

New Albany Historic Preservation Commission

The distinctive buildings found throughout New Albany's historic districts are not only symbols of our proud past, but also contribute to our community's vitality today – as homes, businesses, meeting places, cultural centers and more. Owning such a property is both a privilege and a responsibility.

Thankfully, New Albany's historic buildings are now valued for their beauty, character, usefulness and potential to serve future generations. However, this was not always the case. It was the loss of historic properties like the old Post Office and the Floyd County Courthouse during the Urban Renewal era that renewed local interest in historic preservation.

How was the Preservation Commission established?

In 1998, the New Albany City Council passed the 'Historic Preservation Ordinance for the City of New Albany,' (Section 151 of the Code of Ordinances), creating New Albany's Historic Preservation Commission. The Historic Preservation Commission advises the City Council and property owners on issues related to the city's historic resources, primarily those within New Albany's five historic districts. Within those historic districts, the Commission also reviews proposed exterior alterations, new construction and demolition, to ensure work is consistent with the *Historic District Design Guidelines*.

Where are New Albany's Historic Districts?

The five locally-designated historic districts under the jurisdiction of the Historic Preservation Commission are: Mansion Row, Downtown, Cedar Bough Place, East Spring Street, and the Long-Graf House. Maps showing the boundaries for each of these historic districts can be found on the Commission's website, www.newalbanypreservation.com.



Mansion Row – including East Main Street and a portion of East Market Street - was New Albany's first historic district, designated in 1999.

Why Historic Districts?

Historic districts protect our areas of special historic significance, which include prime architectural styles from the 19th and early 20th centuries, creating awareness and bringing focus to New Albany's properties and neighborhoods that are most deserving of preservation. It allows common building and rehabilitation standards to be applied, promotes pride in the districts, protects property values, and stimulates economic vitality. Across the country, studies have shown that property values increase and are maintained when design standards and historic district protections are implemented.

How does the Historic Preservation Commission operate?

The Commission is a seven-member volunteer body. Three at-large members are appointed by the Mayor, while the other members represent each of the designated historic districts. All members have a professional or personal interest or expertise in historic preservation.

As guardians of New Albany's historic character, the Commission works with property owners planning new construction, demolition or exterior renovation projects, to make sure the project conforms to New Albany's *Historic District Design Guidelines*.

The Preservation Commission hears and reviews proposed plans from property owners, contractors and architects on both commercial and residential projects, ranging from signage and façade issues to site work such as fencing or a new garage. The Preservation Commission has the authority to approve or reject any proposal – including demolition - based on its consistency with the Design Guidelines. Approval through the issuance of a **Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)** is required before a building permit can be obtained. The Commission also monitors projects for compliance once work is underway.



When does the Preservation Commission meet?

The Preservation Commission meets on the third Wednesday of every month at 7 PM, in the third floor Assembly Room at the City-County Building (date, time and location subject to change). To confirm a meeting, call or email Commission Administrator Laura Renwick at 812/284-4534 or south@indianalandmarks.org. The public is welcome to attend.

How does the application process work?

Any project involving new construction, demolition, or exterior alterations to a structure within a designated historic district must be reviewed and approved in advance by the Historic Preservation Commission.

Approval is granted in the form of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA), which is required before a building permit can be issued. COA application forms may be obtained by contacting the Commission Administrator, or downloaded from the Commission's website, www.newalbanypreservation.com. Applications must be submitted at least a week in advance to be included on the agenda for a particular meeting, and early submission is encouraged.

Supporting materials that provide more detail on the work that is being planned should be included with your Certificate of Appropriateness application. These can include:

- ♦ A map, survey or site plan indicating the exact location of the proposed work.
- ♦ Photographs showing existing conditions.
- ♦ Elevation drawings showing proposed work, if available.
- ♦ Samples of specific materials and/or colors to be used.
- ♦ If the project includes signage, a scale drawing of the proposed sign showing dimensions, materials, lettering, colors, any illumination, and location.

What's in the Design Guidelines, and why are they important?

Methods for dealing with older buildings often differ from those applicable to contemporary ones.

Choosing the wrong treatment can cause serious, irreversible damage to irreplaceable historic properties and neighborhoods.

Based on the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, New Albany's *Historic District Design Guidelines* outline specific procedures for compliance in many categories, encompassing virtually every aspect of improvement

or renovation. They describe preferred, time-tested methods for dealing with architectural features and common maintenance-related issues. The document serves a dual purpose, providing guidance both to property owners contemplating work, and to the Preservation Commission as it reviews applications.

The guidelines include sections on:

- ♦ Accessory structures ♦ Additions ♦ Awnings and canopies ♦ Cornices and friezes ♦ Doors
- ♦ Foundations ♦ Masonry ♦ Metals ♦ New construction ♦ Paint ♦ Porches, stoops and balconies
- ♦ Roofs ♦ Siding and trim ♦ Signs ♦ Sites
- ♦ Storefronts ♦ Streetscapes ♦ Windows
- ♦ Demolition and relocation

In addition, the guidelines contain a wealth of information about New Albany's history, the many architectural styles found throughout the city, and the development of the historic districts. The guidelines also contain a map of each of the designated historic districts.

All of the sections of the ***Historic District Design Guidelines*** are available on the Commission's website, www.newalbanypreservation.com. The website also includes a virtual tour of each of the designated historic districts, as well as useful information on a variety of topics, including energy efficiency, lead paint safety, and researching the history of your home.

What happens at a Commission meeting?

Applicants should plan to attend the Preservation Commission meeting at which their project will be reviewed. Staff comments on the application will be read aloud, and the applicant will be given the opportunity to describe and discuss the proposed work and answer any questions the Commission members may have. The public will also have the opportunity to speak on each project prior to a vote.

All applications are reviewed based on their consistency with the ***Historic District Design Guidelines***. When planning a project, property owners are strongly encouraged to review the design guidelines relevant to their request early in the planning process. The Design Guidelines are available on the Commission's website – www.newalbanypreservation.com – or copies can be obtained by contacting the Commission Administrator.

The Commission strives to review and act on each application in a timely fashion. In the event that a request does not meet the guidelines, the Commission and its staff will work with the applicant until a satisfactory design can be developed.

Questions about planned projects are welcome at any time, and can be directed to Commission Administrator Laura Renwick at 812/284-4534 or south@indianalandmarks.org.

Remodeling without design guidelines all too often results in remuddle-ing! The cumulative effect of many changes - most notably the replacement of the storefront display windows and front door with an inappropriate window - has been the loss of much of this building's historic character.

The New Albany Historic Preservation Commission helps ensure our city's beautiful and historic neighborhoods are treated with the respect they deserve, and preserved for future generations to enjoy.

