

Borough of Pennington

Historic Preservation Master Plan Element

Prepared by Mayor's Task Force for the
Historic Preservation Master Plan Element

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION MASTER PLAN ELEMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Historic Preservation Element of the Pennington Borough Master Plan is prepared pursuant to the Municipal Land Use Law (NJSA 40:55D-1et. Seq). This enables the Planning Board to adopt a Historic Preservation Plan Element as part of the municipal master plan. According to NJSA 40:55D-28b (10), the purpose of the element shall be to: “(a) indicate the location and significance of historic sites and historic districts; (b) identify the standards used to assess worthiness for historic site or district identification; and (c) analyze the impact of each component and element of the master plan on the preservation of historic sites and districts”. Historic sites may include buildings, structures, sites and objects. In Pennington Borough, districts may include residential, commercial, industrial or other historically significant areas.

The Borough of Pennington currently has one property, the Delaware and Bound Brook Railroad Station at 2 Railroad Place, listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places. There are no listed historic districts. Also, there is no historic commission, preservation ordinance or method for local designation in place at this time. Also, historic structures have no specific protection from demolition. However, the borough includes a rich inventory of 18th, 19th and early 20th century architecture which remains largely intact and contributes to the unique character of the Borough.

In particular, a recommended historic district has been identified which includes the 19th century architecture along Main Street and Delaware Avenue. This district encompasses the vital “crossroads” of Pennington’s early history, and identifies the historic core of the Borough, showcasing its history and most significant architecture.

While State and/or national designation acknowledges the historic or cultural significance of a property or district, inclusion on the State or National registers has little effect on actions that are privately funded by the property owner. Owners can sell, alter or remove historic structures. It is important to note that a local historic preservation ordinance can provide a level of protection for historic structures by providing a framework for review of certain types of exterior alterations, demolitions, relocations and development applications.

The important historic resources which contribute to Pennington’s unique character are under constant attack. Local designation, coupled with a local historic preservation ordinance can afford a level of protection for these resources, thereby protecting not only individual structures, but the character, scale and overall visual attractiveness inherent in the Borough. Furthermore, historic designation can enhance the value of properties.

An appropriate balance between protection of irreplaceable historic fabric and personal liberty is generally understood and appreciated. The recommendations of this Master Plan Element intend to augment existing zoning requirements with a structure to provide sensible, respectful and historically informed information and regulation for the protection of Pennington’s historic heritage.

This Historic Master Plan Element recommends a step-by-step process which encourages public input and discussion, with Public Hearings prior to each step in order to encourage consensus. Finally, the following recommendations are proposed and further described in this Master Plan Element:

- Enactment of a Historic Preservation Ordinance to include the formation of a Historic Preservation Commission
- Designation of a “Crossroads Historic District”

2. POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of the Historic Preservation Plan Element is to recognize and protect the significant architectural, cultural and social heritage of Pennington Borough as follows:

- Safeguard Pennington’s historic and varied architectural heritage by preserving building sites, structures and objects which reflect its history.
- Identify, designate and provide appropriate advice regarding historic landmarks and historic districts in order to preserve their historic character.
- Discourage demolition of historic resources.
- Encourage continued use of historic sites and districts and to facilitate their appropriate use or reuse.
- Foster civic pride in the history and architecture of Pennington.
- Promote appreciation of Pennington’s architecture and history for the education, pleasure and welfare of its inhabitants.
- Encourage appropriate improvement, beautification and private reinvestment in historic sites and districts.
- Manage change of historic sites and districts by encouraging appropriate alteration and/or new construction.
- Promote and maintain property values of historic sites and districts.
- Recommend enactment of a Historic Preservation Ordinance and formation of a Historic Commission.
- Recommend designation of a “Pennington Crossroads Historic District”.
- Consider other future designations of building sites, structures and objects.
- Consider State and National designation for significant building sites, structures and objects.

3. BRIEF HISTORY OF PENNINGTON

Pennington first appears in the historical record in 1725-1726, as a place called Pennytown. At the annual Hopewell Township meeting of that year, the citizens agreed to hold future town meetings at the “new meeting House by John Smith’s Alias pennytown” Thus Pennington began as the seat of government for Hopewell Township. Due to its position on a north-south road connecting the market called Trent’s town with the developing northern portion of West Jersey, it enjoyed the advantages of traffic on the road. John Smith owned a tract of land in the southeast corner of the intersection of the two forest trails that are now Main Street and Delaware Avenue, and Jonathan Furman owned the facing tract in the southwest corner. It was on these two tracts that the town began. Smith may have owned a store or tavern prior to the construction of the Meeting House (Presbyterian Church), hence the earlier place name “John Smith’s”.

Enoch Armitage arrived from England in 1719. He provided the impetus for the church and hence the town by becoming ruling elder of the area Presbyterians, and providing the timber and iron work for the 1726 building at Pennytown. By 1737, Furman operated the Red Lyon tavern opposite the present Presbyterian cemetery, and by the 1750’s, a half dozen houses were added, bringing in a blacksmith and a wheelwright. By 1740, a new name was sought for the town. Smithfield and Queenstown were tried, but Pennington became the final form in the 1750’s.

By the time of the Revolution, there was a third tavern, at the site of the present Bank, and just a few houses more. On December 10 of 1776, a large detachment of the British army came through Pennington at night, and returned the next day to quarter in the taverns and on neighborhood farms. A few days later a contingent of 500 cavalry arrived, no doubt the source of the tradition that the cavalry men exercised their horses over the cemetery wall. The second most famous American general, Charles Lee, was brought to Pennington on the 13th after his capture at Basking Ridge.

The town we see today, along Main Street north of Curlis Avenue, and along the first blocks of East and West Delaware Avenue, is the result of a rapid 19th century expansion. It began with the construction of a new public school at 135 South Main about 1815. Four nearby houses were added in the 1820’s along south Main Street, bringing the Moore farmhouse and blacksmith shop within the village. A fourth tavern was added on the west side of North Main. The Methodists built a church on South Main in 1826, and other new lots were laid out on South Main in the 1830’s. The Female Seminary and the Pennington Male Methodist Seminary were built in 1836 and 1839, and this triggered a faster expansion of the town. Drygoods and grocery vendors, shoemakers and tailors came to town to serve the student population. Isaac Bergen began his carriage making business on West Delaware.

Meanwhile the traffic on the road increased, and blacksmiths and wheelwrights were added. Houses were added outward along all four directions from the crossroads intersection in the 1830’s, 40’s, and 50’s. The Methodists erected a new church closer to the center of town, in 1846. Just before 1850, frontage on Joshua Bunn’s farm on both sides of Main Street south of the Female Seminary, was acquired by black families. The African Methodist church was erected in 1850. By 1850 Pennington’s population was about 500.

Writing in 1876, Rev. George Hale, Presbyterian minister in Pennington from 1838 to 1863 said,

“During those twenty-five years there has been a perceptible advancement . . . In this village, where there are now standing about one hundred dwellings, at least sixty (more than half) have been put up within this time, and many of the others have been improved and enlarged.”

In 1875 the railroad came through town, opening up another set of business possibilities, and allowing residents to commute for work and travel for recreation. A lumber yard, coal yard, and stockyards for importing dairy cows, and farm and carriage horses were built in the north end of town, and T. P. and C. A. Reed built the grain silo on North Main, near the new railroad Station.

In 1890, under this new business climate, the town incorporated to separate its interests from the Township. Immediately the Pennington Fire Company was formed, and the new equipment was soon housed in the Odd Fellows’ new 3 story brick building. Sidewalks and Street lights were introduced. At this moment of improvements, Col. John A. Kunkle came to town. He purchased the Ketchum farm that lay on the north side of East Delaware Avenue. He then built Stony Brook Lodge, and developed Eglantine Avenue. In 1897, telephones were introduced into Pennington, and a newspaper was inaugurated the following year. Electricity was also brought to Pennington at this time.

In 1898, the first Catholic church was built in Pennington, and the new brick school, now Academy Court, was built. As the new century came in, The First National Bank was founded at the northeast corner of Main and Delaware in the Irving house, the old colonial tavern where the town had been incorporated ten years earlier. In another two years, trolley service was extended to Pennington and also in 1902, the African Baptist congregation acquired the use of the relocated 1850’s public school, which still stands at Academy Street and Crawley Avenue.

In 1910, William Howe, Sr. arrived in Pennington, and continued the role of developer begun by Col. Kunkle. He first acquired a small farm at the site of the Pennington Professional Center, and began his famous nursery business there. Selling that small farm, he purchased the Sked farm opposite the Tollgate House, and expanded his nursery operation there. He soon sold that property and bought the land adjacent on the north, next creating Burd Street and building a new house, at the corner of Laning Avenue. Over the next several decades, Howe laid out streets and lined them with Norway maples. In 1919, he purchased the Curlis farm, lying from the Tollgate house to the north side of Curlis Avenue and extending far to the east. A new network of streets was added, and houses were built through the 1960’s. His nursery operations were interwoven with the house lots. He donated the location for the Tollgate school, and his office at the northwest corner of South Main and Curlis Avenue still serves a commercial purpose.

After the arrival of the railroad and the trolley, the invention of the automobile finished the work of turning Pennington into a quiet suburban town, where new families and long term residents enjoy their lives in a beautiful historic setting. Walking or driving the course of Main Street and Delaware Avenue, we still see much of the town that Reverend Hale knew in 1876. Few towns are as fortunate in the preservation of their history as Pennington. History on display is the source of property value and our town’s unique identity. Let it always be so.

4. HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

The authority to establish a historic preservation ordinance and commission is set forth in the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL). The historic preservation ordinance is an extension of the municipality's zoning laws. It is noteworthy that Historic Preservation Commissions are the only bodies among those prescribed by the MLUL for which the membership must include persons technically knowledgeable in the areas of concern, namely building design, construction and architectural history.

This Plan Element recommends enactment of a Historic Preservation Ordinance which meets the requirements for Certified Local Government (CLG) status, thus enabling the Borough to pursue and receive grants for additional historic studies and preservation efforts. The Certified Local Government program is administered by the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office and currently distributes approximately \$60,000 per year to communities that have CLG status.

To be eligible for the Certified Local Government program, the ordinance must meet the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and include the following:

- a. A statement of purpose.
- b. Definitions.
- c. Establishment of a historic preservation review commission (Commission) and a grant of powers to it.
- d. Procedures for the designation of a landmark and a historic district, including, but not limited to, notice publication and a public hearing.
- e. Criteria for the designation of a landmark and a historic district.
- f. Procedures for the review of applications for alterations, demolitions, or new construction affecting designated landmarks or historic districts.
- g. Standards and criteria for review of alterations, demolitions, or new construction affecting designated landmarks or historic districts.
- h. Definitions of an emergency review and procedures for the adjudication of emergency review applications on an accelerated basis.
- i. Procedures for the enforcement of the provisions of the ordinance, including, but not limited to, the institution of any appropriate action or proceedings to prevent the unlawful alteration, demolition or new construction effecting a designated landmark or historic district.
- j. Provisions for the Commission to make binding decisions or to recommend denial or approval to a body which has the final decision-making authority.

The Historic Preservation Ordinance establishes the process for review and approval of proposed work to historic sites and within historic districts. In compliance with CLG guidelines, the Historic Commission will review applications for proposed work and issue a Certificate of Appropriateness. Depending on the specifics of the ordinance, Historic Commission decisions can be appealed, generally to the planning Board.

Some ordinances are written with only weak advisory powers, wherein the Commission only makes recommendations, and does not issue a Certificate of Appropriateness. This type of

ordinance is not recommended because it does little to protect historic resources and does not comply with Certified Local Government (CLG) guidelines.

To implement this element of the Master Plan, an ordinance will have to be adopted. Before the ordinance is adopted, there shall be extensive discussion with the entire Pennington Borough community to determine if the ordinance shall provide for advisory or regulatory jurisdiction.

This Element recommends an Ordinance which only addresses changes proposed by Owners of designated properties and within districts. It does not recommend mandated work related to maintenance of existing properties when other improvements are not proposed.

5. HISTORIC COMMISSION

The Historic Preservation Ordinance establishes a Historic Preservation Commission. Members of the Commission should include a variety of backgrounds ranging from professionals in the preservation field to citizens with an interest in history and their community.

The Municipal Land Use law identifies the following specific requirements for a Historic Preservation Commission:

- a. The governing body may by ordinance provide for a historic preservation commission.
- b. Every historic preservation commission shall include, in designating the category of appointment, at least one member of each of the following classes:

Class A - a person who is knowledgeable in building design and construction or architectural history and who may reside outside the municipality; and

Class B - a person who is knowledgeable or with a demonstrated interest in local history and who may reside outside. A historic preservation commission shall consist of five or seven regular members and may have not more than two alternate members. Of the regular members a total of at least one less than a majority shall be of Classes A and B. Those regular members who are not designated as Class A or B shall be designated as

Class C - Class C members shall be citizens of the municipality who shall hold no other municipal office, position or employment except for membership on the planning board or board of adjustment.

- c. Alternate members shall meet the qualifications of Class C members. The mayor or, if so specified by ordinance, the chairman of the planning board shall appoint all members of the commission and shall designate at the time of appointment the regular members by class and the alternate members as "Alternate No. 1" and "Alternate No. 2." The terms of the members first appointed under this act shall be so determined that to the greatest practicable extent, the expiration of the terms shall be distributed, in the case of regular members, evenly over the first four years after their appointment, and in the case of alternate members, evenly over the first two years after their appointment; provided that the initial term of no regular member shall exceed four years and that the initial term of

no alternate member shall exceed two years. Thereafter, the term of a regular member shall be four years, and the term of an alternate member shall be two years. A vacancy occurring otherwise than by expiration of term shall be filled for the unexpired term only. Notwithstanding any other provision herein, the term of any member common to the historic preservation commission and the Planning Board shall be for the term of membership on the Planning Board; and the term of any member common to the historic preservation commission and the Board of Adjustment shall be for the term of membership on the Board of Adjustment. The historic preservation commission shall elect a chairman and vice-chairman from its members and select a secretary, who may or may not be a member of the historic preservation commission or a municipal employee. Alternate members may participate in discussions of the proceedings but may not vote except in the absence or disqualification of a regular member. A vote shall not be delayed in order that a regular member may vote instead of an alternate member. In the event that a choice must be made as to which alternate member is to vote, Alternate No. 1 shall vote.

- d. No member of any historic preservation commission shall be permitted to act on any matter in which he has, either directly or indirectly, any personal or financial interest. e. A member of a historic preservation body may, after public hearing if he requests it, be removed by the governing body for cause.

The Historic Preservation Commission shall have the responsibility to:

- a. Carry out the provisions of the Historic Preservation ordinance;
- b. Prepare a survey of historic sites of the municipality pursuant to criteria identified in the survey report;
- c. Make recommendations to the Planning Board on the Historic Preservation Plan Element of the Master Plan and on the implications for preservation of historic sites of any other master plan elements;
- d. Advise the Planning Board on the inclusion of historic sites in the recommended capital improvement program;
- e. Advise the planning board on applications for development pursuant to section 24 of this amendatory and supplementary act;
- f. Provide written reports pursuant to Section 25 of this amendatory and supplementary act on the application of the zoning ordinance provisions concerning preservation.
- g. Review applications and issue Certificates of Appropriateness, where warranted, for designated sites and districts in accordance with the historic preservation ordinance.
- h. Carry out such other advisory, educational and informational functions as will promote historic preservation in the municipality. Such functions could include establishment or procurement of funding for Historic preservation work.
- i. Recommend listing of individual sites or districts.

An important role of the Historic Commission is to provide advice and useful information to property owners preparing to make changes. In this way, a consistent source of advice would be available to Owners during the design process, and prior to completion of documents submitted to the Building Department. Where variances are required, the Historic Commission would work with Owners prior to submitting a variance application, thereby addressing certain issues of architectural appropriateness in advance. It should be noted, however, that the purview of the

Historic Commission would be limited, and would not overlap the Planning Board's interpretation of the Zoning Ordinance.

6. HISTORIC DISTRICT

The final recommendation of this Historic Preservation Master Plan Element is the establishment of a "Pennington Crossroads Historic District", described in the appendix of this document. This district includes the most significant and character-defining area of the Borough, focusing on its early pre-industrial history through the early 20th century. As noted below, properties within the district would be identified as "key", "contributing", or "non-contributing". The district would be created by an ordinance, and would include required public comment and input through the public hearing process. Listing of individual historic sites or other additional districts is not recommended at this time as part of this Master Plan Element, but such action by the Historic Commission would not be precluded at any time in the future.

7. CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

Clear criteria are necessary for consistent identification of historic sites or districts which merit local historic designation. Criteria established by the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Historic Preservation are generally regarded as the standard criteria for historic designation. The U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service identifies the following criteria for listing on the National Register:

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and:

- a. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- b. That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or
- c. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- d. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Specific criteria related to properties located within the proposed Pennington Crossroads Historic District have been established as follows:

- a. Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the history of Pennington.
- b. Association with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- c. Embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of type, period, or method of architecture or engineering.
- d. Representative of the work of an important builder, designer, artist or architect; or
- e. Unique location of singular physical characteristics that make a site an established visual feature.

- f. Significant for containing elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation.

Although all properties within a Historic district are important to the sense of place, it is understood that some resources are more significant than others. Resources in the proposed Pennington Crossroads Historic district will be classified into the following three categories:

- Key: Resources that would individually qualify for Historic Landmark status.
- Contributing: Resources that are integral components because they date from the same time period or are architecturally significant.
- Non-contributing: Resources that are not historically or architecturally significant.

8. INTERFACE WITH OTHER MASTER PLAN ELEMENTS

The Historic Preservation Element strives to integrate with other elements of the Master Plan. Historic districts, buildings, structures and archaeological sites are intimately and irrevocable linked with past, present and future land use, housing, circulation, community facilities and conservation in municipal planning and history. The Historic Preservation Element seeks to find a balance between, on the one hand, the preservation, maintenance and interpretation of the Borough's critical historic resources and on the other hand, the community's need for ongoing changes in land use.

Land Use Element

Historic landmarks and districts link with land use planning in a variety of way. The land use plan lays out goals and policies that consider alternative residential, commercial, recreational, open space, and other forms of development within and around historic landmarks and districts. Without such goals and policies, subdivision and zoning regulations over time tend to alter the historic pattern of development to a more regularized and uniform model than existed in the past.

The 1998 Master Plan Re-examination states "The visual quality and historic character of the Borough should be protected and enhanced. Goals set forth in the Master Plan include 1) New residential development should be consistent in scale and character to existing development and 2) Adopt historic district standards and boundaries. (Page 5) In its description of the Town Center use category, "within the center (Main/Delaware) area of the Borough." The Master Plan promotes a use mix that "is intended to encourage a vibrant and healthy town center, respectful of the scale and historic/residential character of its surroundings." (Page 9) Within its Town Center/Office Residential land use category; "a transition between the more intensive town center uses and nearby residential areas," The Master Plan states, "It is intended that use controls for this category be strengthened by restricting the total allowable office floor area in any structure, requiring that each structure contain some residential use, and that the exterior residential character of all structures be retained." (Page 9/10)

The 2005 Re-examination recognizes that most of Pennington is built up with few vacant or underutilized lands available for development. (Page 3) A concern stated in the re-examination is "that recent applications for expansions to existing dwellings in the Borough indicate a trend towards the desire for homes larger than those historically built in the Borough. Other areas of the State have experienced a similar trend, which has resulted in the tearing down of existing, older

and smaller dwellings and replacing them with larger and taller ones. Indeed, where the size of a lot might preclude the construction of the larger and taller homes, adjacent lots are being consolidated to allow for the desired dwelling, even if two (2) older dwellings must be razed. The increased size and height of dwellings to meet the demands of the current market could potentially negatively impact the prevailing character of the Borough's residential neighborhoods." (Page 8)

Indeed, Pennington has recently suffered the loss of smaller historic structures along South Main Street from demolition to accommodate construction of larger commercial and business entities that have not been designed to be respectful of the scale and historic/residential character of its surrounds, most notably the construction of the Post Office on the corner of South Main and West Delaware, the demolition of 12-14-16 South Main Street for the present much larger structure, and more recently, the re-zoning of 59 South Main Street from Town Center to Professional for lot consolidation for the purpose of its demolition to accommodate the construction of an additional office building on the Howe Commons site. Other zoning variances have been granted over the years that have eroded the character of the traditional scale of some neighborhoods; most notably the larger and taller recent new construction pattern currently occurring in the southern section of South Main Street, which is not to scale with the historic structures presently there.

The Pennington Historic Preservation Commission would act as a resource to the Borough's Planning Board in reviewing applications in the Proposed Historic District to ensure that land use proposals and zoning variances do not inalterably damage the streetscape harmony in which the Borough's present structures exist. The Pennington Historic Preservation Commission would promote the maintenance of the traditional scale of its neighborhoods and the land use categories within its boundaries, including the relationship of the bulk, mass, height, setback, and materials of individual historic properties. In addition, the Pennington Historic Preservation Commission will assist and advocate for property owners of historic properties if they wish to adaptively use their properties for new uses, especially if these new uses are an alternative to demolition.

Housing Plan

Historic housing stock is an important consideration in a housing plan. The Housing Plan Element of this Master Plan is consistent with the utilization of historic buildings that can be rehabilitated by adapting them for low and moderate income housing. Furthermore, limits on demolition of historic buildings will contribute positively to the protection of existing, modest dwellings which are particularly appropriate for low and moderate income housing.

In 1999, New Jersey implemented a new rehabilitation sub code, designed to relax code requirements for historic buildings in an effort to make rehabilitation a more affordable and realistic alternative to demolition and new construction. (www.state.nj.us/dca/cpdes/rehab). This program is now nationally recognized as a stimulus for historic preservation, especially in towns and villages. It has the potential in Pennington to strengthen the historic fabric of neighborhoods, the Town Center and the Town Center/Buffer areas and to slow unnecessary demolition of historic buildings. Where appropriate, property owners in the Borough of Pennington should be made aware of rehabilitation options under the new sub code.

The 2005 Master Plan Re-examination acknowledges that much of the Borough is already built out. Most future development will take place either by renovation of existing structures or by lot

consolidation; “where the size of a lot might preclude the construction of the larger and taller homes, adjacent lots are being consolidated to allow for the desired dwelling even if two (2) older dwellings must be razed.” (Page 8)

The 2008 Housing Plan Element and Fair Share Plan states “many of the homes and buildings in the Borough are historically significant and one hundred or more years in age, particularly those surrounding the central core at the crossroads of Main Street and Delaware Avenue.”

The Pennington Historic Preservation Commission would exist as an advocate for the Borough’s historically significant resources and their owners by promoting appreciation of Pennington’s architecture and history through education and advice. The Commission would be a resource for property owners of historic structures by offering historical property information and structure history and by facilitating research and providing design advice for property owners interested in renovation or expansion. The Pennington Historic Preservation Element is not in conflict with the town’s objective of meeting its housing obligation.

Circulation and Sidewalk Plan

The Circulation and Sidewalk Plan should include special consideration for historic structures, in both residential and commercial areas. The character of a community is maintained when the scale of historic roadways is maintained as they pass through historic districts. Road design standards are an area of public policy that can profoundly affect historic sites and districts. Historic roadways are visually distinguishable from those designed to modern standards. They have an organic quality dictated and shaped by topographic and geographic features of the landscape.

The 1998 Master Plan acknowledges “The Circulation Plan Element of the Master Plan is concerned with all roads serving the Borough and with all related aspects of circulation and transportation. Because of the relatively small size of the Borough, and its location in the region, the Borough is also concerned with area circulation conditions and proposals.

The 2005 Master Plan Re-examination references the Streetscape Committee’s report in the Circulation and Sidewalk plan. This report’s first stated goal is to “Retain the historic character of the community.” This Historic Preservation Element supports this goal and would be consistent with this report’s advocacy of preserving the historic resources in town.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

There is an emerging body of knowledge regarding the environmental benefits of preserving existing buildings. These benefits are based on several key premises:

- a. Environmentally-favorable characteristics in the design of older buildings are often overlooked when contemplating replacement construction; these include such attributes as natural ventilation, high ceilings, thick masonry walls that slow heat transfer, etc.
- b. The total energy cost of new construction and subsequent operations may exceed that of renovating older buildings for energy efficiency, especially when the energy associated with manufacturing, transportation and construction itself are properly accounted for.

- c. Demolition of buildings contributes a significant portion of all solid waste generated in the United States, perhaps as much as one third, and thus potentially creates an unnecessary burden on landfills.
- d. Existing buildings are compatible with changes incorporating sustainable benefits and new technologies. New elements (solar panels for instance) can be appropriately incorporated in historic buildings, where their installation does not adversely affect the historic fabric and where the work is ultimately reversible.

The Borough of Pennington has demonstrated a broad and continuing commitment to energy conservation and sustainability reflecting the sensibilities and sentiments of the community at large. Accordingly, it is consistent for the Borough to consider the potential sustainability benefits of the preservation of existing buildings, and to incorporate these benefits into official Borough policies. In general, the linkage between preservation and sustainability should be stressed and reinforced in Borough planning policies and their implementation.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

This Historic Preservation Master Plan Element lays out a sequence of recommendations leading from the adoption of this Historic Preservation Element, to adoption of a Historic Preservation Ordinance and formation of a Historic Preservation Commission and designation of a Pennington Crossroads Historic District. The recommendations are intentionally isolated, allowing for public input and consensus throughout the process.

The following actions are recommended:

- a. Introduce Historic Preservation Master Plan Element to Planning/Zoning Board for review and comment.
- b. Planning Board Public Hearing for Historic Preservation Master Plan Element. Amend or modify Master Plan Element based on review comments and consensus.
- c. Planning Board adopts Historic Preservation Master Plan Element.
- d. Mayor's Task Force / Committee to develop Historic Preservation Ordinance.
- e. Planning Board review of proposed Historic Preservation Ordinance.
- f. Borough Council Public Hearing for establishment of Historic Preservation Ordinance and Historic Commission. Amend or modify proposed ordinance based on review comments and consensus.
- g. Adopt Historic Preservation Ordinance, forming Historic Commission.
- h. Include "Pennington Crossroads Historic District" as part of Historic Preservation Ordinance, or adopt separately as "overlay" zone.

APPENDIX

A. Description of Proposed Historic District

The proposed historic district includes buildings facing Main Street and Delaware Avenue, and two religious buildings that are one lot away from those streets. There are between 120 and 130 historic buildings included, in a total of 160 buildings. The district begins a few lots north of Curlis Avenue on South Main Street, and extends just past Franklin Avenue. On Delaware Avenue it extends approximately from the railroad on the west to three lots past Eglantine Ave on the east. For a more specific description of the ends of the district on each of these streets, see the further written description below and the map of the proposed district.

The district provides a showcase of historic architectural styles from about 1790 to 1920. Early and late Federal style buildings (1790 to 1850) dominate the district, and emphasize that the town's visible history begins within that period. Intermixed are Greek Revival buildings, both high style and vernacular, some blended with federal design. Italianate versions of federal houses are well represented both modified and original. Second Empire, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, American Homestead, and the American Four Square are also found.

The district includes the AME Church, two Methodist Churches, and the Presbyterian Church. Additional churches are the Baptist Church on Academy Street, and the Catholic Chapel building on Eglantine Avenue, each being one lot away from the Main Street and Delaware Avenue frontage, but included to complete the recognition of the historic church structures in Pennington. The district includes four historic school buildings: The Pennington Academy c1815; Evergreen Hall c1836; The Pennington School's "Old Main" and additions c1838, 1853 and 1860; and the 1856 public school, now the Baptist Church. Three included houses have been used as parsonages. There are about 14 buildings that have served as business locations in the historic period. Each and every building has a story to tell.

Taken together, these buildings are the identity of Pennington, in the impression gained by visitors and residents alike. History is the memory of civilization, and the source of identity, community, and continuity. A person or a place with no memory or history has no identity. Pennington has the fabric of historic resources to compare with Cranbury, Lambertville, Hopewell, and Clinton. These resources support property values, and attract visitors, new residents and businesses. Preserving historic architecture; stabilizing the unique appearance of the town, and giving specific identity to buildings by their associations with people and events, all serve to ground the community and individuals with a sense of place, and concept of time.

Specific boundaries at the end of each street.

On the west side of South Main, the district ends with the house on the south side of the AME Church, 248 South Main.

On the east side of South Main, the district ends with the house adjacent to the professional building parking lot (former trolley bypass lane), 241 South Main.

On the west side of North Main, the district ends with the last house before the Pennington Station Condominiums, 212 North Main.

On the east side of North Main, the district ends with the house before Scudder Tractor, 209 North Main.

On the north side of East Delaware, the district ends with the Queen Anne house adjacent to the Catholic Church Manse on the east, 115 East Delaware.

On the south side of East Delaware, the district ends with the house east of the rear cemetery entrance, 106 East Delaware.

On the north side of West Delaware, the district ends with the two family house facing Delaware Avenue, across from the Pennington School, 41-43 West Delaware.

On the south side of West Delaware Avenue the district ends with the former Headmaster's House, east of the brick auditorium building adjacent to the railroad, 124 West Delaware.

Clarifications:

In most cases, buildings are on small lots, and the district will include the entire parcel. In the case of the Pennington School, the historic district line will be drawn behind Old Main, at a near distance mutually agreed upon. A similar look will be taken at the back of the site of The Pennington Professional Center, and the lots along both sides of North Main.

Within the historic district, there are buildings that are not historical, and these will be reviewed to different standards than historic buildings. The idea of preservation is to maintain and perpetuate true historical materials and design. Non-contributing existing buildings, and new buildings to be built within the district will be required to accommodate the massing and general texture of the district, but not to imitate or reproduce historic structures.

B. Sites currently listed on New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places

Delaware & Bound Brook Railroad Station
#2 Railroad Place

C. Other Potential Historic Sites and/or Districts

1. Delaware & Bound Brook Railroad Station
2 Railroad Place
2. AME Cemetery
South Main Street
3. "Tollgate" House
417 South Main Street
4. Sked Farmhouse – Rose Garden Inn
410 South Main Street
5. William Howe Sr. House
304 Burd Street
6. Clarkson / Woolsey & Cadwallader Lumber Yard Barn
Brookside Avenue at Green Street
7. Clarkson / Woolsey & Cadwallader Lumber Yard
Manager's House
20 Brookside Ave
8. Pennington Canning Company
Brookside Avenue
94 ½ North Main Street
9. Clarkson / Woolsey & Cadwallader Lumber Yard Office
16 West Franklin Ave
10. Daniel A. Clarkson House
230 West Delaware Avenue
11. Mercer & Somerset RR Depot and House.
240 and 238 West Delaware
12. Farmhouse
302 North Main Street
13. Freight Depot & Siding
Green Street

D. Preliminary Design Guidelines

Preliminary Design Guideline recommendations are included in this Master Plan Element in order to clarify the intent and limits of proposed guidelines, and to dispel myths related to the extent of proposed regulation. Ultimately, a more comprehensive set of guidelines should be established as part of a Historic Preservation Ordinance. Design Guidelines are based on the following assumptions:

- The Historic Preservation Commission will use the guidelines to base their decision on “Certificate of Appropriateness” applications.
- The guidelines are flexible, not absolute, and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, they must be applied consistently.
- The intent of Design Guidelines is to establish a reasonable model that can be applied to appropriately protect the character-defining features of a site or district, while allowing and encouraging appropriate new work and individual expression.
- Only proposed changes would be reviewed. Maintenance of existing property would not be mandated by the ordinance.
- Historic significance of individual properties would be considered. For instance, non-contributing buildings in a district will not be subject to the same criteria as key or contributing buildings.
- Design Guidelines DO NOT mandate paint colors.

Preliminary Design Guideline Recommendations:

Extent: Review would only be required for proposed new work or changes to existing buildings or properties. Maintenance of existing conditions would not be mandated by the ordinance. Review would be limited to the portion of work or property visible from a public street. Review would typically not apply to interior spaces, or rear yards not visible from the street.

Demolition: Limits on demolition of existing historic buildings is one of the primary goals of the ordinance. Accordingly, the ordinance may recommend Planning Board approval for demolition of any designated site or building in a district, as well as “cooling-off” periods and demonstration of good faith efforts to re-use or sell property.

Renovation / Rehabilitation: Use of original or historically appropriate materials and building elements should be encouraged. Where possible, understand historic condition of the building. Consider the historic significance of the individual structure, as well its context.

Additions / Alterations: Recognize that additions and alterations are natural changes to buildings which occur over time, and contribute significantly to the architectural variety in Pennington Borough today. Respect context of existing building, including building mass, scale of openings, textures and materials without endorsing “replica” historic styles.

New Construction within Historic Districts: New construction should respect the character and scale of the existing historic context, while not necessarily replicating historic styles. Visual compatibility factors including height, proportion, materials and scale should be considered within the context for new construction.