

Historic District and Properties Commission FAQ

Q. I want to learn more about my antique home and neighborhood. What is the best way to go about this?

A. You can visit the History Room on the second floor of the Wilton Library. The History Room, which houses non-circulating research materials, contains the archives of the Wilton Historical Society, as well as materials from other town organizations. There are maps, documents, photographs, diaries, journals, and more. It is best to call ahead (203-762-3950) to find out when the History Room is open, or to make an appointment with the part-time archivist, who can help you. Also, you may wish to consult the definitive history of Wilton, Bob Russell's book *"Wilton, Connecticut: Three Centuries of People, Places and Progress"*, available at the Wilton Library and at the Wilton Historical Society.

Another avenue is to document the changing ownership of your property. Visit the Assessor's Office in the Town Hall to get title information; then you will be able to use the records found in the Town Clerk's office to trace back.

Q. My house has a marker on the exterior identifying it as a historic home. Does the Historic District and Properties Commission place these markers?

A. No. There are two kinds of historic property markers in Wilton.

Rectangular, beige markers inset with a bronze medallion have been obtained from the Wilton Historical Society (a private, non-profit organization not affiliated with the Historic District and Properties Commission), and generally denote a structure listed in the 1989 Architectural Survey of the Town. Your house is automatically eligible for the Society's marker if it appears on the Survey.

The other type of sign, a small blue oval with gold lettering, is from the National Register of Historic Places, maintained by the Department of the Interior, and is a designation of recognition and honor.

If you would like to learn how to get a marker from the Wilton Historical Society, [click here](#).

To learn more about the National Register of Historic Places, [click here](#).

[Click here](#) to learn about the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation.

Q. I wish to demolish an old barn near the street so I can expand my home and build a garage. I understand the barn dates from the late 1800's. I do not live in a Historic District – how should I proceed?

A. You need to obtain a demolition permit from the Building Department. Then, since the structure is over 50 years old, and larger than 500 square feet, the Historic District and Properties Commission will be notified about your barn. We will review the property, most likely by visiting the site, and determine if the demolition should be delayed by 90 days. In that time, it may be possible to find an interested party to salvage the structure; there are a number of architects in the area who may know of projects in need of antique structures. Perhaps the barn could be incorporated into your own home expansion. Regardless, you will be able to proceed with demolition in 90 days.

Q. Does the Commission insist that ALL structures over 50 years of age have a demolition delay?

A. No, the majority of structures demolished in town are not of sufficient architectural or historic significance to warrant a delay, and are promptly approved for demolition. Many of Wilton's structures of historic and/or architectural significance are listed in the 1989 Architectural Survey List, which can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

Q. Is it true that if you own a local historic property or live in a historic district you can't make any changes to your house?

A. Not true. Residents of local historic properties or historic districts renovate or enlarge their homes whenever they desire. There are no inherent restrictions placed on local historic properties or homes located within local historic districts; however there is a design review process. In Wilton, the design review is handled in the "Certificate of Appropriateness" process. The process helps insure that changes are made in harmony with the structure and the neighborhood. In turn, this helps to preserve the historic integrity of the structure – as well as its contribution to the streetscape.

Q. My house is located in a Historic District. I want to install new windows, replace the roof, and perhaps expand the kitchen. Do I need to involve the Historic District Commission?

A. Yes. You need a Certificate of Appropriateness approved prior to the start of any significant exterior work on your house which can be seen from the public right of way. The Commission works to protect and preserve the unique visual character of your neighborhood by reviewing proposed work plans and ensuring that they are in keeping with the character and style of the building/neighborhood. [Click here](#) to obtain the Application for a Certificate for Appropriateness.

Q. I want to repaint my house, which is in a Historic District, and do some landscaping. Do I need a Certificate of Appropriateness?

A. No, the Commission does not have authority over landscaping or the color of exterior paint; maintenance and repair of the property; use of the property; the interior arrangement <or structures>; or the portion of the property not visible from a public right of way. However, if you would like advice on appropriate historic paint colors, we are happy to help.

Q. I live in a Historic District, and have a fence running along the road by my house. I would like to replace it with a stone wall and a gate. Do I need a Certificate of Appropriateness? I am also thinking of building a chicken coop near the fence.

A. Yes. Because the stone wall and the chicken coop (or any other structure, such as a gazebo, tool shed, barn) can be seen from a public right of way, you would need a Certificate of Appropriateness before starting work on your projects. If you wish to simply repair the fence in the same style and material, a Certificate of Appropriateness would not be necessary. If visible from the road, the chicken coop would need to be designed and built in a style compatible with your home and neighborhood, and would need prior review of the Historic District and Properties Commission.

Q. I want to make my home more energy efficient – I'd like to explore solar and wind power. Can a Historic Property or one in a Historic District be approved for such technology?

A. The Commission is very supportive of homeowner's efforts to make their historic homes as comfortable and energy efficient as possible – without substantially impinging on their character and style. If your planned solar or wind installation can be seen from the street, a Certificate of Appropriateness will be required. That said, the Commission will make every effort to work with you to find a way to support your improvements.