

Historical Commission

Town of Carlisle

MASSACHUSETTS 01741

Greetings from the Carlisle Historical Commission which oversees the Carlisle Historic District, established by the Town in 1969. Our intent is to preserve the distinctive architecture and rural nature established by our town forebears, among them James Adams, John Heald, James Nickles, Timothy Wilkins, John Green and Dr. Austin Marsh. Under their influence, Carlisle has developed much of its unique identity.



A view of tree-lined Bedford Road toward Carlisle Center prior to 1938. A close inspection reveals the Soldiers' Monument at the rotary.



An aerial view of the town center taken c. 1940 from the belfry of the First Religious Society.

What Is Carlisle's History?

Carlisle was first settled by Europeans in 1650, with one of the earliest settlers being James Adams from Carlisle, England, for which our Town was named. Originally created from parts of many towns, including Concord, Carlisle became a district twice – once in 1754, and again in 1780 as a larger district. The incorporation of the Town was approved in 1805. For nearly three centuries Carlisle was a farming community, with small industries scattered throughout the Town. Farmers would often supplement their income by running mills and taverns, or by shoemaking, blacksmithing, or other more unique ventures, including a cooperage located in the town center. The Gleason Public Library, also in the town center, was part of the legacy of the Town forebears, the funds for its construction having been donated by Joanna Gleason, a Carlisle teacher.

One of the most enduring distinctions of Carlisle, in contrast to surrounding communities, is that it has remained agricultural in character.

Why Do We Have Historic Districts?

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 Historic District.

The role of the Historical Commission is to ensure that changes and additions within designated districts are both harmonious and appropriate. It is the responsibility of Historical Commissions to work cooperatively with local residents to ensure that changes do not detract from the aesthetic and historic values of the Historic District.

Who Is on the Historic District Commission?

The Commission consists of five members and two alternate members appointed by the Selectmen to a term of three years. Under a specific set of regulations and guidelines, the Commission deals with exterior architectural changes. The Commission is required by law to review the appropriateness of all exterior design changes, additions, and new construction.

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 to the maintenance of property values. In historic districts throughout the country, realtors report that preservation and conservation efforts, supported by historic designation or individual properties, actually increase property values.

What if I Want to Make Changes to My Home?

Homeowners within the Historic District are encouraged to informally consult with the Commission as they begin consideration of a change to their property. Any owner/resident within the District making the decision to change any part of his/her property that is "visible from a public way" must notify the Historic District Commission by filing an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness. Examples of work requiring an application may include:

Any alterations, rebuilding, new construction, restoration, removal, demolition or changes that alter the exterior composition of the structure.

The Historic District Guidelines include, but are not limited to, architectural style, general arrangement and setting, building materials, windows, lights, signs and other exterior features as well as hardscapes (paving, cobblestone or brick). Only exterior property changes that are visible from a street or public place are included. Occupancy, usage and other zoning issues are not reviewed, nor are any interior alterations except as they may affect the exterior of a property.

How Do I File an Application?

Applications for a Certificate may be obtained at the Carlisle Town Hall. No building or demolition permit may be granted for exterior work in the district without a Certificate from the Historical Commission. Completed applications should be returned to Carlisle Town Hall a minimum of 4 weeks prior to the regularly scheduled meeting of the Historical Commission (generally the 3rd Tuesday of the month).

Completed applications should include photographs, material and color samples and specifications, manufacturer's illustrations, plans and elevations, detailed dimensions, shop drawings, and site or plot plans, as applicable, to assist the Commission in fully understanding the scope and nature of the work.

What if I Have Questions?

The Historic Commission hopes that you have found the information in this communication to be useful. We believe in the value of Carlisle's unique identity and are committed to helping resident/owner homeowners enjoy living in the District. If you have any questions about your home and the Historic District, please call the Carlisle Town Clerk's office at 978-369-6155 for contact information.

*Carlisle Historical Commission
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