

Local Historic Districts and Properties



Since 1959, Connecticut has designated over 126 Local Historic Districts, including 8,128 buildings and 92 individual Local Historic Properties. They span 84 cities and towns across Connecticut.

What is a Local Historic District or Property?

The Connecticut enabling statute (Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), Section 7-147b) defines a historic district as “an area, or a cluster of related buildings, or objects and structures, in a compatible setting which, taken as a whole, visually expresses styles and modes of living representative of various periods in American History.”

Some communities have identified Local Historic Properties (LHPs) that are isolated or geographically separate from existing historic districts.

The Historic District Commission (HDC) or the Historic Property Commission (HPC) is an appointed municipal commission that represents the interest of the community in maintaining the architectural and historical integrity of the Local Historic District (LHD) or Local Historic Property (LHP). Working with property owners and municipal agencies, the Commission helps to preserve designated historic buildings and structures by reviewing any proposed exterior changes that will be visible from a public way for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA).

What is the difference between a National Register District and a Local Historic District?

Listing on the State or National Register of Historic Places is primarily an honorary designation. These types of designations alone do not require any kind of review process for owners who want to alter their property unless public funding is involved. An LHD is created by a local ordinance and falls under the jurisdiction of an appointed historic district commission. Properties within an LHD may also be listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places.

What are the benefits of Local Designation?

LHD and LHP designations represent one of the strongest forms of protection for cultural resources in the community, protecting buildings, structures, and archaeological sites from the threat of demolition or inappropriate exterior alteration. Beyond this primary responsibility for exterior review, the Connecticut enabling statute (CGS, Section 7-147a (b)) outlines four broad ways in which HDCs and HPCs can serve their communities, listed below. Understanding the broad range of these benefits can help explain the advantages of having a commission, attract community support, and build a stronger coalition of partners.

1. Educational

Preserving historic resources helps to tell the human stories of people who built, lived in, or worked in them. HDCs and HPCs highlight the presence of historic buildings to represent and interpret the past through publications, walking tours, school programs, or collaboration with other community organizations.



2. Cultural

Preserving historic buildings adds to the richness of the community, displaying the roots of its architectural character and cultural diversity. As a tangible link to tradition and innovation, LHDs and LHPs help to create a powerful sense of place.



3. Economic

Studies throughout the country have shown that property values within designated districts remain more stable through periods of economic volatility and show stronger appreciation over the long term. Other economic benefits may include well-maintained infrastructure, a stronger neighborhood identity, increased tourism, and more thoughtful and creative design of new construction in the district.



4. General Welfare

LHD and LHP designations contribute to the general welfare of the community in less obvious ways as well. The benefits of historic designation may include: sustainability through the reuse of existing materials, visual impact through spatial context, and social impact through providing an active role for residents and property owners in their community.

