

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is historic preservation?

A: Broadly, historic preservation is a conversation about the past for the purpose of planning for the future. It typically involves identification of sites, buildings, or objects and protection of them for future generations. For the purposes of this Ordinance, it means identifying and regulating buildings, structures, sites or districts with cultural, social, architectural or historic value in order to communicate with future generations those places (including individual buildings or sites and whole neighborhoods) which have been important or significant to the broader story of the Town of Newcastle and its inhabitants.

Q: How did we get here? Why is this Ordinance happening now?

A: As you may know, the Town adopted a new Core Zoning Code on November 3, 2020 (which went into effect on January 1, 2021). Throughout the development of the Core Zoning Code, historic preservation was discussed but consensus was not reached on how to tackle the matter. Ultimately, it was decided that the SD-Historic zoning district boundaries captured what the community considered to be historic neighborhoods (at the time), and interim Demolition Delay standards were added (see [Article 7, Section 22: Demolition of Historic Assets in the Core Zoning Code](#)). It was agreed that a future Committee would be appointed to hold public meetings and discuss historic preservation in greater detail at a later date. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this initiative was put off until earlier this year when the Selectboard (at the recommendation of the Planning Board) appointed the five member Ad-Hoc Historic Preservation Committee for the purposes of holding public meetings, drafting an Ordinance, and returning to both the Planning Board and Selectboard with an Ordinance that could be adopted.

Q: What is considered historic [under this Ordinance]?

A: If approved, this Ordinance would apply to all properties within the SD-Historic zoning district (see the [Town's Official Zoning Map](#) for more information), regardless of the year buildings on the properties were built.

The draft Ordinance also provides standards for adding or expanding the SD-Historic district or establishing a Local Landmark. Properties eligible for designation are those associated with the history of Newcastle, the State of

Maine, or the country; those associated with important historic people or ideas; examples of architecture valuable for the study of a certain time period or for the history of development in Newcastle; those which contribute to the overall character of the historic district; and places listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Q: Will my property be impacted by the proposed Historic Preservation Ordinance?

A: As noted above, the Ordinance (if adopted) would apply to those buildings within the SD-Historic zoning district. You can use the Town's interactive zoning map to search for your address and see which zone you're located in:

<https://www.axisgis.com/NewcastleME/>

Q: My house isn't historic! Why am I included in the SD-Historic zoning district?

A: Properties which contribute to the overall character and visual continuity of the district were included within the boundaries of the SD-Historic district.

Q: Would this Ordinance require me to paint my house a certain color?

A: The Ordinance does not regulate paint color, except in instances where the painting of brick, stone or masonry is proposed (due to the difficulty of removing paint from such materials without damaging the historic building materials). Generally, painting of brick, stone or masonry would not be allowed. Painting of wood or other kinds of siding would be allowed under this Ordinance (though not required until such time as *you* were proposing to paint the building).

Q: Would this Ordinance prevent me from building a garage?

A: No, but you would need to demonstrate that your garage complies with the standards as outlined in Article 2, Section 3 (and Section 1, if an attached garage is proposed).

Q: Would this Ordinance prevent me from adding an addition?

A: No, but you would need to demonstrate that your addition complies with the standards as outlined in Article 2, Sections 1 and 3 of the draft Ordinance.

Q: Would this Ordinance prevent me from adding solar panels?

A: No, but they generally would not be able to be seen from the public realm (from sidewalks, adjacent public spaces, or from the water) or you would be encouraged to seek alternative places to put the panels (such as on the roof of an accessory building or barn, as ground-mounted panels in the rear yard, or to mostly obscure them from view by hiding them behind existing cupolas or other architectural features). If none of the above is technologically or economically feasible, you may be allowed to place them on the roof facing the public realm with Review Board approval.

Q: Would this Ordinance prevent me from demolishing my house?

A: Not necessarily, but you would need to prove one of the following: that the structure is not of historic significance based on findings from an architectural historian or the Maine Historic Preservation Commission; that the structure represents an immediate hazard because of severe structural deficiencies; or, demonstrate that no prudent or feasible alternative exists (in which case, relocation of the building would be encouraged rather than demolition).

Q: Will this Ordinance force me to make changes to my property?

A: The Ordinance as written does not require you to make any changes that you were not otherwise planning. The building would be considered a “non-conforming” structure. When you propose a change to the building, then the provisions of this Ordinance would come into effect and you would need to comply with the relevant standards of review, specific to your project or proposal. For example, if you are proposing to add an addition, you would only be subject to the standards for additions - your existing windows could not be considered by the Review Board unless part of your proposal.

Q: Will this Ordinance prevent me from making changes to my property in the future?

A: No, but you would need to demonstrate that you have met the applicable standards of review for whatever change you’re proposing.

Q: Does this Ordinance have authority over the interior of my home?

A: No!

Q: My house is considered historic, but isn't in the SD-Historic zoning district. How do I protect it for future generations?

A: Not all historic properties were added to the SD-Historic district, especially if they are surrounded by vacant land or are not located near any other historic buildings. This Ordinance as drafted does give property owners the authority to subject their property to the provisions of the Ordinance by going through the process to designate their building as a Local Landmark. Local Landmarks would allow buildings to be subject of this Ordinance, without impacting the underlying zoning district of the overall property.

Q: Can a new building be built in the SD-Historic zoning district?

A: Yes, as long as it demonstrates compliance with Article 2, Section 3: Standards for New Construction and Additions (as well as the standards of any other Code or regulation, including the Core Zoning Code).