

Borough of Pennington
Historic Preservation Commission
30 North Main Street
Pennington, NJ 08534

24 May, 2026

Mayor Jim Davy
Pennington Borough Council

2025 ANNUAL REPORT – Pennington Historic Preservation Commission

The intent of Pennington’s Preservation Ordinance has, from the start, been intended to discourage demolition of the oldest houses in town, mostly along Main and Delaware, which are the houses that most contribute to the in-town character of the borough. Intentionally, outbuildings, fences, landscaping, and things like solar panels are not subject to review, because we recognize that those things inevitably change over time and Pennington residents generally take very good care of their properties.

Unlike some other ordinances, however, Pennington’s ordinance is regulatory, not advisory, meaning that regulated changes within the historic district require a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Commission before a Building Permit can be issued. That requirement has discouraged potential demolition of at least 10 contributing buildings in the historic district since 2011,

1. 2025 Applications / Actions:

- 25-001: 221 S Main St. Minor Work application for railing replacement. Approved
- 25-002: 27-29 E. Delaware. Minor Work application for window replacement. Approved
- 25-003: 221 S Main St. Minor Work application for storm door replacement. Approved
- 25-004: 16 W. Delaware. Minor Work application for new siding & shutters. Approved
- 25-005: 12 N Main St. Major Application for replacement storefront. Approved w/ conditions
- 25-006: 221 S Main St. Minor Application for replacement windows. Denied 9/15/25 and 10/21/25. Approved 12/31/25
- 25-007: 141 S Main St. Major Application for renovation and addition. Approved
- 25-008: 47 S Main St. Minor Application for window replacement. Approved

The number of applications in 2025 is typical – largely because many actions do not require review. Most applications are for replacement of windows, doors and/or siding. Criteria has been established for replacement of these items and is included in the updated ordinance, and the Commission actively discusses the proposed work with the applicant in advance whenever possible. Work not subject to review includes sitework, outbuildings, roofing, mechanical equipment including solar panels, signage, lighting, material replacement in-kind, and exterior painting. Each year, the Commission also responds to several inquiries noting that historic Preservation review for proposed changes is not required.

2. Master Plan Element:

The Historic Preservation Master Plan Element has been adopted as part of the Pennington Master Plan update. The Historic Preservation Element emphasizes that a greater variety of housing and mixed uses, with carefully increased density, is compatible with the character of the Historic District.

3. Certified Local Government (CLG):

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The HPC has initiated contact with the NJ Historic Preservation Office (HPO) in advance of officially applying for Certified Local Government (CLG) status. CLG Status will enable eligibility for State-level grants and technical assistance. The last few years of improved record-keeping, webpage improvements, ordinance revisions and engagement of a Land Use Administrator have put us in a good position for acceptance. HPO has reviewed our ordinance and has suggested a few updates which would be required for CLG acceptance.

4. Ordinance Update:

The Historic Preservation Ordinance has been updated to clarify criteria for replacement, particularly for windows and siding. Other more minor items were updated for clarification, consistency or for MLUL compliance. Current comments from the NJ Historic Preservation Office for Certified Local Government have flagged a few other generally minor items requiring updates for MLUL compliance.

5. Properties at Risk or of Concern:

The following structures are not within the boundaries of the existing Historic District, but are being considered by the Commission for either individual local listing or non-contiguous inclusion in the district:

- Pennington Train Station
- Hopewell Board of Education Administration Building (Former High School)
- Tollgate Grammar School

The following property is of concern because it is immediately adjacent to the district, and its development could have significant impact on the historic district.

- Blackwell property – Area in Need of Redevelopment (adjacent to district)

6. Identification signs:

- The Commission has formed a signage sub-committee to consider historic informational signage in the Borough. They have identified certain key sites of historic interest. The sub-committee is in the process of reaching out to the EDC to discuss coordination of signage ideas.
- Also, the Commission provides temporary lawn signs at properties undergoing improvements which have been reviewed and approved by the commission.

7. Street Trees:

Many Street Trees have been removed within the Historic District by the County. Pennington's appearance as a "Tree City" is being diminished by these removals – specifically on its two most prominent streets. Because E & W Delaware and N & S Main St are County Roads the County road jurisdiction complicates the Borough's monitoring and replacement efforts. The Preservation Commission would like to gather more information regarding the process for tree removals, including options for retaining and replacing trees within the district on Main and Delaware.

8. Land Use Administrator:

The current Land Use Administrator has greatly improved the operation and organization of the Historic Commission. Coordination with Planning/Zoning, record-keeping and minutes are now well-organized.

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One of the points noted by the NJHPO in their review of our ordinance is that MLUL does not allow Commission Chair to sign approved application, signature must be by an authorized municipal employee. Land Use Administrator will sign applications going forward.

Prior to having staff assistance, the HPC had limited contact with the borough administration, Building and Planning/Zoning departments, and struggled to maintain meeting minutes, even though some HPC decisions could have legal implications. The appointment of a Land Use Administrator has been enormously helpful in maintaining records and coordinating with other departments.

9. Council Liaison:

For the last few years, the same councilperson has served as Liaison for both the Historic Preservation Commission and the Planning/Zoning Board. This is very positive, and enables the Preservation Commission to keep up with issues which may impact the Historic District or Commission.

10. Meetings:

The HPC typically meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:30 at Borough Hall. Meetings are advertised in advance and are open to the public. Occasionally, meetings are cancelled when there are no applications and “other business” agenda is not pressing. In every case where there has been an application, the HPC has met to review that application at the next monthly meeting without delay.

11. Website:

Website has been greatly improved, including access to Ordinance, Zoning Map, Historic District Map, FAQ's, Applications & District Survey of buildings. We look forward to the new zoning map that will include the Historic District.

12. Sub-committees:

- Pre-application design sub-committee
- CLG/ordinance update sub-committee
- Signage sub-committee
- Street Tree sub-committee

13. Outreach, Public Interaction:

- Jack Davis is an active member of The Hopewell Valley Historical Society and keeps us in touch with that important local organization and their activities.
- Jack Davis and Eric Holtermann have given periodic tours of the Historic District, focusing on the growth of Pennington, the people involved, and the architectural legacy they have left behind
- Chair periodically confers with the Chairs of Hopewell Boro and Hopewell Township Preservation Commissions
- Several HPC commissioners have attended the NJ State Preservation Conference in the last few years.
- Several Commission members have attended Preservation NJ events.
- The commission encourages property owners to meet with Pre-application sub-committee or attend meetings on an informal basis without an application if they have questions or would like to get the Commission's opinion on proposed work.

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14. 2026 Priorities

- CLG Application
- Local listing for at risk significant buildings
- Street Tree program
- Signage program
- Continuing Education for commission members

Sincerely,

The Pennington Historic Preservation Commission

Eric Holtermann	Class A	Chair
Bob Chandler	Class A	Vice Chair
Natalie Shivers	Class A	
Jack Davis	Class B	
Katrina Homel	Class B	
David Coats	Class B	
Mary Baum	Class B	
George Ford	Class B	Alt 1
Craig Wallace	Class B	Alt 2