Article for Paper from Historic Preservation Commission- Lyn Romine

(*Caption for picture)*

*Historic Preservation Commission members, Shelagh Fagan, Larry Folk, Susan Hitchcock, Nancy Marshall, and Lyn Romine admiring the new* ***Plaza Historic District*** *sign toppers just installed at intersections along North Madison Avenue, Wayne, Church and Lafayette Streets.*

Many of you may have noticed, as you enter our city, a sign that says “ National Register Historic District”, and wondered why we also have a “Plaza Historic District” too. There are important differences that we all need to understand.

In 1975, a large portion of Eatonton was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. This lets visitors know that our town is important because of the concentration of significant historic architecture found here. Being on the National Register makes us aware of our town’s treasures and provides a basis to protect buildings from being torn down for Federally funded projects such as GDOT undertakings. However, this did nothing to protect historic structures from property owners who want to demolish historic buildings or modify buildings in ways that compromised their historic character.

In 1991, an in depth survey was done that identified all the historic structures in the National Register Historic District and grouped them into smaller districts such as Cotton Exchange, Downtown, and Imperial Mill Village, with the hopes that they could become Local Districts that could be preserved with design guidelines and administered by a **Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)**. Sadly, this was not done, and several of those smaller districts like the Mill Village have been lost.

However, in 2008, a primarily residential area, the **Plaza Historic District** was approved by City Council. It comprises about seventy-two properties and is known as a local historic district, which does carry protection from adverse changes. This district is a small portion of the original National Register District and includes North Madison Ave, Wayne St, and much of Church and Lafayette. Now, when making structural changes to the outside of their property, owners in this protected district look for guidance from the Design Guidelines that are available on the website at [www.eatontonhpc.com](http://www.eatontonhpc.com) and then bring these changes to the HPC for approval. These actions allow owners to keep the integrity of their property, which typically retains and promotes property values.

The HPC meets the 2nd Monday of every month at 7:00 in the Plaza Arts Center. Applications for COA’s (Certificate of Appropriateness) can be downloaded from the **www.eatontonhpc.com** site. If advice is needed on a project or guidance in the process, members of the HPC are great resources for you. Our current board consists of Larry Folk, Susan Hitchcock, Nancy Marshall, Shelagh Fagan and Chairperson, Lyn Romine. Eatonton residents who are interested in serving on the HPC should contact any current HPC member or City Council representative for information.

While many small towns have lost their residential and downtown buildings, Eatonton folks are working hard to save and restore the unique charm of our hometown.