



Town of Lexington Historical Commission

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What an Owner Can Do to Prepare for a Public Hearing under the Demolition Delay By-Law

-Review the information on file for your house in the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Inventory of Lexington. The survey form for each property listed on the Inventory was sent to the owner of the property as contained in the tax assessor's data base as of May, 2007, with additions sent in July, 2011. The survey form documents the architectural style and historical associations of the property and includes a photo and map. Copies of the survey form and other useful information can be accessed on line at <http://historicsurvey.lexingtonma.gov/>. The Commission welcomes your input on the information contained on the form, including corrections and updates on the history of the property, its owners and construction.

-Contact the Historical Commission early in the planning stages of your project. Owners are encouraged to come to one of the Commission's monthly public meetings to discuss their projects informally. The Commission can explain the historical information on file for your property, review the terms of the by-law, and give you a sense of what the historical or architectural significance of your property may be and how it relates to the history of the Town.

If you have plans for how you want to redevelop your property, consider sharing them with the Commission. The Commission is particularly interested in discussing alternatives to the permanent loss of a historic structure. There may be ways to develop a portion of your property while still maintaining distinctive elements of the historic structure. Preservation of a historic structure often requires that it be updated or modified for modern life. As the municipal board charged with preserving cultural resources in Lexington, the Commission's position is that historic buildings in Lexington should be updated or modified rather than demolished whenever that is a reasonable alternative.

-Bring with you any documents that demonstrate the reasoning behind your decision to demolish the building. It is very helpful to understand what issues may have affected an owner's decision to seek to demolish a building. Information such as structural engineer's reports, building inspection reports, or real estate ads demonstrating efforts to sell can clarify the decision to seek a demolition permit. In making its determination, the Commission looks at two elements of an application to demolish: first, whether the building is significant, and then, whether its preservation is "preferable" to its demolition. Understanding why a building may not reasonably be "preferably preserved" is helpful in making this decision.

-Understand that the Commission cannot make any determinations about what happens on your property after a preferably preserved significant building is demolished.

The Commission is empowered only to consider the possible public detriment of losing a preferably preserved significant building through demolition. The Commission does not have any authority to review or approve the design of a building that might replace a preferably preserved significant building.

Other things to remember:

- any building on the National Register of Historic Places or in the Cultural Resources Inventory is by definition "significant", but not all significant buildings will be found "preferably preserved"; and
- the Commission can release a demolition permit application for approval in less than 12 months if it can be demonstrated that "there is no reasonable likelihood" that anyone or any group is willing to purchase, preserve, rehabilitate or restore the building, or that the owner has made continuing bonafide and reasonable efforts to locate a purchaser to preserve, rehabilitate and restore the building, and such efforts have been unsuccessful.

Please contact the Historical Commission to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about your property. The Historical Commission can be reached at 781-862-0500 X-200.

Prepared by the Lexington Historical Commission, October 2001, revised March, 2013