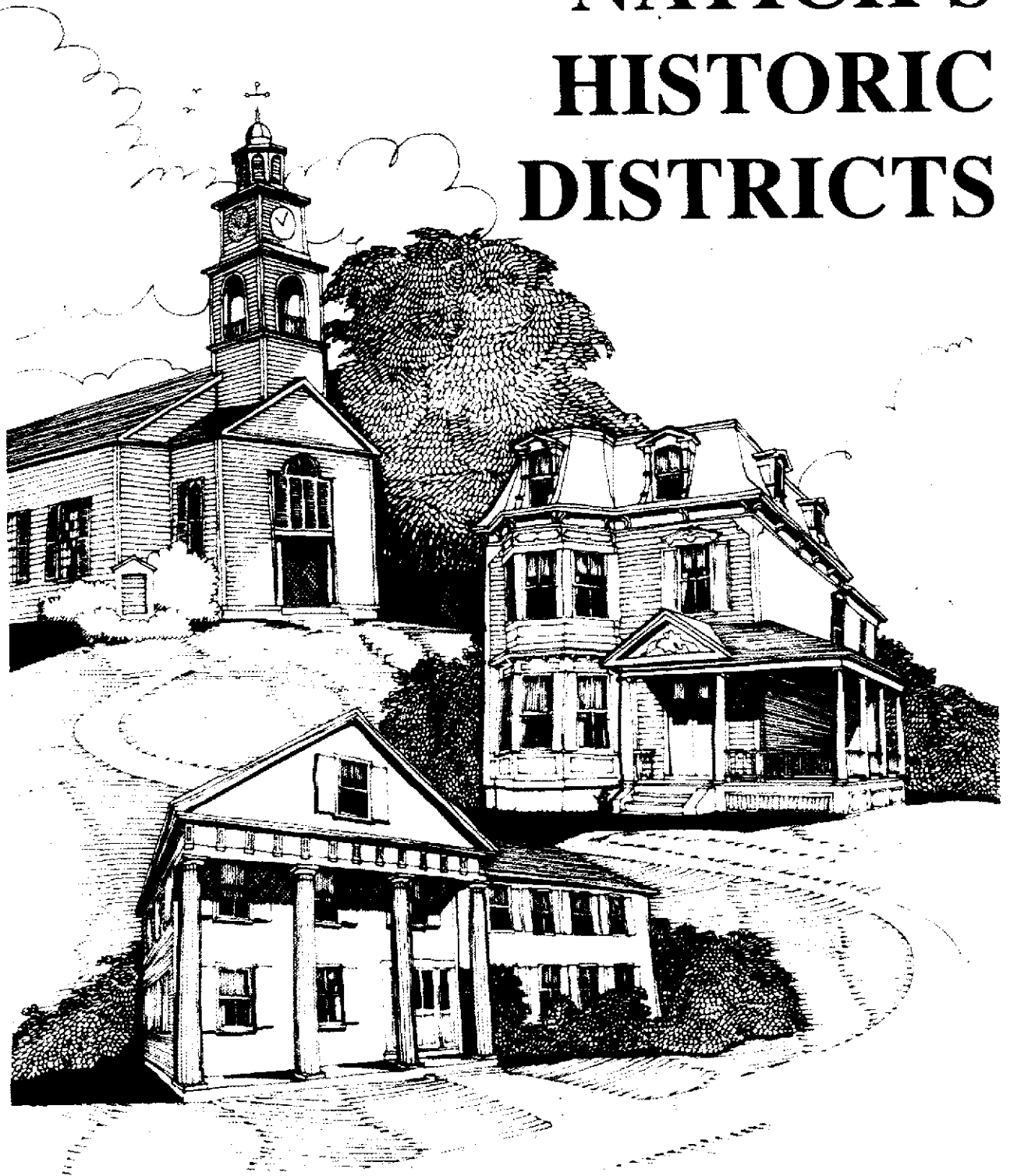


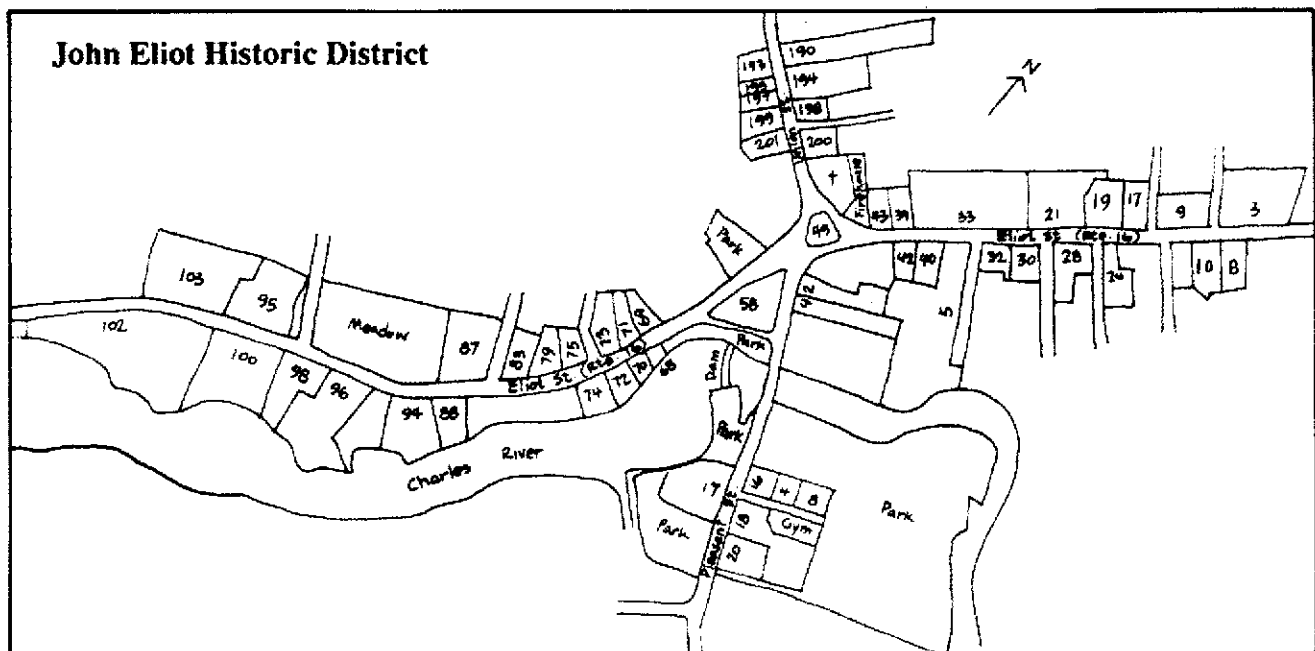
NATICK'S HISTORIC DISTRICTS



Natick's Historic Districts

Natick is a special place with a fascinating history that goes back more than three centuries. Its past is recalled most vividly in the unique character of its architecture. Natick's historic neighborhoods and buildings show us how succeeding generations of our ancestors worked, played, worshipped, and raised their families amid shifting fortunes and fashions. These elegantly designed streets and structures from centuries past are living, life-sized works of art that help give Natick its unique flavor, identity, and beauty.

During the 1970's the citizens of Natick, recognizing that the town's rich architectural heritage was endangered by rapid growth and change, passed a law establishing a pair of Historic Districts as a means of preserving and protecting two of its most distinctive neighborhoods. The John Eliot Historic District encompasses much of the center of South Natick. The Henry Wilson Historic District stretches along West Central Street. These neighborhoods, under the protection of the Natick Historic District Commission, are gradually being brought back to their former splendor as public-spirited property owners, one by one, refurbish and restore their historic buildings. It is a labor of patience and love, dependent almost entirely on the owners themselves, for little governmental assistance is available. It is an effort that benefits everyone, because the Historic Districts are available for all of us to enjoy and study.



Owning a Historic Property

Owners of properties in the Historic Districts benefit from the assurance that the distinctive character of their neighborhoods will not be destroyed by incompatible development. In exchange, property owners are legally restricted from altering the exterior appearance of their building or grounds without the approval of the Historic District Commission, which reviews each proposed change to assure that it is compatible with the existing character of the District.

The Historic Districts and the Historic District Commission were established by the Town under Chapter 40C of Massachusetts General Laws, the Historic Districts Act. This Act establishes three objectives for historic districts: (1) to preserve 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. The Historic District Commission is charged with the responsibility of realizing these objectives.

Making Changes to Historic Properties

Under the Historic Districts Act, "...no building or structure within an historic district shall be constructed or altered in any way that affects exterior architectural features unless the

[Historic District] Commission shall first have issued a certificate of appropriateness, a certificate of nonapplicability or a certificate of hardship with respect to such construction or alteration." Prior to obtaining a building permit for exterior work, the property owner must go to the Town Clerk's office at 13 East Central Street to obtain and file an application for certification. An application fee must be paid at the time of filing. The Historic District Commission will schedule a meeting shortly thereafter at the property owner's convenience to consider the application. The Commission will determine at this meeting whether the proposed change is subject to its review, and whether it is of sufficient importance to the Historic District as a whole that a public hearing should be held to consider it. If a hearing is voted, it is usually held two weeks after the initial meeting, and the public is invited to attend by means of newspaper advertisements and notices mailed directly to abutters. If a hearing is waived by the Commission, a second meeting is still required by law to allow notification of abutters so they may communicate with the Commission either by letter or in person. Most applications are acted upon by the Commission at the public hearing or the second meeting. Unless a written extension of time is granted by the applicant, the Commission must make a determination on the application within 45 days of the date of filing. All the meetings of the Historic District Commission are posted in advance with the Town Clerk and are open to the public.

