

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

DOES HISTORIC DISTRICTING AFFECT MY PROPERTY VALUE?

Your decision to purchase a property in the historic district was a sound financial move. Historic districting helps to protect property values and local merchants' investments.

Studies by the National Trust for Historic Preservation have shown that historic districting brings consistency in maintaining property values. In historic districts throughout the country, realtors report that preservation and conservation efforts, supported by historic designation, actually increase property values.

WHAT IF I WANT TO MAKE CHANGES TO MY HOME OR PROPERTY?

Anyone considering work "visible from a public way" on the exterior of any building within the district must notify the Historic District Commission by filing an application for work or building.

- "Work" includes any alterations, rebuilding, new construction, restoration, removal, demolition or changes in exterior composition.
- "Building" means any structure forming a shelter for persons, animals or property.
- The Commission's Design Guidelines relate to architectural style, building materials, style of windows, lights, signs and other exterior features.
- Only exterior property changes that are visible from a street or public place are subject to review by the Commission.
- The Commission does not review occupancy, usage and other zoning issues, nor plans for interior alterations. Remember, though, that you are responsible for complying with other town bylaws and regulations that apply to those matters.

ARE THERE EXEMPTIONS TO THE BYLAW?

Yes. Not all projects require a hearing by the Historic District Commission. Be sure to review the bylaw for the full list of exemptions.

Even if the work you would like to do includes exterior work that's included in the exemption list, you're still required to file an application with the Commission.

Work that falls under an exemption requires an application for Certificate of Non-Applicability, which can be approved in short time - many times within a day or two of filing the application.

HOW DO I FILE AN APPLICATION?

No building or demolition permit may be granted for exterior work in the district without a certificate from the Historic District Commission.

- Applications may be obtained from the Town website or the Building Department at Town Hall, 22 Monument Avenue, Swampscott, MA 01907.
- The Commission recommends that applications be submitted 60-90 days prior to the planned commencement of any project.
- Complete applications must include photographs, material samples, manufacturers illustrations, plans and elevations, shop drawings, and site or plot plans.
- Seven (7) copies of the complete application must be filed with the Town Clerk at least 21 days before the regularly scheduled meeting of the Historic District Commission (generally the first Monday of the month) at which the application will be reviewed.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Swampscott Historic District Commission
(Bylaw, Design Guidelines, Rules & Regulations, Forms)
<http://bit.ly/swampscotthistoricdistricts>

Massachusetts Historical Commission
<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/>

National Trust for Historic Preservation
<http://www.preservationnation.org/>

When considering a renovation, restoration or addition, the Historic District Commission welcomes you to attend a meeting where you can obtain information and guidance to help you with your application submission. The Commission can assist you with technical advice and methods to research sources for appropriate materials, contractors, and historical reference material.

Swampscott Historic District Commission
c/o Planning Department
Elihu Thomson Administration Building
22 Monument Avenue
Swampscott, MA 01907
+1 781.596.8829

SWAMPSCOTT LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS



Frederick Law Olmsted District

Swampscott Cemetery &
Andrews Chapel District

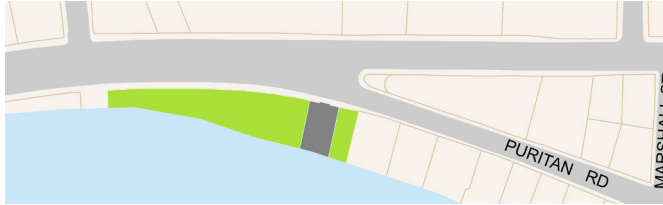
Swampscott Fish House District

Swampscott Railroad Depot District

Swampscott Railroad Depot Local Historic District



Swampscott Fish House Local Historic District



Swampscott Cemetery & Andrews Chapel Local Historic District



Frederick Law Olmsted Local Historic District



“It has been said that, at it’s best, preservation engages the past in a conversation with the present over a mutual concern for the future.”

~William Murtagh, first keeper of the National Register of Historic Places~

AT THE MAY 2014 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING, SWAMPSCOTT VOTED TO ADOPT THE LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT BYLAW AS PART OF ITS GENERAL BYLAWS.

The purpose of the bylaw is to promote the cultural, economic, educational, and general welfare of the inhabitants of Swampscott through:

1. the preservation and protection of the distinctive characteristic of buildings and places significant in the history and development of Swampscott;
2. maintaining and improving the settings of these buildings and places; and
3. the encouragement of design compatible with buildings existing in the area, so as to continue to maintain the historic center, fishing, cultural, commercial and residential character and other qualities which distinguish the town as a desirable community for its residents and visitors.

Swampscott’s Local Historic District is made up for four different areas:

- Frederick Law Olmsted Local Historic District
- Swampscott Cemetery & Andrews Chapel Local Historic District
- Swampscott Fish House Local Historic District
- Swampscott Railroad Depot Local Historic District

HISTORIC SWAMPSCOTT

The early years of Swampscott featured two significant and unique developments that would differentiate it from other American towns. First, Swampscott and nearby Nahant were two of the first summer resort destinations for wealthy city-dwellers. This allowed it to flourish early in its history, as is true for only a few coastal towns that exist today on the Atlantic coastline, making Swampscott fairly unique in this regard.

Second, the residential development planning in Swampscott is historically significant. In the 1880’s, after E. Redington Mudge passed away, the Swampscott Land Trust redeveloped Elmwood, his 130-acre estate, by hiring the pioneer of American landscape architecture, Frederick Law Olmsted, to create a residential neighborhood. The estate’s landscape,

with its open views of the ocean, was enhanced by Olmsted’s design of natural, curving roads, and complemented by beautiful houses constructed on its lots. The area is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This development and comparable projects of that era influenced the development of residential neighborhoods in America for decades, well into the 20th century.

In addition to the Olmsted District, the town has five properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places:

- 20 acres of Swampscott Cemetery, including Andrews Chapel
- The Elihu Thomson House (*used as Swampscott Town Hall, located within the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic District*)
- The John Humphrey House (*home of the first lieutenant governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, also located within the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic District*)
- The Swampscott Railroad Depot
- The Fish House

A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT IS IMPORTANT FOR SWAMPSCOTT

Historic Districts have three major purposes as stated in Chapter 40C of the Massachusetts General Laws:

- To preserve and protect the distinctive characteristics of the buildings and places significant to the history of the Commonwealth’s cities and towns.
- To maintain and improve the settings of those buildings and places.
- To encourage compatibility with existing buildings when new buildings are planned within the district.

Historic District Commissions do not prevent changes from occurring, nor do they prevent new construction. Their purpose is to ensure that changes and additions are harmonious, and to prevent changes that might detract from the aesthetic and historic values of the district. The Commission does not halt growth, but allows for the careful consideration of change. A local historic district is not meant to be burdensome to property owners, but is established to administer change and enhance the value of the district.