

July 30, 2012

NOTICE OF HEARING
Proposed Westwood Avenue Historic District Designation
Public Information Session – August 8, 2012
Formal Public Hearing – September 12

Dear Property Owner:

We are writing to inform you that your property has been proposed for designation by the Westwood Historic Commission (WHC) as part of the Westwood Avenue Historic District. You are part of a community of owners whose properties represent an important part of the Borough's historic legacy that merits preservation.

Following historic district designation of your property, the WHC would be reviewing any proposals for demolitions or exterior building alterations that fall outside of "ordinary maintenance and repair" in order to ensure their appropriateness within the district. The WHC, which serves in an advisory capacity to the Planning Board, recognizes the need for owners to adapt and update their commercial spaces for themselves and/or existing and future tenants so it is committed to making recommendations that reconcile programmatic needs with preservation objectives so long as they are consistent with the borough's Historic Preservation Ordinance. Please note that alterations proposed for a building's interior do not fall within the WHC's purview so long as the proposed changes will not affect the building's exterior.

Regarding the process for designation, the WHC will be holding a public information session on August 8th which will entail a presentation of the proposed Westwood Avenue Historic District followed by a forum in which property owners and the public-at-large will have an opportunity to comment in support of or against the proposed designation. This will be followed by a public hearing on September 12th in which the public will once again have an opportunity to testify, followed by a vote by the WHC to designate the district. In the event of passage of the WHC's resolution, the Borough Planning and Zoning boards will have an opportunity to comment on the resolution before it is heard by the Westwood Borough Council for a final vote.

Here are the specifics regarding the WHC public information meeting and hearing:

Public Information Meeting: August 8 at 7:30
Westwood Borough Hall Council Chamber, 101 Washington Avenue, 2nd Floor
Designation Hearing: September 12 at 7:30
Westwood Community Center, 55 Jefferson Avenue

The Westwood Avenue Historic District designation report is available to review online at www.westwoodnj.gov or, for those who do not have internet access, in person at the Municipal Complex, located at 101 Washington Avenue. In addition, if you would like additional information on what it means to be designated, please refer to our brochure, "Do you Own an Historic Westwood Property?" which, together with Westwood's Historic Preservation Ordinance, is also available online at the Borough's website.

In terms of benefits, studies have shown that property values rise faster in historic districts than in non-designated areas, owing to the "curb appeal" of the sense of place secured by district protection.

Accordingly, it is within every property owner's interests to embrace historic district designation as a tool of enhancing neighborhood character and promoting economic development. Also, as part of the WHC's efforts to encourage responsible and appropriate changes to designated properties, it has partnered with the Borough Council to produce legislation that entitles owners of designated properties to a fee waiver when filing building department applications for changes to their buildings within a district. It is anticipated that this will represent a substantial savings to the district's property owners over time.

We hope you share our interest in preserving the borough's heritage through the designation of the Westwood Avenue Historic District and invite you to contact us at historiccommission@westwoodnj.gov if you have any questions in advance of this meeting and hearing.

Very truly yours,

The Westwood Historic Commission