



Water Tower & Mill. Riverhead, L. I.

## Landmarks Preservation in Riverhead:

### What, Why and How

#### Why have historic districts and landmarks?

Riverhead has a rich past. We are blessed to have many surviving buildings from all eras - ranging from the turn-of-the-century commercial buildings in the downtown core to the many 18th and 19th century houses scattered in rural and village settings throughout the town. Unfortunately, this heritage is disappearing rapidly. For instance, of the twenty historic structures identified along the Sound Avenue Scenic and Historic corridor at the time of the Bicentennial

celebration, seven are already gone. Intense development pressure in the last few years has made the situation even more urgent. Without special attention, our cultural heritage, our unique architecture and areas of historic value spanning the last three centuries could be lost forever.

In 2006, the Riverhead Town Board adopted a revised Landmarks Preservation ordinance first adopted in 1975 to “protect and enhance the landmarks and historic districts that represent distinctive elements of Riverhead’s historic, architectural and cultural heritage.” This ordinance, now Chapter 241 of the Riverhead Town Code, established the Landmarks Preservation Commission, and enabled the designation of landmark sites and structures as well as historic districts that encompass a number of landmark-quality structures. The Commission will “act as an advisory body to the Town Board, and in conjunction with the Architectural Review Board, when necessary, on site plans and applications for designated landmarks or structures within an historic district.”



Bridge over Peconic River-1907

## Benefits of landmark designation

### o Assures future preservation

A historic structure that is designated as a landmark or is part of a historic district cannot be significantly altered or demolished without review by the Commission. The designation of historic sites and districts enhances their visibility. Consequently, owners are more likely to take appropriate actions to preserve and restore their properties. Moreover, the community is more likely to appreciate the need for special consideration for historic structures.

### o Creates “special” places

Throughout Long Island and the rest of the country, the designation of historic districts and landmarks has created special places where people want to live, work and visit.

### o Encourages investment

Property owners are more likely to invest in restoration and improvements when they have some assurance that the owners of neighboring structures are likely to take similar appropriate steps.

### o Increases property values

Several studies demonstrate that the designation of landmarks and historic districts increases property values.

### **o Produces Federal tax benefits**

Federal tax credits of up to 20% are available for the costs of appropriately renovating private homes and up to 40% for income-producing properties, if they are also designated on the National Register of Historic Places or are contributing buildings in a National Register District.

### **o May result in local tax abatement**

Riverhead has adopted a provision of Section 444-a of New York State's Real Property Tax Law to offer a property tax abatement program that freezes any increase in assessments that otherwise could result from rehabilitation work on structures that are locally designated landmarks or in designated historic districts.

### **o Creates more jobs**

Studies show that the same amount spent on renovation of historical structures creates more jobs, especially local jobs, than does new construction. Renovation is generally a more labor-intensive process whereas in new construction more of the budget goes to the purchase of materials produced elsewhere.

### **o Makes restoration advice available**

The Commission can provide or obtain advice for property owners on how they can best restore or rehabilitate their historic structures.



### **What designation does not do in Riverhead**

#### **o Does not restrict the color you can paint your front door**

Approval by the Commission is only required for alterations that normally require a building permit.

#### **o Does not create economic hardships**

The code contains provisions for granting hardship provisions if the “strict application” of the code would result in “unnecessary” economic hardship.

### **o Does not dictate architectural styles**

Ideally, new buildings in a historic district will compliment the architectural style of the district. However, this does not limit new construction to mere replication of historic styles. Indeed, in the Downtown Riverhead Historic District the Commission encourages quality contemporary architecture as the best way to complement the many historic structures there.

#### **o Does not regulate ordinary maintenance and repair**

The code specifically excludes ordinary maintenance from its provisions.

#### **o Does not impact interior alterations**

The Commission only has jurisdiction over exterior features that are visible from a public way.



## What Landmarks have been designated in Riverhead?

- o National Register of Historic Places (11 sites)
- o Riverhead Town Landmarks (62 sites)
- o Sound Avenue Scenic and Historic Corridor

### o Riverhead Town Historic Districts

Downtown Riverhead Historic District (219 contributing resources)

Jamesport Hamlet Historic District (36 contributing resources)

South Jamesport Historic District (78 contributing resources)

Wading River Historic District (40 contributing resources)

o Riverhead Main Street National Register District (36 Riverhead Town Historic Districts)

## Other historic and scenic resources in Riverhead

o Neighborhoods of historic structures in Polish Town and along Main Road in in Jamesport, Laurel and Aquebogue.

o Hundreds of landmark-eligible homes, farm buildings and other structures scattered in rural areas throughout the town.



## How to designate a landmark or historic district

### o Nomination

Anyone can nominate a landmark or district for designation. Simply fill out the Landmark Nomination Form and submit it to the Commission. The Commission can also institute the process on its own

### o Designation

Commission will review all nominated buildings and districts to determine eligibility and make recommendations to the Town Board. The Town Board officially declares both individual landmarks and historic districts, after appropriate notifications and public hearings.

## What happens once a structure or district is designated

- o Building Department notifies Commission of permit requests

Owners of individual landmarks or structures within historic districts do not face any additional notification requirements. Rather, the Building Department maintains a map showing all designated landmarks and historic districts. Whenever a property owner requests site plan approval or a building or demolition permit for a designated structure or one in a historic district, the Building Department automatically notifies the Commission.

- o Commission has 45 days to approve, modify or disapprove application

- o Town Board may call a hearing to review Commission actions



## National Register Designation

o In addition to designating local landmarks and historic districts under provision of Riverhead Town Code, the Commission has also been active in listing individual resources and historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places under provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966. These designations are done in cooperation with the State Historic Preservation Office.

o In Riverhead, designation to the National Register either as an individual listing or as a contributing resource in a National Register district can bring Federal restoration tax credits of up to 20% for the costs of appropriately renovating private homes and up to 40% for income-producing properties such as farms, commercial structures or rental buildings.

o While designation to the National Register brings prestige and tax benefits, it does not bring any additional state or federal regulations of what a property owner may or may not do with their property.

## The Landmarks Preservation Commission

o The Landmarks Preservation Commission consists of up to seven members, appointed by the Town Board. If possible, the Commission is to include an architect, an architectural historian and a member of the bar. Members serve terms of three years.

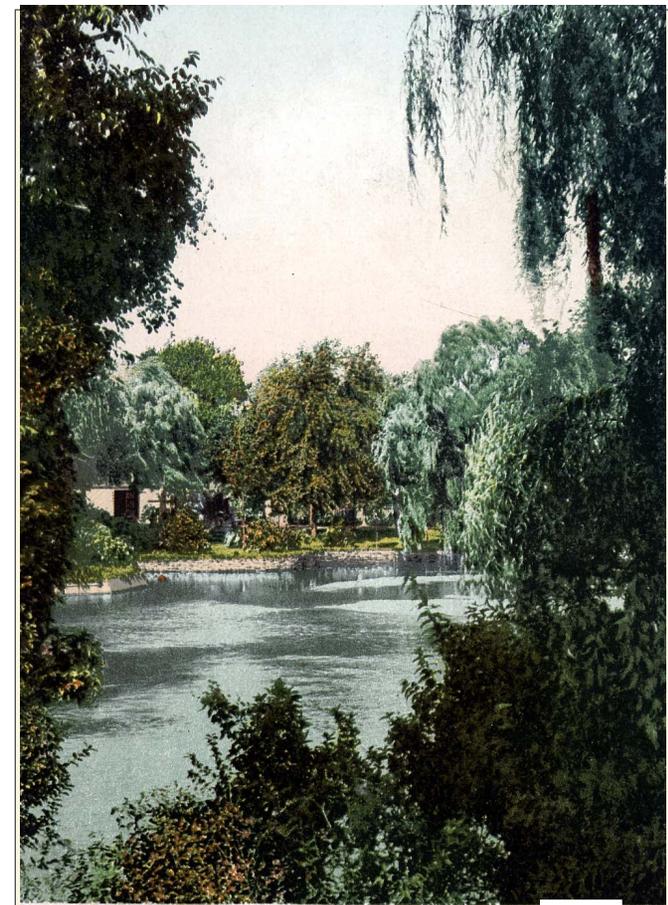
o The Commission meets monthly, normally on the fourth Monday at 4:00 in Town Hall. All meetings are open to the public.

o To contact the Commission, call Town Hall at 727-3200, contact any of the commission members at their numbers shown below or write to us at 200 Howell Avenue, Riverhead, New York 11901.

o For more information about the Commission -- including a list of members, maps of historic districts, lists of landmarks and historic districts and our Historic Preservation Design Guidelines -- go to our page on the Town of Riverhead website: **HYPERLINK**

**"<http://www.townofriverheadny.gov/>**

Look for us in the left-hand menu under Town Hall Committees.



View in Griffin Park, Riverhead, L. I., 1906

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PRESERVATION COMMISSION