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Information for owners of property in a proposed Bridgehampton Historic District

Questions and Answers on Town Designation of Bridgehampton Historic District

Background

For owners of property receiving this communication, this Q and A outlines some basic information in relation to the establishment of an historic district in Bridgehampton.

The Town of Southampton is considering designation of the hamlet center of Bridgehampton as an historic district pursuant to § 330-321 of the Town Code with a goal of preserving and protecting the identity of an historic community, its sense of place, and its historically significant structures.

The Town of Southampton has made substantial investments in preserving Bridgehampton's historical character with such projects as:

- Beebe Windmill restoration and maintenance (TL; NSHR)[1].
- Acquisition and maintenance of the Bridgehampton Community House from the Community House Association.
- The Nathaniel Rogers House multi-million dollar restoration in partnership with the Bridgehampton Museum and its private fundraising (2021).
- Preservation and care of Militia Green on Ocean Avenue.

Bridgehampton's institutions along with private investment have also made efforts at preservation and enhancement of community identity through Main Street architectural conservation:

- Presbyterian Church (NSHR[1] placement in March 2017)
- Restoration of St. Ann's Episcopal Church Rectory (2017)
- The Bridgehampton Museum's preservation of the Corwith House (NSHR)[1]
- Topping Rose Spa and Restaurant at Monument Square
- New Office building at Monument Square (2016)

What is the scope of the proposed Bridgehampton Historic District?

This Bridgehampton Bull's Head – Main Street Historic District will embrace the hamlet center clustered along Main Street bounded on the west by the intersections of Montauk Highway with Snake Hollow Road and Hildreth Lane and on the east, by its intersections with Ocean Road and Sag Harbor Turnpike at Monument Square. This latter eastern part of Bridgehampton is historically referenced as Bull's Head. The properties contained therein include public and private business sites, churches, residences, cemetery, museums, a park, a monument and parking areas.

1 TL = Town of Southampton Landmark; NSHR = listed in National and State Registers of Historic Places.

What is a Town Designated Historic District?

A Town designated historic district is a zoning overlay that must be approved by the Southampton Town Board. An historic district is defined in §330-321 of the Town Code as a distinct section of the Town containing properties, cultural resources or structures which meet one or more of the criteria that would qualify them as landmark-worthy. These landmark-worthy elements contribute to the character of the district and are commonly referred to as contributing elements or contributing resources for a district. Not all properties in a district would necessarily be considered contributing elements to an historic district.

What determines a contributing element in a historic district?

Whether a property, cultural resource or structure is a contributing element to an historic district is based upon a finding that it possesses one or more of the following criteria:

(a) Possesses special character or historic or aesthetic interest of value as part of the cultural, political, economic or social history of the locality, region, state or nation;
(b) Is identified with historic personages or is the site of an historic event in the Town, state, or nation;
(c) Embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type, period, or style or contains elements of design, details, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation;
(d) Is the work of a designer, engineer, builder, artist, or architect whose work has significantly influenced an age;
(e) Because of a unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood.

These are the criteria set out for landmark qualification and found in Town Code §330-321(B). Landmark qualification is not solely a question of the age of the structure. Structures and sites acquire significance for community members for many reasons.

In order to determine the contributing elements of the proposed historic district, the Landmarks and Historic Districts Board (LHDB) in conjunction with Town Historian Julie Greene reviewed prior and current research on properties found in:

1. *The Bridgehampton Hamlet Heritage Area Report*, Ann Sandford, Ph.D, 2009.
2. *The Town of Southampton Historic Resources Survey*, AKRF, Inc., New York & Jacqueline Peu-Duvallon, April 2014.
3. Archives of the Bridgehampton Museum.
4. LHDB historical research on applications for alterations to properties within the proposed Bridgehampton Bull's Head – Main Street Historic District.
5. Targeted property research on the New York Historic Newspapers project.[2]

How does designation of a historic district take place?

The Town Board receives a recommendation for an historic district from the Landmarks and Historic Districts Board. Before any designation is made, the Town Board must refer same to the Planning Board for an advisory report and must conduct a public hearing on any district recommended, including the Bridgehampton Historic District. The recommendation for the Bridgehampton Bull's Head – Main Street Historic District is the result of a 2017 request by Southampton Town Supervisor Jay Schneiderman to the LHDB to study the possibility of designated historic districts for Bridgehampton and the application of the Bridgehampton Civic Association in conjunction with the Landmarks and Historic Districts Board.

2 https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/titles/places/new_york/suffolk/

What are the consequences of being in an historic district?

Town historic districts are created to protect and conserve the heritage and character of a community. Owners of all properties, both contributing and non-contributing elements, in a Town designated historic district are required to receive approval from the Landmarks and Historic Districts Board (LHDB), in the form of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) under §330-323 of the Town Code, for exterior changes to the outward appearance, architectural features, design, material or colors, that are visible to the public.

Ordinary maintenance and repair of architectural features do not require a COA. Applications for COAs are reviewed by the Southampton Town LHDB for compliance with design guidelines and the Town Code.

Within Southampton Town limits, this type of review process already exists under municipal codes in the incorporated Villages of Sag Harbor, Sagaponack, Southampton and Quogue. Each of these municipal corporations has a defined Village or National Historic District under their codes. A review is required by their Village review board for approval of construction, demolition, or alteration of properties that affect exterior appearances. Visit https://gis.southamptontownny.gov/historic/ and choose the "Historic Districts" button in the left column for more information.

What kind of review for a Certificate of Appropriateness takes place?

Before an owner undertakes any exterior alteration, restoration, reconstruction, demolition, new construction or moving of a landmark on property within an historic district, a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) from the Landmarks and Historic Districts Board must be obtained. The general criteria in Southampton Code for COA approval are:

1. Utilization of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.
2. Properties which contribute to the character of the historic district shall be retained, with their historic features altered as little as possible.
3. Alteration of existing property and new construction shall be compatible with the district in which it is located.

Are there limitations for a review for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)?

Yes, there are limitations. Changes to interior spaces are not subject to review for a COA if they do not impact exterior appearances. Changes to architectural features that are not visible from a public right-of-way or alley are not subject to the required COA review. Also excluded from review is ordinary maintenance and repair of any exterior architectural feature not involving a change in design, material, color or outward appearance.

Is there a process available to ease approval for a Certificate of Appropriateness?

Yes. Town Code specifies that preliminary plans, elevations, sketches and/or proposals may be submitted to the Landmarks and Historic Districts Board by the applicant for a preapplication conference prior to filing an application for a certificate of appropriateness. A preapplication conference does not incur costs.

Is there an appeal procedure in a dispute on a Certificate of Appropriateness?

Yes, in the case of a dispute, appeals of COA determinations of the Landmarks and Historic Districts Board can be made to the Southampton Town Zoning Board of Appeals and State Supreme Court under Article 78 of the Civil Practice Law and Rules.

Are there benefits to be found in a Historic District?

Local historic districts protect the investments of owners and residents of historic properties. Insensitive or poorly planned development can make an area less attractive to investors and home buyers, and thus undermine property values.

For contributing properties in Southampton Town Historic Districts (as well as individual Town Landmarks), there are several possible Town benefits:

1. A 5 year abatement program for increased property tax stemming from property improvements.
2. Potential sale of a historic preservation easement to the Town's Community Preservation Fund.
3. Eligibility to apply for the annual Landmark Maintenance Award.
4. Possible Zoning Code Relief: § 330-167 (J) The ZBA may grant special use permits "*compatible with an intent to preserve, protect, restore or promote the historic or cultural integrity of a district, site, building, structure or object*".

The attached description of Designation Benefits provides more information.

Where can more information be found about the proposed Bridgehampton Bull's Head – Main Street Historic District?

Detailed information on the proposed Bridgehampton historic district can be found on the webpages of the Southampton Town Landmarks and Historic Districts Board:
https://southamptontownny.gov/318/Landmarks-Historic-Districts-Board

There under "QUICK LINKS" you will find downloadable *Bridgehampton-Historic-District-Review-and-Design-Guideline---Phase-I.* The direct link is:
https://www.southamptontownny.gov/DocumentCenter/View/23074/Bridgehampton-Historic-District-Review-and-Design-Guideline---Phase-I-Draft-

This publication was produced by Julie Greene, Town Historian, in consultation with others, and includes:

1. An overview of the history of Bridgehampton.
2. Design and Review Guidelines for the historic district.
3. Mapping of the district properties.
4. An inventory of properties with historical annotations and proposed status as contributing or non-contributing resources to the historic district.

RELATED LINKS:

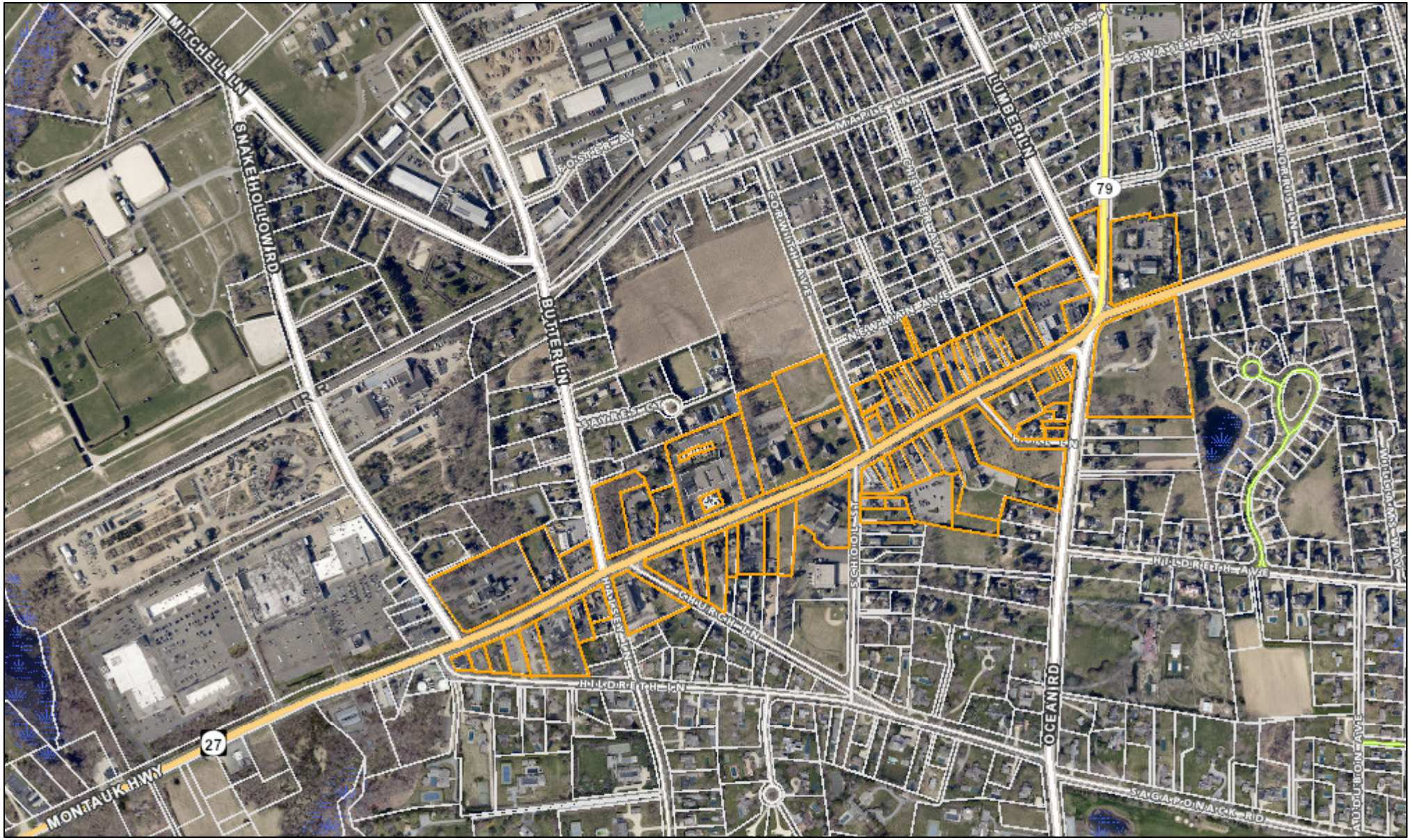
2009 and 2014 surveys for Bridgehampton: https://southamptontownny.gov/390/Historical-Studies-Reports

Town Zoning Code for Landmarks and Historic Districts: https://ecode360.com/8704719

Co-applicant Bridgehampton Civic Association: https://www.bridgecivic.org/action

Inquiries can be emailed to Ed Wesnofske, LHDB at: ewesnofske@southamptontownny.gov.

BH Hist Dist Phase 1: Bulls Head - Main Street



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Prepared by The Town of Southampton
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Town and State Benefits For Designated Town Landmarks and Contributing Resources in Historic Districts

Designation of a historic structure as a Landmark or a Contributing Resource for a Historic District in the Town of Southampton currently qualifies the owner(s) to participate in the following programs.

Property Tax Abatement

Section 444-a of the NYS Real Property Tax Law authorizes a partial exemption from real property taxation for alteration or rehabilitation of historic property. If an owner makes improvements to a historic structure that result in an increase in value (e.g. enlarging the structure, new roof, new windows, etc.), the tax abatement program allows them to postpone the consequential increase of property taxes for five (5) years, and a graduated increase over the next five (5) years (20% increments) back up to the total assessment rate. This incentive can be found in the town's codes, Chapter 298, Article XII, and specifically states, "historic property that is altered or rehabilitated in accordance with local historic preservation laws is exempt from taxation to the extent of any increase in value attributable to the alteration or rehabilitation. Such improvements are exempt from special ad valorem levies as well as from general municipal and school taxes..."

Year of Exemption	Percentage Exemption
1-5	100
6	80
7	60
8	40
9	20
10	0

Landmark Maintenance Award

The Southampton Landmarks Maintenance Award Program (SLMAP) provides an opportunity for owners of designated Landmark structures to seek financial assistance with the maintenance of their historic building(s), thus aiding in the ongoing survival of those resources, and consequential benefit to the character, history, and identity of the community. The SLMAP supports projects that contribute to the long-term sustainability and preservation of designated Southampton properties. Example projects may include exterior improvements, structural stabilization, window, door and shutter restoration, and resolving water penetration issues. Applicants are required to have Basic or Enhanced School Tax Relief (STAR) status in order to participate. Approximately $20,000 may be awarded annually, with disbursements issued to cover costs of material and labor only; architectural, engineering or other professional fees are ineligible expenses. The recommendation of an award recipient(s) will be made by the Landmarks & Historic Districts Board (LHDB) based on the need for maintenance and the historic significance of the resource. Applications and information are made available via the LHDB pages of the town's website in early February of each year, with award recipients announced the following January. Donations to this fund are tax-deductible.

Historic Preservation Easements

The Town's current Comprehensive Plan encourages the provision of economic incentives for the preservation of historic structures. Section 140-3-A (Community Preservation) stipulates that the Town Community Preservation Funds may be used,

"(1) To implement a plan for the preservation of community character as required by § 64-e, Subdivision (6), of the Town Law", and

"(2) To acquire interests or rights in real property for the preservation of the community within the Town, including any village, in accordance with said plan."

A historic preservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement that can be used to protect a significant historic resource. It gives the holder of the easement (in this case, the Town) the authority to review and approve physical changes to the exterior of the preserved property to ensure they are compatible with, and sensitive to, the historic resource. In exchange for the preservation interest, the recipient of the easement (the Town) provides financial compensation to the property owner, without restrictions on how those funds are used. Easement values are determined by the level of restrictiveness established in the easement; the more restrictions, the higher the easement value. Values are not capped but normally do not exceed approximately thirty percent of the property's market value. The compensation is considered taxable income; the value of the easement normally reduces the property's taxes by the same percentage; and the easement is extinguishable in the event of a disaster (fire, hurricane, etc.).

Property owners interested in the Town's historic preservation easement program can direct their interest to the Manager of the Community Preservation Fund. The Town Board, with input from the Community Preservation Advisory Board and the Landmarks & Historic Districts Board, makes all final determinations regarding preservation easement acquisitions. Properties considered contributing resources within historic districts, individually designated as Town landmarks and/or listed on the state and/or national register are eligible for this program. However, eligibility does not guarantee the Town's interest. Properties must also be in good condition to be considered.

Zoning Code Relief-Section 330-9: Additional 'Carriage' (Guest) House

Designating a historic structure as a Landmark or Contributing Resource in the Town of Southampton now enables some owners to have a legal guest ("carriage") house on the property without having to acquire a development right. Owners may choose to either convert their existing historic resource into to a carriage (guest) house and build a new main house on the property, or keep the historic structure as the principle residence and build a new carriage (guest) house on the property. Lot size and building size restrictions apply.

Zoning Code Relief-Section 330-167 (J)

The Zoning Board of Appeals may grant special use permits "*compatible with an intent to preserve, protect, restore or promote the historic or cultural integrity of a district, site, building, structure or object*" and a variety of relief opportunities from Zoning requirements of Chapter 330 to owners of designated local landmarks. For example, an owner who may not qualify for the carriage house incentive due to lot size requirement, may be eligible for a variance, and an owner of a designated contributing historic resource located within a commercial zone may be eligible for a use variance.