



The Amherst Historic District Commission is delighted to share with you some information about this historic Village and your important role as stewards of this truly unique American landmark.

The following are some Frequently Asked Questions about Amherst's Historic District and the properties included within the District:

**Q:** *What area comprises the Historic District?*

**A:** The Historic District, the largest in New Hampshire, comprises more than 1600 acres and 120 buildings. The district encompasses the central Village area as well as the area on State Route 122 by the Police Station, out Christian Hill Road, and over to Boston Post Road. The District is so designated by the U.S. Department of the Interior, under whose basic regulations the National Historic Landmark designation has been earned.

**Q:** *Why was this Historic District designated a National Historic Landmark?*

**A:** There are over 100 properties of historical significance in the District covering the period from 1700-1924 and incorporating important Colonial, Federal and Greek Revival properties. Unlike some towns where a few properties may be on the National Register, the entire Historic District is on the National Register. In brief, the Historic District has played a significant role in understanding the history of our town, and our role in local and regional history.



The complete Regulations as adopted and amended can be viewed on:  
[www.amherstnh.gov/Regulations/HistoricDistrict](http://www.amherstnh.gov/Regulations/HistoricDistrict)

We hope this description of the purposes of the Amherst Historic District and the regulations that govern the construction, maintenance, and rehabilitation of properties in the District is helpful to property owners, so that decisions and permits are based on clear and objective rules.



# Welcome to Historic Amherst Village



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**Q:** *What is the local significance of the Historic District?*

**A:** Amherst's past is significant in the history of New England and indeed in the nation. The Village Green has played an important role in the cultural development of the community and has served as a center of activity for nearly 200 years. The designation, Historic District, means that the District possesses significance in American history, architecture, or culture and retains its historic integrity. To be eligible for the National Register the landmark must not have lost the physical qualities that convey its significance.

Today, Amherst Village Historic District has not only retained its integrity, it has also been a continuous cultural resource that is still central to most of Amherst's community functions including the Fourth of July, Antiques on the Green, Easter egg hunts, the Farmers Market, the Tree Lighting, and the summer band concerts just to name a few.

**Q:** *What are the roles and responsibilities of the Town of Amherst, its property owners, and its citizens?*

**A:** While every resident of Amherst is truly a volunteer steward of the Historic District, the official stewardship of the District is vested in town government including, the Board of Selectman, the Heritage Commission, the Historic District Commission, and the Planning and Zoning Department. In addition, the State of New Hampshire is responsible for administering the rules and regulations through the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources. As with the U.S. Department of the Interior, its responsibilities are to preserve and protect the nation's most important architectural and cultural resources.



**Q:** *What rules and regulations govern Amherst's Historic District?*

**A:** In brief, all property owners must make an application and receive a permit for any changes to the exterior of their property. This includes all aspects of the property including exterior siding, roofing, chimney, windows, fencing and the like. A detailed listing of all the rules and regulations may be found at the Historic District section of the Town of Amherst website, the Amherst Public Library, or by contacting the Town of Amherst Planning and Zoning Department at the Town Hall. Within the website is a link to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation.

The process to make an application for changes includes first completing an application for change through the Planning and Zoning Department located at the Amherst Town Hall. Knowledgeable representatives are there to provide assistance in completing the application. The Historic District Commission is comprised of volunteer members appointed by the Selectmen. Their role is to review each application and determine if the application meets the regulations and to offer guidance on how best to incorporate change and to share knowledge about our treasured historic Village. The Historic District Commission meets the third Thursday of each month and conducts a site visit to the property within a week of each meeting so that a timely response to all applications can be made.

Property owners will want to be in compliance with the various rules and regulations, namely the Historic District Regulations as adopted January 17, 1991 and as amended 3-16-2000, 10-19-2000 and 5-15-2003. Such regulations are promulgated under RSA 674 and RSA 675. Here are some highlights of the regulations that govern the Historic District:

1. The scale, size and exterior features of properties in the District will be compatible to other properties, and their architectural features can be altered only so as to conform closely with their original appearance, especially those within view of the public and neighboring properties.
2. The distinguishing original qualities and distinctive architectural features and/or examples of skilled craftsmanship of any property shall not be destroyed, removed or altered, and alterations that have no significant historical basis and which seek to create an earlier appearance are discouraged.
3. Buildings shall not be demolished or removed from their present site and all property owners shall make reasonable efforts to properly maintain the existing structure on the existing site.
4. Building owners shall provide sufficient maintenance so buildings do not fall into disrepair or unsafe condition impacting detrimentally upon the character of the Historic District.
5. No synthetic siding shall be used, and structures and fencing shall be constructed only from natural materials.
6. The choice of color is not regulated and does not require an application for approval, but selecting colors that are compatible with other historic buildings in the neighborhood is encouraged.
7. Existing historic doors and doorways shall be retained to maintain the integrity of the building. Storm and screen doors shall be plain and shall not have false hardware.
8. Existing historical windows, including all elements of moldings, sash casings and frames, shall be retained and repaired. In rare

cases when repair is not possible, new windows are to match the originals or be in character with the building. Replacement windows are to retain individual panes formed by true mullions. Neither snap-ins nor fake grid mullions are allowed in either replacement or as part of an approved addition.

9. Roofs, dormers, chimneys and related architectural features give buildings their unique historical character and shall be preserved or restored using original materials, sizes, shapes, colors and textures.

10. Outdoor mechanical equipment such as ducts, fans, vents and air conditioners should be installed in areas of limited visibility so as not to harm the historical appearance of the building.

11. New construction shall complement existing buildings and streetscapes in terms of height, width and character.

12. Screened off-street parking is encouraged to the extent possible and landscaping should be natural to preserve the character of the area.

13. Tree removal requires a Certificate of Approval from the Historic District Commission.

14. In general, fences are to be one of the specific styles allowed by the regulations and be made of natural materials, and be in harmony with the style of the house and the neighborhood.

15. Any additions to properties require a permit and approval of the HDC, and in general additions should complement the structure and the character of the neighborhood and the District in terms of scale, design, materials, and texture.



**Q:** *What are the consequences when a property owner does not comply with the Regulations of the Historic District?*

**A:** Fortunately, those who are in the Historic District understand the importance of their stewardship of their properties and examples of non-compliance are few. While there are fines for non-compliance and possible need to replace the non-conforming features with proper features, the single greatest consequence may actually be a loss of market value of the property whose integrity has been compromised.