

Summary of the Hartford Preservation Ordinance

Purpose

The purpose of the ordinance is to protect the unique architectural nature of the city's historic neighborhoods so as to enhance the appeal and attractiveness of the city, promote rehabilitation and property maintenance, strengthen the city's economy, and foster neighborhood pride.

Basic concept of the ordinance

The ordinance requires the approval of the Historic Properties Commission before the issuance of a demolition or building permit for exterior work in a historic district that is visible from a public street.

Covered properties

The ordinance applies to buildings and neighborhoods which are listed on the National or State Registers of Historic Places.

Covered activities

The ordinance applies to demolition, new construction, and exterior alteration of covered properties within a historic district, but only if (a) the activity requires a building or demolition permit and (b) the alteration is visible from a public street. It also applies to demolition in areas in which a National Register application is pending.

Exceptions

The ordinance does not apply to emergency health and safety orders, to activities outside a historic district, to alterations to the interior of a building in a historic district, to alterations which do not require a city permit (e.g., painting), or to exterior alterations not visible from a public street.

Cost and hardship provisions

The ordinance requires the development of design guidelines to give guidance to property owners as to how to make cost-effective architecturally compatible improvements. It requires the Commission to promote flexibility in materials and design so as to maintain economic feasibility. It requires the Commission to consider economic hardship and sets standards for assessing such hardship. It also precludes the Commission from requiring modifications which will add more than 20% to the cost of a proposed alteration but requires the Commission to work with applicants to find architecturally appropriate solutions within those cost parameters.

City policy provisions

The ordinance establishes a city policy of giving priority to the preservation of the city's historic architecture and character and requires all city departments to consider historic and architectural significance and preservation when making decisions involving rehabilitation, demolition, and disposition.