

BRIDGETON



***Design Guidelines for
the Historic District***

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BRIDGETON DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR HISTORIC DISTRICT AND SITES
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The preparation of these guidelines is a project of the Bridgeton Historic District Commission and the City of Bridgeton's Office of Community Development. The assistance and cooperation of the City of Plainfield is gratefully acknowledged. Plainfield's historic guidelines are a model for this project and many of the illustrations and much of the narrative from Plainfield's guidelines are replicated herein.

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FOREWORD

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Bridgetonians have always known that their city is one of New Jersey's most attractive small communities. A community of 19,000, it has established facilities and services, and outstanding recreational amenities for all members of the family. Nestled in an agricultural area away from the blight of the large urban centers, Bridgeton is still within easy driving distance to Philadelphia, Atlantic City, Wilmington and to the bay and ocean coasts. Yet the capstone to Bridgeton's charm is its large historic district with Victorian, Federal and Colonial structures.

The state and federal governments have recognized Bridgeton's architectural enchantment by the inclusion of Bridgeton's historic districts in the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Bridgetonians take pride in the facts that their district, with over 2,200 structures, is the largest in the State of New Jersey and that the district contains some of the best examples of carpenter Victorian architecture to be found anywhere. Bridgeton has many "register quality" buildings which could be listed individually on the National Register because of their special architecture and history. However, it is the abundance of "district quality" structures which house by house present the living environment that people love. Although the district quality structures may not qualify for the National Register individually, they collectively contribute to the aesthetic and architectural ambience that distinguishes the historic districts from just a collection of old buildings. The economic value of these buildings is often commensurate with how well the architectural integrity of the buildings is retained during renovation, rehabilitation, and preservation work.

The city has encouraged appropriate redevelopment through its Community Development Programs to rehabilitate commercial buildings, residential housing, and public amenities. Commercial buildings have been rehabilitated with appropriate storefronts and signs and hundreds of district quality homes have been rehabilitated and painted. The downtown sidewalks and Riverfront Park have been rebuilt with Victorian era brick sidewalks, light posts, benches, and landscaping. One consequence of these improvements has been an emerging tourist industry as the town's attraction has been increasingly recognized throughout the region.

These accomplishments have been recognized by the National Advisory Council for Historic Places with its 1988 National Historic Preservation Award to the City of Bridgeton for its Property Improvement Program. During ceremonies held in Washington, D.C., in November 1988, when Bridgeton's Mayor Donald Rainear accepted the National Preservation Award for the City's Property Rehabilitation Program, President Reagan explained "in an earlier time, many thought that preservation work was expensive, time consuming and limited in its outcome. We have evidence...to prove that notion false. In fact, well-informed, planned and coordinated enterprises prove that you can show cost-effective results and generate social and economic benefits beyond the original scope of the project."

The City government has also adopted an historic district ordinance to promote appropriate treatment to the exterior of historic structures in the districts and to limit inappropriate alterations to valuable architectural features. In order to facilitate the implementation of the historic district ordinance, these guidelines have been developed for use by both the Historic District Commission which reviews projects before construction permits are issued and property owners who plan to make improvements to their properties. These historic district guidelines are intended to help this generation preserve the historic buildings and their important architectural features for the enjoyment and use by the next generations.



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INTRODUCTION

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In 1984 the City of Bridgeton City Council adopted an ordinance to protect Bridgeton's Historic Districts, declaring that "the historical, cultural, architectural and social heritage of the City of Bridgeton is given in trust from generation to generation to be used, enriched, and then passed on" and that "the character, lifestyle and very quality of life" in the city depends in great measure on the protection of this heritage. The ordinance also recognizes that our heritage has important economic as well as quality-of-life consequences for our community.

The ordinance establishes a process for the review of all exterior work on property within the historic district with the intention to not only discourage or prohibit inappropriate alterations, demolition or new construction but also to encourage historically accurate and aesthetically pleasing rehabilitation or preservation work. The review process provides an opportunity for the city's staff and its Historic District Commission to suggest ways for the property owner to make repairs which allow the owner to continue to use the property without destroying its aesthetic, architectural, and often its economic value. Inasmuch as there is often a fine line between architectural verities and individual opinion, the reviewers and property owners often must work carefully to find solutions that are acceptable. If satisfactory solutions cannot be found, a building permit cannot be issued and the work cannot proceed.

These guidelines provide uniform standards for property owners, architects and builders who plan work in the historic district and are the basis of review by the Historic District Commission, Community Development staff, and Zoning and Planning officials. The guidelines also provide information regarding rehabilitation new construction work. Additional information may be obtained by referring to publications listed in the bibliography or contacting the city's Historic District Officer or the Historic District Commission members.

The guidelines include: (1) a section on the Powers and Review Procedures of the Historic District Commission which explains the application, review process, and appeals

process, (2) a section on Rehabilitation and Maintenance which addresses exterior work on both residential and commercial buildings, (3) a section on New Construction which identifies the criteria used to evaluate plans to build new structures within the historic district, (4) a section on Removals which explains the policies with regard to partial or select demolitions, complete demolitions, and moving buildings, (5) a map of the historic districts, (6) a bibliography, (7) a glossary of architectural terms, and (8) an appendix with the Historic District Ordinance and Amendments, and Section 708 of the Zoning Ordinance regulating signs.

Identification of the City of Bridgeton's Historic District is the result of the Historic Sites Survey of Bridgeton's 6000 buildings by architect Hugh McCauley and his staff between June and September of 1979. The survey noted that more than 2200 homes had significant historic and architectural quality. The survey indicated which properties were register quality, district quality, district quality altered, district quality radically altered, undistinguished, and intrusions. The register quality properties are those which have such outstanding architectural or historical values that they would be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The district quality properties are those which contribute to the character and quality of the historic district which qualified the district for inclusion on the National Register. Although it is important for all rehabilitation work in the historic district to be compatible, the standards for rehabilitating register quality homes may be applied more stringently.

The Historic District Commission recognizes that work which is historically correct is usually visually compatible with the design of the building that is being rehabilitated. Occasionally, however, it is necessary to change a building from its original construction in order to correct bad designs or make a building useful for modern use. The Commission understands that every new design and modern contrivance is not necessarily good, and indeed often inappropriate for historic buildings, but also that all that is old is not necessarily valuable. The extent to which such changes are done sensitively will determine how well this generation passes on its heritage to the next generations.

These guidelines are based on the review of historic preservation literature, the knowledge and experience of the Historic District Commission members, the Bridgeton Historic District Ordinance and the Secretary of Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.

In addition, the Bridgeton Historic District Commission gratefully acknowledges the help from the City of Plainfield whose Design Guidelines served as a model for this document and from which a number of illustrations have been reprinted

to illustrate important historic preservation principles. Much of the narrative for the generally accepted preservation guidelines has been reproduced verbatim from the Plainfield Historic District Guidelines. The Bridgeton Historic District Commission has and will continue to add to these guidelines to provide additional instructions and information that helps address those issues which are of special concern in Bridgeton.

FEBRUARY 1990

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POWERS AND REVIEW PROCEDURES

OF THE

BRIDGETON HISTORIC COMMISSION

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The Bridgeton City Council created the Bridgeton Historic District Commission in 1984 with the adoption of the Historic District Ordinance. In 1989, City Council amended the ordinance to designate the Zoning Board of Adjustment the appeals body for the Commission's actions and to comply with State enabling legislation enacted since 1984. The Commission has five members who hold a public meeting monthly to review major applications for Certificates of Appropriateness.

Certificates of Appropriateness

Certificates of Appropriateness are required for all exterior changes on buildings within the historic district. Work which needs a CA includes: (1) demolition, (2) relocation or removal of any building or improvement, (3) change in the exterior appearance, (4) new construction, and (5) changes or additions in exterior lighting or signs. Exceptions which do not require a CA are (a) any repainting, repair or exact replacement of any existing improvement and (b) signs which are less than one square foot for identification or four square foot for a commercial sign providing it is attached to and parallel to a facade of the building or structure. The Certificate of Appropriateness is required for both major and minor applications. Certificates of Appropriateness are required before any permit can be issued and before any work can begin even if a permit is not required.

Major Applications

The ordinance specifies that major applications are those applications for a Certificate of Appropriateness which involve demolition, removal of a building, addition to a

building, or construction of a new structure in the historic district. In addition, any other exterior change which, in the opinion of the historic district administrative officer, may substantially affect the characteristics of the district will require a major application and appearance before the historic district commission.

Notification to all property owners within 200 feet of the lotlines is required and appropriate certification must be submitted that notice has been sent certified mail to these owners at least 10 days prior to the Commission's meeting. In addition, proof of publication of the notice of the application in the official newspaper not less than 10 days before the matter is heard by the commission must also be provided. The Commission may however waive this requirement pursuant to section 5.3 of the ordinance if compliance is deemed an unreasonable hardship and that the nature of the proposed change does not warrant the additional expense of notification.

Submission of the completed application must be received in the City's Planning Office at least 10 days prior to the Commission's meeting in order for the Commission to formally act on any matter. However, the Commission may informally hear any matter submitted after the deadline providing the administrative officer has adequate time to review the application and place it on the agenda. Major applications will be decided on within 45 days after an application is declared complete.

Minor Applications

Minor applications submitted to the City Planning Office may be decided immediately by the historic district administrative officer providing the application is complete and there is sufficient information to warrant a decision. If the administrative officer determines that other properties will be affected by the proposed change the owner may be required to notify those other property owners by certified mail and such other property owners will have 30 days to file a written objection. If written objection is received the matter shall be submitted to the Commission.