

Historical & Cultural Resources

Boylston has a long and rich history that residents wish to preserve.



Boylston is rich in historic and cultural resources that provide residents and visitors with a connection to its past. The hilly landscape has been historically characterized by forests, farms, orchards, places of worship, small businesses, manufacturing, and residences. Many aspects of the past remain, while others were erased over time or through major changes in land use. Historic sites in Boylston span from the 17th century onward. These valuable resources include historic buildings, structures, areas, monuments, and burial grounds.

The Town contains two properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places and one designated as a National Historic Landmark. The Town's local historic district, Boylston Center Historic District, hosts 21 historic properties.

Boylston residents take immense pride in the Town's historic, architectural, aesthetic, and cultural heritage. Culturally and historically significant locations include the historic Town Hall, the Sawyer Memorial Library, the John B. Gough House, and the Town Common.

Boylston is home to several organizations that work to preserve history and promote culture in the community. Residents of Boylston generally support preserving historical resources and expanding cultural services in the community, but some residents express concern regarding allocating too much of the Town's budget towards these efforts.

Boylston faces several challenges in preserving its historic and cultural resources, including limited funding and staffing to support such efforts. Future steps the Town should consider taking include establishing regulations to enhance historic preservation, designating one or more additional Local Historic Districts, and becoming eligible for Massachusetts Community Preservation Act funding.

Historical & Cultural Resources Goals

The Cultural & Historic Resources goals of this Master Plan are:

Goal 1

Preserve and maintain Town-owned historic assets.

Goal 2

Encourage preservation of privately-owned historic assets.

Goal 3

Utilize protective regulatory and planning tools in key areas of town to enhance the community's rich heritage.

Goal 4

Ensure there are adequate cultural opportunities for Boylston residents and visitors.



Photo: Boylston Town Common
Photo credit: CMRPC

Cultural & Historical Resources

Introduction

Boylston is rich in historic and cultural resources that provide residents and visitors with a connection to the town's past. The hilly landscape has been historically characterized by forests, farms, orchards, places of worship, small businesses, manufacturing, residences, and more. Many aspects of the past remain today, while others were erased over time or through major changes in land use: such as the eminent domain takings of 2,761 acres of land for the Wachusett Dam and Reservoir System completed in 1905. Residents take immense pride in the historic, architectural, and aesthetic heritage of Boylston.

Cultural resources refer to how people relate to their environment and surroundings through their culture, and can include cultural uses of the natural environment, the built environment, and social institutions. The places, buildings, objects, documents, traditions, and stories of our cultural heritage help shape the community's sense of place, giving Boylston residents a sense of "home."

Historic resources include the districts, sites, buildings, structures, or objects that are significant in the history, architecture, engineering, archaeology, or culture of the community, state, or country. Historic preservation generally refers to safeguarding the existence and appearance of historic elements in the community, placing value not only on the physical structures but the occupants and uses over time as well. The historic buildings, neighborhoods, and landscapes help residents understand the community's origin and how it became what it is today.

Proactive planning for historic and cultural resources allows the community to reflect on its evolution as a town and envision its direction for the future. It is essential to inventory and document a community's historic and cultural assets to provide a framework for preservation. This chapter aims to identify what is valued and irreplaceable in the town, who the key stakeholders and partners are, and what steps can be taken to preserve and enhance Boylston's heritage for future generations.

Community Engagement

Input was sought from residents regarding their perspectives on the importance and preservation of Boylston's historic resources. The Community Vision survey provided a set of statements about historic assets and asked survey respondents to identify whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements. Overall, residents expressed favorability regarding historic resource preservation, while some noted concern about municipal financial resources that would be dedicated to these efforts. The results of question 10 on the Community Vision Survey can be seen in Table CH1.

A second survey was released to Boylston residents after the Master Plan Steering Committee and CMRPC developed a vision statement and preliminary goals for each of the master plan elements. The survey sought feedback from residents on how relevant the goals were to Boylston’s future. The four historic and cultural resources goals were primarily considered “Very Relevant” or “Somewhat Relevant” by respondents. At monthly Committee meetings the results of the survey were discussed, and changes were made accordingly to goals that did not receive overwhelming positive feedback. The results of question 7 on the Vision and Goals Survey are summarized in Table CH2.

Table CH1. Community Vision Survey Results

Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about Boylston’s historic assets?				
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total Responses
Historic resources are an essential part of Boylston’s character	70%	26%	4%	394
New development should be prohibited if it means losing a historic building	64%	25%	11%	393
Historic resources deserve financial support from the town’s government	54%	33%	13%	394
Historic resources should be paid for by property owners alone, without additional help from the town’s government	18%	40%	42%	389
Local regulations should protect certain historic resources and regions (e.g., Local Historic District)	73%	24%	3%	389
The Hillside/Gough House site is an important Town asset that should be carefully redeveloped to maximize its economic potential	55%	29%	16%	391

Table 2: Preliminary Vision and Goals Survey Results

Rate each statement by the extent you think each goal is relevant to Boylston's future.				
	Very Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Not At All Relevant	Total Responses
Preserve and maintain Town-owned historic assets.	69%	27%	4%	181
Encourage preservation of privately-owned historic assets.	50%	40%	11%	181
Utilize protective regulatory and planning tools in key areas of Town to enhance the community’s rich heritage.	52%	37%	11%	180
Ensure there are adequate cultural opportunities for Boylston residents and visitors.	41%	44%	14%	180

Summary of Goals

The following goals were established to reflect the above noted public preferences.

Goal 1: Preserve and maintain Town-owned historic assets.

Goal 2: Encourage preservation of privately-owned historic assets.

Goal 3: Utilize protective regulatory and planning tools in key areas of Town to enhance the community’s rich heritage.

Goal 4: Ensure there are adequate cultural opportunities for Boylston residents and visitors.

Prior Planning and Engagement Efforts

Boylston Reconnaissance Report (1983)

As part of Massachusetts Historical Commission's Statewide Reconnaissance Survey Town Reports, this survey was conducted to document the historical development of municipalities in the Commonwealth. The report begins with an historic overview, a description of topography, and political boundaries. Seven periods of the town's history are described, each section summarizing the transportation routes, settlement patterns, population, economic base, architecture, and observations for the period.

Inventory of Historic Places and Natural Resources (1979)

A summary of historic assets of the town was developed to identify, evaluate, and preserve our historic resources and areas of significance including buildings and natural resources for present and future use. The Boylston Historical Commission conducted the initial survey of historical assets of the town of Boylston in 1979 and strives to maintain it continuously to identify, evaluate, and preserve our historic resources and areas of significance including historic buildings and natural resources for present and future use. Each asset has a site survey completed which includes a historical description, location on a map, chain of title, and description of the historical significance to the town. This inventory is the primary means for recording information on our historic resources, their significance, including the people and activities associated with each over time.

Commissions and Active Groups

Governmental Commissions

Historical Commission: The Historical Commission is the official municipal government agent responsible for the community-wide historic preservation planning. It is a three-to seven-member board of residents that are appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Commission works to promote, preserve, and develop the town's historical assets for current and future use. Additionally, at the request of the Town of Boylston, the Commission oversees the operations of the town's Historic Town Hall. The Historical Commission operates in accordance with the Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 8D, with a mission to:

- Identify historic assets as well as archeological sites.
- Encourage the protection and preservation of town artifacts that comprise the rich tapestry of Boylston's past.
- Encourage historic activities and historic events, including but not limited to tours, interactive programs, presentations, and educational activities.
- Educate the community on historic preservation through working collaboratively with other Town boards, Historical organizations, and the community, at large.
- Advertise, prepare, print, and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets deemed necessary for the purpose of protecting and preserving historic places.

Historic District Commission: The Boylston Center Historic District became an official local historic district in 1979. With its inception, a Historic District Commission was created to oversee administration and alteration of any structures or buildings within the district, in accordance with Boylston's Local Historic District Rules and Regulations that are consistent with M.G.L. Chapter 40C. The Commission is tasked with reviewing proposals and issuing certificates of appropriateness, of non-applicability, or of hardship to homeowners seeking alternation of an exterior architectural feature within the boundaries of a Historic District. The Historic District Commission is appointed by the Board of Selectmen and consists of seven regular members, each of whom serve a term of three years.

Cemetery Commission: The Cemetery Commission consists of three elected members who each serve a three-year term; with one seat on the board elected annually. The Old Burial Ground and the Pine Grove Cemetery are Town-operated under the jurisdiction of the Highway Department and the supervision of the Cemetery Commission. The Pine

Grove Cemetery provides burial space for residents or former residents of the Town of Boylston. The Highway Department performs route maintenance and upkeep of both cemeteries. All recreational vehicles are banned, and other activities deemed inappropriate, such as exercising unleashed animals and parking except on Cemetery business are not allowed. The complete Rules and Regulations of the Pine Grove Cemetery can be located on the Town of Boylston website.

Boylston Cultural Council: The Boylston Cultural Council is part of the Massachusetts Local Cultural Council (LCC) Program, which funds and manages a network of LCCs across the state. The Mass Cultural Council receives funding from the Massachusetts Legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts and distributes those public funds through two channels, one of which is distributions to LCCs which then re-grant funds to individuals and organizations in their own communities. Each council awards money based on community cultural needs, which are assessed and established by council members appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Applicants apply directly to local councils. The Boylston Cultural Council seeks to support both local Boylston artisans and cultural events to enrich the Boylston community. The Council aims to appeal to a wide audience of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. The FY2022 allocation for Boylston was \$5,300.

Public Library Trustees: The Library Trustees is a six-member board tasked with establishing a mission and vision, determining policies that govern the library, and overseeing the management as well as the physical space. The Trustees manage building maintenance and renovation projects, monitor budgets, and assist with strategic and long-range planning. The library is currently in the process of developing a Strategic Plan for 2023-2028. The 2017-2022 goals established for the library state that the Boylston Public Library will:

- Be a community hub for the Town of Boylston, enriching lives by providing a means of social and cultural interaction.
- Provide a flexible and adaptable physical space that is accessible to all residents and adequately supports collections and services.
- Enhance existing collections and services.
- Improve marketing, outreach, and communications with patrons, media, and stakeholders.
- Provide the highest level of customer service to all residents.
- Develop new offerings to patrons as community needs change.
- Adapt services as new technology becomes available.

Private Groups

Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc.: The Boylston Historical Society is a tax-exempt, non-profit organization founded in 1971 managed by its Board of Directors and Officers elected from its membership. Their mission is to preserve the history of the town and its people by assembling collections of archival records and artifacts, ensuring their continuous care, providing public access to them, and using them in cultural and educational purposes. The Society is headquartered in the Historic Town Hall located near the Town Common in Boylston Center. It hosts a small museum and library that are rich in historic artifacts and history on Boylston and Central Massachusetts. With a dedication to increasing the knowledge and appreciation of the people and events which created present-day Boylston, the Society's motto is "Preserve the Past for the Future." Over 16,000 artifactual and archival items are part of the Society's many collections. Its George and Sybil Fuller Memorial Research Library holds over 2,400 volumes, including an extensive Boylston Records section and numerous reference books on American history. These materials are available to researchers and townspeople. The Historical Society is committed to collecting and preserving the historical heritage of our town through its museum, library, public programming, and publications. Visitors can also acquire copies of local history books and other publications.

Boylston Cemetery Research Consortium: Organized in 2008, the Boylston Cemetery Research Consortium is a research consortium of the Boylston Historical Commission, the Boylston Historical Society & Museum, the Boylston Cemetery Commission, and the Boylston Cemetery Office who strive to map, photograph, and link the graves within the town of Boylston to preserve the historical heritage of the town and its people.

The consortium and its volunteers search original town documents, burial records, and cemetery stones in the Old Burial Ground and the Pine Grove Cemetery, with the ongoing research published online on the Findagrave.com free

web site. The consortium's primary goals are to research and preserve town history as presented in our cemeteries, linking these town citizens to their roots and descendants, as possible. Specific concentration is given to accurate documentation and historical relevance. Besides sharing the data online with educators, researchers, historians and genealogists, the data is used for basic historical research and publications of the Boylston Historical Society & Museum, as well as providing a location reference for out-of-town visitors to locate ancestors.

Boylston Public Library Foundation: The Mission of the Boylston Public Library Foundation, Inc. is to raise funds to support the current activities and long-term goals of the library as a community hub, including the enhancement of the physical space and the adoption of new technologies. The Boylston Public Library Foundation, Inc. (BPLF) believes that every resident of our diverse Boylston community deserves free and easy access to the vast world of reliable information, ideas, and connections available in the public domain. As a community center and resource able to accommodate meetings, social gatherings and other group activities, the BPL will help every community member to realize their full potential, and thereby contribute to the common good. Funding from past Annual Appeals has made possible many of the wonderful improvements and new services implemented at the library. The Board of Directors meets regularly to consider the financial needs of the library and the support available from the Foundation as well as to work on upcoming library projects with the Library Trustees.

Friends of the Boylston Public Library: The Friends of the Boylston Public Library is a non-profit organization consisting of volunteers dedicated to helping promote, support, and provide for fuller utilization of all material and cultural library resources. The organization sponsors various library programs and museum/park passes, holds community events, and raises awareness on the importance of libraries. Memberships are offered and these funds help the library host events and provide museum passes each year. The three goals of the organization are: 1) engage users at the library, 2) encourage gifts and Friends' financial support for the benefit of the library, and 3) serve as the library's link to the community through advocacy, marketing, programming, and access. The Friends of the Boylston Public Library meets the first Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m.

Hillside Restoration Project, Inc.: As a joint venture between the Boylston Historical Society and Boylston's municipal leaders, the Hillside Restoration Project launched in 1998. This project is now a small non-profit organization managed by an independent Board of Directors. The primary goal of the organization includes the complete restoration and adaptive reuse of the John B. Gough Estate, a National Historic Landmark site which includes the Gough House, barn, carriage house, and 12 acres of landscape features. The mission of the Hillside Restoration Project is to restore, preserve, and adaptively reuse the Hillside Estate, home of the internationally renowned temperance orator and social reformer, John B. Gough, to serve the greater community. The project's leaders have recently taken proactive steps to engage residents, including hosting a month-long event in August 2021 called *Discover Hillside!* in which a series of activities and programming were held to provide residents with a sense of the possibilities for the site.

Existing Conditions

History and Overview

Pre-Colonial Period (Before 1675): Nipmuc tribes were the original inhabitants of the land that is now Boylston. Regional patterns suggest permanent settlements were not common in the area, but the land was used for seasonal fishing, gathering, and hunting, as well as agriculture. The native population dwindled in the area upon the arrival of English settlers who established praying towns (settlements intended to convert Native Americans to Christianity) in nearby locations.

Colonial Period (1675-1775): The Sawyer family is the most notable of the first settlers in present-day Boylston. Thomas Sawyer Jr. is often believed to be the town's first landowner, acquiring land in 1705 in the territory that would later become Boylston. Thomas Sawyer Jr.'s second son, Joseph Sawyer, built a dwelling, barn, cornmill and sawmill near the Nashua River in Lancaster, later to become part of Boylston. His son Aaron succeeded him, building a nearby home, barns, a neatsfoot oil mill, a saw and grist mill, and other out-buildings. This area became known as Sawyer's Mills and eventually became a small manufacturing village.

The first attempts to incorporate Boylston occurred in 1738, then again in 1741, however those endeavors were unsuccessful. The town was incorporated as the North Precinct of Shrewsbury on December 17, 1742. In 1743, a meeting house was constructed in the geographic center of the precinct and the Reverend Ebenezer Morse, ordained in October of 1743, served as the church's first minister. Other municipal structures were built as well, including a schoolhouse, burying ground, noon-house, pound, parsonage, and tavern. The economic base was primarily agricultural with strength in cattle and grains, as well as orchard products such as hickory, apple, and stone fruit.

Federal Period (1775-1830): On March 1, 1786, the Town of Boylston was incorporated, named after a Boston-based family. A social library was established in 1792. The Second Meeting House, with a bell tower and clock, was constructed in 1793 on the site of the present-day Sawyer Memorial Library. Boylston's primary economic activity continued to be agriculture through the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Orchard growing, a land use well-suited to the town's hills, experienced a surge in development and by 1806 there were 30 cider mills in Boylston. Early 19th century tax lists note over 100 farmers in Boylston, along with a variety of craftsmen. A brickyard was established in 1807 at Route 70 and Cross Street. Several taverns operated during this period along with a corner store which operated throughout the 19th century. In 1808 West Boylston separated, reducing the town's population, and resulting in the loss of its best waterpower sites and four operating mills.

Early Industrial Period (1830-1870): The Town Hall was built in 1830 with proceeds from a grant by Ward Nicholas Boylston. This fund was also used to build the school building in the town center. A post office opened in 1845. A dance pavilion and picnic resort of the Nashua River above Sawyer's Mills was built in 1850 by Thomas Cunningham.

The industrial center of the town continued to be Sawyer's Mills. Straw Hollow developed as a major commercial complex for dairy production and orchard growing, plus palm leaf hat and straw braid production during the first half of the period. Agriculture continued to be the major employer during the Early Industrial Period. Between 1845 and 1865, 400,000 – 600,000 board feet of lumber were cut from Boylston's forests annually by three sawmills, plus nearly 4,000 cords of firewood per year. A cotton mill at Sawyer's Mills was erected in 1855, a large manufacturing enterprise employing 50 people to produce cotton yarn and gingham cloth. 1865 saw the construction of a third meeting house as the second was deemed too large and "cheerless". Most residential development occurred during the early portion of this period.

Late Industrial Period (1870-1915): The major event of this period was the construction of the Wachusett Reservoir that began in 1895 and was completed in 1905, with flooding of the Nashua River Valley and establishment of surrounding watershed pine plantations. For the reservoir to be constructed, 302 people were displaced and 46 dwellings were either moved or destroyed. The once thriving textile mill complex, and village of Sawyer's Mills was erased as the buildings and homes were torn down to make room for the reservoir. This constituted a sizeable loss in taxable property, a virtual elimination of the town's manufacturing industry, plus resulted in a population decline of over 50% over the next five years. The reservoir also flooded the tracks of the only railroad through the town, the Southern Division tracks of the Boston and Main Railroad, erected in 1875.

Agriculture continued to grow with the demands of the Worcester and Boston markets, with dairy providing the largest income to Boylston farmers. A large creamery and stock farm were established at Straw Hollow during the 1870's and continued into the early 20th century.

Boylston experienced a surge in population between 1895 and 1900 due to the arrival of immigrant workers on the Wachusett Reservoir, living in temporary housing developments, however the population dropped immediately after the completion of the reservoir. With population relocation due to the reservoir's construction, further development in the center of town occurred, including construction of Sawyer Memorial Library in 1904. With the opening of the electric streetcar line in 1898 along the length of Main Street from Worcester to Clinton, the village of Morningdale began to develop as a cottage streetcar suburb of Worcester.

Early Modern & Modern Period (1915-present): The streetcar line was abandoned by the 1920's as local roads were improved to accommodate automobiles. The population rose significantly with suburban development, which was particularly concentrated in Morningdale. Worcester County Tuberculosis Hospital was constructed on the border with

West Boylston. The Early Modern Period saw Boylston’s economy remain largely agricultural, providing the means of livelihood to most of the town’s occupants.

The town remained an agricultural community until the mid-1950’s. Boylston gradually evolved into a bedroom community for workers commuting to nearby employment hubs like Worcester and Boston. The Town prides itself as quiet, peaceful town for residents and retains much of its rural atmosphere.

Historical and Cultural Resources Inventory

A comprehensive inventory of the town’s historic resources resides in the Historical Commission section of the Fuller Research Library at the Historic Town Hall. A version of this inventory is available online using the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS), a research website managed by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. A copy of Boylston’s historic resource inventory, listing the historic structures, monuments, statues, objects, burial grounds, and historical buildings, is included in the Appendix and notable historic resources are included in Tables CH3 and CH4, and Map CH1.

Table CH3: Major Historical Properties in Boylston by Time Period

Historic Period	Structure/Landscape	Location	Year
Pre-Colonial Period (Before 1675)	Bay Path Road	Bay Path Rd	1630
Colonial Period (1675-1775)	Samuel Bennett House	Linden St	C 1725
	Phineas Howe - Capt. John Howe House	Cross St	C 1727
	Daniel Hastings House	Central St	C 1728
	Elisha Maynard House	Tower Hill Rd	1735
	Lt. Timothy Whitney - Peter Babcock House	Central St	1742
	Strawberry Hill Farm	School St	C 1743
	Boylston Old Burial Ground*	Main St	1745
	Dea. Jonathan Bond House	Main St	1757
	Taylor Tavern*	Main St	C 1760
	David Taylor - Aaron White Tavern Ell*	Main St	C 1770
Federal Period (1775-1830)	Calvin Glazier House*	School St	C 1770
	Elijah Ball House	Mile Hill Rd	1778
	Rev. Eleazor Fairbanks House*	School St	1779
	Jotham Bush – Caleb Kendall House	Main St	1780
	Rocky Pond Farm	Rocky Pond Rd	1784
	Dea. Cyprian Keyes House - Barlin Acres	East Temple St	C 1790
	Caleb Kendall House	Diamond Hill Ave	1794
	William Ball – Ira Longley House	Linden St	1795
	Boylston Second Noon House	School St	1799
	Rev. Ward Cotton House*	Cottonwood Pl	C 1800
	Montraville Flagg - Lt. John Hastings House	Elmwood Pl	C 1800
	Dea. Jonathon Bond, Jr. House	Main St	C 1800
	Abbott Tavern*	Church St	C 1805
	H. Winchester House*	Central St	1805
	Amasa Keyes House	School St	1809
	Stephen Brigham House	Main St	C 1812
	James Hastings House	Central St	1815
	Parker Lowe House and Blacksmith Shop	Linden St	1815
	Silas Hastings Tavern*	Main St	1818
	Ezra Collier - Abishai Crossman, Jr. House	Central St	C 1819
Capt. Jason Abbot – George Boyden House	Central St	1825	

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	Historic Town Hall*	Central St	1830
Early Industrial Period (1830-1870)	John Bartholomew Gough House & 12-acre Preservation Site**	Main St	1848
	Phineas Stratton House*	Main St	C 1849
	Simon Partridge House	Sewall St	1850
	Capt. John T. Andrews House*	Scar Hill Rd	C 1859
	Charles I. Longley House	Central St	1865
	Henry White House	Central St	C 1869
	Late Industrial Period (1870-1915)	Bigelow Parsonage*	9 Scar Hill Rd
Dr. Andrew Bigelow Gold Mine		Linden St	1875
Clifford T. Eldridge House		Main St	1875
Sawyer Memorial Library*		Main St	1904
Wachusett Reservoir		Wachusett Reservoir	1905
Early Modern and Modern Periods (1915-present)	Caren Lund House	Belair St	1917
	Ernest A. Leyon House	Stockton St	1917
	Claus Oscar Johnson House	Belair St	C 1919
	Eva M. Bunker House	Main St	1921
	Boylston Men's Club Hall	Main St	1923
	Albert C. Johnson House	Melrose St	1924
	Boylston Telephone Exchange*	Scar Hill Rd	1925
	Morningdale School	Main St	1926
	Calliope Theatre	Main St	1926
	Boylston First Congregational Church*	Church St	1927
	Bond Corner Store*	Central St	1811 (rebuilt 1929)
	Walter M. Gasek House	Nicholas Ave	1935
	First Congregational Church Parsonage*	Church St	1950
Boylston Powder House Marker*	Main St	1972	
*Located within the Boylston Center Historical District			
**National Landmark			

Source: MACRIS, 2022

Table CH4: Major Historic Resources in Boylston by Resource Type

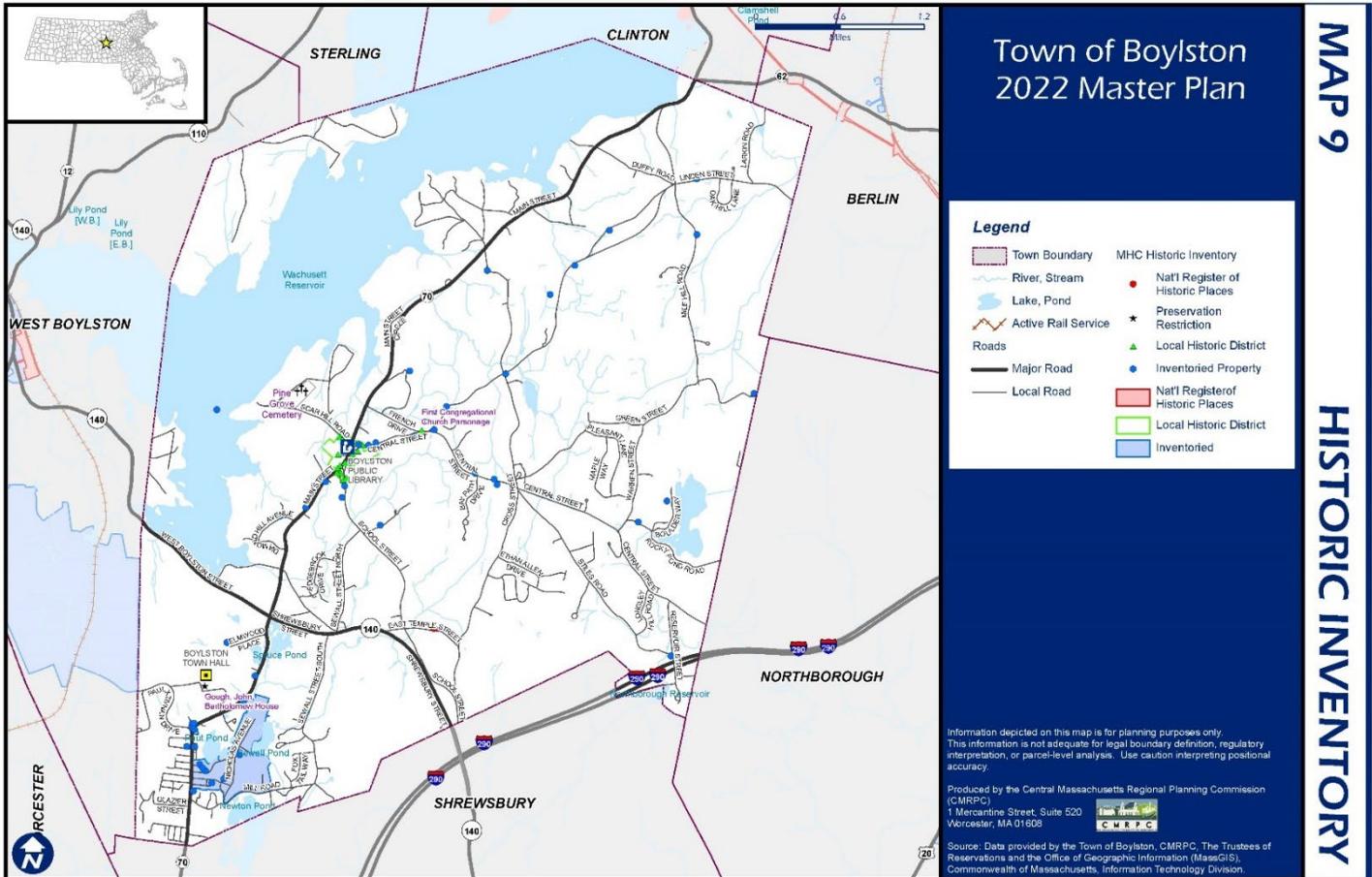
Type of Historic Resource	Name of Historic Resource	
Historic Structures	Bay Path Road	Rocky Pond Ledges
	Dr. Andrew Bigelow Gold Mine	Wachusett Reservoir
Historic Areas	Boylston Historic District	Windsor Park and City Gardens
Monuments, Statues, Objects	Boylston Powder House Marker	First Meeting House Marker
	Second Meeting House Marker	Consolidated School Marker
	Consolidated School Marker	Center School Marker
	Memorial Tablet	Red Knights Firefighters Memorial
	Soldiers War Memorial	Civil War Memorial
Burial Grounds	Boylston Old Burial Ground	Pine Grove Cemetery
Historic Buildings	Historic Town Hall and Museum (Central St)	148, 149, 178, 181, 183, 219, 264, 307, 565, 599, 620, 644, 651, 661, and 701 Main St
	Boylston First Congregational Church (Church St)	21 Melrose St
	First Congregational Church Parsonage (Church St)	211 Mile Hill Rd
	Morningdale School (Main St)	72 Nicholas Ave
	Sawyer Memorial Library (Main St)	40 Poe Ave
	1 Central St	64 Reservoir Rd
	11 and 15 Belair St	25 Rocky Pond Rd

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Cottonwood Pl	1, 5, 9 and 10-12 Scar Hill Rd
30 Cross St	5, 15, 16, 22, 30, 111, School St
18 Diamond Hill Ave	298 Sewall St
284 East Temple St	32 Stockton St
Elmwood Pl	30 Tower Hill Rd
439 Green St	39, 142, 330, and 426 Linden St

Source: MACRIS, 2022

Map CH1: Inventory of Historic Resources



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Historic Classifications

Massachusetts State Register of Historic Places

Established in 1982 by M.G.L. Ch. 9, ss. 26-27C, the State Register of Historic Places is a comprehensive listing of the buildings, structures, objects, and sites that have received local, state, or national designations based on their historical or archaeological significance. Over 67,000 properties in more than 340 cities and towns in Massachusetts are included in the State Register. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) publishes the State Register of Historic Places once per year. This important historic preservation planning reference tool serves to alert property owners, planners, and project proponents as to which historic properties and sites should be considered for preservation undertakings. Additional information on properties listed in the State Register is available through MHC.

Filing an Inventory Form with MHC does not constitute listing in the State Register of Historic Places. Listings are arranged by municipality and within each city or town, properties are arranged alphabetically by their historic name. Many listings include multiple designations, and the boundaries of each designation can sometimes differ. Address listings of individual properties located within historic districts are not included. Publications are available at the State House Bookstore, Room 116, State House, Boston, MA 02133.

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. It is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect historic and archaeological resources in this country. Properties listed in the National Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture.

A property listed on the National Register of Historic Places does not place any restrictions on the way an owner handles their property, given there is no state or federal involvement in a project and no pertinent local or regional regulations. It is a federal designation and provides national recognition that the area, noting significance to the history of the community, state, or nation. National Register Districts are often confused with Local Historic Districts; however, they are far less effective preservation tactics. Designation as a National Register District has benefits such as qualifying property owners for state and federal preservation grants or making certain tax incentives available for preservation, however it does not protect buildings and structures within the district from demolition or substantial alteration.

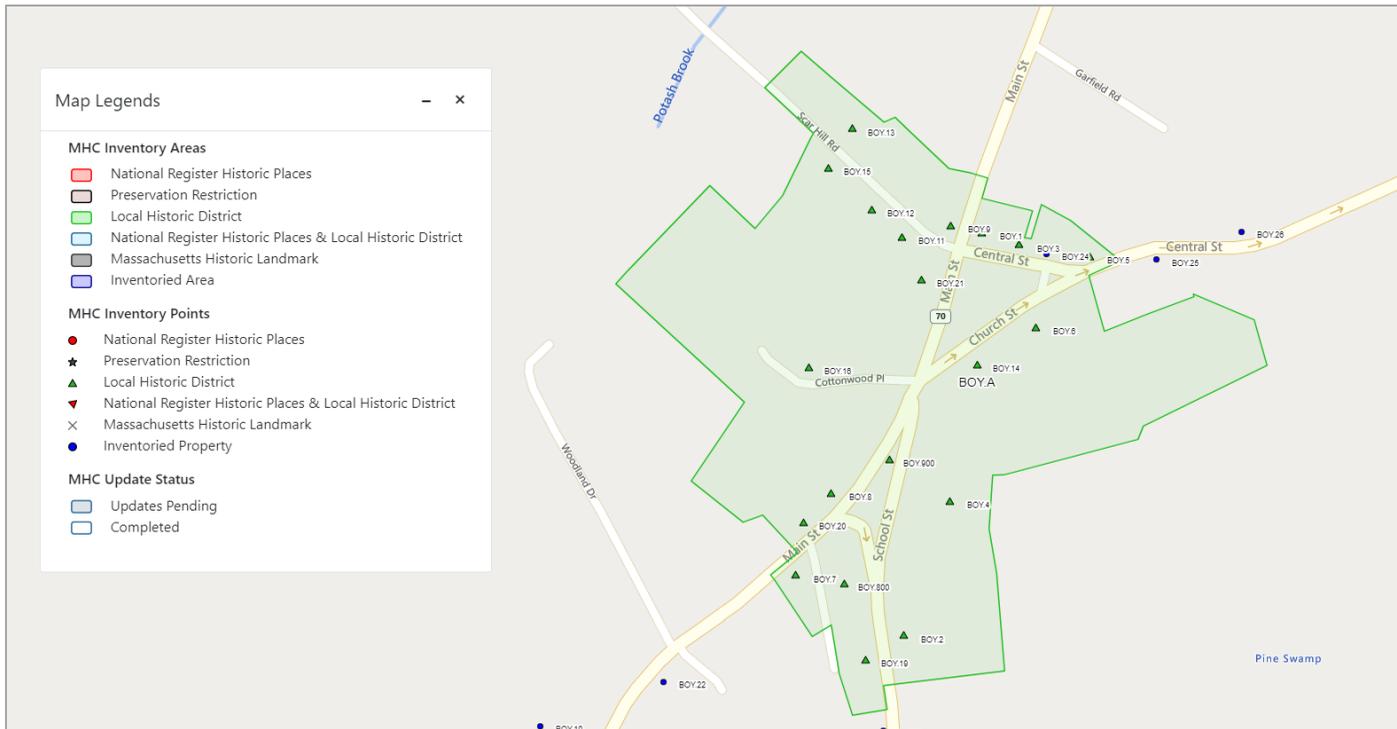
There are no National Register Districts located in Boylston. However, there are two National Register Individual Properties: the Deacon Cyprian Keyes House – Barlin Acres (1790) and the John B. Gough House (1848). The Deacon Cyprian Keyes House was designated in 1982, although much of Barlin Acres was demolished to make way for the construction of the Cyprian Keyes Club House. The John B. Gough House was designated in 1974 when it became a National Historic Landmark.

Local Historic Districts

A Local Historic District is a district designated by a local ordinance, which falls under the jurisdiction of a local historic preservation review commission. This designation protects the significant properties and the historic character of the district, encouraging sensitive development through a design review process. A Historic Commission approves major changes planned for properties within the district boundaries and issues Certificates of Appropriateness to allow proposed changes to take place. As stated in M.G. Chapter 40C, Local Historic Districts serve three major purposes: 1) to preserved and protect the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant in the history of the Commonwealth and its cities and towns, 2) to maintain and improve the settings of those buildings and places, and 3) to encourage new designs compatible with existing buildings in the district.

Boylston has one local historic district – Boylston Center Historic District. There are 21 historic properties listed within the boundaries of this district (see Map CH2 and Table CH5). The town's Local Historic District was designated in 1979. Owners of the properties in this district seeking alterations to exterior architectural features of buildings must file an application with the Boylston Historic District Commission, who consider the appropriateness of proposed changes. The Bylaws of Boylston Historic District include the powers and duties of the Historic Commission as well as guidelines and exceptions to review authority.

Map CH2: Boylston Center Historic District Boundaries



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Table 5: Properties within the Boylston Center Historic District (MACRIS)

Property Name	Street	Year
Historic Town Hall	Central St	1830
Bond Corner Store	1 Central St	1929
Winchester, H. House	15 Central St	R 1805
Boylston First Congregational Church	Church St	1927
First Congregational Church Parsonage	Church St	1950
Abbott Tavern	4 Church St	C 1805
Cotton, Rev. Ward House	Cottonwood Pl	C 1800
Sawyer Memorial Library	Main St	1904
Boylston Old Burial Ground	Main St	1745
Boylston Powder House Marker	Main St	1972
Stratton, Phineas House	644 Main St	C 1849
Taylor Tavern	651 Main St	C 1760
Taylor, David - White, Aaron Tavern Ell	661 Main St	C 1770
Hastings, Silas Tavern	701 Main St	1818
	1 Scar Hill Rd	C 1925
Boylston Telephone Exchange	5 Scar Hill Rd	R 1925
Bigelow Parsonage	9 Scar Hill Rd	1873
Andrews, Capt. John T. House	10-12 Scar Hill Rd	C 1859
Fairbanks, Rev. Eleazor House	5 School St	1779
Chinnery, Dr. Thaddeus - Bigelow, Rev. Andrew House	15 School St	1793
Glazier, Calvin House	16 School St	C 1770

Source: MACRIS, 2022

National Historic Landmarks Program

A National Historic Landmark is a building, district, object, site, or structure that is officially recognized by the United States government for its outstanding historical significance. Each Landmark demonstrates exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archaeology, technology, and culture. Out of over 90,000 places listed on the National Register of Historic Places, only about 2,600 are recognized as National Historic Landmarks. The Program relies on the guidance of National Park Service staff throughout the nomination process and works with citizens to assist existing Landmarks. The United States Secretary of the Interior designated these historic places because they are:

- Sites where events of national historical significance occurred.
- Places associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in U.S. history.
- Icons of ideals that shaped the nation.
- Outstanding examples of design or construction.
- Places characterizing a way of life.
- Archaeological sites able to yield information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures or shedding light upon periods of occupation over large areas of the U.S.

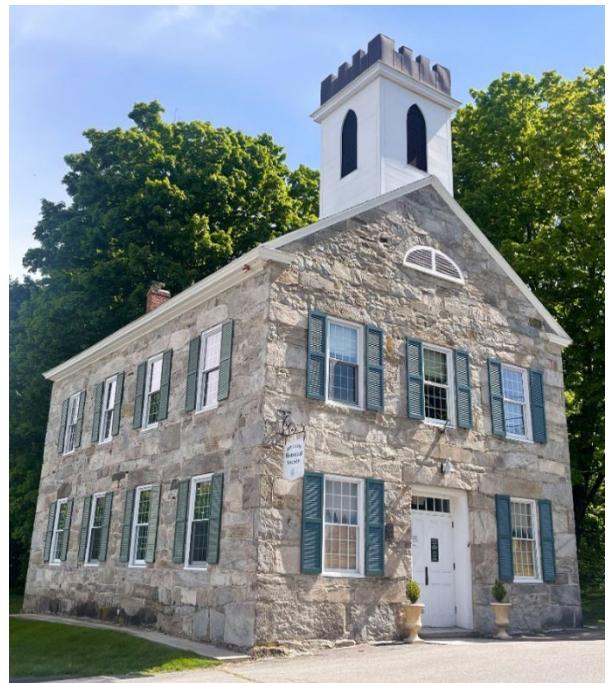
There is one National Historic Landmark located in Boylston- the John B. Gough House. The historic estate set on the hilltop at 221 Main Street was constructed by social reformer and temperance orator John Bartholomew Gough in 1848. The house was occupied by Gough for 38 years, while he built a career as a nationally renowned orator, delivering at least 9,600 lectures to more than 9 million people in his lifetime. The John B. Gough House was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1974, and in 2011 the Hillside Restoration Project and the Town applied to the Secretary of the Interior to expand the National Landmark status to include the remaining barn on the property.

Cultural and Historic Destinations

Historic Town Hall

An impressive stone edifice in the town's historic center, the Historic Town Hall was constructed in 1830 as Boylston's first Town Hall and now is one of the oldest town halls in Massachusetts that continues to serve the public. Proceeds from a grant by Ward Nicholas Boylston made construction of this municipal building possible, however Ward Boylston died before the ashlar granite building was constructed. In 1840, the Town voted to purchase a 1,000-pound bell, which was brought by ox-driven cart from East Medway and placed in a small belfry on top of the building. A foundational aspect of the community, over the years the Historic Town Hall has been used for municipal offices, school classes, religious services, a library, police department, plus hosting local theater groups.

The building remains actively available for public use, hosting civic and private organizations that include the Boylston Historical Commission, local chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club, Hillside Restoration Group, and Boylston Historical Society and Museum. The Fuller Research Library is located downstairs. A large hall with original stage, serving as a meeting place for townspeople and museum of rotating exhibits, is on the second floor. The bell in the bell tower is rung on special holidays. The Historical Commission is tasked with overseeing the operations and management of the Historic Town Hall.



*Photo: Historic Town Hall
Photo Credit: CMRPC*

Sawyer Memorial Library

Boylston’s public library is a significant cultural and historical resource to residents. The Boylston Social Library was founded in 1792 as a private organization, however in 1880 its librarian, George L. Wright, persuaded the members to donate their collection to the town and start a public library. Prior to having its own building, the library was in the current Historic Town Hall, then the Town Hall. In 1904, the Sawyer Memorial Library was constructed out of field stone on the site where the second meeting house of Boylston’s Congregational Church stood between 1793 and 1835, followed by the second Centre School House, built in 1841. Spanning 4,000 square feet, the Craftsman-style library was designed by architects Fuller & Delano of Worcester, using funding provided by Miss Salome E. White of Brooklyn, NY in memory of her mother, Mrs. Harriet Sawyer White of Sawyer’s Mills.

Now more commonly known as the Boylston Public Library, the library is the social, cultural, and educational hub for locals. The library offers many innovative programs, book and media collections, and technology to its patrons. Its mission is to foster a lifelong love of learning through the provision of cultural, educational, and recreational resources. A three-phase renovation of the existing library was decided by the Library Trustees in 2009, following failure of a March 2008 town vote to construct a new library at Hillside. This renovation included ADA compliant features, a remodel of the Children’s Room, upgrades to infrastructure, parking lot expansion, roof replacement, chimney removal, and more.

Boylston Common

Early European settlements in New England typically had a meeting house and the common became the place specifically reserved for these places of worship and public affairs. When settlements grew in population and people constructed homes and businesses adjacent to the common, it became the center of town. The Boylston Common provides a glimpse into the early days of the town, with over twenty historical structures surrounding the beautifully landscaped open space.

The first Boylston Common was located on the northern side of the Old Burial Ground, approximately one-tenth of a mile south of the present common. This common saw the development of Boylston’s First Meeting House, Old Burial Ground, Hearse House, first schoolhouse, Taylor Tavern and Store, and First Noon House. Upon construction of the Second Meeting House in 1793, the site of present-day Sawyer Memorial Library, the area known now as Boylston Common was deemed the “New Common.” This area featured the second Noon House, Third and Fourth Meeting Houses, Town Hall, Center (Corner) Store, and residences. In the early 1900’s, Boylston Common was the bustling center of the town, hosting two general stores, a millinery shop, post office, public library, Town Hall, and the meeting house.

Today, the Boylston Town Common serves as the center of festivities and celebrations in town, a public space that unites the town. The gazebo, which underwent reconstruction in 2020, is a lovely feature of the landscape that is a point of pride for residents.

Hillside and John B. Gough House

John Bartholomew Gough was a well-known social reformer and temperance orator who captivated audiences with exuberant emotional appeals, speaking against the consumption of alcoholic beverages and emphasizing alcohol’s negative effects of people’s health, personalities, and family lives. In 1843 he married his second wife, Mary Elizabeth Whitcomb, and built the two-story farmhouse in Italianate style in 1848.

The house has a roughly square plan with three bays on each side, with a flat roof and square belvedere on top. A wide porch spans the front of the building and additions have been added to the rear of the house. Gough’s working farm was named Hillside and a scenic roadway lined with elm trees interspersed with syringa bushes led to the house. Hillside was visited by many, including a former U.S. president, clergymen, artists, politicians, and temperance leaders. Gough lived in his Boylston residence for the



Photo: John B. Gough Estate at Hillside
Photo Credit: CMRPC

major portion of his oratorical career, from 1848 until his death in 1886.

After Gough's death, the house was purchased by William J. Hogg, owner of the Crompton Carpet Company in Worcester, and served as the campus of the Shepherd Knapp School for much of the 20th century. The John B. Gough Farm was purchased in 1930 by George F. Fuller, the president of the Wyman-Gordon Co. Noted for its historical significance, the house was declared a National Historic Landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

Hillside Farm is municipally owned and consists of the John B. Gough House, a horse barn, carriage house, and 12.56 acres of landscape features under a preservation restriction. The farm also features the foundation of a former springhouse, a structure uncommon in New England, built into the sloping hillside. The fieldstone foundation includes three chambers divided by cross wall supports and was historically used for keeping spring water clean as well as refrigeration for food that would otherwise spoil.

Hillside Farm sits within the larger Hillside Park, a 293.6 acres Town-owned site that hosts municipal offices, public safety, recreation fields and facilities, and open space. Much local momentum has been dedicated to preservation and restoration efforts of Hillside Farm. The Hillside Restoration Project is a non-profit organization dedicated to the full restoration and adaptive reuse of the estate, envisioning Hillside as a self-sustaining, multi-use facility that integrates culture, history, nature, and recreation. A master plan has been recommended for Hillside to establish a shared vision for future use of this importance resource.



Old Burial Ground. Photo Credit: CMRPC

Old Burial Ground

Located at the intersection of Main and School Streets in the town's historic center, the Old Burial Ground dates to 1742, following the town's incorporation as the North Precinct of Shrewsbury. Many of Boylston's prominent historical figures are buried here, including Captain Robert Andrews, Commander of the town's Minutemen in 1775; Dr. Samuel Brigham, Paymaster on the staff of General George Washington; Henry Keyes, the town's only veteran of the French and Indian War; Reverend Ebenezer Morse, the first minister of the North Parish and a prominent Tory during the American Revolutionary War; and the graves of many men who served in the French and Indian War, Revolutionary War, and War of 1812. By the 1830's, the two-acre Burial Ground was approaching its limits, leading to the establishment of Pine Grove Cemetery off Scar Hill Road in 1837. Subsequently, only occasional burials took place in the Old Burial Ground.

The Boylston Old Burial Ground is included in the boundaries of the Boylston Center Historic District, aiding its preservation for years to come. In 2010, a full photographic survey was completed with grave photographs and transcriptions available online. Only two gravestones were unidentifiable in this survey.

Issues and Opportunities

Preservation and maintenance of historic properties and cultural destinations proves to be an ongoing challenge for residents, but a battle that has countless merits. Small communities like Boylston often struggle to allocate adequate resources to protect their historic resources. Particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, when many businesses and families are struggling to get back on their feet, the allocation of town funding and staff time towards preservation efforts may be a controversial topic. There are many tools that Boylston can utilize to provide supplemental assistance

in ensuring historic and cultural resources are preserved. The Town's leaders and residents should thoughtfully consider the various opportunities to address preservation challenges.

Community Planning Tools

Demolition Delay Bylaw

Demolition delay ordinances or bylaws are tools for communities to protect historic buildings and structures. Enacted by a majority vote at Town Meeting, a demolition delay ordinance or bylaw provides a review procedure requiring a delay in the demolition of historically significant buildings. This process provides a period in which Towns can consider alternatives to demolition of historic buildings and structures. During this process of establishing a demolition delay bylaw, the Local Historical Commission collaborates with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) to develop a bylaw that would appropriately fit the Town's needs. The town's Historical Commission should also work with other local groups to coordinate public education outreach and widely publicize the advantages of a demolition delay bylaw to the community. Typically, demolition delay bylaws apply to structures that were built over 50 years ago. The most common delay of demolition is six months, although many communities have discovered that a 1-year delay is more effective. This is a tool that can help temporarily protect structures with historic value but not completely impede development options. Boylston should explore the adoption of a Demolition Delay Bylaw that will extend time for concerned parties to consider alternatives to demolition.

Local Historic District

Local Historic Districts, as defined in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40C, are some of the most effective ways to prevent inappropriate alterations to historically significant buildings. If a property owner wishes to make changes to exterior architectural features visible to public view, then the locally appointed Historic District Commission must review the proposed changes. A public hearing is held by the locally appointed Historic District Commission to determine whether the changes are suitable. To assist property owners within Local Historic Districts, many Historic District Commissions opt to prepare Historic District Design Guidelines.

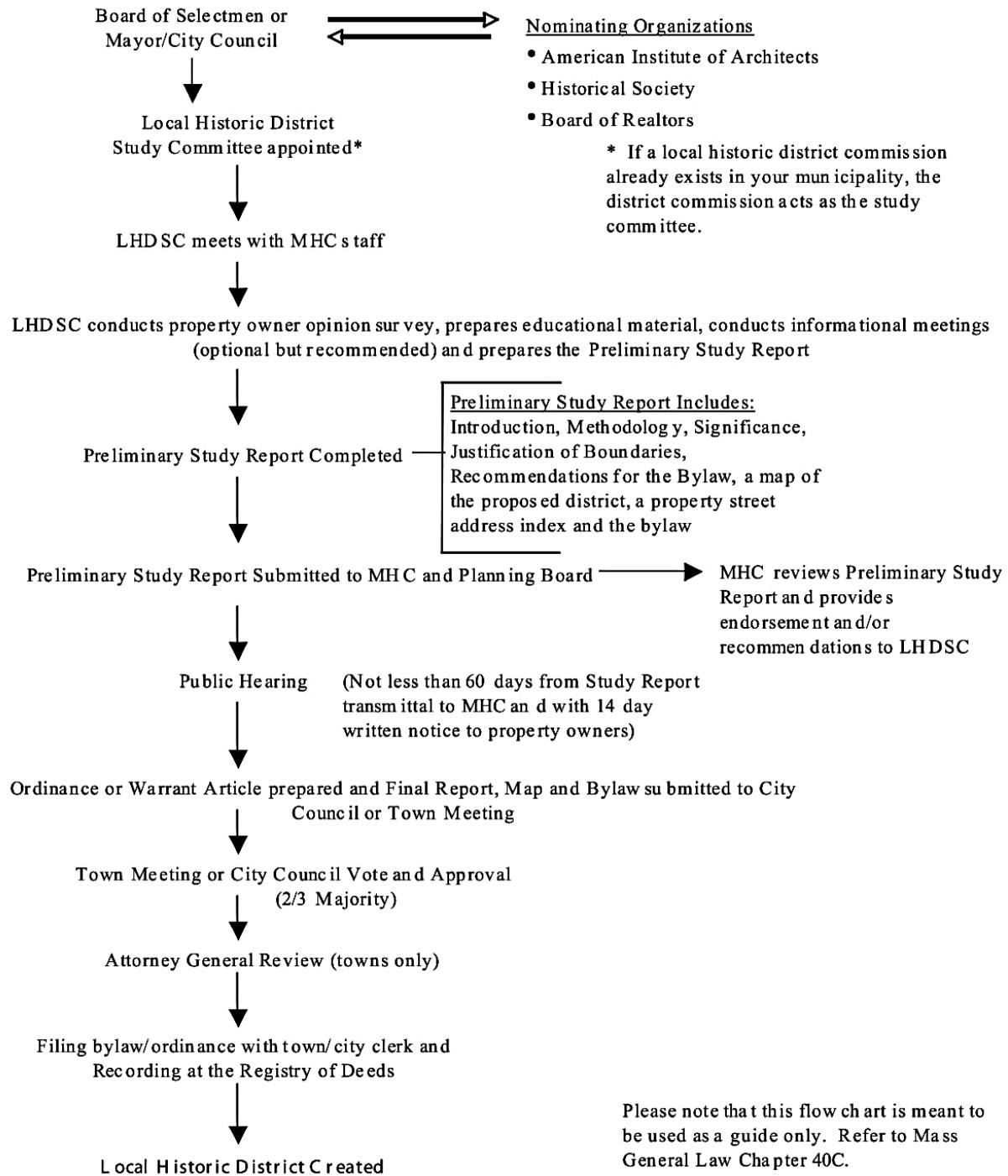
Boylston currently has one local historic district, as previously described in this chapter, called the Boylston Center Historic District. A Historic District Commission exists to review proposed changes to exterior architectural features of buildings within the district boundaries. Seven community members appointed by the Select Board serve on the Historic District Commission. The Historic District Bylaws are easily available for the public to read and can be located on the Town of Boylston website.

The town is encouraged to pursue additional local historic districts. Sizes of districts can vary greatly, and communities are even permitted to establish single building districts, though it is generally more desirable to protect the character of a larger surrounding area. The existing Historic District Commission would be responsible for leading the process, which begins with research and a preliminary report on the historical and architectural significance of the buildings, structures, or sites to be included in the proposed district. Subsequently, a public hearing is required to be held prior to the vote at Town Meeting, giving residents the opportunity to ask questions or voice concerns. Following the public hearing, a final report with the district map and proposed bylaw must be submitted for consideration to Town Meeting. Staff at the Massachusetts Historical Commission is available to tour the proposed district, review the historic district process, answer questions, and provide materials to aid the process at any point. The steps are detailed in Figure CH1.

It is important to note that when a Local Historic District is created, there are many proposed changes that are exempt from review, including review of interior and a variety of external features (i.e., HVAC units, storm doors, storm windows, paint color, and temporary structures). The decision on which features are exempt from review depends on how the local bylaw or ordinance is written and voted on at Town Meeting.

Figure CH1: Steps to Establishing a Local Historic District

Establishing a Local Historic District Flow Chart



Source: Massachusetts Historical Commission, 2022

Preservation Restriction

Defined in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter, 184 Section 31, a Preservation Restriction (PR) is a voluntary legal agreement that protects a significant historic, archaeological, or cultural resource from changes that may be inappropriate. It assures that an historic or culturally significant property's intrinsic values will be preserved by present and future owners by restricting the demolition or alteration of its significant historic features. A PR must be filed at the Registry of Deeds and runs with the property. While PRs typically focus on exterior architectural features, they may also address any significant interior spaces. Preservation Restrictions offer protection of a historic property or site for a term of years or in perpetuity.

At the core of a PR is the Grantor's Covenants, where the owner of the property agrees to maintain the building exterior in good repair consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, which are federal standards that define appropriate treatment of historic properties. A Preservation Restriction may be held by any governmental body or charitable corporation or trust capable of acquiring interests in land and whose purposes include historic preservation. Local Historical Commissions are empowered to hold preservation restrictions under the state's Historic District Act; however, they cannot hold a PR on a town-owned property. Those who want to use a working model to establish a Preservation Restriction can utilize the Massachusetts Historical Commission long form template, available in its Guidebook on Preservation Restrictions.

Community Preservation Act

Codified as Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44B, the Community Preservation Act (CPA) is available to communities that want to protect their open space and historic sites, create affordable housing options, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. CPA funds are generated through two sources: a voter-approved surcharge of up to three percent on annual real estate taxes, and an annual disbursement from the statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund administered by the Department of Revenue, which distributes funds each year to communities that have adopted CPA. At least 10% of the annual revenues must be used for each of the three core areas: 1) open space, 2) historic resources, and 3) affordable housing. The remaining 70% can be used for any combination of the above uses as well as recreational uses.

Scenic Roads Bylaw

A Scenic Roads Bylaw is a preservation planning tool that helps communities preserve the scenic, historic, and aesthetic characteristics of the public right-of-way. This regulatory tool can help Boylston maintain its small-town character. Roads that are designated as "scenic roads" by the town and approved at Town Meeting require additional review and protection regarding actions like tree removal, stone wall removal, or other significant alterations within the public right-of-way. Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 15C states that if a city or town passes a bylaw in accordance with the Scenic Roads Act, the cutting or removal of trees, or the altering or removal of stone walls within a road right-of-way, requires prior written consent of the planning board, select board, or city council.

Roads could be designated as a scenic road based on the following criteria:

- Overall scenic beauty and view from the roadside
- Contributions of trees to scenic beauty
- Contributions of stone walls to scenic beauty or prevalence of historic stone walls along the right-of-way
- Age and historic significance of road, trees, or stone walls



Photo: Stone wall along a Scenic Road.

Photo Credit: CMRPC

A bylaw will establish the process and criteria for designating roads as scenic roads, the types of work on trees or stone walls that will require hearings, the process for conducting hearings, the criteria for approving proposed work, and how the bylaw will be enforced. The town may develop a bylaw that is appropriate for Boylston's needs.

Other means of managing change along historic roads include a Scenic Vista Protection Bylaw, Scenic Overlay District, or Corridor Overlay Protection Bylaw.

Historic Resources Survey

In Massachusetts, historic resources of a community are documented on inventory forms developed by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). There are eight different forms, depending on the kind of historic resource (areas, buildings, objects, archaeological sites, burial grounds, structures, streetscapes, or parks and landscapes). While these forms were formerly prepared by community volunteers, today they are prepared by consultants such as professional architectural historians. Survey work today considers all a community's historic resources, not limited to buildings, but resources developed by all the peoples who have lived in the area. Survey forms can provide information for planning projects beyond just historic preservation as many community planning initiatives, development projects, and even roadwork projects deal with historic resources.

Communities are encouraged to update their historic resources surveys. Surveys do not need to be updated all at one time. For many communities, hiring a consultant to prepare a survey plan can be helpful and there is funding available through the MHC Survey and Planning Grant Program (a 50/50 reimbursable matching grant) for this endeavor. Communities should contact MHC prior to completing and submitting new or updated inventory forms.

Summary of Goals and Strategies

1. Goal: Preserve and maintain Town-owned historic assets.
 - a. Objective: Continue to evaluate, prioritize, and fund maintenance and preservation of historic assets using timely and proactive measures.
 - i. Action Item: Continue routine maintenance activities and funding for Town-owned historic properties.
 - ii. Action Item: Create a plan and fund restoration of the Old Burial Ground
 - iii. Action Item: Create a plan and fund restoration of the slate roof on Sawyer Memorial Library
 - iv. Action Item: Create a Master Plan for the Hillside property.
 - b. Objective: Encourage fluid communication and collaboration among local preservation groups.
 - i. Action Item: Continue to integrate and encourage participation of private and public preservation organizations
2. Goal: Encourage preservation of privately-owned historic assets.
 - a. Objective: Educate property owners on the benefits of Preservation Restrictions
 - i. Action Item: Develop literature outlining the parameters of Preservation Restrictions and the environmental benefits of conserving resources with preservation of existing structures; then utilize the town website and social media platforms to share the information.
3. Goal: Utilize protective regulatory and planning tools in key areas of Town to enhance the community's rich heritage.
 - a. Objective: Ensure protection of historically significant structures
 - i. Action Item: Explore adoption of a Demolition Delay Ordinance or Bylaw to protect historic and architecturally significant buildings from demolition.
 - ii. Action Item: Educate the public about the benefits of Local Historic Districts and continue to identify any historic buildings or areas that could be designated.
 - iii. Action Item: Educate Town leaders on the significance of historic preservation and ways to address preservation issues.

4. Goal: Ensure there are adequate cultural opportunities for Boylston residents and visitors.
 - a. Objective: Enhance public access to historic resources and information.
 - i. Action Item: Continue to maintain and update a publicly accessible, comprehensive inventory of the town's historic resources including the historic artifacts, properties, structures, districts, burial grounds, and any other notable features of Boylston's history.
 - ii. Action Item: Continue to maintain the digitized historical records relevant to Boylston and continue providing online access to them.
 - iii. Action Item: Continue to encourage community research to fill in gaps of Boylston's history, such as identifying unknown people in photographs.
 - b. Objective: Expand community outreach initiatives related to the town's cultural and historical resources.
 - i. Action Item: Continue to sponsor activities such as guided community tours, self-guided walking tours, history days, farmer's markets, concerts, community theater, etc. to attract visitors and build appreciation for local history and culture.
 - ii. Action Item: Incorporate a "How to Get Involved" section into the Boylston Town website that details volunteer opportunities and contact information.
 - c. Objective: Promote the community's local identity and foster a sense of place.
 - i. Action Item: Utilize new wayfinding signage, enhanced gateway features, and other beautification or place-making projects.
 - ii. Action Item: Boost the Town's presence on social media networks to communicate local news, events, and updates to residents.