

LOWER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL MARKER PROGRAM

Mission Statement

The Lower Gwynedd Township Historical Marker Program is designed to highlight important aspects of township history to increase residents' sense of pride of place, to support cultural tourism throughout the county and region, to educate the public, and to encourage the public to preserve historic resources.

Program Administration

Lower Gwynedd Township will administer the historical marker program. Through ordinance, the Board of Supervisors will enable the program and hold the final decision on the placement or removal of markers.

The township's Historical Committee/Commission will set up a framework for vetting proposed marker submissions, receive and review submissions from the public, and make recommendations for approval to the Board of Supervisors. It will review criteria, set priorities, and assess the progress of the program. It will also review the accuracy and integrity of the marker text in consultation with nominators and local historical organizations.

Effort will be made to consult and coordinate with, where appropriate, the State Historic Preservation Office, state and regional tourism entities, and PennDOT on issues related to verifying historical significance; establishing special initiatives for topics/themes; signage design, placement and maintenance; creation of an inventory of existing historical marker signs.

Once established, the Historical Committee/Commission may make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors to update the terms of the program as necessary.

Submissions

The public (resident or non-resident), elected and appointed members of the Lower Gwynedd Township government or committees, and/or Lower Gwynedd Township staff may nominate a subject for a historical marker.

Eligibility Criteria

Subjects/themes of a proposed marker:

1. Must have direct connection to local history (specifically historical Gwynedd Township or modern Lower Gwynedd Township);
2. Should reference an event(s), place (building, structure, object, site, district, natural or cultural landscape), innovation, legend, person, or group/organization;
3. Should have had a significant impact on its time (and/or the present) or contributed significantly to regional, state, or national history with a specific connection to Lower Gwynedd Township; and
4. Should be sufficiently in the past that enough time has elapsed to evaluate its impact based on credible documentation and historical perspective.

Subjects/themes should meet specific criteria as appropriate:

- Events should date from at least 40 years in the past
 - For continuing events, must be historically established rather than of contemporary interest
- Places may include public or private buildings, structures, objects, sites, districts, and cultural and natural features/landscapes
 - These places may be extant, significantly altered, or no longer standing
 - A group of sites can be collectively argued to be significant under any of the criteria
- Legends and/or folklore should be based on relevant historical documentation and/or scholarship
- A person or group/organization may be a marker subject 20 years after their death or the group's dissolution
 - For continuing groups/organizations, must be historically established rather than of contemporary interest
 - Individual gravesites are not eligible for markers unless there are no other appropriate location associated with the person's productive life
 - Churches or religious sites are not eligible unless their significance is associated with broader themes in local history and culture

Special consideration for subjects/themes:

- Will be afforded for recognition of the historical hamlets of Lower Gwynedd Township
- Will be considered for places already recognized on a registry (e.g., National Register of Historic Places) or landmarks list
 - However, the place must meet the same criteria as other LGT historical markers, have adequate documentation, and will not receive preference or precedence among other marker submissions
- Marker candidates with state or national significance should be considered for a Pennsylvania state historical marker

Lower Gwynedd Township recognizes that continuing scholarship may help validate the subject's impact on its times or its significance from a more recent historical perspective. As such, marker submissions that are not accepted may be resubmitted after a period of two years from the most recent rejection for reconsideration.

Documentation

All subjects/themes nominated for a historical marker must be accompanied by relevant, authoritative, accurate, and verifiable documentation.

The burden of proof will be on the application's sponsor to provide documentary evidence demonstrating the significance of the proposed marker subject.

Documentation should include:

- A fact-based description of the subject/theme and its direct connection to historical Gwynedd Township or modern Lower Gwynedd Township
- An explanation of the subject/theme's historical importance to the township
- Footnotes that reference verifiable primary and secondary sources for facts and assertions presented to support the submission
- A map and photo of the site proposed for the marker; historical markers will be installed at the location of greatest historical significance related to subject/theme.
- Proposed text for the historical marker which will be reviewed (and may be altered) by the Historical Committee/Commission
- A clear and organized presentation that makes documentation verifiable by reviewers without undue burden

The Township may create and require specific paperwork related to the application process.

Review Process

Submissions will follow a standardized process recommended by the Historical Committee/Commission and approved by the Board of Supervisors.

- Submissions will be considered by the Historical Committee/Commission no less than twice yearly
- Submissions may be returned for clarification or to request additional information; the Historical Committee/Commission may return a submission with recommended changes prior to final consideration by the Committee/Commission
- Application sponsors are welcome to address the Historical Committee/Commission and should give advanced notice where possible in order to enable members to prepare questions
- Application sponsors may also be requested by the Historical Committee/Commission to appear/re-appear in advance of their submission's public review and/or approval to answer questions
- The Historical Committee/Commission will be given adequate time to verify the materials presented
- Marker submissions that do not win initial approval may be resubmitted; if the submission is denied twice, it may be resubmitted for reconsideration after a period of two years from the most recent rejection.

If a historical marker is approved by the Board of Supervisors, township staff will notify the application's sponsor, order the marker, and schedule the dedication ceremony.

Installation/Maintenance

Historical markers will be installed at the location of greatest historical significance related to subject/theme.

Markers should be placed in a safe location in the right of way as close to the significant event, place, or site as possible and appropriate. The Public Works Department will install the signage.

The Township will collaborate with private citizens, PennDOT, and/or other agencies to ensure the markers are properly maintained. Markers should be inspected annually and a report will be provided to the Historical Committee/Commission regarding any degradation.

Once installed, markers should be considered property of the Township and stealing a sign becomes a prosecutable offense.

Marker Retirement

Markers may be retired by Lower Gwynedd Township. Such requests come through the Historical Committee/Commission where a supermajority vote is needed to forward such a request to the Board of Supervisors.

Companion Web Site

LGT will develop a portion of its website with a map-based capacity to highlight the location of historic markers and print a limited number of self-guided tour brochures for markers.

[NOTES: PHMC says it suspended its historical marker program in late 2022 due to supply chain issues; individual markers and private markers are common, but there do not seem to be any county/local programs in PA though there are in New Jersey and other states; BOS would need to develop an enabling ordinance of some sort to root this as a township program and to justify maintenance, etc.)

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Program Administration

Lower Gwynedd Township will administer the historical marker program. The Historical Committee/Commission will set up a framework for vetting proposed marker nominations, receive and review nominations from the public, and make recommendations for approval to the Board of Supervisors. The BOS will make the final decision on any marker nominations forwarded to them from the Historical Committee/Commission.

The Historical Committee/Commission will also review criteria, set priorities, assess the progress of the program. It will also serve to review the marker text accuracy and integrity in consultation with local historical organizations.

Effort will be made to consult and coordinate with, where appropriate, the State Historic Preservation Office, state and regional tourism entities, and PennDOT on issues such as verifying significance, establishing special initiatives for topics, signage design, placement and maintenance, and maintaining an inventory of existing historical marker signs.

Nominations

The public (resident or non-resident), including elected and appointed members of the Lower Gwynedd Township government or committees, may nominate a subject for a historical marker.

Eligibility Criteria

1. The subject of the marker may include events, places, innovations, legends, persons or groups/organizations significant in Lower Gwynedd Township history or that contributed significantly to regional, state, or national history so long as there is a direct connection to Lower Gwynedd Township. The subject must have had a measurable impact on history and sufficient time has elapsed to evaluate that impact based on credible documentation. Places of state or national significance should be considered for a Pennsylvania state historical marker.

A. Events should date from at least 40 years in the past.

B. Places may include public or private buildings, structures, objects, sites, districts, and cultural and natural features/landscapes. Markers may be approved for buildings or structures that are either significantly altered or no longer standing.

They may be associated with: events significant in Lower Gwynedd Township history or contributed significantly to the broad pattern of regional, state, or national history; the lives of persons significant in our past; embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; or represents the work of a master; or possesses high artistic values; or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history; have important value to an ethnic group due to associations with past or present cultural practices at the property or due to associations with traditional beliefs, events or oral accounts (these associations being important to the group's history and cultural identity). But places nominated for a marker are not limited to those considerations (unless otherwise specified below). Special consideration will be afforded for recognition of the historical hamlets of Lower Gwynedd Township.

C. A person or group may be a marker subject 20 years after their death. The significance of their accomplishments must have had a measurable impact on history and sufficient time has elapsed to evaluate that impact based on credible documentation. The significance of the subject, particularly for continuing events and organizations, must be historically established rather than of contemporary interest.

D. Topics not eligible for markers include: individual gravesites; churches or religious sites, unless their significance is associated with broader themes in local history and culture.

E. Lower Gwynedd Township recognizes that continuing scholarship may help validate the subject's impact on its times or its significance from a more recent historical perspective.

F. A group of sites can be collectively argued to be significant under any of the criteria.

G. Listing on the State or National Register of Historic Places will be given special consideration for historical markers. However, they must meet the same criteria as other LGT historical markers and have adequate documentation.

Documentation

1. The burden of proof will be on the application's sponsor to provide documentary evidence demonstrating the significance of the proposed marker subject. The submission must include both primary and secondary source documentation for each fact presented to establish the significance of the marker subject. Nominations should demonstrate clearly the age and significance of the marker subject to Lower Gwynedd Township history.

2. Application should include a map and photo of the site proposed for the marker.

3. Application will include proposed text for the historical marker which will be reviewed and may be altered by the Historical Committee/Commission.

4. Nomination paperwork is clear and organized and includes thorough documentation (with selected photocopies and bibliographies from reliable primary and secondary sources) and verification of the facts claimed.

5. The Committee/Commission will be given adequate time to verify the materials presented.

6. Application sponsors are welcome to address the Historic Committee/Commission and should give advanced notice where possible in order to enable members to prepare questions. Sponsors may also be requested by the Committee/Commission to appear in advance of their nomination's approval.

Review Process

1. Submissions will follow a standardized process recommended by the Historic Committee/Commission and approved by the Board of Supervisors.

2. Submissions will be considered by the Historical Committee/Commission no less than twice yearly.

3. Submissions may be returned for clarification or to request additional information.

4. Nominated subjects reviewed and disapproved three times are not eligible for review for a period of five years from the most recent disapproval.

5. If approved by the Board of Supervisors, township staff will notify the application's sponsor, orders the marker, and schedule the dedication ceremony.

Installation/Maintenance

1. Markers should be placed in a safe location in the right of way as close to the significant event, place, or site as possible. The Public Works department will install the signage.

2. The Township will inspect all markers annually and provide a report to the Historic Committee/Commission regarding any degradation.

3. The Township will collaborate with private citizens, PennDOT, and/or other agencies to ensure the markers are properly maintained.

4. Once installed, markers should be considered property of the Township and stealing a sign becomes a prosecutable offense.

Retirement

Markers may be retired by Lower Gwynedd Township. Such requests come to the Historical Committee/Commission and upon a supermajority vote will be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors.

Companion Web Site

LGT will develop a portion of its web-site with a map-based capacity to highlight the location of historic markers and print a limited number of self-guided tour brochures for markers.

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Portions referenced from:

“Assessment of State Historical Marker Programs.” Preservation Partners.

<https://www.nj.gov/dca/njht/documents/publ/HistoricalMarkersFinal102307.pdf>

“Historical Marker Policy.” Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

<https://www.phmc.pa.gov/Preservation/About/Documents/Historical%20Marker%20Policy%20Adopted%2009092020.pdf>

Additional resources:

San Antonio Local Markers Program: <https://www.sanantonio.gov/historic/Local-Historical-Markers>  
(Which also has a crowd-sourced digital marker program)

## **Difference between a National Register Historic District and Local Historic District?**

A National Register District Identifies; a Local District Protects.

Both National Register district and locally designated historic districts can be used as effective preservation tools, either independently or together, to help preserve a community's historic resources. For example, the National Register program might be used as a convenient and credible way to identify a community's historic resources, followed by local district designation, which would further protect and enhance those resources through the process of design review. Conversely, a local survey to establish a local historic district might also be used as the basis for a National Register district nomination, which would afford additional preservation incentives, including rehabilitation tax credits, to properties protected in the local district. Local district designation might also be used to selectively protect portions of National Register districts considered especially significant to a community or subject to particularly strong development pressures. Local designation also might be afforded to an area larger than a National Register district to provide an even greater degree of protection to the historic resources within the National Register district.

Some communities' preservation needs may be met entirely with either a locally designated district or a National Register district; there are many examples in Georgia of both situations. Other communities may believe that a package involving both types of districts works best. Remember: local districts and National Register districts are different, but complementary, and can work effectively by themselves or together to meet a community's historic preservation needs.

***For further information, visit the [HPD website](#) or contact Olivia Head, National Register Specialist, at 770-389-7842 or [olivia.head@dnr.ga.gov](mailto:olivia.head@dnr.ga.gov).***

*The following is a detailed analysis of what both National Register districts and local historic districts are, and the ways in which they can be used as preservation planning tool.*

## National Register District

A National Register historic district is a historic district that is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is our country's official list of historic places worthy of preservation. It includes individual buildings, structures, sites, and objects as well as historic districts that are historically, architecturally, or archaeologically significant.

National Register listing recognizes the significance of properties and districts. By doing so, it identifies significant historic resources in a community. Boundaries of National Register districts are tightly drawn to encompass only concentrated areas of historic properties. Information compiled to nominate a historic district can be used in a variety of planning and development activities. National Register listing also makes available specific preservation incentives and provides a limited degree of protection from the effects of federally funded, licensed, or permitted activities.

The National Register is maintained by the U.S. Department of the Interior. In Georgia, the National Register program is administered by the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Natural Resources. Districts and other properties are listed in the National Register through a 17-step process that involves identification, documentation, and evaluation. National Register historic districts most commonly encompass central business districts, residential neighborhoods, industrial areas, rural areas, and occasionally, entire communities.

### ***A National Register District:***

- ◆ Identifies significant properties and districts for general planning purposes
- ◆ Analyzes and assesses the historic character and quality of the district
- ◆ Designates historic areas based on uniform national criteria and procedures
- ◆ Sets district boundaries tightly, based on the actual distribution pattern of intact historic properties in the area
- ◆ Makes available specific federal and state tax incentives for preservation purposes
- ◆ Provides a limited degree of protection from the effects of federally assisted undertakings
- ◆ Qualifies property owners for federal and state grants for preservation purposes, when funds are available
- ◆ Does not restrict the use or disposition of property or obligate private property owners in any way
- ◆ Does not require conformance to design guidelines or preservation standards when property is rehabilitated unless specific preservation incentives (tax credits, grants) are involved
- ◆ Does not affect state and local government activities
- ◆ Does not prevent the demolition of historic buildings and structures within designated areas

## Local Historic District

A local historic district is a district designated by a local ordinance, which falls under the jurisdiction of a local historic preservation review commission. A local historic district is generally “overlaid” on the existing zoning classifications in a community. Therefore, a local district commission deals only with the appearance of the district, not with the uses of those properties.

According to the 1980 Georgia Historic Preservation Act which makes such local designations possible, a local historic district is a “geographically definable area, urban or rural, which contains structures, sites, and/or works of art which have special historical or aesthetic interest or value; represent one or more periods or styles of architecture typical of one or more eras in the history of the municipality, county, state, or region; and cause that area to constitute a visibly perceptible section of the community.”

The designation of a local district protects the significant properties and the historic character of the district. It provides communities with the means to make sure that growth, development, and change take place in ways that respect the important architectural, historical, and environmental characteristics within a district. Local designation encourages sensitive development in the district and discourages unsympathetic changes from occurring. This happens through a process called design review, whereby the historic preservation commission approves major changes that are planned for the district and issues Certificates of Appropriateness which allow the proposed changes to take place.

### ***A Local Historic District:***

- ◆ Protects a community’s historic properties and areas through a design review process
- ◆ Protects the historic character and quality of the district with specific design controls
- ◆ Designates historic areas on the basis of local criteria and local procedures
- ◆ Sets district boundaries based on the distribution pattern of historic resources plus other preservation and community planning considerations
- ◆ Provides no tax incentives for preservation purposes unless such are provided by local tax law
- ◆ Provides no additional protection from the effects of federally assisted undertakings
- ◆ Does not qualify property owners for federal or state grants for preservation purposes
- ◆ Does not restrict the use to which property is put in the district or require property owners to make improvements to their property
- ◆ Requires local historic preservation commission review and approval, based on conformance to local design guidelines, before a building permit is issued for any “material changes” in appearance to the district
- ◆ Does not affect federal, state, or local government activities
- ◆ Provides for review of proposed demolitions within designated areas; may prevent or delay proposed demolitions for specific time periods to allow for preservation alternatives.

To: Board of Supervisors, Lower Gwynedd Township  
Fr: Matt Metcalf, Chair, LGT Historic Advisory Committee  
Da: 2023 April 20  
Re: Historical Markers Program



After opportunities for open public comment and committee discussion, the Historic Advisory Committee would like to recommend the following action(s) to the Board of Supervisors.

**Action(s):**

- Enable through ordinance a Historical Markers Program (proposed program attached)
- Provide annual funding for historical markers
- Promote the Historical Markers Program on the township's web site and social media

**Background:**

Historical markers serve as a form of visual recognition of places that have meaning to communities. Subjects of a marker may include events, places, innovations, legends, persons or groups/organizations of historical note or significance. The most familiar form of a marker in this region is the well-known large metal navy and gold keystone signs along major roadways placed by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

This proposal suggests creating a program by which Lower Gwynedd Township can place its own historical markers. The PHMC program (which is indefinitely paused) qualifies locations for signage based on their significance to *state* history; locally-significant places cannot be considered under the PHMC program.

Under this proposal, public or private buildings, structures, objects, sites, districts, and cultural and natural features/landscapes could all be marked. Markers could be approved for buildings or structures that are either significantly altered or no longer standing, so long as they have appropriate historical research to justify the placement of such signage and a direct connection to Lower Gwynedd Township history.

**Other relevant facts:**

- ✓ Historical markers are one of the most passive forms of historic preservation that a municipality can implement
- ✓ Placement of markers can be considered separately from landmarking, historical registry, or preservation planning efforts
- ✓ While most historical marker programs in the U.S. are run at the state level, county and municipal marker programs do exist

### **Demonstration of Need:**

The township currently has no historical marker program. As noted, the PHMC program is paused; per communications directly between the HAC Chair and the PHMC, it is unknown when the state program will return. Though not as widespread in Pennsylvania as in other states, there are no state laws governing (or preventing) the creation of local historical marker programs.

There has been notable feedback over the last several years offered to township leadership regarding a desire for a local historical marker program. Recently, advocates have expressed interest in social media, through email, and in person at BOS and HAC meetings, particularly regarding the need to recognize places that represent the diversity of histories present in the township.

### **Notes/Additional Resources:**

- ✓ Schultz, Ellen and Deborah Kelly. *Assessment of State Historical Marker Programs*. Preservation Partners. 2007.  
<https://www.nj.gov/dca/njht/documents/publ/HistoricalMarkersFinal102307.pdf>
- ✓ *Pennsylvania Historical Marker Program*. Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission. Accessed 2023.03.10. <https://www.phmc.pa.gov/Preservation/Historical-Markers/Pages/default.aspx>

Respectfully submitted,  
Matt Metcalf  
Chair, Historic Advisory Committee

**Attachment: HAC\_HistoricalMarkers2023.04.20.docx**

To: Board of Supervisors, Lower Gwynedd Township  
Fr: Matt Metcalf, Chair, LGT Historic Advisory Committee  
Da: 2023 April 20  
Re: Preservation & Conservation Easement Template



After opportunities for open public comment and committee discussion, the Historic Advisory Committee would like to recommend the following action(s) to the Board of Supervisors.

**Action(s):**

- Develop and make available to citizens a preservation and conservation easement template
- Authorize the Township Solicitor to develop such a template in conjunction with the Historic Advisory Committee
- Promote the availability of the template on the township's web site and social media once completed

**Background:**

Historic preservation easements are a legal tool to enable a property owner to preserve the character-defining features of a property in perpetuity. Easements are written into deeds and transfer certain specific property rights to a third-party.

According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, "...owners retain numerous rights to the property (for example, the right to live in, use, maintain, sell, or give away) but transfer other specific rights to the easement-holding organization. These transferred rights protect a historic property from activities that would be inconsistent with the preservation of the property, such as the demolition or inappropriate alteration of historic buildings, or the subdivision of surrounding land."

Kin to historic preservation easements are conservation easements, which are often focused on aspects of a cultural landscape (e.g. the area surrounding farm buildings) or a natural landscape (e.g. frontage to a river or creek), which is often associated with the idea of "open space."

Preservation and conservation easements are enabled by current Pennsylvania state law through the Conservation and Preservation Easements Act.

**Other relevant facts:**

- ✓ Easements may pertain to exterior, interior, or environmental features of a property
- ✓ Easements can protect properties not governed under local historic preservation ordinances
- ✓ Implementation does not require a property be formally recognized as "historic"
- ✓ Implementation is the choice of a given homeowner; subsequent homeowners are legally required to be made aware of any such easements prior to the purchase of a property

### **Demonstration of Need:**

Currently, Lower Gwynedd Township offers little oversight of privately-owned historic and historical properties. Development continues to alter the places important to LGT residents. Rather than seek to expand legal control or governance in a way that offers direct protection to these properties, the BOS can meet the needs of residents by encouraging consideration of easements, which would enable property owners to pursue their own preservation interests independently. A template would facilitate awareness and a cost-effective option for property owners.

### **Notes/Additional Resources:**

- ✓ *Easements to Protect Historic Property: A Useful Historic Preservation Tool with Tax Benefits*. National Park Service. Pamphlet.  
<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/brochure-easements-historic-properties.pdf>
- ✓ *Preservation Easements*. National Trust for Historic Preservation. Blog.  
<https://forum.savingplaces.org/learn/fundamentals/preservation-law/easements>
- ✓ Stark-Sachs, Jonathan. *Conflicts in Stewardship: A Survey of Historic Preservation Easement Practice*. Thesis.  
[https://docs.rwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=hp\\_theses](https://docs.rwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=hp_theses)

### **Examples:**

Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia: <https://ced.sog.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1176/2020/01/Historic-Easement.pdf>

National Park Service: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/easements-covenants-and-preservation-agreements.htm>

WeConserve PA: <https://conservationtools.org/guides/89-guide-to-the-conservation-and-preservation-easements-act>

Respectfully submitted,  
Matt Metcalf  
Chair, Historic Advisory Committee