

LOCAL ADVISORY PANEL GUIDELINES MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Section 24A-5 of the County's Historic Preservation Ordinance gives the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) the authority "to appoint members to local advisory panels to assist and advise the commission in the performance of its functions."

Because each historic district is unique, the HPC values and depends on the useful viewpoints and information conveyed by Local Advisory Panels (LAPs), especially in the review of Historic Area Work Permits, but also in other historic preservation matters. Although their role is advisory, the LAPs' contributions and assistance are vital to the work of the Commission and to the furtherance of public knowledge of the history of Montgomery County's communities.

While not a primary function, the LAPs can also be a source of recommendations for citizens who might serve as members of the County's Historic Preservation Commission.

1. MEMBERSHIP

Although the HPC, by law, appoints/confirms the members of an LAP, it is important for the community itself to decide how to constitute an appropriate LAP.

In general, the LAP should include a cross-section of the community or historic district which they represent. The LAP may include individuals with expertise on local history and architecture. Property owners who have made changes to their properties through the HAWP process may also have particularly useful viewpoints to contribute.

LAP members should acquire familiarity with the County's Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and with how to read and interpret architectural plans. The HPC staff would be happy to brief LAP members on the procedures and purposes of the Commission.

There is no minimum or maximum size for a LAP - most include three to seven members. One member of the LAP should be designated to receive mailings from the HPC and to pass this information on to other members.

The HPC is interested in working cooperatively with communities to create functional, well-structured LAPs, and is able to accept nominations for LAP members at any time.

*Source: LOCAL ADVISORY PANEL GUIDELINES, M.C. Historic Preservation Commission, 1994
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2. DUTIES

LAPs should be structured to perform a number of very important and vital functions:

- A. Assist the HPC in its Historic Area Work Permit (HAWP) decision-making process by representing the views of the community, relating community concerns or general consensus on HAWP issues, etc. An example of this exchange of information:

HPC staff would mail a copy of a HAWP application (including plans and photographs) to the designated LAP representative approximately 2 weeks prior to the HPC meeting at which the HAWP would be considered. The LAP may formulate a position and convey it to the HPC staff by telephone, letter, or FAX prior to the meeting. If the LAP's comments are to be included in the packet mailed to HPC Commissioners, they must be received by staff a week prior to the meeting. If the LAP's comments differ significantly from either the applicant's HAWP submission or the staff's recommendation, attendance at the HPC meeting by a LAP member would be encouraged.

- B. Assist the HPC in its public education mandate by furthering the understanding of historic preservation in the community, disseminating information to residents about the HPC and its purposes and goals, welcoming new property owners into historic districts, etc.

The HPC, through its staff, conveys to the LAP information about new or revised policies and procedures, activities, and copies of publications or informational flyers produced by the HPC. The LAP can "spread the word" in the community about issues of concern. In addition, as part of a broader partnership, the HPC and LAP could co-sponsor activities or workshops to provide historical information or technical advice to owners of historic properties.

- C. Serve as advocates for historic preservation programs and projects throughout the County.

The HPC may elicit comments from the LAP relating to issues of concern within the historic area, or topics related to the overall County preservation program. The LAP serves as the Commission's link to the community on issues involving historic preservation.

LAPs serve in an advisory capacity to the HPC. It is the HPC itself which makes decisions concerning HAWPs or provides recommendations to the Planning Board on designations and subdivisions. In dealing with individual property owners - especially in providing comments on HAWP applications - the LAP should always be very clear that its role is advisory.

3. PROCEDURES

Although LAPs are created by the HPC as a function of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Commission is very interested in enabling LAPs to respond appropriately to the unique challenges in each historic district or community. For this reason, each LAP should establish its own written procedures for its functions. These procedures should be made public within the community and should be conveyed in writing to the HPC.

Some of the issues which should be addressed in the written procedures are:

- How often will the LAP meet?

- Are the meetings open to the public and, if so, where will they be held?

- How will the LAP generally communicate recommendations to the HPC – in writing, by phone, in person, etc.? Who will do this? Do you seek consensus or individual polling for viewpoints?

- How do residents communicate with the LAP, for advice about an HAWP application or other questions regarding historic preservation?

- What are the procedures for nominations to the LAP and length of term?

- How will you continue to inform residents or new owners about all these matters?

- Other:

