

Obligations of Property Owners within a Historic District

Every property owner in a registered district is responsible for obtaining a permit for any work affecting a part of their building that can be seen from a public street or way using this procedure:

1. Apply to the Historic Preservation Officer for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) prior to obtaining any required building permits. A COA application is available from the City's Historic Preservation Office.
2. Complete the COA application, including all specifications for proposed exterior alterations or modifications (submit paint color samples, material samples, and detailed drawings illustrating finished dimensions for signs, new construction and alterations).
3. Submit completed application along with attachments to the Preservation Office ten working days prior to the regularly scheduled meeting of the Reading Board of Historical Architectural Review (HARB).
4. Attend the HARB meeting. Attendance is not mandatory, but is recommended. The HARB will review the application and render a decision at that meeting.
5. Certain proposed improvements may require review by City Council as per the Historic District Ordinance.
6. The HARB may authorize the Preservation Officer to approve certain proposed building improvements. A list of treatments authorized by the HARB is available from the Preservation Officer.
7. Once the COA is issued, a building permit may be obtained.

Obligations of Property Owners within a Conservation District

The purpose of a conservation district is to protect the unique physical character of a neighborhood by reviewing major structural alterations, additions, demolition, and new construction without particular emphasis on the historical architecture. Property owners do not need to get a COA or have their project reviewed by the HARB. However, any kind of major exterior work including major structural alterations, demolition, additions or new construction requires a permit and review by the City Planning Office.



Penn's Common Neighbors

The Penn's Common Historic District is supported by Penn's Common Neighbors, a volunteer organization committed to architectural preservation, maintaining neighborhood quality of life, and promoting a sense of community.



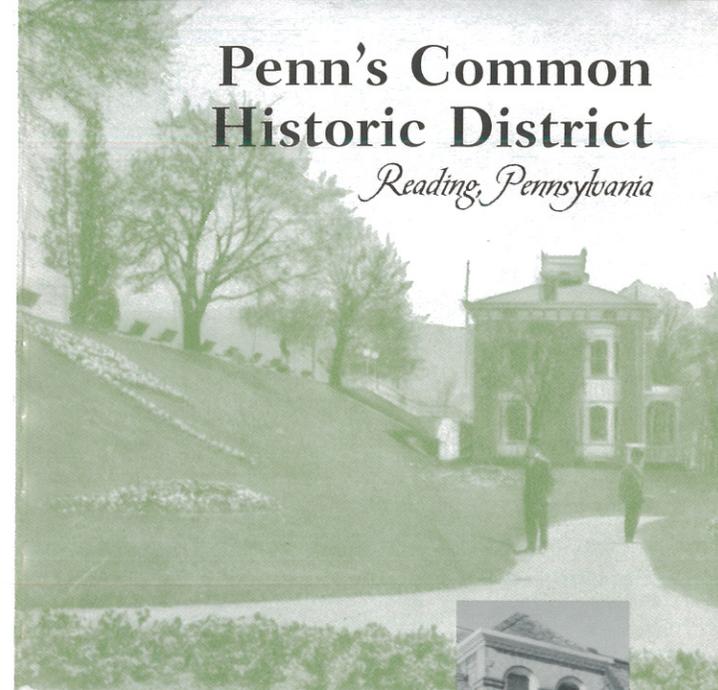
**CITY OF READING
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**
815 Washington Street
Reading, PA 19601-3690
610-655-6211

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Penn's Common Historic District

Reading, Pennsylvania



Now and Then

**Property Owner Information,
History of the Park and District,
and Architectural Styles**

Penn's Common Historic District

The Penn's Common Historic District and Conservation District

A historic district is a legally-designated and protected historic area. Laws guide and regulate the types of changes and improvements that can be made to sites within the district.

A historic district can be eligible for or listed in the National Register of Historic Places and be protected and regulated by a local government ordinance.

In 1978 an area including and surrounding City Park in Reading, PA, was determined eligible to the National Register of Historic Places by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission as the Penn's Common Historic District. Local residents now intend to protect the district as a municipal historic district under the City of Reading Historic District Ordinance. Reading already has three historic districts regulated in this manner: Centre Park, Prince, and Callowhill.

Residents are also seeking to register a conservation district in the neighborhood adjacent to the historic district. The purpose of a conservation district is to protect the unique physical character of a neighborhood by reviewing major structural alterations, additions, demolition, and new construction without particular emphasis on cosmetic alterations or changes.

A map on the inside of this brochure shows the boundaries of both districts.

Benefits of a Historic District Designation

Historic districts regulated by a local ordinance helps protect properties against devaluation. Historic districts help stabilize or increase property values. The ordinance acts like an insurance policy to stabilize and improve property values and prevents neighbors from making changes to their property that would reverse this trend.

Preservation of a historic district offers economic advantages. The costs of preservation are often lower than that of new construction. Since most preservation consists of routine maintenance to originally sound construction, property owners can frequently lower their expenses through "do-it-yourself" projects. Most importantly, preservation prolongs the life of the structure by maintaining the original materials.

Government Assistance Programs

Property owners in a historic district may be eligible for various government assistance programs such as: grants, low-interest loans and tax incentive programs. Property owners should contact the City's Planning Office at 610-655-6326 for specific information.



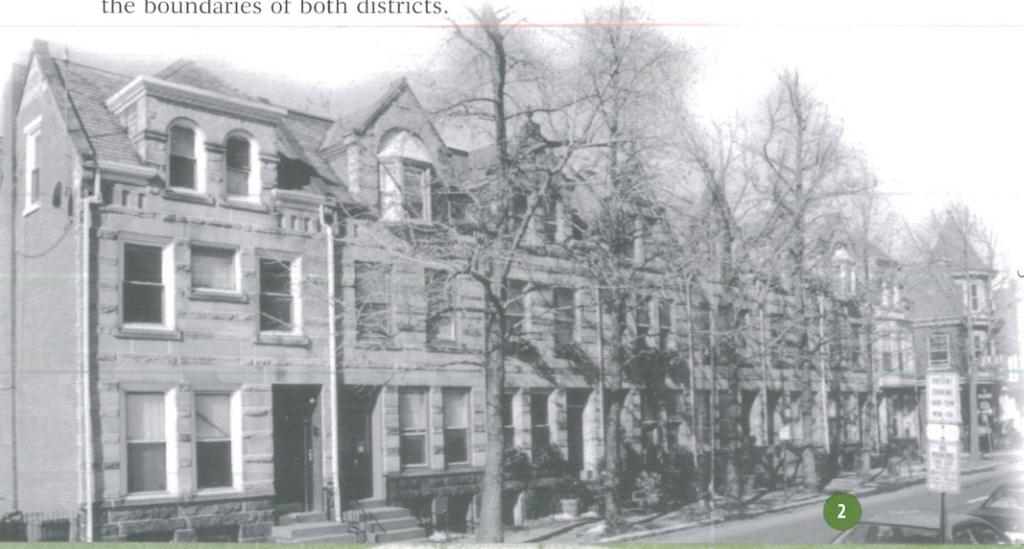
Now and Then

THIS BUILDING TODAY IS HOME TO THE BERKS COUNTY CONSERVANCY. IT WAS BUILT IN 1872 TO HOUSE THE OFFICES OF THE WATER AUTHORITY.

The Historical Architectural Review Board

The Reading Board of Historical Architectural Review (HARB) is charged with the responsibility of overseeing any improvements or work within the district. This includes general design, arrangement, texture, materials and colors. This only applies to projects done to areas of the property that can be seen from a public way. (For example, improvements to the front facade of the property would need to be reviewed but any work done to the interior of the building would not.)

The review board is a body of citizens appointed by the Mayor and approved by City Council. Its function is to advise property owners, when they are ready to make changes to their properties, about how to undertake improvements without violating the Historic District Ordinance. The review board is required to contain a registered architect, a licensed real estate broker and a building inspector. The remaining members must have knowledge and interest in preservation and historic districts. A certain number of board members must also be residents of the historic district. Thus property owners can discuss projects and request expert advice from the board and are also guaranteed that the district will be protected by people concerned with the goals and welfare of their neighborhood.



North Eleventh Street

THIS WELL-KEPT ROW OF HOMES ACROSS FROM CITY PARK IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE QUALITY OF THE HOMES WITHIN THE PENN'S COMMON HISTORIC DISTRICT. ELEVENTH STREET WAS ONCE KNOWN AS "DOCTOR'S ROW" BECAUSE OF THE LARGE NUMBER OF PHYSICIANS WHO HAD OFFICES THERE.

History of the Penn's Common Area

The Penn's Common Historic and Conservation District is situated on the lower slopes of Mount Penn and centered around Penn's Common (City Park). The 116-acre district encompasses City Park and the neighborhood surrounding it, bounded on the west by Ninth Street, on the north by Buttonwood Street, and on the south by Chery and Good Streets.



3 FEDERAL STYLE HOMES AT 1156-1162 PERKIOMEN AVENUE WERE BUILT BETWEEN 1840 AND 1864.

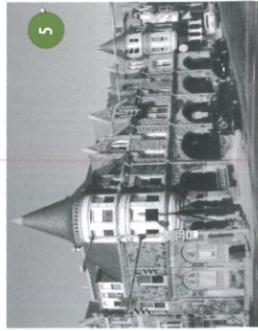
The district is one of the most fascinating areas of the City, with a rich architectural and historical heritage. The district features a range of architectural styles including Federal style row homes, Victorian Period single homes, row homes and commercial buildings, unique Chateausque and Romanesque rows, elegant Georgian homes and slightly more modern Arts and Craft style properties.



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Now and Then
9TH & PENN HAS BEEN THE LOCATION OF A PHARMACY SINCE 1909, FIRST AS SCHEARER'S DRUG STORE AND TODAY AS PENN PHARMACY.

The park itself, was originally decided to the citizens of Reading by the Penn family and became known as Penn's Common. During the early years of the City's history, the Common was used by the community for drawing spring water, grazing livestock, washing laundry, public hangings, and military exercises. In later years, the open space served as a site for water reservoirs, a county jail, and a fairground which included a race track. Penn's Common officially became City Park in 1887 when the land was decided to the city for use as a public park and recreational area.



5

AT THE CORNER OF ELEVENTH AND WASHINGTON STREETS IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF VICTORIAN ROMANESQUE ARCHITECTURE.

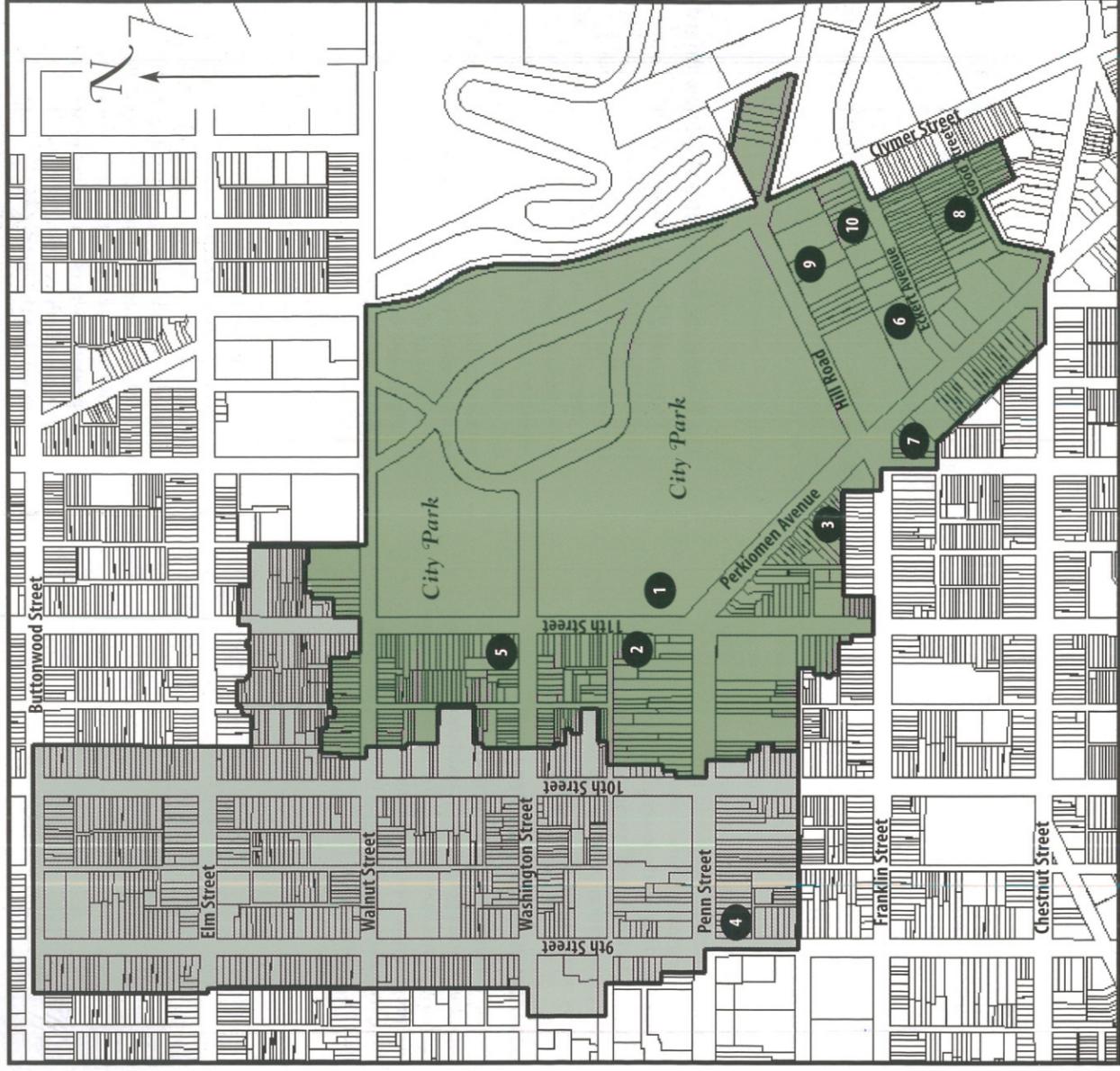
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THIS GEORGIAN STYLE HOME ON ECKERT AVENUE IS STILL USED AS A PRIVATE RESIDENCE.

Residential development began in the 1840's with two-story brick and wood frame gabled dwellings concentrated on Penn and Washington Streets. Some of the most distinguished townhouses were constructed during the years after the Civil War and at the turn of the century. Many fine examples of Italianate, Victorian Romanesque, and Chateausque style rowhouses



■ Penn's Common Historic District

■ Conservation District

es are located opposite City Park on North Eleventh Street, on Perkiomen Avenue, and in the 1000 Block of Penn Street. The final building boom took place in the early 1900s. The Georgian and Arts and Craft style homes on Eckert Avenue were built during this time period.

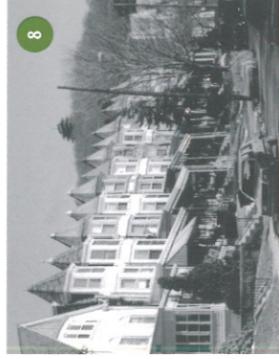


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THESE CHATEAUESQUE STYLE HOMES AT THE CORNER OF FRANKLIN AND PERKIOMEN AVENUE ARE ONE OF THE MORE UNIQUE STYLES IN THE DISTRICT.

Penn and North Ninth Streets. This area has been an active retail area since the early 19th century.

This area also has a long history as the major African-American neighborhood in the City. The church in the African-American community has always played a significant role, and in 1868 the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church was built at



8

THIS ROW OF VICTORIAN HOMES ON GOOD STREET ARE TYPICAL OF MANY BUILT IN THE CITY IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY.



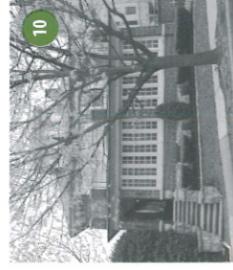
9

Now and Then

THIS SINGLE VICTORIAN QUEEN ANNE AT 1246 HILL ROAD TODAY IS A BED AND BREAKFAST INN. IT WAS BUILT IN 1887 AS A HOME FOR JONATHAN AND JULIA MOULD WHO DONATED THE PAGODA TO THE CITY IN 1911.

119 North Tenth Street. The property which has since undergone numerous transformations, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places

The history of the park and surrounding area along with the mixture of architecture and culture makes the Penn's Common Historic and Conservation District one of Reading's unique historic treasures that should be preserved for future generations to enjoy.



10

ECKERT AVENUE HAS A MIXTURE OF STYLES ON ONE TINY STREET INCLUDING THIS ARTS AND CRAFTS STYLE HOME AT 1235 ECKERT.



Penn's Common circa 1900

THIS VIEW OF THE PARK FROM MOUNT PENN SHOWS THE BANDSTAND AND GREENHOUSE IN THE PARK. THE LARGE STRUCTURE ON THE RIGHT IS ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL.