

CITY OF WORCESTER

Historical Commission Ordinance

CITY OF WORCESTER PART TWO, ORGANIZATION OF CITY AGENCIES OF THE REVISED
ORDINANCES OF 2015 Ordained by the City Council September 21, 2015 As Amended Through September
17, 2024

§16. Historical Commission

(a) *Establishment of the Historical Commission.* Under authority of General Laws, chapter forty C, sections four and fourteen, and chapter forty, section eight D, and Article Six of the Home Rule Charter, there is hereby established under the jurisdiction of the city manager an executive board of the city to be known as the “Historical Commission” (“commission”).

(b) *Establishment of Massachusetts Avenue, Montvale, Crown Hill, and Elm Park Neighborhood Historic Districts.* Under authority of General Laws, chapter forty C, section three, there are hereby established historic districts to be known as the “Massachusetts Avenue Historic District,” the “Montvale Historic District,” the “Crown Hill Historic District,” and the “Elm Park Neighborhood Historic District.” The Massachusetts Avenue Historic District is shown on a map dated August, 1973 and revised September, 1974, the Montvale Historic District is shown on a map dated February 28, 2008, the Crown Hill Historic District is shown on a map dated October 5, 2012 and revised February 12, 2013, and the Elm Park Neighborhood Historic District is shown on a map dated March 22, 2023, all of which are on file with the city clerk and made a part hereof, and are also recorded with the Worcester Registry of Deeds.

(c) *Membership of the Historical Commission.* The commission shall consist of seven regular members and two alternates appointed for terms of three years by the city manager in accordance with the requirements of the city charter and the provisions of this section. The terms shall be staggered such that three terms of regular members shall expire on December thirty-first of one year and two terms of regular members shall expire on December thirty-first in each of the following two years. The terms of alternate members shall be staggered such that the terms shall expire on December thirty-first on successive years, and none shall expire every third year. Three of the seven members shall reside in one of the four Historic Districts. No more than one member may reside in each Historic District. All members and alternates shall have demonstrated a special interest, competence or knowledge in historic preservation. To the extent available in the charter appointment districts, members of the commission shall be professionals in the disciplines of architecture, history, architectural history, prehistoric archaeology, historic archaeology, urban planning, American studies, American civilization, cultural geography and cultural anthropology. In case of absence, inability to act or unwillingness to act because of self-interest on the part of any member of the commission, his or her place shall be taken by an alternate member designated by the chair.

(d) *Duties & Responsibilities of the Historical Commission.* To preserve, promote and develop historic assets of the city in accordance with law, the commission shall:

- (1) administer the Massachusetts Avenue Historic District, the Montvale Historic District, the Crown Hill Historic District, the Elm Park Neighborhood Historic District, and any additional historic districts lawfully established, consistent with General Laws;

- (2) issue certificates of appropriateness, certificates of nonapplicability, and certificates of hardship with respect to construction or alteration of buildings and

structures within the historic district when such construction or alteration affects exterior architectural features. Such certificates shall be issued as prescribed in the General Laws, chapter forty C, section six;

(3) consider factors as prescribed in General Laws, chapter forty C, section seven, in passing upon matters before it;

(4) issue such certificates, make such recommendations, keep such records and have such powers, functions and duties as are prescribed in General Laws, chapter forty C, section ten, except that officers and employees necessary for the proper administration of the commission shall be appointed and removed by the city manager in accordance with the city charter; and all gifts shall be subject to approval of the city manager and city council;

(5) call and conduct meetings and to hold such public hearings as are prescribed in General Laws, chapter forty C, section eleven;

(6) conduct research for places of historic value, to coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes, to advertise, prepare, print and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets which it deems necessary for its work, and to make such recommendations as are described in General laws, chapter forty C, section eight D;

(7) propose from time to time to the city manager as it deems appropriate, the establishment in accordance with the provisions of this Article and the General Laws, chapter forty C, section three, of additional historic districts and changes in historic districts;

(8) determine an appropriate system of markers for selected historic sites and buildings not already sufficiently marked, to arrange for preparation and installation of such markers, and to arrange for the care of historic markers;

(9) advise the redevelopment authority, planning board and any other city department or agency in matters involving historic sites and buildings;

(10) cooperate with and enlist assistance from the National Park Service, the National Trust of Historic Preservation, and other agencies, public and private, concerned with historic sites and buildings;

(11) advise owners of historic buildings in Worcester on problems and solutions of preservation; and

(12) perform such other duties as may be prescribed by law.

(e) *Advisory Board to the Historical Commission.* The commission may recommend to the city manager from time to time as needed, appointment of advisory committees of historians and persons experienced in architecture or other arts or in historic restoration or preservation to assist the commission.

(f) *Rules & Regulations of the Historical Commission.* The commission, under the authority of General Laws, chapter forty C, shall keep a permanent record of its resolutions, transactions and determinations and of the vote of each member participating therein, and

may adopt and amend such rules and regulations not inconsistent with the provisions of chapter forty C and prescribe such forms as it shall deem desirable and necessary for the regulation of its affairs and the conduct of its business.

(g) Maintenance & Repair of Properties Under the Jurisdiction of the Historical

Commission. Nothing herein shall be construed to prevent the ordinary maintenance and repair of buildings, structures or grounds within the district nor prevent actions by duly authorized public officers as described in General Laws chapter forty C, section nine. (h)

Work excluded from Historical Commission Review in the Elm Park Neighborhood Historic District. The following are excluded from the review of the Worcester Historical

Commission: (1) Temporary structures or signs, subject, however, to conditions as to duration of use, location, lighting, removal, and similar matters as the commission may reasonably specify, and provided that the location and specifications of said temporary structures or signs are in accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the Worcester Historical Commission.

(2) Terraces, walks, driveways, sidewalks and similar structures, or any combination of one or more of them, provided that any such structure is substantially at grade level and continue to conform to their existing footprint. (3) Storm doors and windows, screens, window air

conditioners, lighting fixtures, antennae and similar appurtenances, or any combination of one or more of them, provided that the location and specifications of said appurtenances and fixtures are in accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the Worcester Historical

Commission. (4) The color of paint. (i) Appeals. Any applicant aggrieved by a determination of the commission may file a written request with the commission for review by person or persons of competence and experience in such matters designated by the Central

Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission as prescribed in the General Laws, chapter forty C, section twelve, and may further appeal such determination to the superior court as prescribed in the General Laws, chapter forty C, section twelve A.

