

Historic Residential Design Guidelines

**LaPorte Historic Preservation Commission
July 2021**



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What are the guidelines all about and how are they used?

The LaPorte Historic Preservation Commission (Commission) has adopted the following guidelines after consulting with property owners, city officials, and others interested in preserving LaPorte's legacy buildings. Each generation is entrusted with the historical, cultural, architectural, archaeological, social, and economic heritage LaPorte. The guidelines aim to help in this task by offering a vision for preserving the historic buildings and neighborhood by identifying features that imbue their character.

These guidelines provide direction for property owners proposing exterior repairs, rehabilitation, alterations, and additions to existing buildings and for the design of new structures in the district, moving buildings and in rare instances demolitions. They are written broadly to allow a range of best practice approaches to a variety of projects.

The Commission and the staff use the guidelines when reviewing a proposed project. Each section provides recommendations and includes a list of approaches generally not approved by the Commission.

For a deeper dive, linked sections in the text will take you to additional information on the topic. Here you will find in-depth guidance about the project you are considering, examples useful in developing a project, and information about the historic aspects of your building.

Help is always available if you would like feedback about your project, have questions, or want ideas about how to accomplish a project you envision. Reach out to the Commission:

LaPorte Department of Community Development & Planning
David Heinold, Interim City Planner
dheinold@cityoflaportein.gov

NAVIGATING THE GUIDELINES



Click on any blue colored text to jump to a linked section.

Just want to know what types of projects are recommended – look in the Project Guidelines Section



Want to get more “how to” or background information look in the For More Information Section.

FAQ's

How are the guidelines applied?

The Commission recognizes some buildings, individually or within a district, carry great architectural or historic importance and have been little altered over time. Others feature more commonplace design or many alterations. Taken together, this variety creates the building's and district's special character.

Consequently, the guidelines provide a range of options and their application. They have been developed based on best practices promoted by the National Park Service, the state historic preservation office, and historic districts Commissions nationwide.

How are buildings within the district rated?

The Commission, as required by state law, has adopted a ratings structure for the district's buildings. These ratings guide decisions about proposed changes to those buildings over time, allowing the greatest flexibility while preserving the characteristics of those buildings and the district overall that make it the special place it is today.

Each property within the district falls into one of five classes, identified in greater detail [here](#). The level of review and latitude for alternative construction materials, additions, etc., is based on the building's significance and level of change over time, called integrity.

The Commission considers integrity when reviewing proposed changes to a building, ranging from those rated most architecturally significant, or "outstanding" rated buildings, to the least significant, or "non-contributing". The Commission generally is more conservative in allowing changes to outstanding-rated buildings, offering more latitude for non-contributing properties.

What is the general philosophical framework for the guidelines?

Projects should retain and repair the parts of their building that give it its look and architectural design rather than replace them wholesale. Original materials are important, conveying the age of the building and its connection to the past. And, often, such materials are of a better quality than modern replacements.

If a part of a building cannot be repaired, then it should be replaced with a matching material of the same type and design, if possible. Sometimes new materials can be substituted but need to imitate the original. The guidelines have pre-approved material lists to help guide proposals.

Parts of historic buildings that are completely missing can be reconstructed or restored using photographs or designs from buildings of a similar age.

New construction of entire buildings or additions to historic buildings should be designed to be compatible to the overall district and/or the building to which it is added. Read more about new construction and additions [here](#).

How do other city codes, zoning or permits relate to the district guidelines?

The guidelines address only the elements of the site and building that are related to its historic design or construction. Other city building codes, zoning, and permits may also need to be followed.

For more information about city building codes, zoning or permits go [here](#) or [contact](#):

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HOW DOES THE COMMISSION AND APPROVAL PROCESS WORK?

To apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) contact:

NAME OF STAFF:	David Heinold
ADDRESS	City of LaPorte, 801 Michigan Avenue, LaPorte, Indiana 46350
PHONE NUMBER	(219) 362-8260
EMAIL	dheinold@cityoflaportein.gov
WEBSITE	Historic Preservation Commission

When do I need a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) from the Commission?

A COA is required for changes to any part of the building and site that can be seen from a public view. Routine maintenance does not require a COA however when you are repairing a part of a building with the same material and look staff can usually approve within 24 hours.

Do I need other building permits or variances?

A COA is needed before the building department will issue a permit. However, COA approval and these guidelines relate only to the historic elements of the District, site and building. Other city building codes may also need to be followed. Find out information about other city codes [here](#). Or contact: (219)362-8260.

How much does it cost?

General repair and maintenance – no COA or fee
Staff approvable COA - \$25

Commission approvable COA - \$25

Retroactive COA – \$100 – see [here](#) for further details about retroactive COAs.

Do I have to have a contractor selected before applying?

No. The best practice is to have a proposed project approved prior to finalizing, signing, and putting a deposit with a contractor. Sometimes the project may change during the review process.

What information is required for a COA Application?

The LaPorte Historic Preservation Commission has created a simple form to assist property owners in outlining their project and for the Commission members and staff to have enough information to complete a review. Find an application form [here](#).

What is the deadline for a COA Application?

Two weeks prior to the regular Commission meeting date; generally, the first Tuesday of each month, by end of business day.

What happens after I apply?

If you have not already met with a staff person, you will probably be contacted to answer any questions they may have and possibly schedule a site visit. Staff will prepare a report to the Commission detailing your proposed project, how it does/does not conform to the guidelines for the historic district. Your

application will be part of the next Commission meeting agenda, where the Commission will review the staff report with your application and any supporting documents, photos, etc. There will be opportunity for you to speak about your project and answer questions the Commission may have before they vote to approve (or deny). A decision is made at the meeting.

What projects can be approved by staff and what projects must go to the full Commission?

The Commission has approved a wide range of projects that can be approved administratively by the staff. This process was created to assist owners by keeping approval time to a minimum while meeting the legal responsibilities held by the Commission. If a project follows the guidelines for the proposed project, then staff can approve the project and you do not have to wait for a full Commission meeting.

Throughout the guidelines, staff approvable items have been noted. Any projects that do not fall within the staff approval overview must go to the Commission for their review for approval.

Regular maintenance and repair project where the same material and design are being installed as part of the repair require a COA but can usually be approved by staff within one business day of submission.

When/where does the full Commission meet?

The Commission meets the third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m., in the City Hall Council Chambers, 801 Michigan Avenue, LaPorte, Indiana 46350.

Will I be notified and how does the Commission let me know about the meeting and decision?

A copy of the agenda that includes your COA application, as well as time and place of the meeting, will be emailed to you in advance. If you prefer a paper copy can be mailed to you.

Do I have to attend the meeting? Can I send someone else? Can I call in? Who can comment?

It is important that you and/or your representative attend the meeting to answer questions. COA applications can be denied for lack of information/representation. Telephone participation is not allowed. (that may vary by location). The public is also offered an opportunity to comment in support or against your project during the meeting.

Retroactive COA's - I already did the work – but did not get approval now what?

Applications for the approval of work already completed – known as retroactive applications – can be heard by the Commission. The Commission does not consider favorably retroactive applications and an additional fee will be charged. The Commission can require projects completed prior to a COA Approval be removed and the building returned to its pre-project condition. Contact staff as soon as possible to talk about next steps.

Who makes up the Commission that review the projects?

The Commission is a group of appointed community members. Commission members are appointed by the Mayor. Commission members are all volunteers and have an interest and experience working on historic buildings.

My COA was approved – what happens next?

Following the meeting, owners will receive a letter or email confirming approval of their COA application. Owners may then apply for other necessary permits before beginning work.

How long is a COA valid? Can it be extended?

A COA is valid for 1 year. The Commission may renew a COA after reviewing it.

What if I do not agree with a Commission decision?

Owners may appeal the decision of staff to the Commission. In such a situation the applicant must submit that appeal to be heard by the full Commission. Owners may appeal a full Commission decision by judicial review.

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ACCESSIBILITY

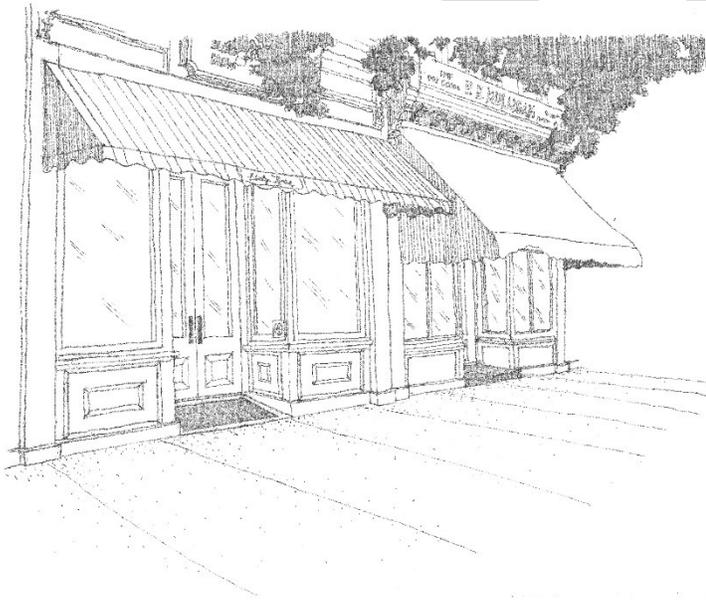
General understanding and approach

Access to historic buildings for everyone regardless of ability is an important project goal for all sites. Owners of historic properties should fully comply with the ADA and other accessibility laws, while also preserving the design of their buildings and sites. Special provisions for historic buildings exist in the law that allow some alternatives in meeting the ADA standards. When an elevator addition is required to allow for accessibility, refer to New Construction and Additions to Historic Buildings section [here](#).

What is your project?

Adding a ramp.

- Accessibility projects should create an accessibility solution that respects character defining features and spaces of a building and site.
- Materials proposed for the ramp should be complimentary to the existing building such as using masonry ramps for masonry buildings wood ramps for wood clad buildings.
- The ramp should be constructed in a manner that is reversible so that if it were removed the original building materials would still be in place and not damaged.
- If access to the front door is not possible, the project should provide a respectful accessible entrance and route located as close to the principal entrance as possible. The alternate location should be designed so that it blends in and complements the historic building's design and materials.



Modifying sidewalks and other walkways.

- Projects should consider modification of sidewalks by elevating the grade a few inches, where possible, to eliminate steps to provide an accessible entry.

Staff approval – modifications to sidewalks and elevations to eliminate one or two steps into a building without modifying the overall entrance or storefront.

Adding railings to existing stairs.

- New handrails and balusters should be like the historic design of the building including the same materials. For masonry buildings materials, such as aluminum or wrought iron should be used.

Staff approval – adding handrails to existing steps in designs like historic railings on the building.

The following is not recommended and generally not approved by the Commission:

- Removing a historic porch or stoop to install a ramp.

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AWNINGS, CANOPIES, MARQUEES, AND LIGHTING

What is the difference?

Awnings, traditionally, are fabric covered light, sloped metal frames. They may be operable or fixed.

Canopies are fixed, generally flat, metal structures, attached to the front facade of the building. They are traditionally supported with chains or rods anchored above the primary entrance.

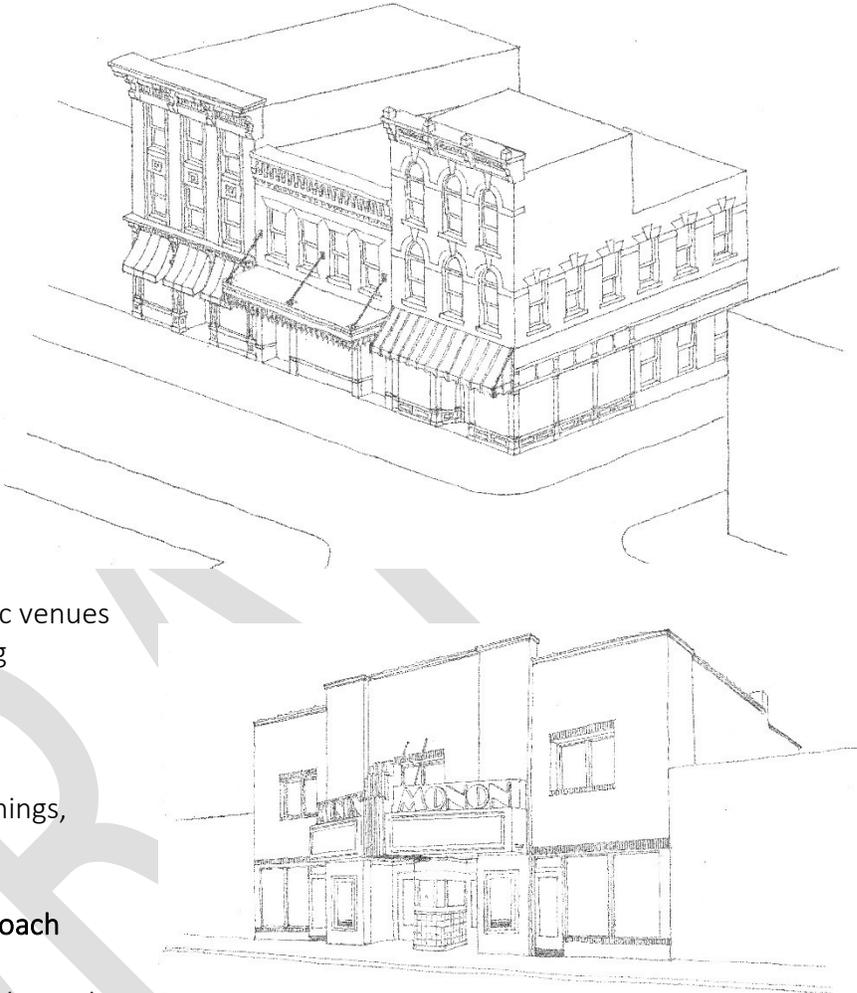
Marquees are generally found on movie theatres or other public venues and are used to advertise coming attractions or other public announcements.

Get more information about Awnings, canopies, or marquees [here](#).

General understanding and approach

Preserve and rehabilitate a historic awning by replacing deteriorated fabric coverings with new coverings that match the existing or are within the approved designs and colors.

Attach canopies between the window display area and the signboard or second floor windowsills; attach below the transom line where historic prism glass is present. The valance should be no lower than seven feet and six inches above the sidewalk at any point.



Heads up – it is likely that other permits or variances are required from the City for projects in this section. For more information [go here](#)

What is your project?

Awnings, canopy, marquee project

Replace an historic awning that has deteriorated coverings and/or structure.

- Repair damaged frames with similar materials to restore structural integrity and operability.

- Replace deteriorated covering with similar materials or materials that restore the look of earlier coverings.
- Replace an historic awning, canopy or marquee that cannot be repaired with a new one that matches the original in shape, design and covering.

Staff approval - repair or replacement of an existing but damaged historic awning, canopy, or marquee to match existing.

Add a new awning, canopy, or marquee to replace a previously existing one which has been removed.

- A new awning, canopy or marquee proposed to replace a historic one should be designed based on historic images and match to the extent possible the design, shape and coverings evidenced in the image.
- Projects should utilize physical evidence found on the building such as remnant mounting hardware, holes from previous mounting hardware to guide design and installation.

Add a new awning, canopy or marquee to a façade that has not had one in the past.

- A new awning, canopy or marquee proposed for a building where no photographic or physical evidence exists should be designed based on others found in the District or on historic images of the District.
- The new awning, canopy or marquee should match to the extent possible the design, shape and coverings evidenced in the historic image(s).
- New designs should not cover up elements of the building that give it its architectural character.
- The new awning, canopy or marquee's installation should be specified in such a way as not to require removal or damage to original materials.

Remove and not replace an historic awning, canopy, or marquee. (See also [Signage](#) section if new sign is proposed in place of the existing awning, canopy, or marquee.)

- Original historic awnings, canopies and marquees should remain.
- If a historic element is deteriorated beyond repair and must be removed with no plans for replacement, the original hardware should be stored on site for future reference
- If storage is infeasible due to space limitations, photographs and measurements taken to document the element and provided for the Commission's file.

Adding new or upgrading marquee lights.

- Marquees with traditional chaser lights can be re-lamped with new LED lights of a similar candle power as original.
- Backlighting for marquee sign boards should be no more than allowed by Zoning Ordinance:
Sign Brightness from Zoning Ordinance:

Night time – 500 nits (candelas/square meter) within 500 feet of a residential district or use

1,250 nits (cd/m²) at least 500 feet from residential district or use

Day time – 3,500 nits (cd/m²) within 500 feet of a residential district or use

5,000 nits (cd/m²) at least 500 feet from residential district or use

Staff approval - re-lamping existing marquees' chaser lights and sign board backlights with similar candle LEDs. Repair or restoration of damaged marquee elements with the same or similar material.

Add exterior façade lighting to the building.

- Utilize LED Lighting to primary facades to accentuate historic features.
- Exterior lights should be LED and 3000 KV or less.
- Mount lighting in a manner that does not require removal or damage to original materials that give the building its character.
- Utilize the smallest light head available mounted in the most inconspicuous manner possible.

Staff approval – repair of historic exterior lighting and removal of non-historic lighting.

The following is not recommended and generally not approved by the Commission:

- Portable back lit sign boards – converted for permanent installation
- Back lit vinyl traditional design or barrel vault awnings
- Sodium vapor lighting
- Covering over the decorative transom glass over a storefront
- High wattage electronic message boards, signs, or signs

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CORNICES AND PARAPETS

General Understanding and Approach

Cornices should be repaired with materials like their construction. Missing features should be refashioned and installed using existing elements as a pattern. Maintain cornices and associated parapet caps to preserve the integrity of buildings by shedding moisture away from the building's parapets and walls. Parapets should not be reduced in height or removed but maintained.

Read more about the history of cornices, typical materials, and construction methods [here](#).

What is your project?

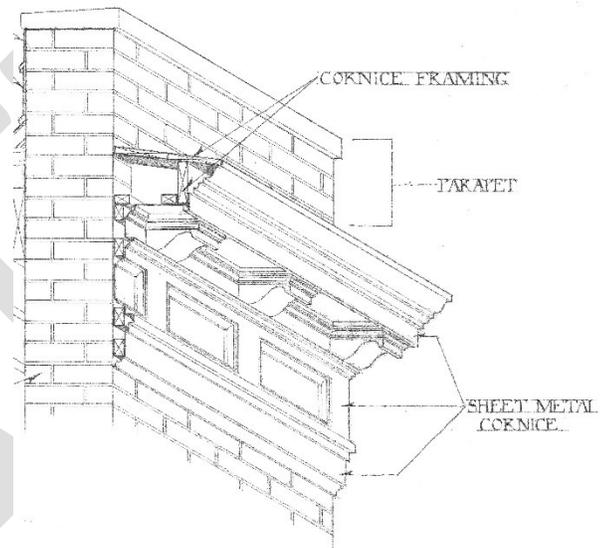
Repair an existing cornice.

- Cornices should be repaired to match the existing cornice in materials, color, details and installation method.
- Missing features should be refashioned and installed using existing elements as a guide, matching material, installation pattern, location, and details.

Staff approval – repair of cornices as recommended.

Install a new cornice where an original cornice has been removed.

- Use historic photographs to determine design details of the original cornice.
- Where existing images are not available of the subject building, images from similar age buildings in the District and designs appropriate to the original age of the building should be used to develop the new design.
- A new replacement cornice can be constructed of traditional materials such as stone, brick, terracotta, stamped sheet metal, or cast iron.
- New materials such as fiberglass may be utilized if a mock-up demonstrates that the finished cornice will fit in visually with the existing building materials.
- Parapet walls should remain in place and maintain enough cap to prevent water infiltration.
- Parapet wall caps may be covered in new aluminum so long as the color selected does not add a new visual element to the cornice or parapet.



The following is not recommended and generally not approved by the Commission:

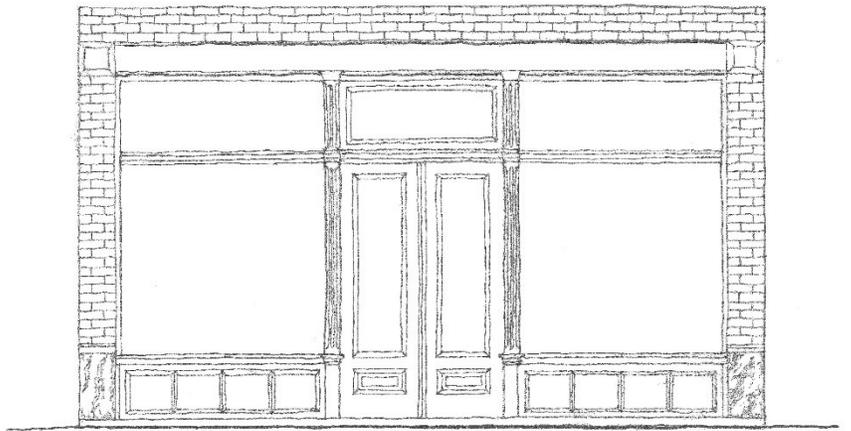
- Removal of an original cornice with no replacement planned.
- Covering over an original cornice.

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DOORS AND ENTRANCES

General understanding and approach

The character-defining features of a historic door, surround, materials, and placement should be preserved. New doors should be in character with the main facade of the historic building. Historic doors should be repaired. Installing and weather-stripping doors and associated frames is a preferred method to replacement for improving energy efficiency.



Read more about doors and storefronts [here](#).

What is your project?

Repair a deteriorated front façade or other publicly visible façade entrance door.

- Preserve historic doors by repairing with the same material and matching features.
- Historic details that should be preserved through rehabilitation include the door itself, any glass panes and related lite pattern and location, and hardware.

Staff approval – repair to match a historic door with the same materials. The change in an exterior door swing required by code or fire regulations.

Replace a deteriorated or damaged historic door.

- Doors beyond repair, defined as over 50% of material needing replacement, should be replaced with a new door matching the existing door in materials, design, details, panel configuration and installation.
- Historic doors on rear or alley locations can be replaced with alternatives such as metal to provide added security.

Staff approval – repair of doors with the same materials, design, details, panel configuration and installation. Replacement of an existing door damaged beyond repair, with a matching door.

Add a new door or entrance.

- New entrances and their doors should be added to rear or alley facades.
- New entrances and their doors proposed for the main façade should relate to the overall design of the storefront and front facade.

- The main entrance and door on the front façade should be retained to maintain the original proportions, scale, and detailing of the entrance and associated door.
- When proposing reconstruction or rehabilitation of an altered entrance, the design should be based on physical evidence and/or historic images of the missing element or historic images of similar age buildings from the District.
- New entrances may be developed when historic entrances have been removed and no evidence of the original entrance exists. New entrances should be developed with proportions and details that are reflective of the period of the building. Starkly modern entrances should be avoided on historic buildings.

Staff approval – creating a new entrance on a rear or alley facade.

Add a vestibule.

- Vestibules should be added behind the original entrance door within the corresponding commercial space.
- New vestibules should reflect the design and materials of the original entrance and door.
- Traditional materials that match the historic entrance/door are recommended. New materials may be used if they are similar in look and installation as the historic entrance.

Staff approval: Temporary winter vestibules.

The following is not recommended and generally not approved by the Commission:

- Residential-type doors on commercial storefronts.
- Reduction of the size of the overall opening.
- Complete removal of a primary entrance visible from the public street.

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FENCES AND RETAINING WALLS

General understanding and approach

Fences in commercial areas are reserved for screening parking, trash, or other service elements. To aid you, the Commission has pre-approved several screening fences designs. Fences also include those that define an outside dining area in front or side of the building on the sidewalk.

Traditional materials such as wood or wrought iron are encouraged. Fences in the rear of a site should be no taller than six feet and have the finished face installed towards the neighboring property.

Historic walls and decorative piers are considered character defining features which help to establish a sense of visual continuity and should be preserved. Where new retaining walls are installed, they should complement the traditional retaining walls in the District and building to which they are associated.

What is your project?

Fencing

Repair an existing fence.

- Historic fences should be repaired using the same materials and designs as the existing fence.
- Damaged chain link fences that need more than 20% replacement should not be repaired but instead removed and replaced with a new fence in a style approved by the Commission (see chart and graphics in this section).

Staff approval— repair of an historic fence or chain link as noted with the same materials and design.

Replace an existing fence.

- Historic fences should be repaired rather than replaced.
- If a historic fence is beyond repair, defined as more than 50% requiring replacement, the new fence should match the historic fence in design, material and installation, or a fence that utilizes approved designs and materials (see designs in this section)

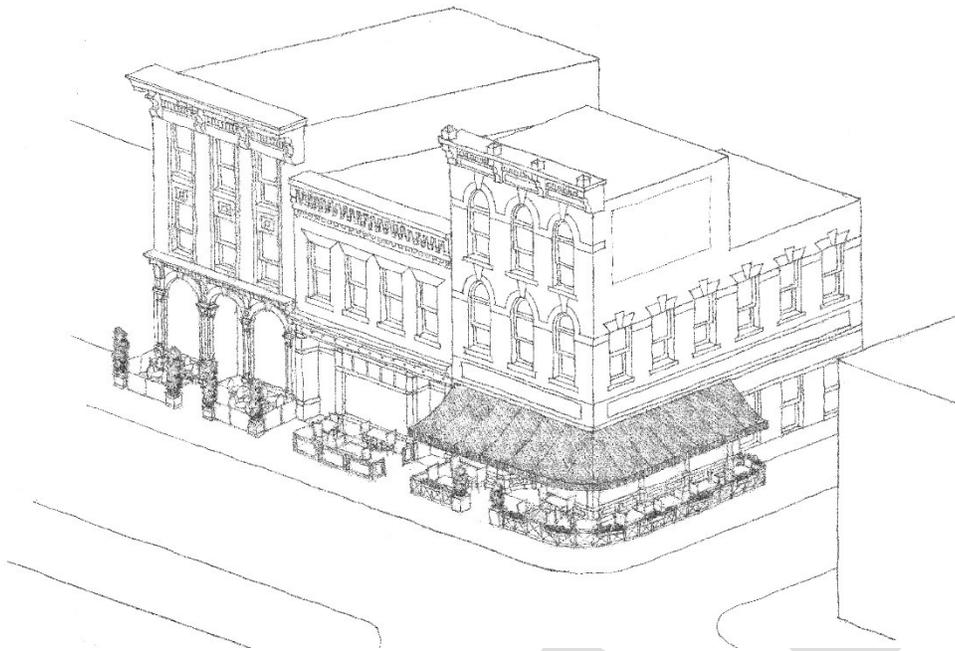
Staff approval – replacement of an existing fence with one that matches the original or with a pre-approved design fence.

Install a landscaping screen.

- Planting windbreaks or hedgerows to function as privacy “fences” alone or in front of a true fence may be considered or where screening of less appropriate site amenities is required.

Heads up – it is likely that other permits or variances are required from the City for projects in this section. For more information go [here](#).

Install a new fence where no fence exists



- New outside seating area fences should only be installed where required and should be temporary in nature.
- Outside seating area fences should be no more than 36 inches tall and be at least 50% open visually.
- Rear and side fences installed for screening and security of parking lots, trash corals, and utility and service equipment should be no taller than six foot and may be solid in the design. Aluminum fences may be considered when the design uses the pre-approved designs – see graphic in this section.

Retaining Walls

Repair a historic retaining wall.

- Historic retaining walls should be repaired with the same materials from which they are constructed including the replication of details that give it its character.
- Repointing should be done when necessary using a mortar mix that is like that used historically and applied in a joint design that matches the original. See also masonry repair guidelines [here](#).

Staff approval – repair as noted in masonry repair guidelines.

Install a new retaining wall.

- Preserve historic grading features of a site avoiding changing the grade by more than 12” and only when required to accommodate a drainage or other physical problem.
- Any grade changes need to take into consideration impact to adjacent sites and the overall character of the District.
- New walls should be compatible with the historic character of the property and DISTRICT and be constructed out of materials that match the building to which it is related. Walls should be not more than four feet tall and include a masonry cap.

The following is not recommended and generally not approved by the Commission:

- Chain link fences – including those with artificial grass or other covering.
- Vinyl fencing.

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LOADING DOCKS, DUMPSTERS AND SERVICE AREAS

General understanding and approach

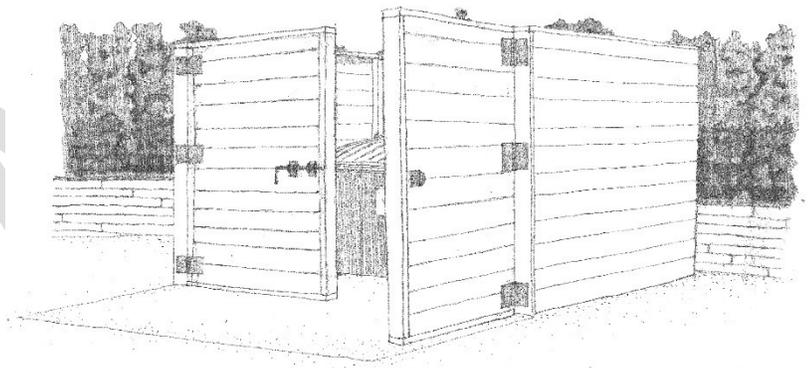
Service areas should be hidden from the main entrance and integrated with the design of the site and the building. Dumpsters, utility connection boxes and meters, external fire connections, telecommunication devices, cables, conduits, satellite dishes, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning should be located on rear or alley facades if at all possible and screened when located on side walls along a street.

What is your project?

Create a dumpster enclosure.

- Locate enclosures for dumpsters or totes in the rear of the property or in alleyways, not along streets or main facades.
- Enclosures should have doors that can close to hide the receptacles. These enclosures should follow pre-approved designs by the commission and/or standards for the downtown

Staff approval – creation of a trash enclosure based on pre-approved design and location.



Add a loading dock or overhead delivery door to an existing building.

- Loading docks should be created only on rear or side alley locations.
- Design new loading docks to be as inconspicuous as possible.
- Overhead doors and docks should be compatible to the building in size, scale, materials, color, and texture and face away from the primary public street.

Staff approval – repair of existing loading dock and/or doors.

Bring new utilities to the building - install new equipment.

- New utilities such as gas, electric, water and internet meters and boxes should be located away from the main entrance and not prominently visible from the primary street.
- HVAC condensers should be installed on the roof not visible from the ground or on rear and alley locations with screening such as plantings, fencing (see [here](#) pre-approved designs) or walls that match the building.
- HVAC condensers located on rooftops should be low height units.
- Satellite dishes shall not be mounted on the main façade and should be out of view from the primary public street.

Staff approval – mounting new HVAC equipment, in compliance with the guideline on the roof not visible from the ground. New utility meters and the like installed in an alley or rear wall so long as such installations are screened by pre-approved screening.

The following is not recommended and generally not approved by the Commission:

- Loading docks on the front or visible from primary and secondary streets.
- Utilities installed on the front of the building, attached to the front facade.

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PAINTING

General approach and understanding

Paint is one of the most common ways to protect the exterior surfaces of historic buildings, as well as highlight architectural details and appearance. Although paint colors are temporary and generally reversible, they are also quite visible and should be selected wisely. Colors should be suited to the age of the building, its style, and the DISTRICT.

Generally, a paint color scheme is broken down into the various parts of the building, including siding, trim, decorative details, and window sashes. Read more about selecting paint colors and color schemes, and a list of approved historic color palettes [here](#).

The key to a long-lasting paint job is good surface preparation involving the removal of loose paint, sanding, caulking, primer, and several coats of paint. More information on proper preparation and painting techniques can be found [here](#).

What is your project

Repaint a building with colors from approved paint pallet for the District

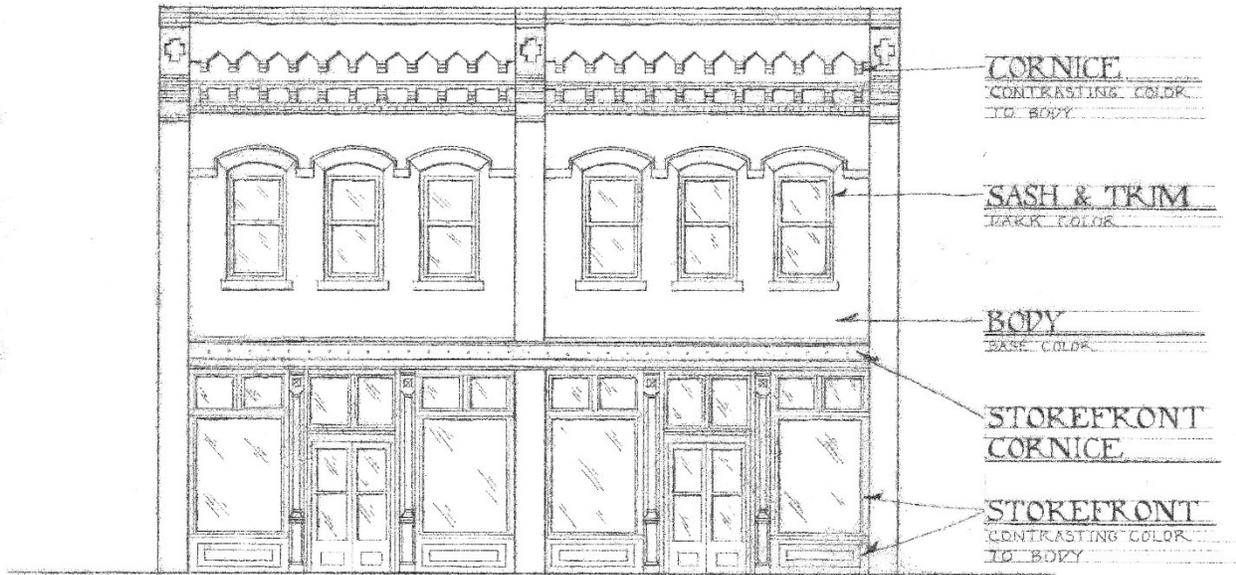
Repaint building in a color scheme suitable to the age, style, and DISTRICT, using colors from the pre-approved color palette.

Staff approval – Painting with colors from the Sherwin Williams Historic Exterior Color palette or equivalent.

The following is not recommended and generally not approved by the Commission:

- Painting walls that have not previously been painted
- Single-color for walls, trim, and windows
- Exceptionally bright or high-contrast paint schemes (such as neon orange siding with lime green trim)

- High gloss paint finish



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ROOFS

General understandings and approach

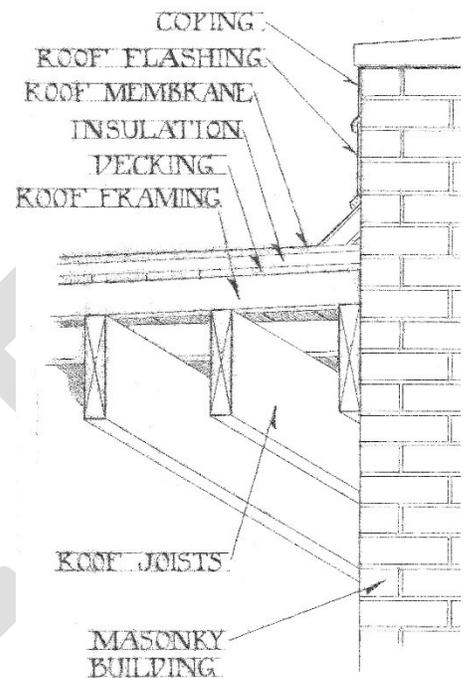
Roof form, material and details are important features that contribute to the character of a building and should be preserved. Roofs should not extend above the parapet or be converted to gable roofs where none previously existed. Proposals for pop ups or additions to the top of a building to add floors can be found under New Construction/Addition sections.

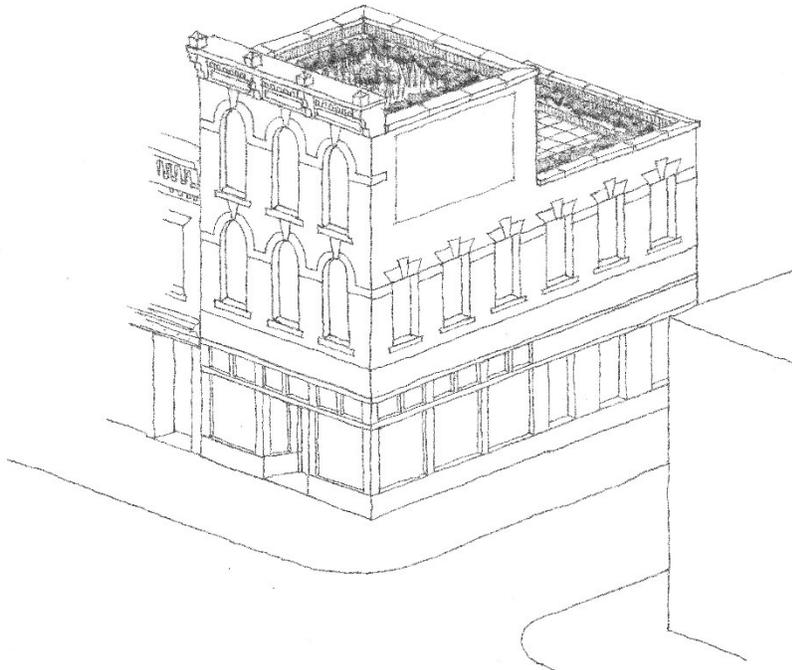
What is your project?

Replace the roof covering, gutters and/or downspouts, flashing, soffit.

- Roof covering replacement has a wide latitude with regard to materials so long as the new covering is not visible from the street and does not change the character of the building by adding a gable or higher sloped deck that extends above the parapet.
- New gutters and downspouts should be installed along the rear or side of the building and not be located on the front or primary façade.
- Gutters and downspouts should be commercial in size and large enough to handle the anticipated water drainage.
- Modern materials such as aluminum are allowable in colors with neutral colors recommended.
- Caps should be installed along perimeter edges to seal edges as per industry standard. Limestone, concrete or other decorative roof capping should be removed prior to starting the re-roofing project and reinstalled at the completion of the project once new flashing is completed.

Staff approval – installation of a new roof covering, gutters and downspouts and projects in compliance with guidelines.





Install a green roof.

- Installation of a green roof should only be undertaken if its installation does not require removal of a historic roof materials without modification of the roof's look and design.
- A green roof on a flat-roofed building should set back from the parapet.

Staff approval – proposals for green roofs on rear additions and set back at least five feet from the parapet and edge.

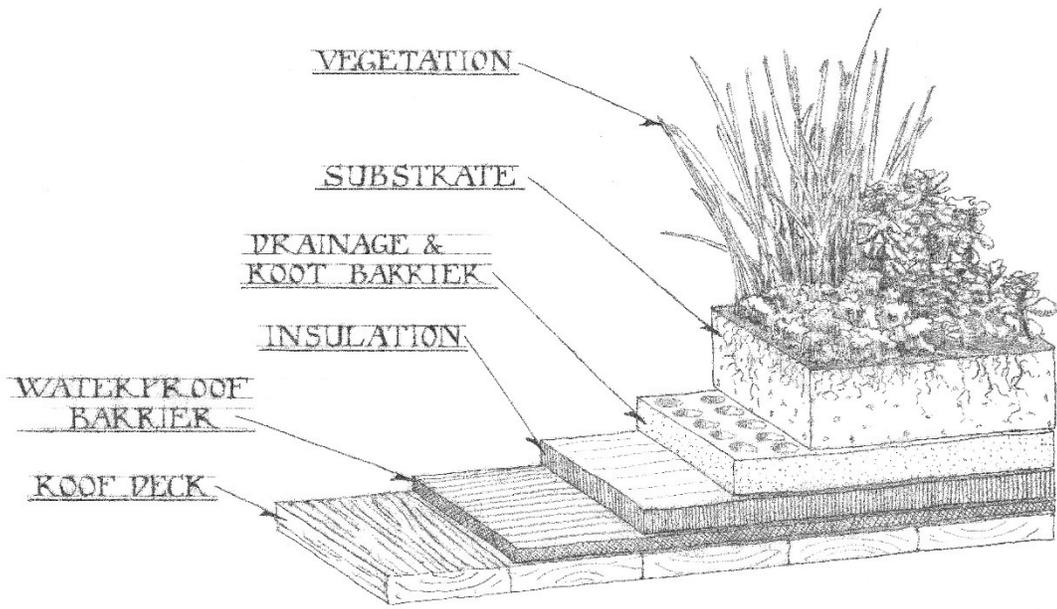
The following is not recommended and generally not approved by the Commission:

- Installing a modern metal cap over the top of limestone or concrete roof

caps.

- Using residential grade and size gutters and downspouts on a commercial building.
- Constructing a gabled or other sloped roof structure that projects above the parapet.
- Removing a parapet as part of a roofing project.
- Mounting large scale items that project above the parapet.
- Installing HVAC equipment that projects above the parapet without approved screening. See also section on utilities [here](#).

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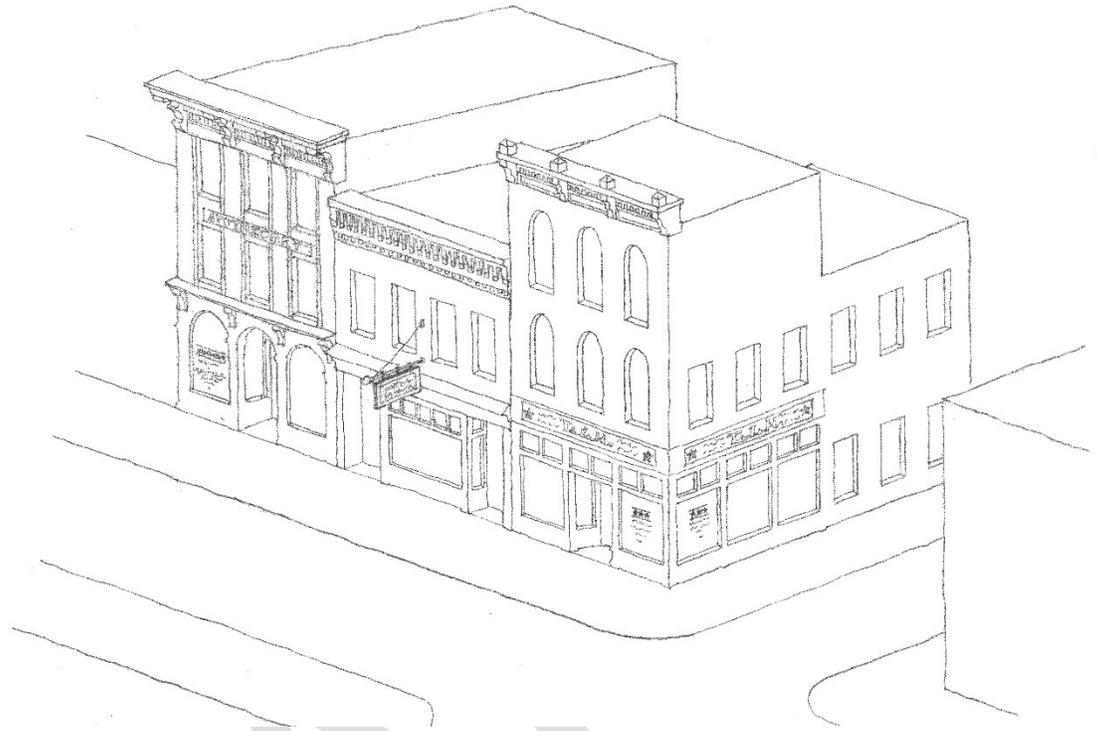


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Signs and Murals

General understanding and approach

Signage should reflect the character of the building and its use. Signage is short lived as businesses change or graphics need updating. Attention should be paid not to cover or remove historic details that give the building its character. Historic signage should be preserved.



Get ideas about historic signage, recommended designs and placements and uses [here](#).

If the project also involves an awning, canopy or marquee go [here](#).

What is your project?

Repair an existing sign modifying only the information on it.

- Changing an existing sign to update the information should be done with materials that match the existing. New lettering and graphics that are applied should be in proportion to the overall sign size and of a color that is of the pre-approved palette approved by the Commission that is compatible to the building on which it is mounted. Owners are encouraged to consider replacing non-historic signs then updating them. See new sign information below.

Heads up – it is likely that other permits or variances are required from the City for projects in this section. For more information go [here](#).

Staff approval – repair of an existing sign, overlay of new graphics on an existing sign in the color palette approved by the Commission.

Work on a ghost sign – a sign painted on the building from a historic business use.

- Ghost signs should be left undisturbed.

Remove an existing sign and install a new sign in the same location.

- Removal of old signs that do not help define the character of the building is encouraged. Follow guidelines for new signage below when a new sign is proposed in its place.

Staff approval – removal of an existing sign that does not add to the character of the building with no replacement planned.

Add a new sign to replace a sign or where no signage exists.

- New signs should be in proportion and be similar in color and details of the building.
- Signage should not cover nor remove elements of the building that give it its character.
- Blade signs are encouraged in sizes proportional to the front façade.
- Signs designed in the same period as the building's construction are recommended – allowing the use of modern materials for their fabrication.
- New signs should be installed with anchoring that does not destroy or cause removal of historic materials.
- Signs should be externally lit.
- Where signs must be mounted to masonry, they should be mounted on the building in areas where a sign previously has been installed to minimize new holes in the masonry materials, with any new holes made in the mortar joints only.
- Neon signs that add to the character of the building and the District should be considered for retention and rehabilitation.
- Neon signs that interfere with new signage or will be confusing to the public about the business located within the building should be considered for removal and storage on site or installed inside as a decorative item.
- External lighting for signs shall be shielded to minimize glare, not overpower the building or street edge.
- Small and discreet modern light fittings may provide an unobtrusive alternative to traditionally styled lamp units.
- Window signs visible to the exterior without regard to their application materials or installation method shall fill no more than 30% of the overall window surface.
- Multiple individual signs should be consolidated into a uniform overall sign program for the building and taken together shall not cover more than 30% of the overall window surface.
- Hung lit signs behind the glass are discouraged.

Staff approval – address, public information signage, temporary banners, and flags.

Add a monument style sign on the site.

- Where sites allow, monument style signs should be no more than three feet in height with a length and width in proportion to the yard in which it is installed and the building for which it is identifying.

- Monument signs should be constructed of masonry with applied lettering and graphics.

Cover a historic sign that is carved into or constructed and installed with materials that are part of the building's walls.

- Signs that are carved into the building's materials or are made from the materials of the building itself should be preserved.
- Historic names should remain visible so long as options exist for new signage to identify the present-day use(s).
- If a historic carved sign needs to be covered, then the new sign should be affixed with anchors into the mortar joints and not the material itself and be reversible.

Install a Directory or Wayfinding Sign.

- Directory signs for the interiors of buildings should be mounted on an inside wall or vestibule and not on the front façade.
- Wayfinding signs for a community should be coordinated with an overall wayfinding program throughout the City.
- Interpretive signs and kiosks should be installed in public rights of way and not attached to the building.
- Color, graphics, and scale should be compatible with the District and its character.

Staff approval – inside vestibule walls or storefronts.

Install a banner.

- Banners should be mounted to street posts or other elements in the District rather than attached permanently to the historic building.

Staff approval – banners and brackets installed on street posts or other public elements.

Murals

Murals can become iconic spots in commercial historic Districts, contributing to its unique identity as well as its public art. Murals can be defined in these ways:

- **Mural Signs** contain advertising or directly promote a product, business, organization, or political message (not recommended).
- **Artistic Murals** contain no advertising of any type (recommended.)

What is your project?

Repaint an existing mural.

- Historic “ghost sign” advertisements and murals should be retained, but should not be repainted, removed, or altered unless the structural integrity of the buildings is at risk.

- Replication of an historic mural sign that has been removed could be acceptable if adequate photo documentation of the original sign exists.

New artistic murals.

- Artistic murals should consist exclusively of paint and contain no type of advertising.
- New murals should only be painted on previously painted flat surfaces of back or side walls.
- Murals could be painted on panels inserted into a frame that is attached in mortar joints.
- Before installing a new mural, the owner must ensure the wall underneath is properly repaired and in good condition. Refer also to section about [Walls](#).
- A mural painted in an outdoor location becomes public art. When planning a mural, consideration should be given to ownership of the mural (artist or building owner), location, and on-going maintenance, as well as local regulations. See guidance [here](#) for murals.

The following is not recommended and generally not approved by the Commission:

- LED, back lit, electronic signage, or strobe lights.
- Back lit plastic signs.
- Painting over a ghost sign.
- Removing a historic sign that is a character defining feature of the building – either carved, painted or applied.
- Installing a sign that covers or removes features that give the building its character.
- Rooftop, animated and message board signs.
- Oversized signs.
- Super graphics.
- Billboards on buildings.
- Vinyl murals.
- Clear sealants on murals.

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Sites – Parking, hard surfaces, parking garages, geothermal

General understanding and approach

Parking lots and other paved areas should be as small as possible and screened with landscaping and/or fencing to help blend in with the District. Parking should be developed to the extent available in the rear or sides of the site.

New parking structures should include commercial uses on the first floor with storefronts that are compatible to the pedestrian scale. Materials for the parking structure should be compatible and be like the material found in the District such as brick, terra cotta or limestone.

Read more about best practices when designing a parking lot or structure [here](#).

What is your project?

Repave an existing parking lot.

- Parking surfaces should be repaired with the same material as constructed.
- Repaving should not add additional spaces without consideration of additional screening.

Staff approval – Repair of existing parking lot surfaces with the same material.

Add a new parking lot to a site.

- Locate a parking lot on the interior of a block whenever possible, but not on a primary or secondary street more than one building lot wide.
- Locate surface parking to the side of a building when it is not feasible to locate parking to the rear, but only if the adjacent lot is already vacant.
- Locate a surface lot so that it will minimize gaps in the continuous building wall of a commercial block.
- Where a parking lot shares a site with a building, place the parking at the rear of the site or beside the building.
- Proposals for parking lots that involve the demolition of historic buildings shall be avoided.
- Lighting for parking lots should balance brightness and need for security with its overall impact to the District. Use of warm-colored bulbs is recommended with lamps shielded to direct light downward.
- Light standards should not be more than 10' tall.

New parking lots should include setbacks and screening. See also section on [fencing](#).

Staff approval -Repave existing parking lot with in-kind material or new materials following the guidelines.

Build a new parking structure

- Parking structures should include commercial use of at least 75% of the ground floor.
- The façade shall reflect a height and floor to ceiling ratio that mimics the adjacent structure and District overall.
- Facades should be clad in materials that are found throughout the District.
- Entrances for parking structures should be located to disrupt the pedestrian flow on the primary street as little as possible.
- Structures taller than the average height of historic buildings in the District should have upper floor set back a minimum of XXX feet to minimize the overpowering of the adjacent buildings
- The structures should be set to the sidewalk edge along the main street to match the setbacks of other historic buildings in the District.
- Open spaces between floors should be screened with an opaque metal screening or infilled with alternate ventilation louvers mimicking the window openings in the District.

The following is not recommended and generally not approved by the Commission:

- Gravel or other loose materials for parking lots.

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SOLAR PANELS, WIND TURBINES, SATELLITE DISHES/INTERNET COMMUNICATION

General understanding and approach

Accommodating alternative energy projects within the district is an important goal. Their integration into a Historic structure or site should maintain the building and districts look and feel considering historic integrity of the site and building. Mounting and installation should be done in a manner that is reversible without harm to the Historic building.

To plan energy efficiency improvements, check out a suggested guide for the evaluation of all energy-generating technologies [here](#).

See also section on Sites [here](#).

What is your project?

Install solar panels, wind turbines or satellite dish (Equipment)

- Equipment should be installed in a manner that is reversible without the harm to historic materials on which it is installed and in locations shielded from public view.
- Equipment should be placed on the ground in the rear of the property and designed, sized, and located to in locations that avoid obscuring the building or significant site features.
- Installation of equipment on a roof is a last resort if no suitable ground locations are possible.
- Equipment proposed for a roof installation shall be mounted on roofs not facing or visible from a public street and installed as flush to the roof surface as possible.
- Equipment shall not extend above the front parapet as viewed from the ground across the street along the main public street.
- Equipment shall be placed on secondary roofs or rear wings and mounted to the rear of the roof and not towards edge.
- Exposed hardware, frames and piping should have a matte finish, and be consistent with the color scheme of the primary structure.

Staff approval – installation of equipment on accessory buildings, or secondary roofs or rear wings not visible to the public from a public street.

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STOREFRONTS

General guidance and approach.

Storefronts are the public face of a commercial building and reinforce the human scale of the District. Historic storefronts are character defining features of a building – even if not original to the building – and should be preserved.

If the storefront needs more than 50% replacement, a new storefront should reflect traditional storefront design with the various parts including a kickplate, large display windows, a transom and cornice. Original façade elements such as cast-iron posts should be retained and preserved.

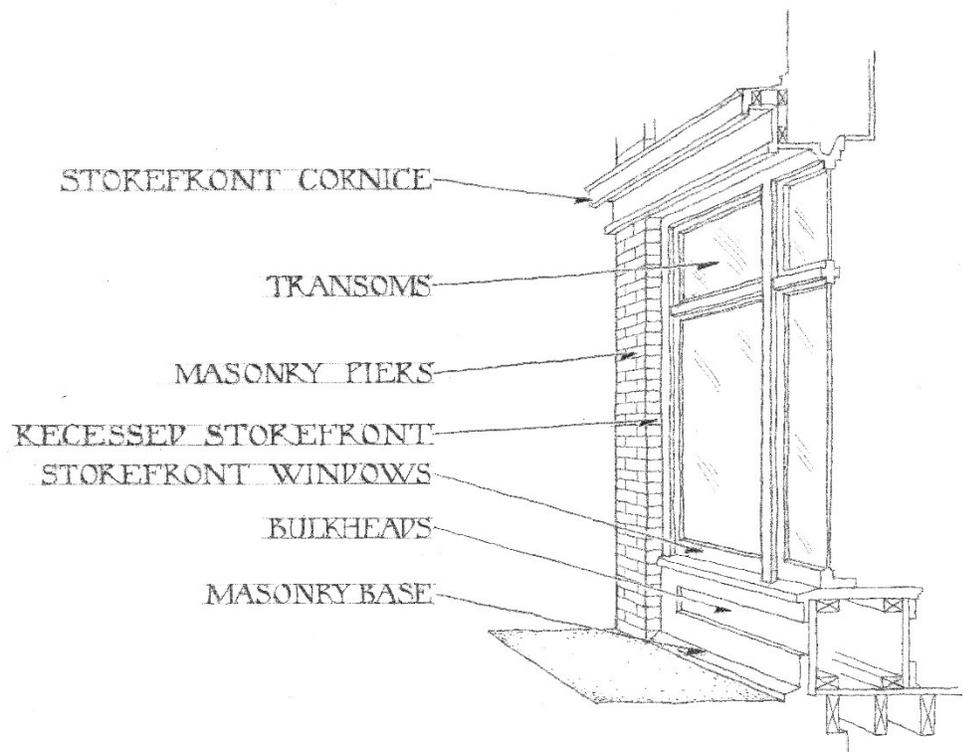
Read more about historic storefront design, materials, and history [here](#).

Refer also to section about [Signage](#) and [Doors](#) as a part of the overall storefront design.

What is your project?

Repair an historic storefront.

- Historic storefronts should be repaired using the same materials as originally constructed.
- Where storefront windows are single pane glass weatherization and energy usage should be improved using internal mounted storm windows or by swapping the single pane glass with new double pane glass of the same size.
- Display windows should remain the same size as originally designed.
- Prism glass should be retained and restored. If rehabilitation is not possible as part of the project, then simply maintaining in place while covering for a later rehabilitation is recommended.
- Prism glass more than 50% deteriorated or in danger of falling out of the opening could be removed and stored on site for potential future reinstallation or used as a new hanging behind a new full view transom.



Staff approval - repair with the same materials and design as originally constructed. Replacement of single pane window glass with double pane insulated glass of the same size.

Remove an existing non-historic storefront and build a new storefront.

- Non-historic storefronts - defined as those constructed within the past 50 years and not adding to the architectural look of the building - can be removed and replaced with a new storefront.
- New storefronts can be constructed of modern materials such as aluminum or composite and should include traditional design elements such as kickplates, large display windows that comprise at least 60% of the storefront, transoms, recessed entrance doors, and storefront cornice. See guidance [here](#) on the design of a traditional storefront.
- Use of historic, pictorial, and physical documentation to design a new storefront is encouraged however creating a fake historic design is not recommended.
- Storefronts should fit within their original structural openings.
- When a building has been divided by storefront (bay) into different legal parcels, new storefronts should seek to unify the original building design and not continue to treat each storefront – or bay – separately. [See here](#) for a fuller explanation and example.

Replace a historic storefront with a new storefront.

- Character defining storefronts should be preserved and repaired in kind.
- Where rehabilitation would require more than 50% of replacement then a new storefront can be designed and installed.
- If a historic storefront must be removed retain as much of the original materials (limestone, brick, terra cotta, Carrara glass, ceramic tile, cast and wrought iron, prism glass) as possible and incorporate in the new design.
- New storefronts should not attempt to create a fake historic look but should adhere to good new storefront design with traditional elements and proportion. New storefronts should fill the entire space in the façade.
- Storefront windows for commercial uses that no longer require, or desire transparency should be obscured by non-permanent means such as blinds, blacking out the glass, or installing opaque vinyl applique on the interior.
- [See here](#) for guidance on the design of a new storefront.

The following is not recommended and generally not approved by the Commission:

- Closing in or reducing the size of the storefront windows.
- Adding elements to storefronts that have no historic basis such as coach lanterns, false mansard designs, small-paned windows, and shutters.
- Residential-style windows or doors.
- False fronts, false stories, or projecting eaves to the roof.
- Vinyl or vinyl composite materials.
- Textured wood or T1-11 siding.
- Reflective or insulating film or deeply tinted new glass.
- Changing or re-orienting the location of the main entrance of a storefront.
- Removing or obscuring historic flooring materials such as ceramic tile, mosaics or terrazzo in entryway vestibules or recessed storefront entrances.

- EFIS or similar systems for storefront construction.

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WALLS

General understanding and approach

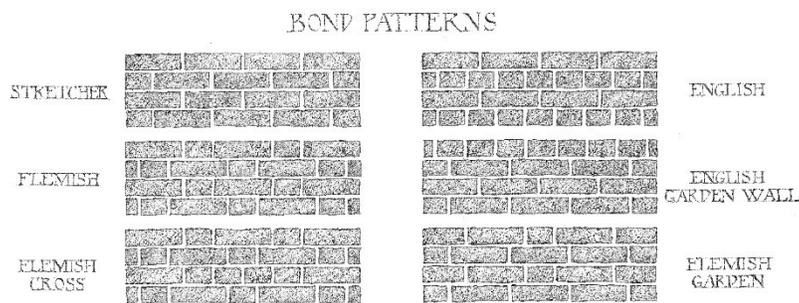
Walls provide protection for interior structural framing and give a building its architectural look. Walls should be repaired with matching material, mortar color, texture and strength and joint size and profile. Cleaning should be done with the gentlest means possible avoiding aggressive media or water pressure. Traditionally painted surfaces should be kept painted whereas traditionally unpainted surfaces should remain coating free.

Read more about the recommendations for wall maintenance and repair and construction [here](#).

See sections also about [Cornices](#), [Storefronts](#), [Doors](#), [Windows](#)

What is your project?

Repair a wall.



Repairs to a wall should be done with materials and designs that match the original look.

Brick and other masonry materials

- Brick and Terra Cotta units should match the size, color, shape, and finish of the original material.
- Mortar should be similar in strength, color and joint rake, depth, and decorative finishes.
- When possible, salvage and reuse original bricks in the repair.

- Fiberglass reproductions of missing terra cotta pieces are acceptable provided a mock-up sample is presented for approval prior to full scale use in the project.

Stucco

- Stucco on walls should match the original in texture and tooling.
- Modern stucco materials are allowable for recoating and repair so long as the result is not a diminished reveal for the windows, trim, doors or other wall details.

Wood

- Repair of deteriorated wood siding and trim should be completed with new wood. Pine is not a recommended wood species. Poplar or cedar is preferred for its longevity.
- Substitute materials such as fiber cement or other composite materials pre-approved by the Commission can be considered when the deteriorated wood siding is in a high moisture contact, is high off the ground and difficult to maintain. The following composite or new materials have been approved by the Commission:

PRE-APPROVED Siding: Boral TruExterior, JamesHardie HardiePlank

Staff approval – Repair in-kind or with materials from pre-approved list.

Rebuild a part or entire wall.

- When a wall needs to be rebuilt in part or in whole, documentation should first be completed such as high-resolution photographs and drawings.
- The exterior layer (cladding) of the rebuilt wall should be reconstructed matching the original in form, look, materials, color and design of the original.
- The internal structure may be any form approved by the building department so long as the exterior cladding matches the original.

See also [Cornices](#), [Storefronts](#), [Doors](#), [Windows](#)

Staff approval – Rebuild a wall to match original.

The following is not recommended and generally not approved by the Commission:

- Covering a brick wall that historically is exposed with a new covering like modern stucco or wood.
- Sand or other media abrasive blasting.
- Painting an unpainted brick wall.
- Vinyl siding.

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WINDOWS

General approach and guidance

Windows are a primary feature defining the architectural look of a building and are themselves individually important historic pieces of a building. Original or early windows should be preserved and not replaced unless beyond repair – defined as over 50% of the original materials needing to be replaced. Features of windows that are important to the architectural look of a building include their materials, placement within the facade of a building and their overall operational design – i.e. double hung, casement, hopper or fixed.

Repairing, weather stripping, and/or insulating around the window frame within the wall has been found to be as or more energy efficient, less expensive, and maintains the architectural look of a building while achieving energy efficiency. Read more about that [here](#). If windows are not able to be rehabilitated then new windows should match the original in materials, operation, placement, and opening size.

Read more about window repair and replacement [here](#).

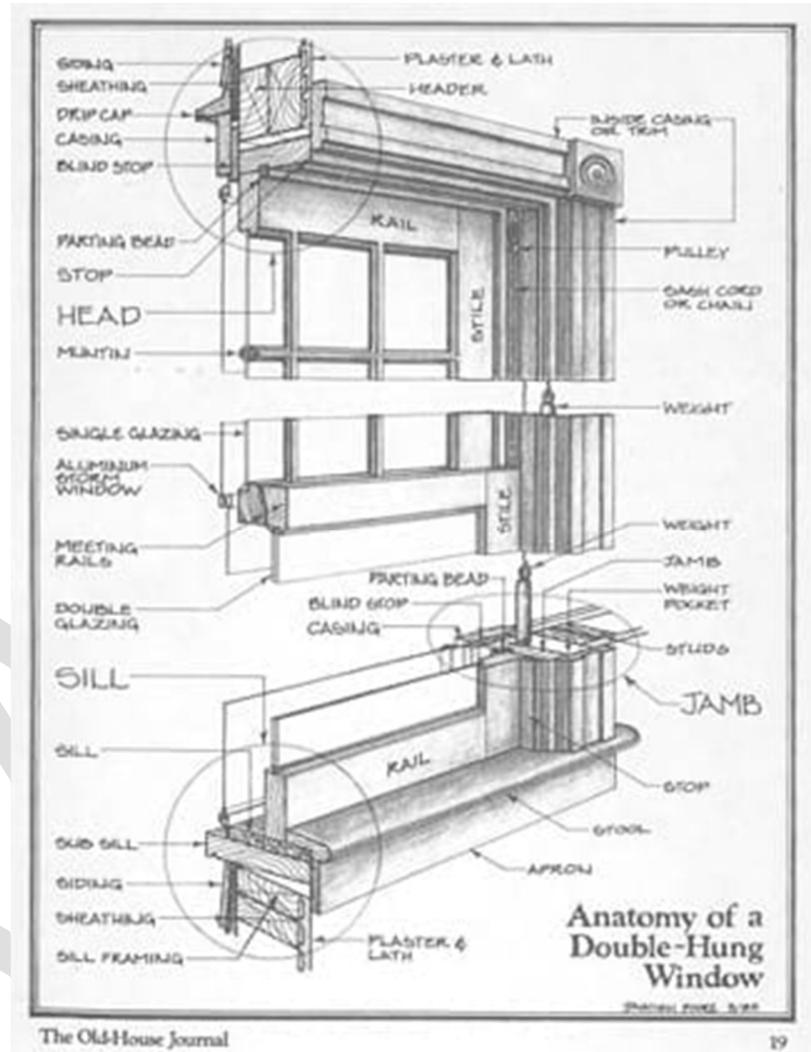
What is your project?

Repair existing windows, sash, or jamb.

- Original or early windows should be repaired using the same materials as original. Epoxy or similar repair consolidates are recommended.

Staff approval – repair of windows using the same materials, or a combination of original materials and epoxy as described in the “How to Repair Wood Windows” section [here](#).

Replace fewer than all the windows.



- Original or early windows should be repaired using the same materials as original. Epoxy or similar repair consolidates are recommended.
- Where some but not all windows in a building are beyond repair, as defined as over 50% of the original window material requiring replacement, proposed replacements shall match the existing windows that will remain in size, shape, lite division, operation and materials.
- When some windows need replacement on different facades, and a phased plan is proposed, replacement projects should be undertaken one entire facade at a time. The applicant should specify which facade and the planned project timeframe.
- Phased projects should be completed in less than three years to avoid colors that do not match over time or manufacture's that change product lines.

The Commission has adopted the list below of approved windows and systems below.

Window Replacement Matrix

- Question 1: Repair, or replace?
 Question 2: What is the condition of the existing window?
 Question 3: Are the window dimensions going to change (specifically the glazing area)?
 Question 4: What is the rating of the structure?

		EXISTING MATERIAL					
		WOOD	ALUMINUM-CLAD	FIBERGLASS-CLAD	FIBERGLASS	VINYL-CLAD	VINYL
FINAL MATERIAL	WOOD	STAFF	STAFF	STAFF	STAFF	STAFF	STAFF
	ALUMINUM-CLAD	HPC	STAFF	STAFF	STAFF	STAFF	STAFF
	FIBERGLASS-CLAD	HPC	HPC	STAFF	STAFF	STAFF	STAFF
	FIBERGLASS	HPC	HPC	HPC	STAFF	STAFF	STAFF
	VINYL-CLAD	HPC	HPC	HPC	HPC	STAFF	STAFF
	VINYL	HPC	HPC	HPC	HPC	HPC	STAFF

Staff approval– replacement of windows of the same size and design included within the adopted list including a proposal for a phased project that is less than three years that proceeds facade by facade.

Replace all the windows in a building.

- Original or early windows should be repaired using the same materials as original. Epoxy or similar repair consolidates are recommended.
- Where windows are beyond repair, as defined as over 50% of the original window material (not including glass) needing replacement, any new windows should match the original or early windows in size, shape, lite division, operation, and materials.
- The use of aluminum clad wood systems or composite (non-vinyl) windows on primary elevations may be permissible if the new windows closely match the original.
- New sash utilizing applied grids on the exterior and interior to simulate original divided lite windows should also have a black internal divider matching the grids.

The Commission has adopted the following list of approved windows and systems below.

Pre-Approved Replacement Window Products*

Disclaimer: This information is provided to assist property owners. It is not an endorsement of products or exclusionary of similar products that may meet the standards in the Historic District Ordinance

- Andersen
 - E-Series – aluminum-clad
 - A-Series – fiberglass-clad
- Kolbe
 - VistaLuxe – aluminum-clad
 - Ultra – aluminum-clad
- Marvin
 - Signature Series – Ultimate (all wood or aluminum-clad) and Modern, Tilt-Pacs
 - Elevate – fiberglass-clad
 - Essential – fiberglass
- Parrett
 - Wood and aluminum-clad wood
- Pella
 - Architect Series – all-wood
 - Impervia – fiberglass
- Windsor
 - Pinnacle – aluminum-clad
 - Legend – composite

*Note – guidelines specify that repair is recommended over replacement. When over 50% of the existing window would be replaced due to repair needs, then replacements would be in order. The chart provides a list of pre-approved products that staff could work with an applicant to approve if the proposed replacements match size and configuration.

Staff approval – replacement of windows with new windows that match the original period of the building and are compatible with the original opening size. Approval of any windows beyond repair that are utilizing those in the approved list.

Restore windows where the original windows have previously been replaced.

- Where original or early windows have previously been replaced, new windows should be based on surviving windows still extant on the building, photos of the building with the original windows or similar windows found on buildings of the same period and/or in the district.
- New windows should match windows of a similar aged building in size, operation, glass to frame proportion and frame to sash proportion/opening.
- Aluminum clad wood windows systems or composite (non-vinyl) in colors approved by the Commission are allowable if they are following other aspects of the guidelines. The chart above outlines windows pre-approved by the Commission:

Staff approval – replacement of previously replaced windows with new windows that match the original period of the building and are compatible with the original opening size. Approval of any windows beyond repair that are utilizing those in the approved list.

Add a new window and opening to accommodate a use inside the building.

- New windows openings should only be added to side and rear facades.

- New openings and windows should match those that are on other facades.
- Where a smaller opening is proposed, it should be in proportions like the existing window.
- Kitchens and bathrooms should be located where their windows would be on the side or rear elevations of a house to avoid a smaller window on the front façade.
- Where bathrooms and kitchens may necessitate adding a window, the new window should match those that are on other facades.

See approved list above for pre-approved new windows systems.

Staff approval – adding a new opening to the rear or non-public view side that follows the guidelines.

Fill in or obscure an existing original window.

- Original window openings should remain in place.
- A window sash not needed due to interior use conflicts should be fixed in place with glass blacked out leaving the exterior of the window exposed and covering over on the interior is preferred.
- If an opening is approved for in-fill, the exterior wood siding should be installed with staggered joints to blend the filled opening in with the surrounding siding. Brick infill should be toothed in to match the adjacent brick installation pattern. See also [Walls](#).
- Kitchens and bathrooms should be located where their windows would be on the non-public side or rear elevations of a house. Where bathrooms and kitchens may necessitate covering over a portion of a window's original size, the original window should remain in place with the lower portion blacked out on the glass and covered over on the interior while the exterior remains exposed.
- Windows shall not be re-sized to accommodate interior dropped ceilings. Where interior ceilings are being dropped, the ceilings should be bulk-headed or held back from the window to avoid shortening the window or visually obscuring its overall opening.

Staff approval – blacking out an existing window, adding a new opening to the rear or non-public view side.

Install new storm windows.

- New storm windows should match the window openings on which they are installed in the material, size, frame to glass proportion, the divisions of the sash, and trim color.
- Double or triple track aluminum storms are acceptable if they match the underlying trim.

Staff approval– new wood storms that match the profile, size, and color of the windows on which they are installed. New double/triple track aluminum storm windows in colors that match the window openings on which they are installed matching the underlying trim color.

Repair or install shutters by windows where no shutters exist.

- Shutters should not be installed on buildings where no evidence of their original installation exists.
- Existing shutters should be repaired with the same materials.
- If historic shutters are deteriorated beyond repair, new shutters should be made to match the originals in material, size and installed the same way as the originals were installed.
- Composite materials for the replicated shutters may be considered if the design, profile, and installation match the original.

Staff approval – replacement of existing shutters with new that match in materials, design, and installation method.

Repair or replace deteriorated decorative windows such as leaded, stained glass panels.

- Decorative windows shall be retained and repaired.
- When deteriorated beyond repair as determined by an expert with experience working on the window type, restoration should include retaining the glass within a new frame that matches the original frame in size, materials, and design.

Staff approval – repair of deteriorated decorative windows with materials that match the original.

Projects involving lead remediation.

The following pertains only to the nature of the work as it pertains to Historic aspects of the project. Owners or their representatives must ensure when conducting lead remediation, that all work complies with local, state, and federal standards. Read more about the EPA RPP rule on lead remediation [here](#).

- Original wall cladding that contains lead should be maintained and repaired rather than removed and replaced.
- Encapsulation and/or removal of lead paint using safe tools and techniques before applying a new non-lead paint is the preferred project approach over wholesale replacement of original materials.

The following is not recommended and generally not approved by the Commission:

- Vinyl clad or full vinyl sash/frame insert replacement.
- Sashes that are smaller than the original frames, openings, glass size to frame ratio.
- Sashes that are larger than the original frames, openings, glass size to frame ratio.
- Changes in operation such as double hung to casement, steel fixed to double hung, double hung to jalousie
- New windows that have applied glass divisions but do not have an interior divider in the insulated glass.
- Glass block in operable window openings.
- Permanent removal of sash and frame and in-fill of openings.
- Replacing multi-pane windows with true divided lites with thermal glazing windows that have false “snap-in” or applied muntin and mullions or sash with no divided lites.

- Smoked, tinted, or reflective glass on building facades that can be seen from the public street.
- Filling in or removing transoms or side lites.
- Install new floors or dropped ceilings that block the glazed area of Historic windows. If such an approach is required, the design should incorporate setbacks that allow the full height of the window to be seen unobstructed.
- Single hung storm windows where the window behind is a double hung or other multiple sash operation.
- Storm windows that do not match with the window behind in color or sash division.
- Permanently remove or alter original sash to install a window air conditioner.
- Security bars located on the exterior of the window opening.

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NEW CONSTRUCTION and ADDITIONS

General Understanding and Approach

Most if not all districts have the potential for growth. Whether by filling in the gaps left by demolished buildings or lots that permit expansion, new construction and additions to existing buildings require striking a smart balance between compatibility with existing fabric yet distinct to announce its newer arrival. New construction and additions to existing buildings also does not need to replicate the existing style of a building or styles of architecture in a district. To retain the special character that makes that area worth preserving, new development should blend in and flow with the district, rather than disrupt or distract from existing buildings.

Applicants and architects can achieve this compatibility in design by carefully balancing the new with the old and considering the characteristics of the new development, including its mass, scale, form, height, alignment, setback, façade proportion, building materials, and style.

THE GUIDELINES

SETBACKS AND SITE PARAMETERS

- Design characteristics of typical existing buildings help define rhythms that may contribute to the character of a neighborhood. Specific features that should be used in defining physical context include: building age, style, design character, materials, the relationship of openings to solid wall areas, building use, roof lines, eaves, location of entries, and the placement of accessory structures.
- Reflect the traditional setbacks seen within the block. Place the façade of the building at the property line. This should only vary in special circumstances, such as local precedence with treatments for large public buildings and places of worship.

MASSING AND SCALE

- Maintain the average perceived size of buildings at the sidewalk.
- Façade heights of new buildings should fall within the established range along the block and respect traditional proportions of height to width. Floor-to-floor heights should appear like those of traditional buildings in the area.
- Traditional spacing patterns created by the repetition of uniform building widths along streets should be maintained. New façade widths should reflect the established range of the building widths seen along the block. Reference historic examples for double and triple lot buildings.
- Where a building must exceed this width, use a change in design features to suggest the traditional building widths. Changes in façade material, window design, façade height or decorative details are techniques that may be considered. These variations should be expressed through the structure, so the composition is a collection of smaller buildings.
- A new building should incorporate a base, middle and a cap to reinforce the visual continuity of the area.
- Position taller portions of a structure away from neighbouring buildings of lower scale.
- Where permitted by zoning, taller structures should be located to minimize looming effects and shading of lower-scaled neighbours. Taller buildings should step down towards lower-scaled neighbors, including adjacent historic properties and Districts.
- Establish a sense of human scale in building designs. Use vertical and horizontal articulation to break up large facades. Incorporate changes in color, texture and materials in building designs to help define human scale. Use architectural details that create visual interest and convey a three-dimensional façade.

Use materials which help to convey scale through their proportions, detailing and form. Size and locate signs to engage pedestrians and help define building entries.

- Rectangular forms should be dominant on commercial facades. Rectangular forms should be vertically oriented. The facade should appear as predominantly flat, with any decorative elements, and projecting or setback “articulations”, appearing to be subordinate to the dominant form.
- Roof forms should be like those historically found in the District.
- Use a ratio of solid-to-void (wall-to window) that is like that found on traditional commercial structures. Large surfaces of glass beyond the storefront is not recommended.

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

- Design a new building to reflect its time, while respecting key features of its context. Use contemporary interpretations of historic architectural building types when designing a new building.
- Contemporary interpretations of traditional designs and details should be considered.
- Special features which may be used in defining physical character: building height, building form, roof form, variations in wall planes, and the relationship of building floor area to lot size.
- Use similar window and door proportions to those seen traditionally. Upper story windows with a vertical emphasis are encouraged. A general rule is that the height of the window should be twice the dimension of the width. If a larger window is needed, combine sets of vertically proportioned windows.
- Maintain the general alignment of horizontal features on a building front. Typical elements that align include window mouldings, tops of display windows, cornices, copings, and parapets at the tops of buildings. When large buildings are designed to appear as several buildings, there should be some slight variation in alignments between the horizontal façade elements.
- Define the first and second floors of commercial type buildings with clearly distinguishable details. Changes in horizontal details and architectural panels may be used to help define the first and second floors. Changes in material, color, texture, pattern or wall plane may be used to help define the first and second floors.
- Maintain the distinction between the street level and the upper floor. The first floor of the primary façade should be transparent glass. Upper floors should be perceived as being opaquer than the lower floor.
- Express the distinction in floor heights between street levels and upper levels through detailing, materials, and fenestration. A belt course is an important feature to consider.
- Maintain the traditional spacing patterns created by upper story windows. Maintain the historic proportions of windows. Window headers and sills on new buildings should maintain the traditional placement relative to cornices and belt courses.
- Maintain the pattern created by recessed entryways. Set the door back an adequate amount from the front façade to establish a distinct threshold for pedestrians. A recessed dimension of four feet is typical. Where entries are recessed, the building line at the sidewalk edge should be maintained by the upper floor(s). Use transoms over doorways to maintain the full vertical height of the storefront.

MATERIALS

- Use masonry that appears similar in character to that seen historically. Brick should have a modular dimension like that used traditionally. Brick larger than the nominal 2-3/8" x 8" is discouraged. Brick should also appear structural in its application as load bearing and should be detailed accordingly.
- Stone, like that used traditionally, is also appropriate.
- New materials that are similar in character to traditional materials may be acceptable with appropriate detailing.
- Alternative materials should appear similar in scale, proportion, texture, and finish to those used traditionally for that building type.

- Use high quality, durable materials proven to be durable in the local climate.
- Façade materials should maintain an intended finish over time or acquire a patina which is understood to be an outcome of normal interaction with the elements.

The following is not recommended and generally not approved by the Commission:

SETBACKS AND SITE PARAMETERS

- Demolishing contributing structures in a historic District to make way for new or large-scale construction.
- Locating entire building fronts behind the established storefront line.

MASSING AND SCALE

- Exotic roof forms, such as A-frames and steep shed roofs.

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

- Odd window shapes such as octagons, triangles, and diamonds.
- Oversized and undersized interpretations of storefronts.

MATERIALS

- Vinyl and synthetic materials.
- The use of highly reflective materials is discouraged.

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ADDITIONS

General understanding and approach

Developing additional space for historic commercial buildings happens either by an addition to the rear of a building or its rooftop. A ground-level addition to the rear or side is the preferred method approved by the Commission that has the least impact to a historic building. A roof top is an option so long as it is set back from the main facade by at least 10 feet. A visual rendering and often a field test will be required for roof top addition consideration.

Read more about how to approach an addition to a historic commercial building [here](#).

What is your project?

Add an addition to a building including elevators and fire stairs.

- Additions should be added to the rear or side of a building.
- An addition should be compatible in scale, materials, and character with the main building.
- It should be designed to remain subordinate to the main structure.
- An addition should be designed and constructed to avoid the removal of architecturally important or character defining features.
- The addition should be distinguishable upon close inspection as different from the original building.
- No rear addition shall exceed in height more than 1/3rd of the total overall height of the completed building.

Add an addition to the roof of a building.

- A rooftop addition should be set back at least 10' from the primary, character defining façade, to maintain one's perception of the historic scale and character of the building.
- Its design should be modest in character, so it will not detract attention from the historic façade.

Add an open fire escape.

- If allowed by code, a new metal exterior fire escape can be added to side or rear elevations.
- New fire escapes shall not be added to the front or primary façade of the building.

The following is not recommended and generally not approved by the Commission:

- An addition that covers the entire primary facade of a building.
- A roof top addition that is not set back from the front facade.
- A roof top addition that is significantly taller than buildings on either side or the overall height of the District overall.
- Pitched roof additions

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DEMOLITION AND DECONSTRUCTION

Demolition and deconstruction, which is considered demolition, is defined as the razing, wrecking or removal by any means of the entire or partial exterior of a structure. Demolition by neglect occurs in the absence of ordinary and routine maintenance, jeopardizing the structural integrity of the building.

Demolition of a contributing building within the historic District is a last resort and approved only in rare circumstances such as when a building has become a hazard to the safety and welfare of the public and repairs are not possible.

When demolition is considered, salvage of character defining features is encouraged along with a plan for the use/development of the site post demolition.

Commission approval is required for all demolition proposals including a situation where a collapse may pose a threat to public safety. In such an emergency the Commission staff should be contacted, and an emergency meeting of the Commission may be called either in person or virtually. Except in extreme situations, before a demolition can proceed, an opinion by a licensed structural engineer familiar with the historic building type must be provided.

What factors are considered by the Commission when reviewing an application for demolition?

- Failed or inadequate foundation.
- Collapsed roof and/or floor supports.
- Wall members, partitions or other vertical supports that split, lean, list or buckle.
- Structural members of ceilings and roofs, or other horizontal elements which sag, split, or buckle.
- Lack of weather protection to the walls, roof, or foundation.
- Despite marketing the property, no one is interested in its rehabilitation – evidence of marketing will be required as part of the COA submission.
- Estimates for the cost of renovation.
- Appraisals for the market value of the building after renovation.

Demolition of a historic building should be considered only when the condition of the property is such that damage or deterioration is beyond repair and the structural system is comprised to the extent that the building poses a substantial and immediate threat to safety and health of the public.

The architectural and historical significance of the building and its relation to the street shall be considered as it fits in with the street and overall District.

In instances where the demolition of a historic building is approved by the Commission, owners should be encouraged to salvage character defining materials and other reusable items.

Moving A Building

On rare occasions where a building is not beyond repair and no alternative exists to incorporate it into a new development, then relocation should be considered. The first preference is to relocate a building within the same District as it currently exists. If no suitable locations exist within the District, then a site should be selected in another historic area that is of a similar era and allows the positioning of the relocated building on the new site in a way that is similar to its original location. Important considerations include the elevation from street level set back from front and or side streets. Before demolition is approved absent relocation, the applicant shall provide evidence that redevelopment of the existing building or relocation is not feasible.

The following must be submitted by the applicant in support of their effort to identify a party interested in redeveloping the building in place or its relocation:

- Estimates of the cost of renovation and or relocation.
- Appraisal of after rehabilitation value.
- Advertisements or other evidence of other efforts to inform the public of the availability of the building for either redevelopment or relocation.