

Guidelines for Preservation of Historic Landscapes, Streetscapes and the Built Environment in America's Most Historic Small Town

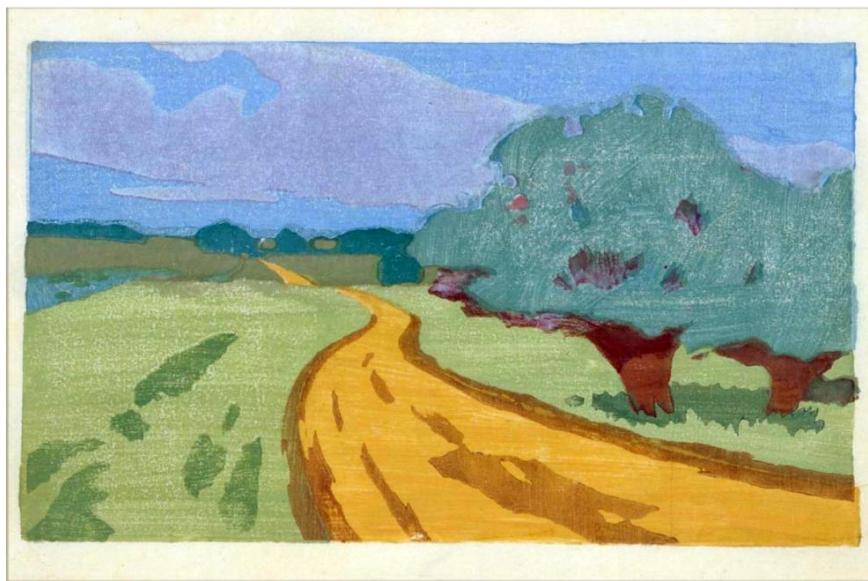
Ipswich Historical Commission, adopted March 13, 2023

Ipswich is rich in historic landscapes, including buildings, parks, roadways, paths, cemeteries, the River, and the natural environment. These features collectively contribute to the landscape's physical appearance as they have evolved over time.

Since the late 19th century, Market, Central and South Main Streets have been the Town's commercial hub, but the North Green has always served as its historic, religious and cultural center. Walkability and areas to sit and visit are essential where people gather, shop and connect. Sidewalks and other pedestrian ways should be safe and aesthetically pleasing, with pedestrian lights to provide illumination and add character to the location.

Careful planning prior to initiating of work can help prevent irrevocable damage to cultural and historic landscapes. A landscape may have several areas of historical significance. An understanding of the landscape as a continuum through history is critical in assessing its cultural and historic value.

Archeological resources should be considered whenever the Town, property owners or developers are planning projects that will involve excavation.



[Argilla Road, by Arthur Wesley Dow](#)

In May 1891, Ipswich native and renowned artist Arthur Wesley Dow appeared before the Ipswich Board of Trade and noted that *"Like other small towns near Boston, Ipswich seemed about to succumb to the god of expediency. Old houses were frequently removed, ancient trees reduced to lumber, and thoroughfares straightened and changed to streets."* He urged preservation of the rusticity that remained. Although old houses, trees, and curving roads were first on his list of endangered items, he

also advised that civic leaders should take an active role in artistic planting and landscaping. Today the rich cultural landscape of Ipswich is more threatened than ever by traffic, modernization, and the impact of large and intrusive housing developments. Going forward, public and private projects should be designed to provide an inclusive and welcoming environment while enhancing and preserving the Town's historic resources. Appendices supply links to information on national standards for preserving historic resources and provide definitions for key terms.



1838 Woodcut of lower N. Main Street by S. E. Brown

Ipswich Historic Districts

Historic Districts: Passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in 1966 established the National Register of Historic Places and a process for adding properties to it. If federal money or a federal permitting process is involved, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 is invoked. Section 106 requires the federal agency involved to assess the effect of its actions on historic resources. The director of the agency is required to "take into account the effect of the undertaking" on the National Register property, as well as to afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (AChP) a reasonable opportunity to comment. Six Ipswich neighborhoods are listed in the National Register:

- [Meeting House Green Historic District](#)
- [South Green Historic District](#)
- [East End Historic District](#)
- [High Street Historic District](#)
- [Ipswich Mills Historic District](#)
- [Brownville Stocking Mill Historic District](#)



The Choate Bridge

Archaeological /Historic Landmarks

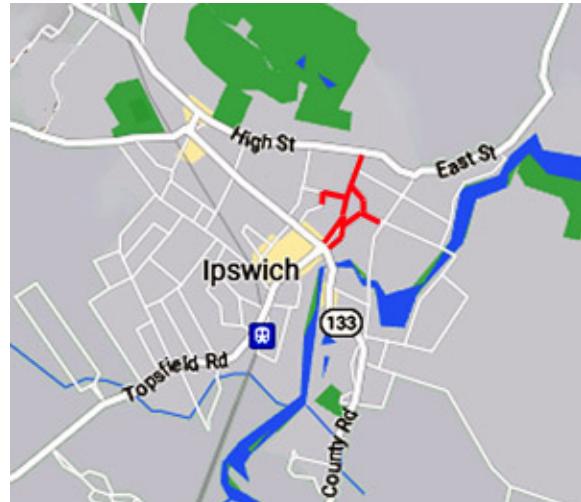
As per the General Laws of Massachusetts, the state certifies historic or archeological landmarks and establishes standards for their care and management, alterations of landmarks, and field investigations of sites (General Laws, Part I, Title II, Chapter 9, Section 27):

“No certified historic landmark shall be altered in such a manner as would seriously impair its historical values without permission of the (State) Historical Commission. Before granting such permission the commission shall hold a public hearing. The commission may grant such permission or may withhold permission for any period up to one year during which time the commission shall consult with civic groups, public agencies and interested citizens to ascertain what action, if any, ought to be taken to preserve such landmark, and shall make recommendations for its preservation to the commonwealth or its political subdivisions, to historical societies or to other interested civic organizations. The superior court shall have jurisdiction in equity to enforce the provisions of this section and, on petition of any party in interest, may alter, amend or revoke the order of the commission. ([Read Section 27](#)). Certified National and Massachusetts Historic Landmarks in Ipswich include Castle Hill, the Whipple House and the Choate Bridge.

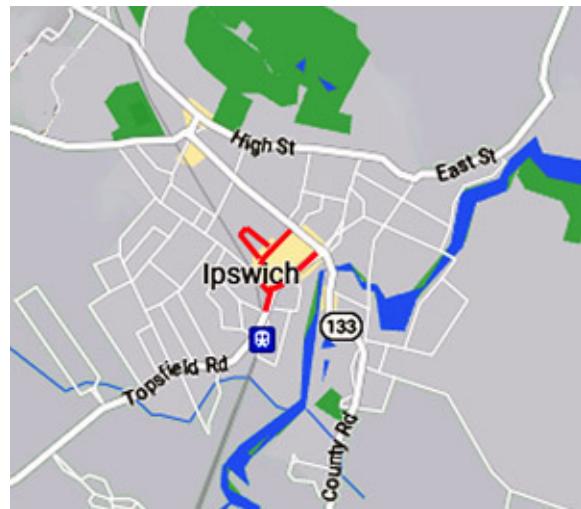


Market Street in the late 19th Century

Ipswich Historic Streets and Neighborhoods



Meeting House Green Historic District: This neighborhood includes Meeting House Green and North Main Street, and for over two centuries was the religious, governmental and commercial center of Ipswich. Most but not all of the earliest homes were replaced by the fine Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate and Victorian homes seen there today. The Congregational Church sits at the approximate location of the original meeting house.

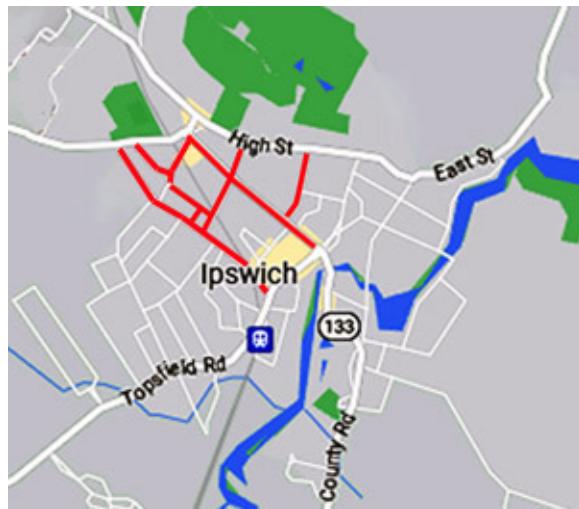


Market Square and Market Street: Until the 19th century, Market Street was a residential path to the mill, Washington Street and Topsfield. The business district of Ipswich began to move down the hill from North Main Street after the railroad arrived in 1839. A few original homes still stand and are the location of present-day businesses.

Depot Square, Hammatt Street and Brown Square: Until the second half of the 19th Century, much of the area bounded by Central, Washington, Mineral and Market Streets was a wetland traversed by an open sewer known as Farley's Brook . Brown Square developed as an industrial area beginning around 1885 and is the town's oldest industrial park.



Central Street



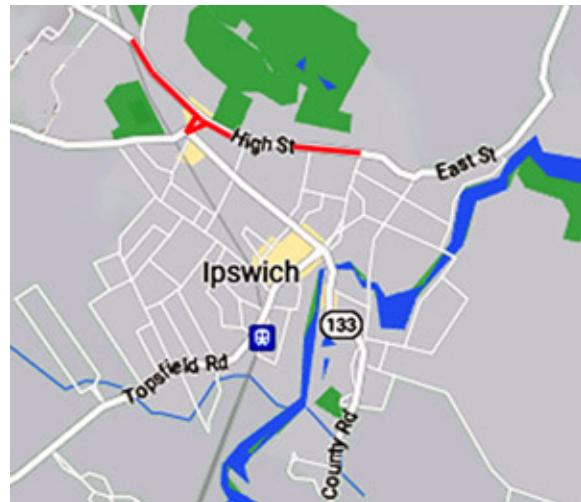
Central Street neighborhood: Created in the mid-19th century on former wetland, Central Street quickly became the location of many downtown businesses, schools, and the fire station. A vernacular Victorian and Italianate neighborhood quickly formed, and includes Manning and Mineral Streets. Highway 1A/133 shares Central Street, making this the most heavily traveled historic neighborhood in Ipswich, but it has not been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Washington and Liberty Streets: The oldest established way on the west side of town, Today's Washington Street was originally called once called Bridge Street, and for two centuries was known as Gravel Street. In the late 19th century Washington Street was extended to Linebrook Road, and Liberty Street became its own street.

Linebrook Road: The outer Linebrook area began to be populated by settlers with the founding of Ipswich, primarily as agricultural land, and was known as Ipswich Farms. The outermost area, near the Old Linebrook Cemetery, was so distant from the center of Ipswich that many of the residents married people from Topsfield, Boxford and Rowley, and had affinity for those towns and churches. The Massachusetts General Court on June 4, 1746, created Linebrook Parish and ordered that the inhabitants establish the church. Linebrook Road is believed to follow a Native American path from Agawam (Ipswich) to Cochicewick (Andover).



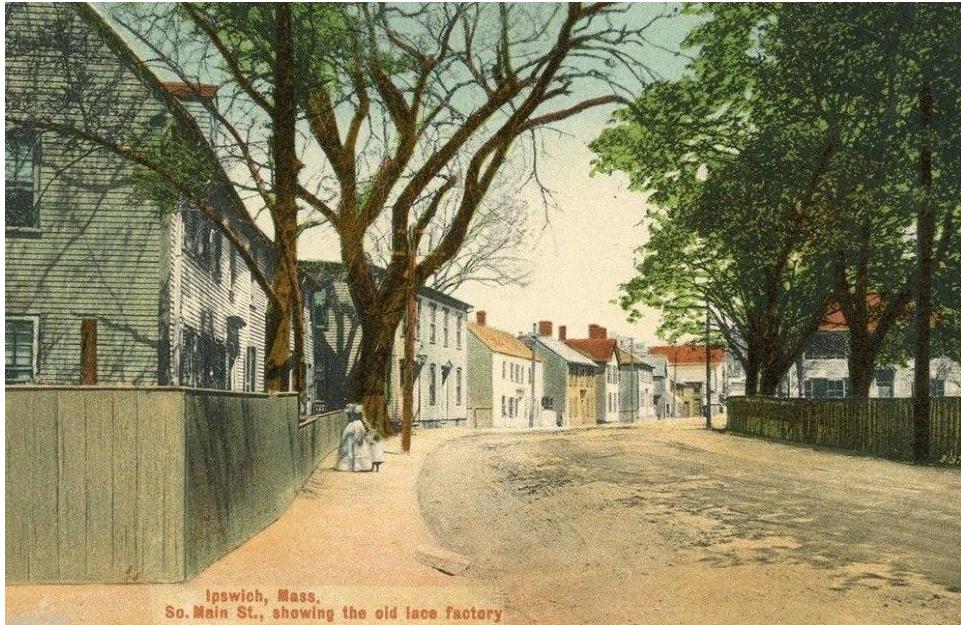
HIGH STREET, IPSWICH, MASS.



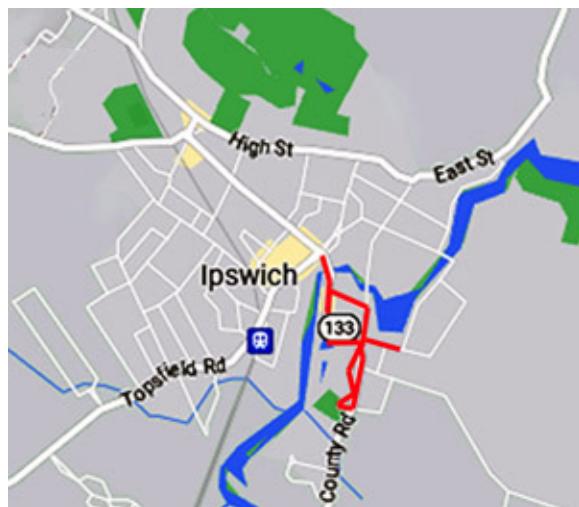
High Street Historic District: High Street is part of the historic Old Bay Road and was one of the main residential and commercial streets in the new community. Several of the 17th, 18th and 19th Century houses still standing once served as taverns, stores, or craftsman's shops. The High Street Historical District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980, and has the highest concentration of First Period houses in any town in America.

Lords Square: Although Lords Square is not part of the adjoining High Street Historic District, many of the homes on the street were owned by members of the Lord Family. The Old Payne School building, built in 1802, is the most visible remaining historic building in Lords Square. The old fire station still stands, abandoned. Lords Square became a major thoroughfare when Central Street was constructed in the mid-19th Century.

Ipswich Village (Upper High Street): High Street was the road to Rowley, referred to in the earliest documents as “the pathway leading toward the River of Merrimac.” It is part of the coastal route decreed to be established in 1640 known as the Bay Road, the colony’s first highway. This neighborhood has historically identified with its nearby neighbors in Rowley, and the highway is lined with historic houses from the Georgian, Federal and Greek Revival era.



Several historic houses still stand on South Main Street



South Main Street: In March 1692 several persons petitioned “to have liberty granted them to build shops upon ye bank by ye river side.” Arthur Wesley Dow referred to the view of the back of the buildings on South Main Street as “Little Venice.”

The South Green Historic District: A good representation of 18th and 19th Century houses line the streets adjoining the South Green, including County Road, part of County Street, South Main and Poplar Streets.

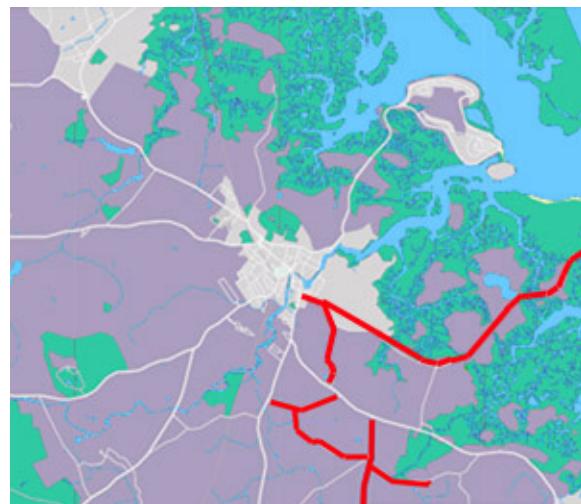
This was the historic southerly entrance to Ipswich. When George Washington visited Ipswich on October 30, 1789, he addressed the people of Ipswich from the steps of the Swasey Tavern, which is still standing. The neighboring historic burying ground is associated with the Second Church which burned in 1975. The South Green Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.



Turkey Shore neighborhood: From the earliest times, the land along the south side of the riverbank was known as Turkey Shore. It wasn't until the late 19th century that the Green Street Bridge was constructed, connecting residents to their neighbors on the other side of the river. Turkey Shore was renamed Prospect Street, but by the 20th century it had regained its picturesque original name. The street is lined with an impressive collection of First Period, Georgian and Victorian houses on the hill side, while a charming array of colorful houses line the side facing the river. Historic houses on Labor in Vain Road, Woods Lane (renamed Fruit Street for a time) and Old England Road connect to the Turkey Shore neighborhood.



Argilla Road, photo by Arthur Wesley Dow



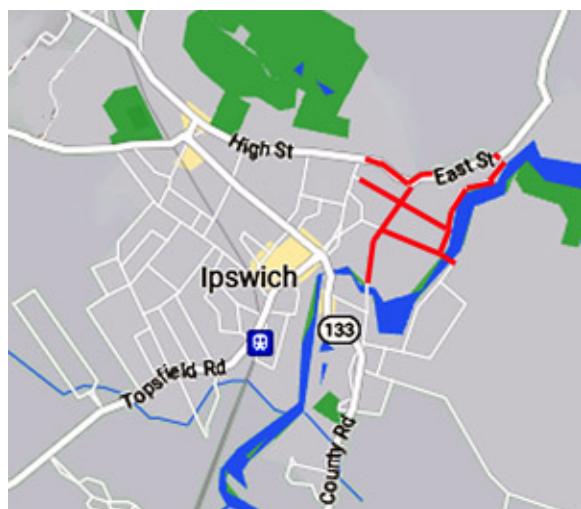
Argilla Road crosses pastures and deep woods, and then opens up to a scenic vista of the Great Salt Marsh and the ocean on its way from the South Green to Crane Beach and the Crane Estate. One of the earliest roads in Ipswich, it closely follows a Native American path from the Ipswich River to Castle Hill, and was one of the ways to get to Chebacco, now the town of Essex. Narrow shoulders and heavy summer traffic greatly reduce its walkability.

The **Candlewood** area is an early rural neighborhood with a substantial collection of 17th and early 18th century houses. In addition to Candlewood Rd., Lakeman's Lane and Fellows Road are part of the Candlewood district. The area is prime agricultural land and still supports several historic farms. Its narrow tree-lined roads are a natural discouragement to heavy or fast traffic. Treatment of the roadways and vegetation should complement its agrarian history.



Photo by George D. Smith, courtesy of Robert Clarke.

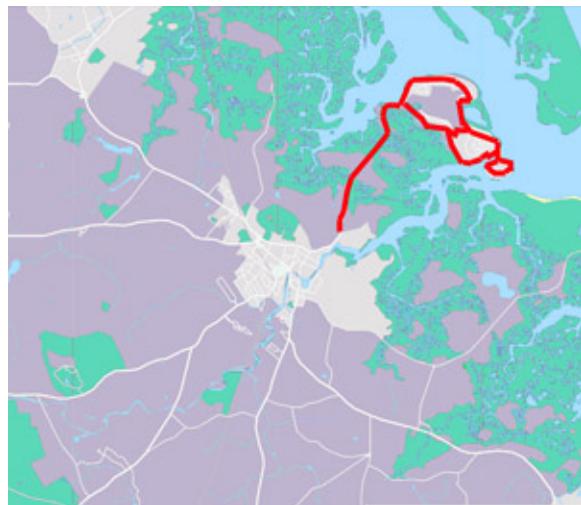
Water and Summer Streets appear today much as they did in the early 20th century



The **East End Historic District**, the original sea-going part of town, was added to the National Registry of Historic Places in 1980. It includes East, Summer, County, Water, and Hovey Streets, and Sutton's Lane. Most of the streets are narrow, with the exception of the wider thoroughfare of East and County Streets. This neighborhood is popular for strolling, cycling and walking dogs, and has an impressive collection of First Period houses.

Summer Street may be the oldest public way in Ipswich, and in the earliest days of the settlement was called Stony Street, Annable's Lane, or simply "The Way to the River." Many of the houses on the south side of Summer Street date to the late First Period. The north side was historically used for agriculture, but in the mid-19th century, it became lined with modest but charming houses, all of which are still standing.

Water Street is part of an early public right of way that extended from the wharf to the Green Street Bridge, then continued along what is now the Sidney Shurcliff Riverwalk to County Street. Historic maps show that the section from Summer Street to Hovey Street was just a dirt path until the 20th century. The community would benefit from a united Riverwalk extending from the EBSCO property through the South Green, connecting to the Shurcliff Riverwalk and continuing along Water Street to the town landing.



Jeffrey's Neck: Before John Winthrop Jr. with a group of 12 men founded the settlement of Ipswich in 1633, William Jeffrey, who arrived in 1623, obtained a title to the two glacial drumlins. Until the beginning of the 20th century, Great Neck and Little Neck were used primarily for grazing. After a settlement between the Proprietors and the town in 1927, the property was subdivided, and leased as house lots. The 1940s and 50s marked the beginnings of significant development of this area. Upon his death in 1660, William Paine bequeathed the 36 acres known as Little Neck to the trust for "the benefit of the said school of Ipswich forever. The Ipswich 2011 town meeting voted to approve an agreement between the Feoffees of Little Neck and the School Committee to sell the land to the cottage owners, with the profits from the sale being used to establish a monetary trust for the schools.



Aerial view of the Ipswich Mills neighborhood



Mount Pleasant Neighborhood: Until the late 19th Century, the hillside west of Washington Street was primarily used for agricultural purposes. The small houses that line the streets were built at a time when the foreign born population of Ipswich was increasing, and manufacturing had become the basis of Ipswich's economy. The adjoining Agawam Heights subdivision includes Farragut, Prescott, Putnam and Lafayette Roads.

Brown Stocking Mills Historic District: At the beginning of the 20th century, Harry Brown established a hosiery mill and laid out Brownsville Avenue with 22 workers' houses just south of his factory. These were added to the National Registry of Historic Places in 1996. The small houses on Brownville Avenue are packed close together with little frontage, and are separated mostly by asphalt pavement. The street was recently repaved without making aesthetic improvements.

Ipswich Mills Historic District: The houses in "Pole Alley" were built in the early 190s by the Ipswich Mills Company to house the workers of their mill, located just east of this area. The company was the largest employer in town and the largest producer of stockings in the world. The now-desirable neighborhood has strong social cohesion.

Design, rehabilitation and preservation recommendations

Sidewalks and paths: Identify the historic sidewalk design appropriate to the period of significance. Change pavement to more traditional, pedestrian-scale materials such as brick or stone in locations with prominent historic character. Avoid the introduction of non-historic decorative treatments. Sidewalks in Boston were paved with flagstones in the early nineteenth century. Brick paving forms the largest proportion of surviving historic paving for sidewalks throughout the region and therefore should be the default sidewalk material, as for example is the case in Newburyport. Maintain sidewalk widths with no reduction of pedestrian space.

Road surface: Determine if the surface treatment of historic roads or streets is a significant feature for the community. Historic pavements include brick and cobblestone. Avoid the unnecessary use of asphalt in clear zones parallel to the road except for in bicycle lanes. Where on-road parking has been historically established, the creation of pull-off areas or bump outs to improve visibility for driveways, rather than continuous wide paved shoulders is more aesthetically pleasing, and is safer for drivers as well as cyclists. An example of this kind of constructive reduction of asphalt is the redesign of Washington Street several years ago.

Curbing: With widths of only 2½ to 3 inches and lengths of 2-4 feet, curbstones appeared in the 19th century and were narrower and shorter than modern curbstones. Reclaimed standard curb are available from road improvement projects throughout New England. If historic curbstones are not available, burnishing the edges would improve both the aesthetics and public safety.

Re-use of historic materials and reproduction materials. Stiles & Hart Brick is a fourth-generation family owned company, founded in 1863. It is the only brick producer in Massachusetts and manufactures high-end colonial sand-molded and water-struck face brick in addition to its "Boston City Hall Pavers. Olde New England Granite, a division of The Reed Corporation, makes reclaimed historic granite available to all architects, contractors, homeowners and to all other enthusiasts.

Noise: Road traffic is the top source of noise pollution in communities. Chronic environmental noise causes a wide variety of adverse health effects, including sleep disturbance, annoyance, hearing loss and cardiovascular disease. Significant public health benefit can be achieved by integrating interventions that reduce environmental noise levels and exposures. Examples of the most popular measures to reduce noise levels in cities include replacing older paved roads with smoother asphalt, better management of traffic flows, reducing speed limits, and accommodating less-noisy modes of transport like cycling, walking or electric vehicles.

Lighting: Choose fixtures that are appropriate and historically compatible for the period of significance. Avoid and /or remove overhead wiring and street poles where possible and replace with underground utilities in conjunction with DPW/utility street renovation projects.

Road and street signs: Minimize sign clutter. Signs should be properly scaled to the Town's historic road environment. Design traffic signage using colors, typefaces, materials and other details which are compatible with historic character.

Street Furniture: Street furniture is all the elements that are placed in public spaces by the authorities and is created for the purpose of rest, sitting and eating, all of which are functions of great importance for the elderly, the disabled or people with children. Benches provide comfort and create a leisure atmosphere. Properly designed furniture in the right places motivates people to leave the house and makes them feel welcome and relaxed in the downtown environment.

Vegetation: In the 19th Century, streets in Ipswich and throughout New England were lined with tall and gracious elms, which succumbed in the 20th Century to Dutch elm disease. Trees are visually desirable, provide shelter from the sun and rain, and can lower the temperature of asphalt roadways by several degrees. The largest and most visually pleasing vertical elements in our Town's landscape are the street trees. The Shade Tree Commission should be included in the planning process.

Summary

Ipswich is fortunate to have an array of historic neighborhoods that each provide a unique "snapshot" of the town as it grew from an early colonial settlement to a set of diverse communities during its industrial development. As the Town considers making improvements or changes to any of these neighborhoods, it is important to consider their essential historic character, with a view to preserving those elements that make each specific neighborhood particularly special.

Appendix A: The Secretary of the Interior's Standards

The purpose of The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings (Part 1: Preservation and Rehabilitation (PDF), Part 2 - Reconstruction and Restoration (PDF)) is to provide guidance to historic building owners and building managers, preservation consultants, architects, contractors, and project reviewers prior to beginning work. It is always recommended that preservation professionals be consulted early in any project.

The Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties address four treatments: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction. As stated in the regulations (36 CFR Part 68) promulgating the Standards, "one set of standards ...will apply to a property undergoing treatment, depending upon the property's significance, existing physical condition, the extent of documentation available, and interpretive goals, when applicable. The Standards will be applied taking into

consideration the economic and technical feasibility of each project.” These Standards apply not only to historic buildings but also to a wide variety of historic resource types eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This includes buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts.

[Standards & Guidelines for Preservation](#)

[Standards & Guidelines for Rehabilitation](#)

[Standards & Guidelines for Restoration](#)

[Standards & Guidelines for Reconstruction](#)

[Other Guidelines for Applying the Standards](#)

[History of the Standards](#)

[Rehabilitation Standards—Tax Credit Projects](#)

[Planning Successful Rehabilitation Projects](#)

[Guidelines on Flood Adaptation for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings](#)

[Tax Incentives program](#) for rehabilitating historic buildings

[Preservation Briefs](#)

Appendix B: Definitions

Preservation: the application of measures to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property.

Preservation maintenance: monitoring and controlling change in the landscape to ensure that its historic integrity is not altered and features are not lost.

Rehabilitation: Making repairs, alterations, and additions to a property while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical or cultural values.

Restoration: the act or process of accurately depicting the form features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time.

Reconstruction: Depicting, by means of new construction, the replication of a site's appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location.

Landscape interpretation: providing the means to experience the landscape as it existed during its period of significance, or as it evolved to its present state.

Cultural landscape: patterns, design and structure of a landscape influenced, altered or changed by human activity

Viewshed: encompasses everything in a view that can be seen from a point in space.

Aesthetic routes: historic roads designed to provide a very specific, and positive, traveler experience. Alteration to any component of an aesthetic route will significantly impact the historic integrity of the resource.

Engineered routes: historic roads designed for the efficient movement of people, goods and services.

Cultural routes: historic roads that evolved through necessity or tradition. Many of the principal streets grew out of old paths and cart ways, and resources parallel to the road, as evidenced by the architecture and land use in the historic corridor. A well-established period (or periods) of significance is as important for historic roads as any other historic resource. An example of great significance the Old Bay Road which ran from Boston to Portsmouth, and encompassed today's County Road., South Main, North Main and High Street.

Context Sensitive Design: transportation design solutions that contribute to and enhance the historic, cultural and environmental characteristics of the community.