

PROJECT APPLICATION FORM – 2016

Due Date: November 16, 2015

Applicant: Historic District Commission **Submission Date:** October 17, 2015

Applicant's Address:

Historic District Commission
PO Box 681, Acton, MA 01720
Phone Number: 978 264 9632
E-mail: hdc@acton-ma.gov

Purpose: (Please select all that apply)

- Open Space
- Community Housing
- Historic Preservation
- Recreation

Town Committee (if applicable): Historic District Commission

Project Name: Historic District Consultant

Project Location/Address: Acton Historic Districts

Amount Requested: \$ \$35,000

Project Summary: In the space below, provide a brief summary of the project.

The Historic District Commission is requesting a \$35,000 grant from the Town of Acton's Community Preservation fund for a detailed inventory of the characteristics and features of each of Acton's Historic Districts. This inventory will catalogue the unique architectural characteristics of the buildings in each Historic District and also undertake to describe the settings of the buildings in the Districts. This inventory will be used to create a foundation for decisions of the Commission regarding Certificates of Appropriateness, to clearly articulate guidelines for new construction, and to advance a proposal for new zoning in the Historic Districts that further protects the sense of place and the settings in Acton's Historic Districts.

Narrative:

The Acton CPC has established the following goals in order to address the preservation of Historic Resources:

- Protect, preserve, and/or restore historic properties and sites throughout Acton, which are of historical, architectural, archeological, and cultural significance.
- Protect threatened properties of historical significance by fully documenting and updating the architectural and/or historical significance on survey forms for Acton's Cultural Resource List.
- Preserve the existing rural/historic character of the Town, including, but not limited to, Residential and non-residential buildings, barns, outbuildings, burial grounds, markers, monuments, stone walls, fields, cart paths, historic land and streetscapes, and scenic vistas.

- Provide education and community outreach regarding the extensive historical and cultural resources within Acton. A signage program to increase public awareness of historical and cultural assets within Acton has been developed and shall continue.

Development pressures in the Town's three Historic Districts have led us to conclude that the protections in the Town's Historic District Bylaw are insufficient to protect the historic character of the Town's Historic Districts. Development practices such as hammerhead lots, sub-developments, and condominiums work in concert with the Town's zoning codes to erode the historic character of the Districts by allowing new development that is out of scale and inconsistent with the character of antique homes in the Districts: new construction can be built to a larger scale, with less open space, and with a different streetscape.

A key goal of this project will be to characterize the settings of Acton's three Historic Districts with analytical tools that describe accurately the size of the homes in the Districts, the amount of open space in the Districts, the size of the lots, and the setbacks from the street. The results of this goal will be used to develop proposals for a new zoning overlay in each of the Districts that will further support Historic preservation and protection in the Districts.

The project will also characterize the different types of architecture as well as the predominant architecture that is found in each District, for example, Queen Anne style. And within a specific architectural style there will be an inventory of common architectural elements that are found in the homes of that style. The purpose of this inventory is two-fold, the first is to provide a foundation for the decisions of the Historic District Commission when ruling on Certificates of Appropriateness. The second is to provide detailed guidelines for design, massing, placement, and spacing that will minimize the guess-work for property owners and developers.

This project will meet many of the criteria listed by the Community Preservation Committee for reviewing applications.

- The project is consistent with the goals of the Town of Acton Community Preservation Plan for Historic Preservation, because the Historic District Commission has determined that this is an important project.
- The project is consistent with the Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan and other Town planning documents that have received wide scrutiny and input. Goal number one for Acton 2020 is to preserve and enhance Town character and preserve and protect historic buildings and landscapes (see Acton 2020 1.4).
- The Acton Community Preservation Plan says that the Town's historic character is threatened by the rise in land values. This project will address that issue directly by taking a critical look at some of the contributing factors such as hammerhead lots, sub-developments, large condominium developments, minimum lot sizes and frontage requirements.

- The Acton Community Preservation Plan says that the Town is frequently put in a position of defending itself from large developments and subdivisions that diminish its rural and historic character. The new zoning overlays that will be proposed by this project will protect the historic character of the Districts by prohibiting new construction that is inconsistent with the antique structures and the established settings in the Districts.
- The members of the Historic District Commission and the consultant will work closely with other board and committees, especially the Planning Commission in order to implement the new zoning.

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Estimated Date for Commencement of Project: May 1, 2016

Estimated Date for Completion of Project: October 1, 2016
