

Town of Durham
Historic Preservation Commission

Box 65
Cornwallville
New York 12418

Statement of Intent

The Durham Historic Preservation Commission was created on October 26, 1989 by virtue of the unanimous adoption by the Durham Town Board of the Durham Historic Preservation Law. The Commission's intent is to carry out the purposes of the Law in a fair, prudent and cautious manner.

Section 1 of the Historic Preservation Law states its purposes. As stated in the Law, the purposes of the Law, and of the Commission, are essentially:

1. To protect and enhance the landmarks and historic districts which represent distinctive elements of Durham's historic, architectural and cultural heritage;
2. To foster civic pride in the accomplishments of the past;
3. To protect and enhance Durham's attractiveness to visitors and the support and stimulus to Durham's economy which is provided thereby; and
4. To ensure the harmonious, orderly and efficient growth and development of the Town.

The Town Supervisor is responsible for appointing the commissioners. He may call a meeting of the commission, and all decisions of the Commission are subject to appeal to the Town Board, which has final say as to the Law and its implementation. Nevertheless, the Commission's members intend that the Commission will act as a distinct entity, entirely responsible for its own actions, with due regard for the opinions of the citizens of the Town, and subject to the right of appeal of any decision to the Town Board.

The Commission's members intend to fairly interpret and implement the Law. They will do so primarily as follows:

1. By adopting criteria for identifying significant historic and architectural buildings and districts.
2. By designating, after public discussion, landmarks and districts, the first of which is the Cornwallville district (the boundaries of which are attached to this Statement and have been filed with the Town and County Clerks).

3. By making recommendations to the Town concerning the matters for which the Commission is responsible, including (a) the utilization of funds which will be made available to promote historic and architectural preservation, and (b) the development of programs to assist in historic and architectural preservation.
4. By increasing public awareness of the value of historic, cultural and architectural preservation.
5. By stressing the merits of historic preservation and building a strong defense against intrusions by large-scale development or governmental efforts to destroy the cultural, historic, architecture and environmental integrity of the Town.
6. By reviewing and considering applications for Certificates of Appropriateness which are required for construction within historic districts and for alteration of certain aspects of properties which are designated as historic or are within historic districts.

An important aspect of the Commission's purpose is to increase public awareness of the value of historic, cultural and architectural preservation. It will do so by implementing and/or participating in public education programs, and encouraging all interested citizens to participate as well. Among these programs are lectures and consultations by experts in the fields of historic preservation, land use planning, property development and renovation.

The Commission's members do not intend at this time to make any further designations of landmarks buildings or historic districts. Certainly any designation in the future will involve the discussion and take into account the views of all citizens of the Town, especially those citizens who would be directly affected.

The Commission's members do not intend to be an anti-development body. Rather, they hope to concentrate their efforts on stressing the development of structures which are compatible with the historic, architectural and cultural values of the Town. To this end, the Commission's members believe that the strength of the construction and renovation businesses of the Town are vital to the continued attractiveness of the Town, and believe that new architecture, not just the patching and/or cloning of old buildings, is an important element of growth.

The Commission intends to be a strong voice in the protection of the Town from those who wish to destroy it, be they private or governmental. They will work with the Town Board, the Planning Board, and individual landowners to ensure that Durham stays an attractive place to live and to do business.

Six Month Plan

The present commissioners are the first to be appointed under the new Law. With no precedent within the Town of Durham, we are very much aware that our actions will influence future Commission members and also be the measures by which the Town Board and the citizens of Durham directly judge the usefulness, importance, desirability and durability of the Commission, its members and the Law itself.

Our planned actions for the first six months, until approximately June 1990, are limited as follows:

1. To assist the Town in obtaining "Certified Local Government" ("CLG") status, which has been made possible by the creation of the Commission. CLG status will enable the Town to be eligible for Federal and State funding for preservation. CLG status will give the Town greater standing in dealing with and, if necessary, fighting outside private and governmental interests which conflict with the Town's own plan for its development (for example, a landfill or a trailer park).
2. To determine the role which the Commission can play in the orderly development of the Town.
3. To work with the Town Board and the Planning Board to ensure orderly development within the Town, and especially within the Cornwallville district.
4. To work with the Town Board and the Planning Board to prevent large-scale interests from undertaking the wholesale development or destruction of the Town without regard for the economic, environmental and cultural interests of its citizens.
5. To develop and implement educational programs concerning historic preservation and proper methods of restoration. To do this we intend to consult with the builders and individual renovators in the area to find out how best to foster and implement creative historic renovations. We also intend to locate people, especially citizens of the Town, who have knowledge of the history and architecture of the Town and wish to contribute to its growth.
6. To consult with the Town Board and Planning Board on the land use process from the point of view of historic and architectural preservation.
7. To adopt and refine criteria for designation of a property or a district as historic and subject to the requirements of the Law.

8. To develop guidelines for restoration, renovation and new construction of landmark buildings and buildings within the historic district.

The Commission's members do not intend to designate any other property or district within the next six months. We believe that one district is certainly enough to work on, and we also do not want to subject other less currently sensitive areas to the jurisdiction of the Commission and the Law until we, the Town Board and the citizens of the Town have had an opportunity to observe the workings of the Law and the Commission for a period of time.