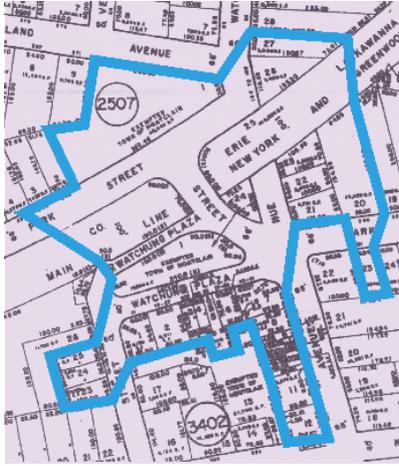


Watching Plaza has served the neighborhood surrounding the Watchung Avenue Station since 1918 and is integral to the history of Montclair's growth during the 20th century. In an effort to capitalize on the resources which reflect elements of Montclair's cultural, social, and architectural history, as well as to foster civic pride in the history and architecture of the Township, the Montclair Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) would like to recognize the historic architectural integrity and aesthetic of Watchung Plaza through the designation of a local historic district.



what is a LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT?

A local historic district is an area recognized for the unique character and identity of its historic buildings. The purpose of a local historic district is to promote and protect local resources, even while the community is changing, and preserve the richness of the past while providing continuity with the present and future. Each local district is defined by buildings deemed significant to a city's cultural fabric and valued for their historical associations or architectural quality.

The district encompasses all of the buildings that contribute to the special and unique personality of a place.

"A restored downtown area and residential districts communicate to citizens that they live in a city that cares about itself and its residents."

Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation
Georgia Department of National Resources

One of the strongest qualities of local historic district designation is that each district is handled differently. Districts can be tailored to the specific needs and distinct identity of the community. Change is important to each city's evolution, as it ties past, present and future together and further indicates a healthy and lively community. Within a local historic district, residents and business owners are able to unite through pride and investment in their community to agree on development that both enhances their neighborhood and supports local commerce.

what are the ADVANTAGES?

As laid out by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, there are numerous advantages to establishing a local historic district:

- Local districts protect the investments of owners and residents. Buyers know that the aspects that make a particular area attractive will be protected over a period of time. Real estate agents in many cities use historic district status as a marketing tool to sell properties.
- Local districts encourage better design. It has been shown through comparative studies that there is a greater sense of relatedness, more innovative use of materials, and greater public appeal within historic districts than in areas without historic designations.
- Local districts attract visitors. A historic district that is aesthetically cohesive and well promoted can be a community's most important attraction. The retention of historic areas as a way to attract tourist dollars makes good economic sense.
- Local districts enhance a community's business recruitment potential. Companies frequently relocate to communities that offer their workers a higher quality of life, which is greatly enhanced by successful local preservation programs and stable historic districts.
- Local districts provide social and psychological benefits. A sense of empowerment and confidence develops when community decisions are made through a structured participatory process rather than behind closed doors or without public comment.

WHAT DO SOME 2,300 local historic districts HAVE IN COMMON?
 "a majority of its residents have decided they want to keep the look and feel of the place they call 'home'...
 LOCAL LEGISLATION is one of the BEST WAYS TO PROTECT the historic character of buildings, streetscapes, neighborhoods, and special landmarks..."
 -National Park Service, 2007

National Trust for Historic Preservation, "What Are the Advantages of Establishing a Historic District?"

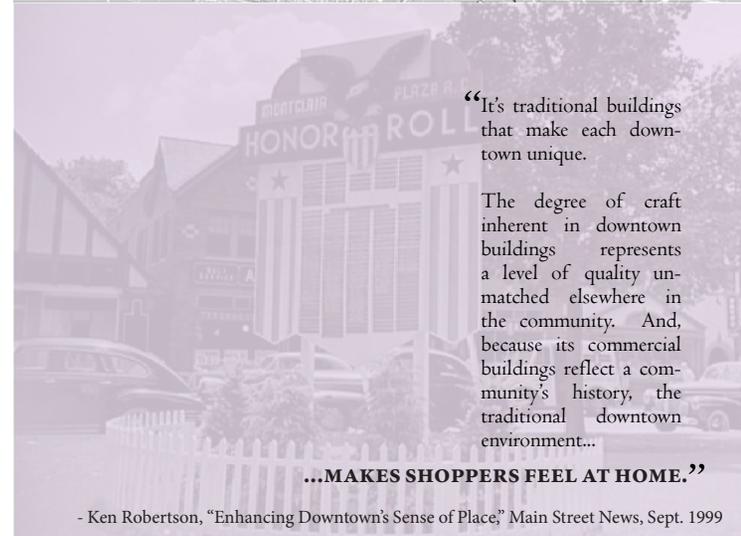
"The work that the HPC has done and continues to do in the Montclair Central Business District has maintained and elevated THE AESTHETIC STANDARDS of our District.

These improvements have INCREASED consumer appeal, tenant demand, and property values."

- Phil Cantor
President, Montclair Center Business Improvement District
President, Phil Cantor Photography

where are other MONTCLAIR HISTORIC DISTRICTS?

Historic Districts, Montclair Township, 2011 (<http://www.montclairnjusa.org/>)



"It's traditional buildings that make each downtown unique.

The degree of craft inherent in downtown buildings represents a level of quality unmatched elsewhere in the community. And, because its commercial buildings reflect a community's history, the traditional downtown environment...

...MAKES SHOPPERS FEEL AT HOME."

- Ken Robertson, "Enhancing Downtown's Sense of Place," Main Street News, Sept. 1999

why WATCHUNG PLAZA?

The Watchung Plaza Historic Business District is historically significant as a neighborhood shopping center that has served residents of the Watchung section since the early twentieth century. It is also significant for the unusual level of community involvement in its layout, design, and development. The district has additional significance in the area of architecture for the English cottage-style design of many of its buildings. It also has associations with two noteworthy architects, Clifford C. Wendehack and Arthur Ramhurst.



WATCHUNG STATION, C.1910
(MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY PHOTOGRAPH DATABASE)



WATCHUNG PLAZA, c.1906
(ELLIS KISER, ATLAS OF ESSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY)



PARK STREET PLAZA, C.1918
(MONTCLAIR TIMES, 15 JUNE 1918)

The Watchung Plaza Historic Business District

developed around the Watchung Avenue Station of the Erie Railroad during the early twentieth century. Most of the buildings and the two parks that define its center – Watchung Plaza Park and Watchung Park – were erected between 1918 and 1925. This development occurred as a response to citizen outcry over a proposed store and apartment building located on the east side of the railroad station, where Watchung Plaza Park is now located. Residents banded together, forming the Watchung Improvement Association to advocate for attractive development near the station and improvements throughout the Watchung section of Montclair.

Architect Clifford C. Wendehack, an Upper Montclair resident best known for his designs for golf clubhouses, prepared an alternative development plan for Watchung Plaza on behalf of the Watchung Improvement Association. The plans included the parks on either side of the station and the commercial strip on Watchung Plaza, as well as improvements to the train station that were never realized. He designed the building at the southeast corner of Watchung Avenue and Watchung Plaza as a blueprint for the English cottage-style development desired by the Association.

By about 1930, the development of the Watchung Plaza Historic Business District was complete. During its early years, the businesses in the district supplied commuters and local residents with groceries, dry goods, hardware, and a variety of services, including barbers, hairdressers, and laundries. As the twentieth century progressed, the district's businesses provided more specialty goods and services, as well as a growing number of restaurants, to meet the changing demands of modern society.

The Montclair Historic Preservation Commission will consider the proposed designation of Watchung Plaza as a local landmark district after a period of public outreach and comment, culminating in a hearing on the application. The Commission will then forward its recommendations to the Township Council and Planning Board for action.

For additional information regarding the designation of the Watchung Plaza Historic Business District, please contact:

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WATCHUNG PLAZA

TOWNSHIP OF MONCLAIR, NEW JERSEY

THE MAKING OF A
HISTORIC DISTRICT

