

A Long Ridge Historic District?

We are exploring the possibility of creating an historic district in this region. This would be Danbury's first historic district. As appointees, however, we can do nothing that the people on Long Ridge Road do not want. State statutes set down the definite guidelines for creating an historic district and these mandate approval by 65% of the people living within the proposed area. We have volunteered our time to explore this issue and have drawn up this non-legal, informal question and answer flier to give you some idea of what an historic district designation means.

HOW DOES ONE ESTABLISH AN HISTORIC DISTRICT?

The first step is for the Mayor and the Common Council to establish an Historic District Study Committee. Last December they appointed:

Gene Erquez, Starr's Plain Road (Member of the Common Council)

John Leopold, Long Ridge Road

John Alley, Long Ridge Road

Imogene Heireth, Division Street, researcher for the Danbury Preservation Trust

William Foley, Park Avenue, Social Studies Teacher at Danbury High School

Alternate members appointed to the commission include:

Stephen Flanagan, Willow Road (Member of the Common Council)

Paulette Pepin, Linron Drive, V.P. of the Danbury Preservation Trust

Joseph LeMoine, Long Ridge Road

WHAT IS AN HISTORIC DISTRICT?

An historic district is a region with a group of homes which distinctively reflect the past. The Connecticut State Historical Commission defines an historic district as "an area, or a cluster of related buildings, or objects and structures, in a compatible setting which, taken as a whole visibly express styles and modes of living representative of various periods in American history."

CAN THERE BE AN HISTORIC DISTRICT ON LONG RIDGE?

Yes, many of the homes along the road reflect the richness of American architectural history and the uniqueness of this area. Thanks to the work of the Danbury Preservation Trust, historic buildings along the road have been carefully studied. The work of Imogene Heireth which details the history of specific buildings is available in the Long Ridge Library.

WILL THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN HISTORIC DISTRICT INCREASE PROPERTY VALUES?

All properties within an historic district will continue to be appraised at their individual worth. There is a commonly held belief that property values will stabilize or increase in an historic district. Empirical evidence indicates that residential property values do not decline as a result of the establishment of an historic district.

WOULD THE CREATION OF SUCH A DISTRICT LIMIT THE ABILITY TO SELL PROPERTY WITHIN ITS BOUNDARIES?

No. There is no lien or any such encumbrance placed on a property owner's right to sell his/her property within the historic district.

IF AN OWNER WISHES TO SUBDIVIDE HIS/HER PROPERTY WITHIN A DISTRICT SUCH AS LONG RIDGE ROAD, DOES THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN HISTORIC DISTRICT PREVENT THIS?

No. An historic district is concerned primarily with architectural details; other matters of zoning must continue to follow the the normal channels prescribed by Danbury law.

IS THERE ANY LIMIT PLACED UPON THE RIGHTS OF A PROPERTY OWNER WITHIN AN HISTORIC DISTRICT?

Yes. In establishing an historic district committee, the people within the district agree that the commission must grant a "certificate of appropriateness" if an owner wishes to change the architectural appearance of his/her home. This does not apply to painting the exterior a different color, but only to altering the exterior of the building in a visible way. No internal changes would be affected. In analyzing a petition for architectural change, the historic commission must follow all the requirements of any public body with regard to the Freedom of Information statutes and due process. The goal is to maintain the historic character of the neighborhood. There will, of course, be many ways to do that and the commission may not arbitrarily impose or reject a design. The goal is for neighbors to work together for the preservation and improvement of the district.

Once you have read this, we are sure you will have many more questions. The Connecticut Historic Commission must approve any area that is a candidate for an historic designation. Representatives of that group have already informally viewed the area and liked what they saw. An official representative will come to an open meeting to discuss the process and answer specific questions you may have. This question and answer paper after all is an informal, non-legal presentation. You will want the best and most official data which only they or an attorney can provide. In the meanwhile for a fuller and exact presentation on historic districts, we have placed a copy of William Devlin's "HANDBOOK FOR CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL DISTRICT AND HISTORICAL PROPERTIES COMMISSIONS" in the Long Ridge Library.

PLEASE COME TO AN OPEN MEETING TO DISCUSS THESE ISSUES ON THURSDAY MAY, 25, 1989, 7:00 P.M. AT THE LONG RIDGE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH. WE WILL HAVE A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION PRESENT.