

What Does a Historic Preservation Commission Do?

Georgia Historic Preservation Commissions (HPCs) must have a minimum of three members. All members must have their primary residence in the municipality for which they are serving as a Commissioner, i.e., they must be able to vote for the elected body that appoints them. Owning property within a historic district is not necessary, nor can it fill the residency requirement. Neither does owning a business within the municipality but living outside of the jurisdiction. If an interested property owner wants to be involved but doesn't meet the residency requirement, they can serve in a non-voting exofficio capacity or on a subcommittee of the HPC.

A majority of the members of the Commission shall have demonstrated special interest, experience, or education in history or architecture. To the extent that such professionals are available in the community, Commission members could be appointed from the disciplines of architecture, history, architectural history, planning, archaeology, urban planning, American studies, real estate, law, landscape architecture, etc. However, Commissioners could be positively involved in historic preservation as part of their work in an "outside" discipline. For example, a banker with experience in federal housing or loan programs targeted to historic neighborhoods might be an appropriate commission member.

In Georgia, historic preservation commissions are authorized to:

1. Prepare an inventory of all property having the potential for designation as historic property.
2. Recommend to the local governing body specific places, districts, sites, buildings, structures, or works of art to be designated by ordinance as historic properties or historic districts.
3. Review and then grant or deny applications for certificates of appropriateness for designated properties.
4. Recommend to the local governing body any designations that should be revoked or removed
5. Restore or preserve any historic properties acquired by the municipality or county.
6. Promote the acquisition by the governing authority of façade easements and conservation easements.
7. Conduct an educational program on local historic properties.
8. Conduct studies or investigations relating to historic preservation as the local governing body or the commission may need.
9. Seek out state and federal funds for historic preservation.
10. Consult with historic preservation experts at the state and national levels.
11. Submit to the state historic preservation office a list of historic properties or historic districts that have been locally designated.