

DESIGN GUIDELINES
FOR
HISTORIC PROPERTIES AND HISTORIC DISTRICTS



DESIGN GUIDELINES
HISTORIC RESOURCES COMMISSION
BOROUGH OF STATE COLLEGE

L HISTORY

The older residential neighborhoods of the Borough of State College offer visible evidence of how an academic community, aware of architectural ideas and trends, evolved and developed over a fifty year period (1890s - 1940s). Local builders were encouraged to replicate plans from pattern books, trade magazines, and mail-order catalogs, while a cadre of architects, landscape architects, and engineers were eager to experiment with built versions of theoretical designs. These activities resulted in an outstanding suburban landscape of early 20th century residential architecture, one that few Pennsylvania communities rival. In April 1995, two historic districts, Holmes-Foster/Highlands and College Heights with more than 1100 properties combined, were added to the National Register of Historic Places. This was the beginning of our community's formal allegiance to our historical past.

The State College Borough Council, concerned with the preservation of the community's rich architectural past, established the Historic Resources Commission in 1995 to identify, advocate for, and protect the Borough's historic resources. The Historic Resources Commission, along with the Planning Commission and Design Review Board are concerned about the future of the Borough's historic resources and realize that many irreplaceable historic resources could be lost forever. A review and possible revision of zoning regulations and the creation of design guidelines are ways in which to encourage the preservation of historic buildings and historic districts within the Borough of State College.

It is important to the Commission that the primary focus of the design guidelines be the local State College streetscape. Our local streetscapes are indicative of how our predecessors lived and how our community developed and evolved. Whether it be treelined neighborhoods with single family residences or rows of commercial buildings with on-street parking, our existing streetscapes have an identity worth preserving. The variety of architectural styles and buildings and the small scale and details of those buildings create State College's unique "small town" identity. These guidelines are designed to preserve our identity, while promoting good design and appropriate development practices to meet the needs of our growing and vibrant community.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

State College Borough has an interesting and diverse architectural heritage. The Historic Resources Commission believes it can be effective in helping to preserve this heritage by making the public more aware of the community's historic resources, and by providing

guidance for their preservation and enhancement. To achieve that purpose, the Historic Resources Commission intends to:

1. Compile and update an inventory of all archaeological, architectural, and historic sites in the Borough (available at the State College Borough Planning Office).
2. Establish and delineate districts of historical and architectural significance that represent the Borough's heritage.
3. Establish design guidelines to enhance the preservation of historic and architectural structures that are in the Borough's historic districts.
4. Review proposals to demolish or alter any historic structure or resource found within a historic district.
5. Review all new construction projects proposed within historic districts.

III. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A. Goals:

1. To preserve and protect the historical and architectural resources of the Borough of State College.
2. To maintain qualities and characteristics of historic properties and neighborhoods during rehabilitation projects, ordinary maintenance projects, or new construction projects.
3. To retain contributing structures and respect and acknowledge the context of our historic neighborhoods.

B. Objectives:

1. Provide a means of preserving the distinct character of State College's historic neighborhoods by protecting and enhancing their significant architectural and cultural attributes.
2. Provide present and future residents and visitors with a visible record of the community's architectural past and its evolving development by preserving, restoring, and maintaining historic structures.

3. Continue the ongoing program to identify and preserve individual properties, historic districts, and other State College Borough historic resources as they become eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.
4. Help coordinate new construction with the old in a harmonious way that contextually respects the community's historic streetscapes.
5. Foster appreciation of the Borough's historic environment through educational efforts and readily available information.

IV. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES

Regular maintenance and repair of a building can preserve its architectural character and distinctiveness. The HRC recommends that maintenance practices be tailored to the special needs of older buildings and reflect, whenever possible, the following U.S. Department of the Interior's Guidelines:

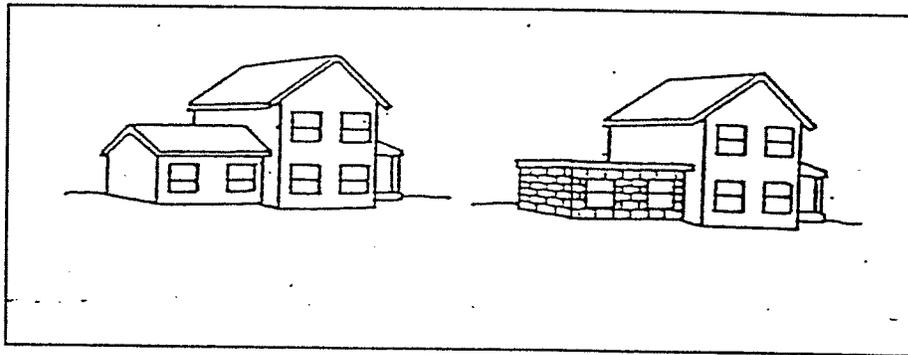
- Conserve existing materials wherever possible through maintenance and repair.
- Restore missing details by duplicating the original.
- Renovate only when excessive cost necessitates substitution of the original materials, while maintaining the scale, arrangement, and texture of the building as closely as possible.

V. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS TO HISTORIC PROPERTIES

A. Compatibility: Design guidelines insure a level of appropriateness when alterations and additions are made. Alterations and additions should complement and preserve the existing physical character of both the residential streetscape and the existing structure.

1. The design of the alteration or addition should be compatible with the architectural features of the original building as it relates to size, location, scale, and materials.
2. Additions to existing buildings within the historic districts should, whenever possible, not be visible from the street. Rear additions are encouraged and should be compatible with the original building.

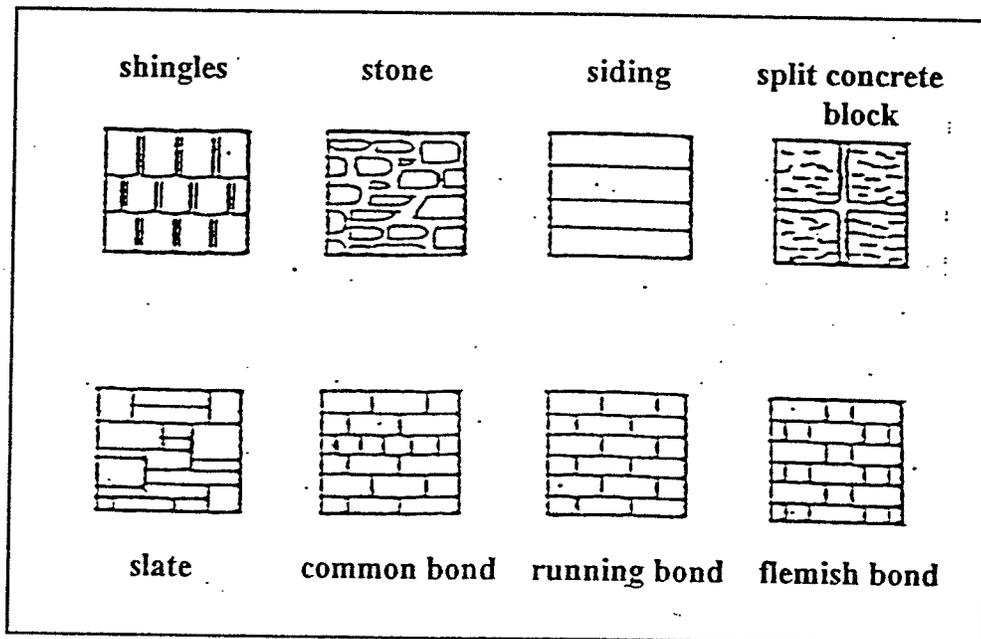
Rear Additions



Recommended

Not Recommended

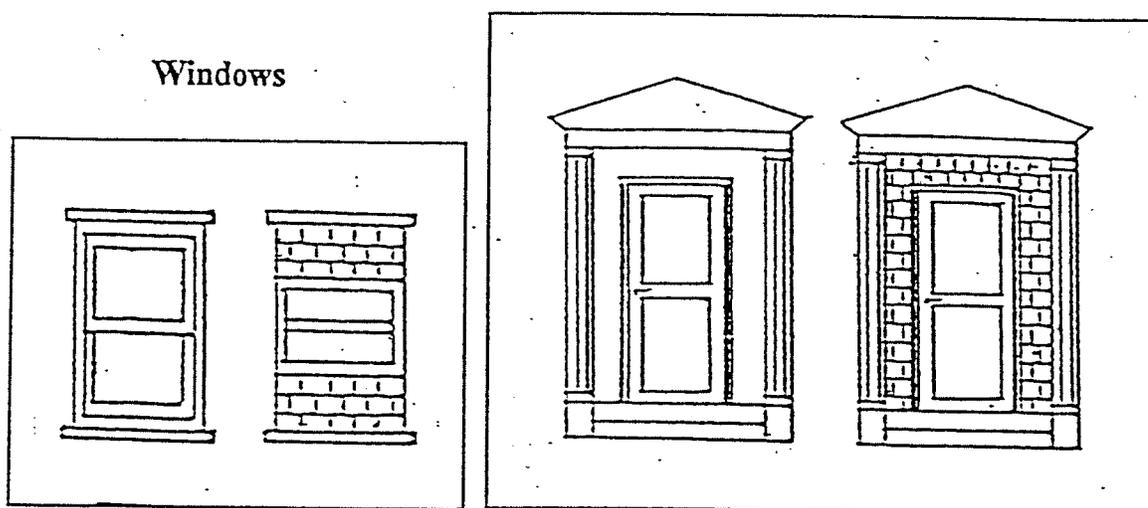
3. When an addition is made to the front of a building, the front setback should match that of the adjoining property's front yard setback.
- B. **Materials:** Materials that closely match original materials found on a property's facade should be used whenever possible. More traditional materials such as brick, stone, slate, or clapboard are compatible materials for historic structures. New wood trim should be painted to match an existing building's wood trim, whenever possible. The use of materials such as vinyl and/or aluminum siding and synthetic stucco are not recommended. Building materials should be visually compatible with and similar to those of adjacent buildings, and they should not contrast conspicuously with them.



C. **Doors and Windows:** The placement and scale of doors and windows on the facades of residential buildings are important in defining the character of each individual building.

1. If replacement of doors and windows is necessary, then it should be done in the same style, size, and shape of the existing doors and windows.
2. Tearing out or significantly altering existing doors and windows should be avoided whenever possible. If blocking of doors and windows is necessary then it should be done in a way that is reversible and maintains the size and shape of the existing opening under the blocking.

Doors



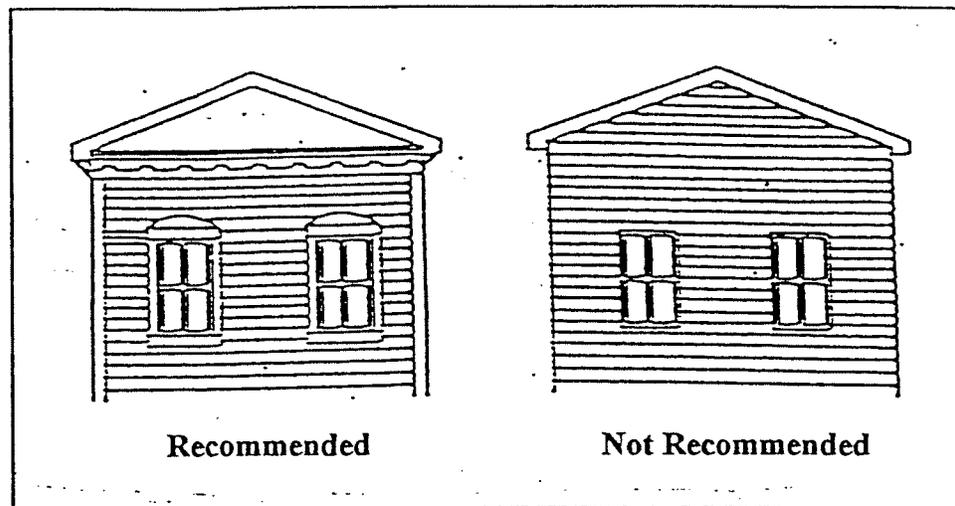
Original Not Recommended

Original Not recommended

3. Additions and alterations should replicate the horizontal lines of windows and doors of existing buildings to maintain continuity and rhythm between buildings.

D. **Cornices and Trim:** Cornices and trim add visual interest to an exterior facade. They are important in establishing a building's individual character.

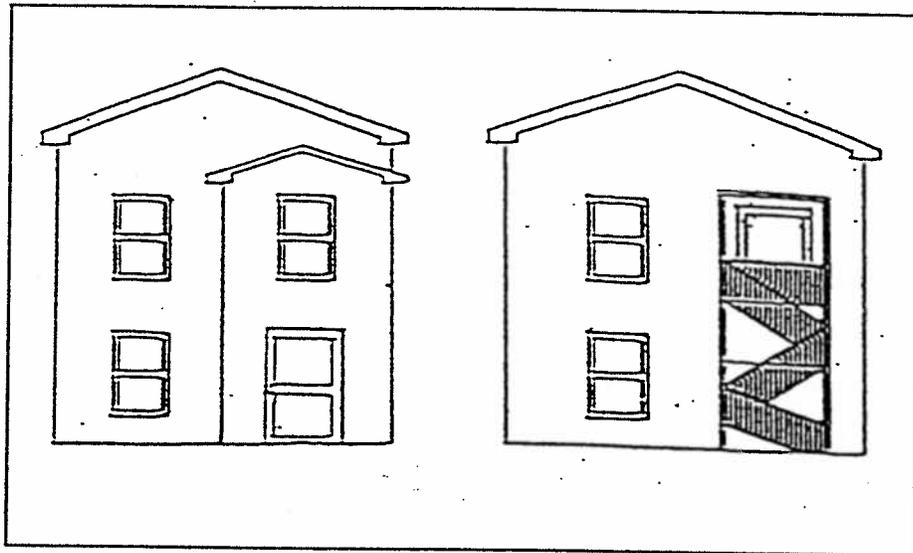
1. Cornices and trim should not be removed.



2. If it is necessary to replace cornices and trim, the materials selected should match what is being replaced.
 3. If aluminum or vinyl siding is used, it should be installed in a manner that is reversible and not cover up the original trim
- E. **Porches and Stoops:** Porches and stoops add visual punctuation and rhythm to the regularity of street facades within neighborhoods. Because of their exposure to the elements, they often require extra maintenance and are subject to severe deterioration before the rest of the building.
1. Porch alterations and additions should compliment the existing building by using matching materials and construction techniques.
 2. Porch alterations and additions that are covered with vinyl or aluminum siding should be avoided. When those types of alterations are unavoidable, original building materials should not be removed but left in place. New material should be installed in a way that does not damage or hasten the deterioration of the underlying material.
 3. When enclosing porches to add livable space, the enclosure should retain the details of the original porch. Columns, railings, and trim should remain in place. Original porch elements should be a prominent feature in the design of the enclosure. Trim that is original to the building should not be concealed. The design of the enclosure should be secondary to the original porch and placed behind the elements of the original porch.
 4. Alterations and additions to stoops and front steps should match and be compatible in size, proportion, and design with the existing building.

5. Porches and additions should be repaired in a manner that maintains or restores the original design. When porches and additions are in disrepair, it is recommended they be repaired or replaced. Demolition by neglect is not an acceptable form of replacement.

- F. **Stair Towers:** The design and construction of stair towers should be similar to the proposed building in size and materials. Whenever possible, stair towers should be located at the rear of the building and enclosed. If the stair tower is unenclosed then it should be constructed of painted metal or painted wood. The slope and construction material of the stair tower roof should be similar to the existing building's roof.

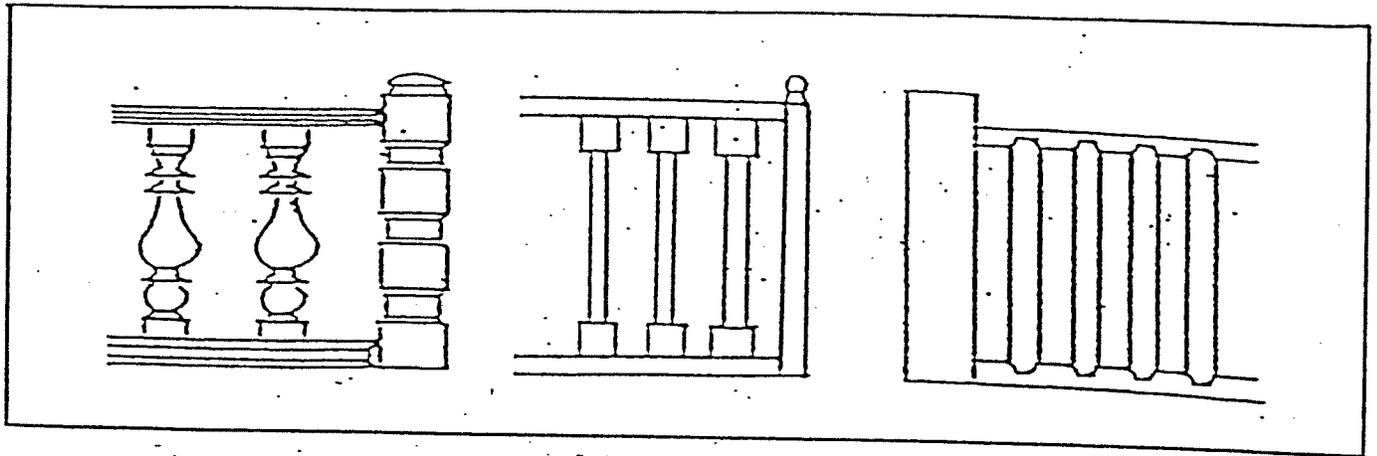


**Enclosed Tower
(Recommended)**

**Unenclosed Tower
(Not Recommended)**

- G. **Building Details:** The scale and design of such details as porch and balcony railings, hand rails, light posts, signs, address numbers, and porch lights should match and be compatible with nearby historic properties.

Hand Rails



Recommended

Recommended

Not Recommended

H. Landscape Details: Fences, gates, posts, trellises and similar devices which enclose and/or abut historic structures should be compatible with the existing structure's trims and finishes.

VII. NEW CONSTRUCTION IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS

New construction brings vitality to any neighborhood and suggests that there is optimism about and commitment to the neighborhood. The conservation of the physical character of State College's National Register districts will, however, be dependent upon the sensitivity and compatibility of new construction within or immediately adjacent to these historic districts.

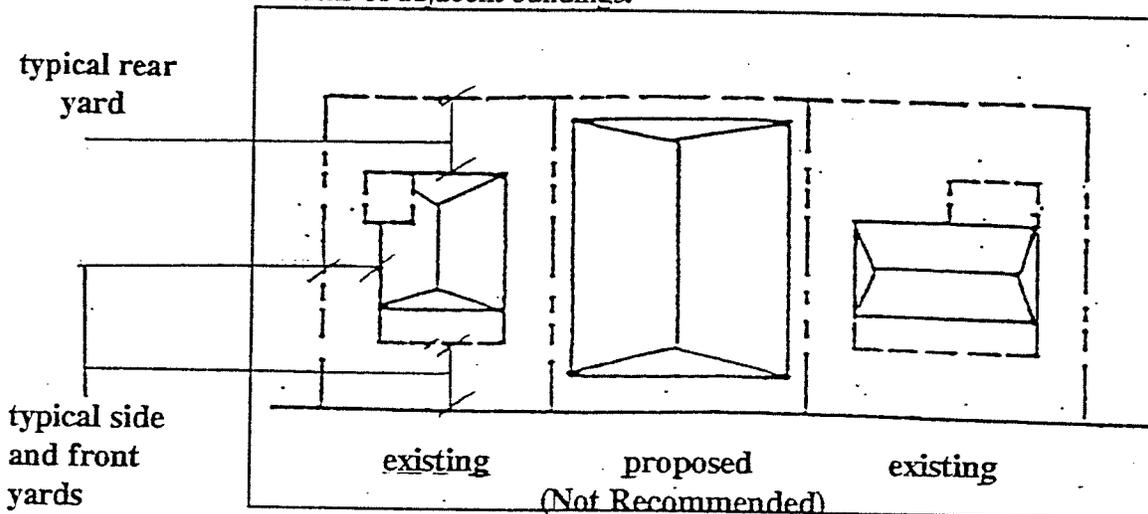
In new construction submissions to the Design Review Board and Historic Resources Commission, the following materials are recommended: written specifications including measurements, photographs of the site and its surroundings including side streets, facade elevations, primary street facade elevations superimposed to scale on a photograph of the streetscape, material samples including color samples.

- A. **General Standards:** When new structures are being added to a historic streetscape, the following standards should apply:
1. A genuine effort should be made to contextually complement new structures with older structures. A sensitive approach, one that shows consideration and understanding of existing architecture and respect for the architectural integrity of the historic district, is encouraged.
 2. A project should first be evaluated based on compatibility, focusing attention to scale, mass, and height. A review of architectural details should then follow.
 3. Visual compatibility is most important within and adjacent to the historic district. Dictation of a particular style is not recommended. However, design of new construction should emphasize elements from the existing streetscape, focusing on context and details that allow the broadest and most flexible interpretation for new construction.
- B. **Design Review Checklist:** The purpose of the Design Review Checklist is to guide development of new construction in a way that is compatible with the existing historic environment. All new construction projects are encouraged to follow these considerations.

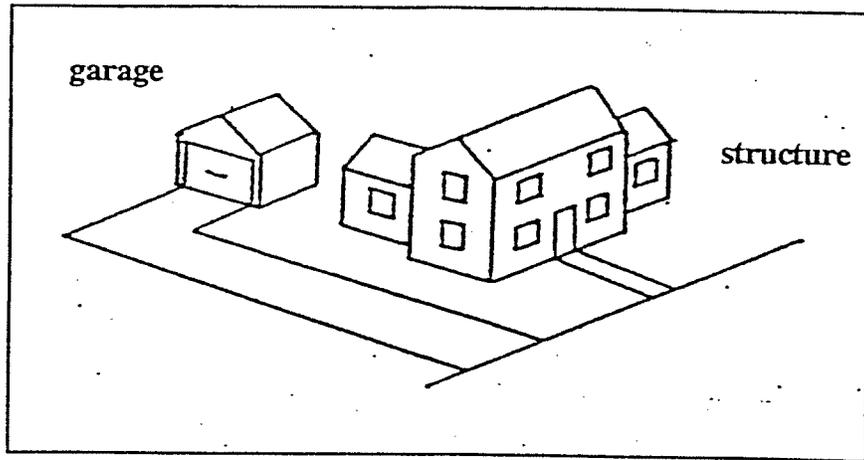
DESIGN REVIEW CHECKLIST

1. **Site Planning Considerations:**

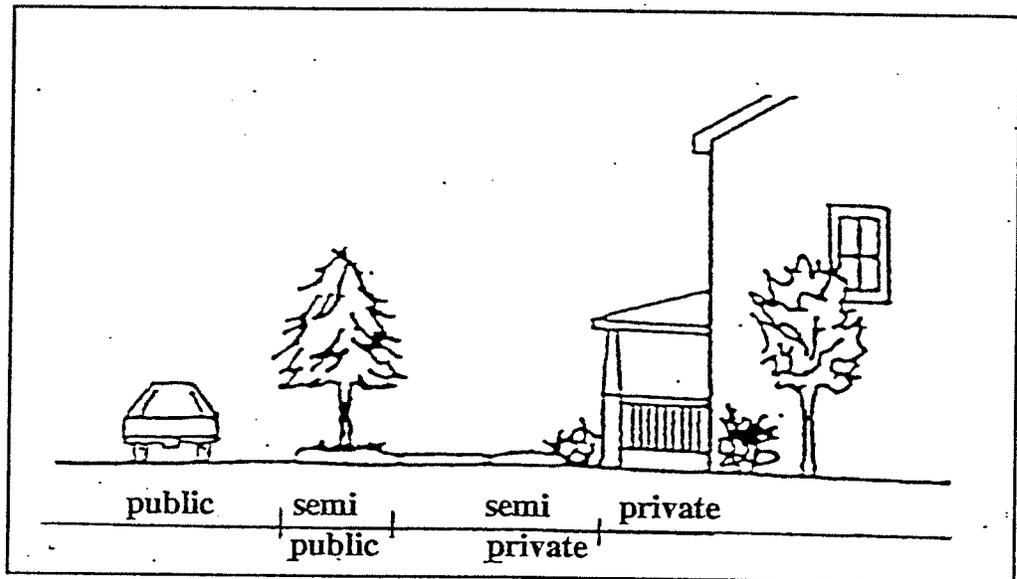
- a. The placement of a building on a lot should be consistent with the setbacks and facade widths of adjacent buildings.



- b. The main facade of a building should be oriented toward the public street.
- c. Accessory buildings such as sheds and garages should demonstrate a subordinate relationship with the primary structure. Their location(s) should not interfere with the visual integrity of the surrounding streetscape.



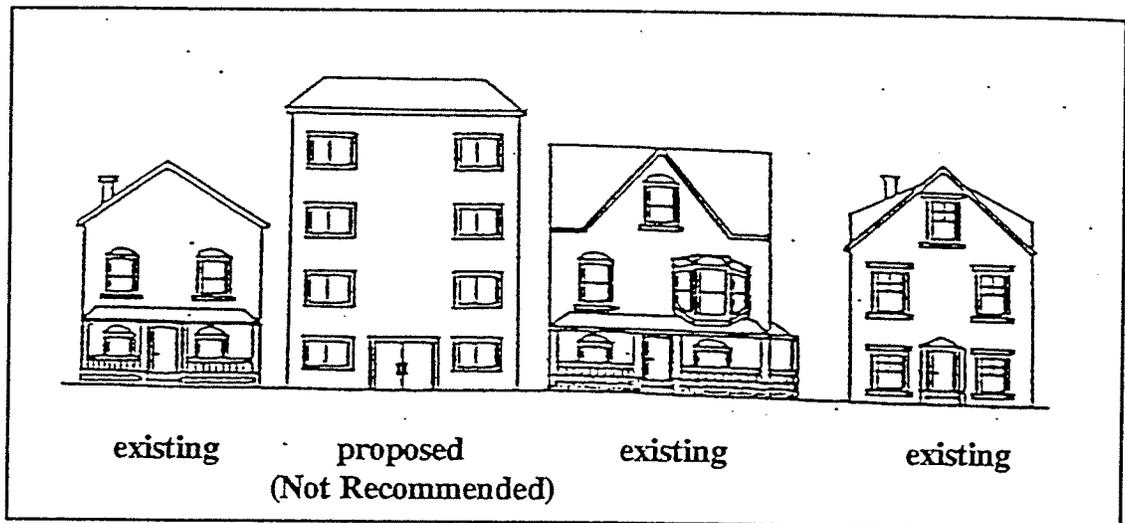
- d. To maintain continuity along a street, a continuous street edge should be maintained, by which public, semi-public, and private areas are clearly separated and defined.



- e. Landscape plantings which serve as "transition areas" between public and private spaces should be designed to screen uses from one another and enhance the visual quality of the streetscape.

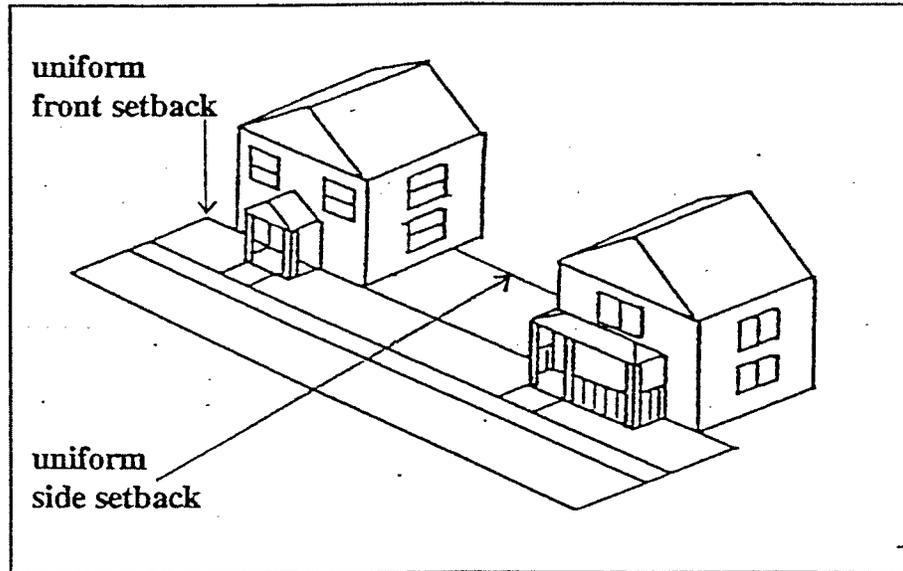
- f. Walkways, driveways, retaining walls, fences, etc. should be designed in keeping with the character of surrounding buildings, architectural details, and building materials. Their location and design should not detract from the visual appearance of the historic streetscape.
- g. Parking areas should not be visible from the street. All parking areas should be screened from view with either plant materials, fences or walls. It is preferred that parking areas be located at the rear of the site.

2. **Building Scale:** The size of a new building, its mass in relationship to open spaces, the placement of doors, windows, and porches should be visually compatible with surrounding buildings. The size of a new building should relate to the size of its parts to the whole and to human scale.

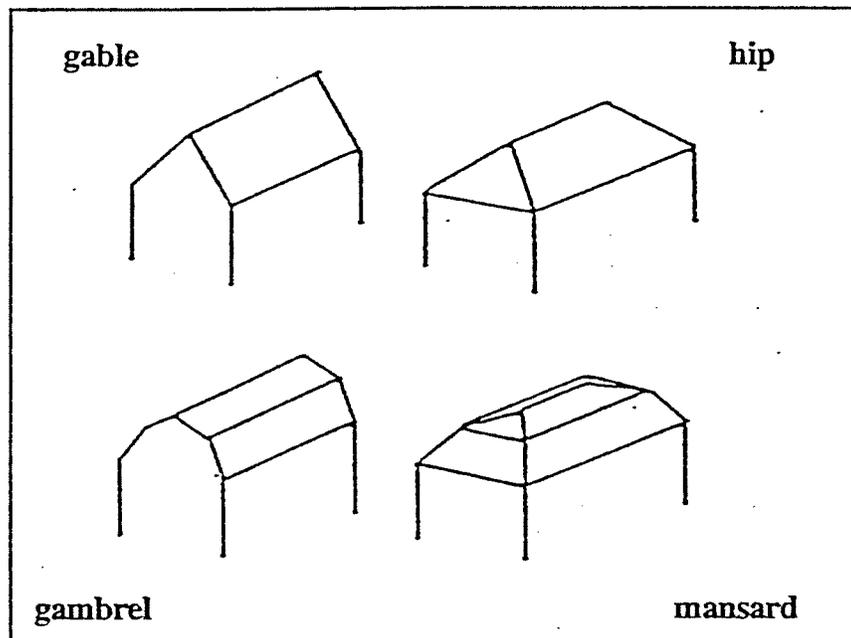


- 3. **Building Form:** New construction should maintain the pattern of traditional building forms and shapes along the street. New construction should be composed predominantly of rectangular components, with visual emphasis on prevailing heights and shapes.
- 4. **Building Proportion:** The size and height of a building, as well as the size of its elements, relate to how the building fits into the existing streetscape. Height and width of a new building's front facade should be within 10 percent (10%) of the average height and width of adjacent buildings.
- 5. **Building Height:** Building height contributes to the overall pattern and rhythm of a streetscape. The vertical character of the streetscape should be maintained. Height of new buildings should be within 10 percent (10%) of the average height of adjacent buildings.

6. **Building Setback:** A uniform building setback helps to achieve balance and order along a streetscape. Front and side yard setbacks for new construction should be aligned with setbacks established by adjacent buildings. If a definite "rhythm of spacing" exists between adjacent buildings then the new building should maintain the same spacing.

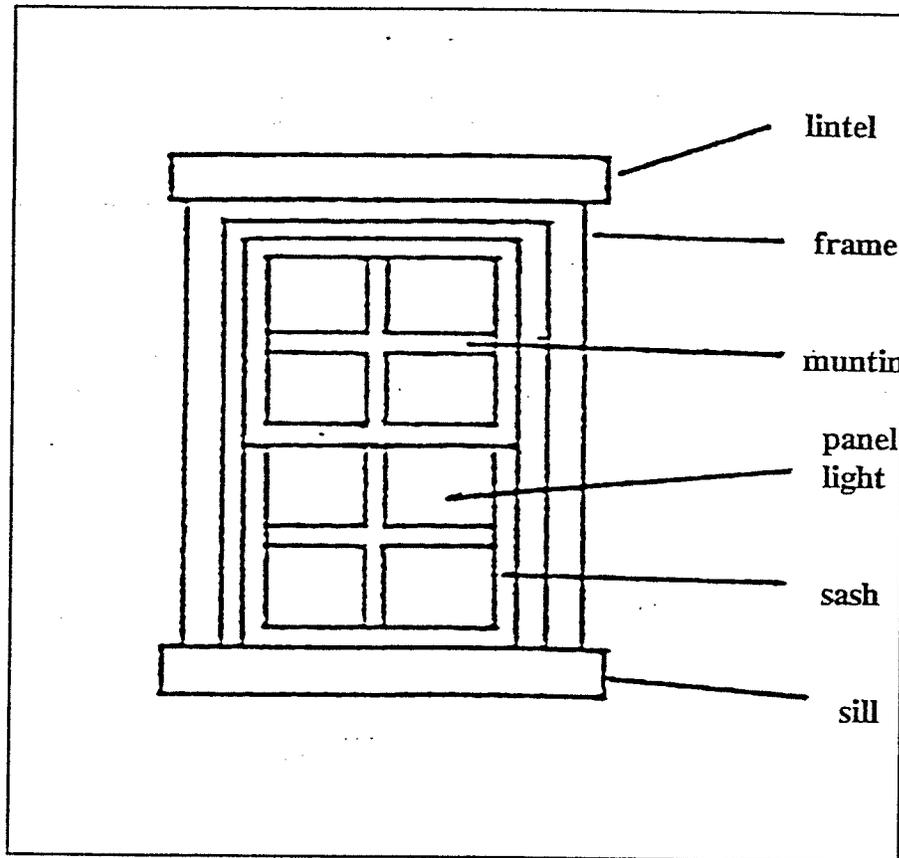


7. **Roofs:** The shape of new roof construction should be similar to existing roof construction found in the neighborhood.



8. **Windows:** Window size, location, shape & style define a building's individual character, as well as add balance and symmetry. Windows in new construction should be consistent with an adjacent building's windows.

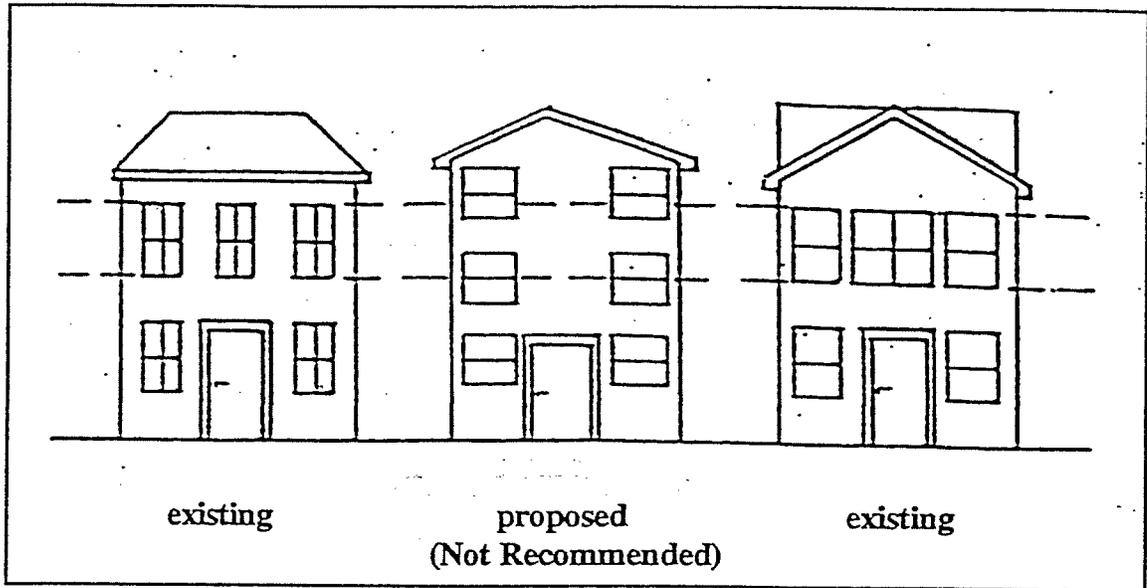
Window Style and Shape: Window style and shape should be similar to an adjacent building's windows. Window elements such as frames, sashes, panes, sills, muntins, etc. should be repeated in new window construction.



Window Size: The height to width ratio for window openings should be within 10 percent (10%) of the average of an adjacent building's window openings.

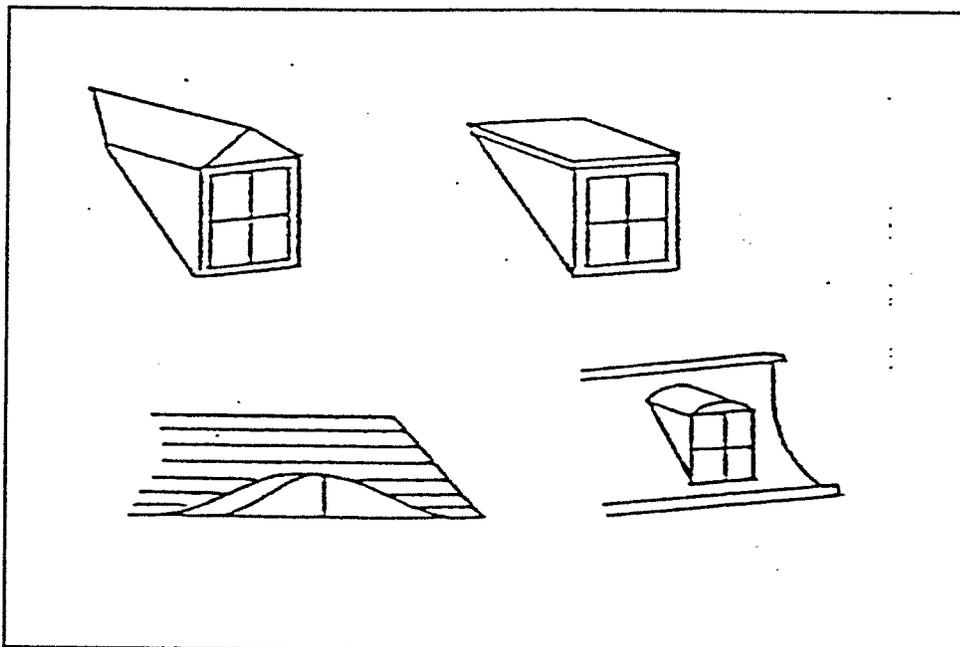
Window Location: Window location should be uniform across a building's facade. New window construction should be in alignment with an adjacent building's windows.

Window Misalignment



Window Dormers: Dormers contribute to a building's unique character and charm. Dormer construction is encouraged.

Typical Dormer Styles



9. **Doors:** Doors are often the focal point of a building. They provide balance and definition to the facade. Style and location of new doors should be similar to doors of adjacent buildings. The height to width ratio of door openings should be within 10 percent (10%) of the average of adjacent door openings.
10. **Exterior Architectural Elements:** Character-defining exterior architectural elements such as porches, decks, stair towers, door platforms (balcony), roofwalks, steps, etc. should be similar in size, location, and materials to an adjacent building's elements. It is sometimes possible to seek safe alternatives to standard building code requirements in historic districts. If the public's health, safety, and welfare are protected, it is sometimes possible to tailor such features as fire escapes, emergency lighting and exit signs, stair towers, porch and hand rails, and other requirements for doorways and windows to meet the unique needs of older buildings.
11. **Details:** Building details such as trim, cornice, railings, shutters, louvers and vents, exterior lighting, gutters, chimney shape, etc., add character and visual interest to a building. A building's visual appeal is oftentimes enhanced by these design details. Such details should be consistent with the overall design scheme for the building.
12. **Colors:** Color plays an important role in defining our visual perception of the built environment. It is important to blend and combine colors that complement each other. Complementary color schemes create a harmonious and visually appealing environment. The colors used in new construction should respect the existing color schemes of the historic neighborhood and blend-in with them as much as possible.
13. **Public Utilities:** Public utilities such as power lines, gas, water and sewer meters, cable boxes, etc., should be as unobtrusive as possible. Whenever possible, these utilities should be screened from view by either plant materials, fences, etc..

VI. ALTERNATIVES TO DEMOLITION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Demolition of a viable historic structure should not be a consideration; instead, renovation, remodeling, and adaptive re-use should be considered. When a historic building is threatened with demolition and there are no alternatives for its use in the historic district, another solution is to move the building to another historic district. If the new location is within a historic district, the same design standards should be used as those outlined under "New Construction".

VII. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR STANDARDS

The following standards are designed by the U.S. Department of the Interior for rehabilitation projects. These standards are useful when considering a project for rehabilitation, renovation, and for new construction in historic districts. Standards for National Register buildings are:

1. Endeavor to use the building for its original purpose or for a compatible use requiring minimal changes.
2. Retain and preserve original distinguishing features and qualities.
3. Recognize all buildings and structures as products of their own time, avoiding changes that have no historical basis.
4. Recognize and preserve changes that have occurred over time if they have significance in their own right.
5. Retain and preserve distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship that characterize the building or site.
6. Repair rather than replace worn architecture features. If replacement is necessary, new material should match the old in all visual qualities - design, color, texture - and should be based on factual historical data.
7. Clean facades using the gentlest means possible: Avoid sandblasting. High water pressure or other damaging methods are not permitted.
8. Protect and preserve archaeological resources affected by or adjacent to a project.
9. Compatible contemporary additions or alterations are acceptable if:
 - they do not destroy significant historical, architectural, or cultural materials; and,
 - the design is compatible with size, scale, color, material, and character of the structure and neighborhood.
10. Additions or alterations should be removable without impairing the original structure.