

INTRODUCTION

This section summarizes the results of the Compatible Design Survey as well as the consultant’s analysis of existing conditions in the historic districts. It includes brief notes on some public perceptions that arose during the outreach process and a discussion of how the design guidelines can help to illustrate and explain criteria that appear in the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

The findings presented here represent information from several sources: The Compatible Design Survey provides data about property owners’ opinions of recent trends in the historic districts, their perceptions about historic preservation in general and their tolerance for new buildings and additions of varying designs. In addition, the information collected from GIS documenting development patterns was considered. Field observations also are reflected in these findings as well as comments collected from the public in workshops, focus groups, and online correspondence.

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GENERAL CONDITIONS IN THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Several universal findings should be addressed in the design guidelines. These appeared in focus groups and workshops as well as online communications and the surveys:

Those contributing structures that are in original condition are important to the integrity of the historic districts.

Historic resources that retain their integrity are important in maintaining the significance of each historic district. Many people commented on their hopes of preserving this historic character. The design guidelines should explain the importance of preserving the integrity of contributing resources.

Earlier inappropriate alterations and infill projects cause confusion.

Some inappropriate alterations and infill projects occurred before any preservation ordinance was put into place; others occurred under previous versions of the ordinance. These may cause confusion about what is considered acceptable today. However, some of these built projects do provide lessons, in terms of designs to avoid in the future. The design guidelines should address this issue.

Pressure to build continues in some of the historic districts.

The historic districts are becoming ever more desirable places to live because they are close to downtown and retain their character. This puts pressure on the historic districts since many buyers and builders seek to maximize house size to justify high purchase prices. The design guidelines should emphasize the importance of preservation under these conditions.

CONDITIONS IN INDIVIDUAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

In addition to general trends found in all of the historic districts some features of individual districts should be noted. These should be addressed in the design guidelines:

Freeland Historic District

The Freeland Historic District is a small enclave of one-story historic bungalows that is generally intact. It consists of only two blocks and

retains most of its building fabric and setting. Some new construction has occurred to the rear of lots. This has not impacted the character of the historic district.

Houston Heights Historic Districts

The Houston Heights Districts consist of Houston Heights East, Houston Heights West, and Houston Heights South. Combined, they contain approximately eighty-eight blocks. A variety of historic building styles appear in these historic districts. Many areas retain their historic fabric and setting, while some parts have undergone more change. This may be due to the more relaxed regulations that were in place prior to the adoption of the current ordinance. New construction on small lots has had the greatest impact. The result sometimes is a large home that overwhelms the smaller houses in the area.

Some individual properties in the districts also have deed restrictions. These restrict party walls, front garage configurations, and building height. They do not consider historic preservation principles or neighborhood context, and they only apply to properties that have opted-in to those restrictions.

Norhill Historic District

The Norhill Historic District contains approximately forty-eight blocks. One-story bungalows predominate, but other styles also occur here. This historic district retains most of its historic fabric and setting. This may be due in part to the combination of the neighborhood association design guidelines and deed restrictions that limit lot coverage, building size, and placement. These are more restrictive than the criteria in the preservation ordinance. However, pressure still exists to expand houses. Since the lots are smaller in Norhill, new construction can have a major impact.

Old Sixth Ward Protected Historic District

The Old Sixth Ward Protected Historic District is a modest enclave with a mix of one and two-story historic buildings. It is relatively intact. It contains approximately nineteen blocks. Most buildings date from the nineteenth century and therefore this district differs from the others, which are primarily from the early twentieth century. The historic district has its own design guidelines, which in general are more restrictive than the ordinance. Deferred maintenance is an issue on some properties.

Woodland Heights Historic District

The Woodland Heights Historic District is an enclave primarily of one-story historic houses, but it also includes some two-story buildings. Houses are usually more grand than in other heights districts. The historic fabric is generally intact. It contains approximately twenty-eight blocks. Some changes have occurred, often as infill to the rear of lots and thus have had less of an impact on the character of the historic district.

COMPATIBLE DESIGN SURVEY RESULTS

The Compatible Design Survey data provides valuable insight into perspectives that property owners have for preservation and compatible infill in the historic districts. The Compatible Design Survey was customized for each historic district, and survey responses were tabulated for them individually. Unique identifier numbers were used on each survey to assure that only one response was recorded for a property. In some cases, respondents did not answer all questions relevant to their historic district. Therefore, the number of respondents reported for individual questions varies from question to question.

The Compatible Design Survey is the third in a series of exercises designed to identify issues of interest to property owners in historic districts and their opinions about the relative compatibility of different sizes and shapes of additions and new construction. Using information gathered through the exercises conducted in two previous community workshops (in person and online), the survey measures the extent to which various opinions are shared among property owners. The survey does not represent a vote for or against design guidelines, historic districts, or any specific concepts or designs. Instead, it provides a measure of property owners' understanding of historic preservation principles and their perception of how new infill construction can fit into a historic district.

NOTE:

See Appendix E, "Compatible Design Survey: Original Documents." This presents copies of the survey that was delivered to property owners in each district.

The survey includes three sections:

Part 1: Overall Issues in the Historic District

This section of the survey asks questions related to issues raised in community workshops and focus groups that relate to recent renovation and infill projects, as well as the value of owning property in a historic district.

Part 2: Building Design Tools

This section describes potential design tools that can be used to improve compatibility by managing mass, scale, and a building's relationship to its neighbors. It then asks participants to indicate which tools should be considered in the design guidelines. These tools are those described in Section 4 of this paper.

Part 3: Building Scenarios

This section presents computer images of contributing structures in a block similar to one found in a part of the historic district, and asks the reader to comment on various aspects of additions or new (infill) houses in those settings, in terms of their compatibility.

Tabulating the Surveys

The survey was presented online using SurveyMonkey.com; paper copies were also mailed to each property owner using mailing address data provided by the Harris County Appraisal District. Approximately half of the surveys were completed online. Data from the paper surveys was entered manually into the SurveyMonkey system and combined with the online responses. The City’s project manager personally received, opened, and entered every mailed survey to ensure data consistency and accuracy.

NOTE:

See Appendix D, “Compatible Design Survey: Detailed Responses.” This reports the results from each district in the ten-point survey scale.

Response by Degrees of Agreement

The survey used a ten-point Likert scale to measure positive or negative responses to a series of statements, such as “A bigger house can fit in if it is well designed and respects traditional neighborhood patterns.” For each statement, the survey asked respondents to indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree. Respondents answered by selecting one of ten numbers, with #1 indicating that the respondent “strongly **disagrees**” with the statement and #10 indicating that the respondent “strongly **agrees**” with the statement.

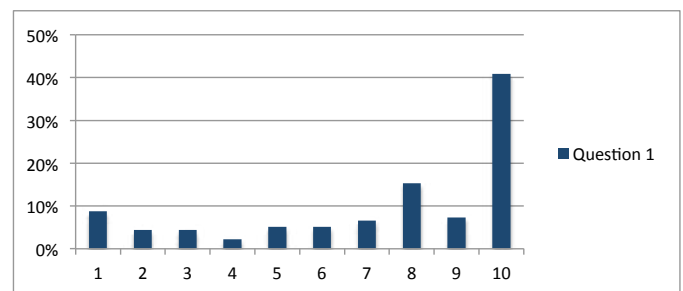
The complete results, organized by historic district, are provided in Appendix D. For each statement, a chart reports the number of respondents who selected each point of the ten-point scale, as well as the total percentage of respondents who selected that point. Bar graphs illustrate the distribution of the responses, for a quick visual comparison.

Here is an example of a response to Question #1, from the Houston Heights Historic District West:

1. “Some recent construction in my historic district is too large.”

Answer Options	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree					Response Count
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
On-line Responses	8	2	4	2	5	4	6	7	6	21	65
Mail-in Responses	4	4	2	1	2	3	3	14	4	35	72
Total Responses	12	6	6	3	7	7	9	21	10	56	137
Response Percentages	9%	4%	4%	2%	5%	5%	7%	15%	7%	41%	
<i>answered question</i>											137
<i>skipped question</i>											0

This bar graph associated with Question #1 illustrates the relative distribution of those agreeing and disagreeing with the statement about appropriateness of scale of recent construction in the Houston Heights Historic District West. Position #1 on the graph indicates those who “strongly disagree” with the statement. Position #10 indicates those who “strongly agree” with the statement. Similar bar charts appear in Appendix D for all of the survey questions for each district.



NOTE:

See Appendix C, “Compatible Design Survey: Summary of Responses.” This summarizes the survey results in the three groups described here.

Grouped Responses

While it is informative to view the percentage of respondents at each point on the scale, it requires careful study to see general patterns of responses. Grouping the responses into three categories makes the data patterns easier to identify.

- **Group 1.** Respondents who selected points 1 (*strongly disagree*) through 4 on the scale generally disagree to some extent with the statement.
- **Group 2.** Respondents who selected points 5 and 6, in the middle of the scale, are *undecided*.
- **Group 3.** Those who selected point 7 through 10 (*strongly agree*) generally agree with the statement, to some extent.

Here is an example of the three group response to Question #1, from the Houston Heights Historic District West:

1. “Some recent construction in my historic district is too large.”		
20%	10%	70%
Disagree	Undecided	Agree

These *grouped* data sets, along with the complete charts and graphs, are provided in Appendix C. Note that the finer-grained responses in the ten-point scale as reported in Appendix D also will be used in developing the design guidelines, especially in terms of the degree of firmness that specific prescriptive design standards may express.

General Observations to the Survey Responses

Overall, with just a few exceptions, respondents across all historic districts are strongly consistent in their agreement or disagreement with individual questions. Where distinctions exist between individual historic districts, in terms of degrees of agreement, additional detail that shows some of those differences is provided following this summary. With that in mind, the analysis of survey response data shows that, generally:

1. Property owners throughout all historic districts are concerned about preserving historic character.

The majority want to preserve the historic character of their individual historic districts. This means that design guidelines that show how to preserve the integrity of each contributing structure will be important.

2. Being in a historic district adds value to properties.

The survey indicates that a majority of respondents believe that historic district regulations add value.

3. Opinions vary about the appropriateness of recent renovation projects.

A majority of respondents indicate that recent renovation projects are appropriate. However, the degree to which respondents agree is less strong than with some other questions.

4. Concerns continue about the size of recent new construction.

Most property owners express concern about the large scale of recent new construction, which may result in the loss of open space and mature vegetation, as well as a loss of privacy when larger new buildings loom over neighboring property. When presented with models of additions and new construction, they respond less favorably to noticeably larger buildings and taller wall heights. This indicates that design standards that minimize the impacts of larger buildings are needed.

5. Maintaining traditional scale in the front of a lot is important.

In settings with predominantly one-story buildings, images that show a one-story element on the front of a new building receive more favorable responses than images of buildings which are entirely two stories. That leads us to conclude that preserving the historic scale of the block, as seen from the street, is important.

6. Sometimes, when additional building mass is located to the rear, it can be compatible.

On a block where most of the houses are of a smaller (traditional historic) scale, a somewhat larger mass is considered compatible if it is located to the rear of the building. However, opinions of compatibility decrease when lot coverage increases and open space is more compromised. Design standards that are coordinated to address the interaction of these factors are needed.

7. Traditional lot coverage is a key characteristic to preserve.

This theme reoccurs throughout the survey responses and across all historic districts. Models that maintain open space in the rear of the property, as well as in side yards, receive higher compatibility ratings.

8. Context-sensitive design can help a new building fit in.

While respondents express concern about the impacts of new construction, a small majority believes recent examples to be compatible. This suggests that other factors related to the design of buildings can help to mitigate the impacts of building size and loss of open space.

9. A limit exists on the ability to fit a larger building into a historic setting.

Images of very large houses receive unfavorable ratings, even when they have one-story elements and variations in massing. This indicates that variation in form and stepping down in height ceases to be effective when a design exceeds a certain threshold in size and lot coverage.

10. Parking on site should be subordinate to the street.

Designs that locate garages in the rear receive greater support than those with garages closer to the street. Detached garages are seen more favorably, probably because this reduces the perceived size of the main building.

Conclusive Analysis of Responses

The following section provides more detail about responses to individual survey questions. Using the grouped data sets, described on page 58, to understand how many respondents generally agreed with, are undecided about or disagreed with each question, some patterns emerge. Some percentages expressed in the statements below illustrate a plurality agreement, rather than a majority. In these cases, the largest percentage agreed with the statement rather than disagreed or were undecided. Therefore, while not the majority, these percentages represent the largest responses and are reported.

Survey Part 1: Overall Issues in the Historic District

The responses from all historic districts are summarized here in two categories:

- (1) Questions in which the majority of respondents in each historic district agree with the statement, and
- (2) Questions in which opinions are more divided.

The question numbers from the survey are included here so that these summaries may be easily cross-checked with the detailed responses in Appendix C.

Statements with strong support

Respondents from all historic districts agree to some extent with these four statements:

Question 2: “The loss of green space when a larger building is constructed is a key issue.”

Respondents in each historic district agree by more than two-thirds, with this statement, except for Houston Heights Historic District South, where 51% agree to some extent. Across all historic districts, the highest percentage of agreement appears in category #10, those who “strongly agree.” This indicates that design standards which help to maintain a substantial amount of open space could help preserve mature vegetation.

Question 3: “The loss of mature vegetation when new construction occurs is a key issue.”

A majority in each historic district agree with this statement. Those agreeing to some extent range from 64% to 79%, depending on the historic district. Agreement is less strong in Houston Heights Historic District South, where 51% agree to some extent. Looking at responses to each of the 10 points on the scale, the highest percentage in agreement is consistently in the “strongly agree” column, for all historic districts. This reinforces the need for guidelines that show how to preserve contributing structures.

Question 5: “A large house next door diminishes privacy in neighbors’ back yards.”

Respondents in five of the six historic districts agree by more than two-thirds (ranging from 67% to 74% agreeing). In Houston Heights Historic District South, 50% agree while 31% disagree; the balance are undecided. This further substantiates the need for guidelines that will minimize negative effects of larger house sizes.

Question 7: “A bigger house can fit in if it is well-designed.”

All historic districts agree by more than two-thirds (ranging from 68% to 83%). This suggests that design guidelines should show how to design houses that may be somewhat larger than contributing structures to be compatible with them.

Statements with mixed responses

In this category, respondents in many historic districts generally agree with the statements, but responses are more varied within each historic district than in the questions above.

Question 1: “Some recent new construction is too large.”

Respondents in Houston Heights Historic District East, Houston Heights Historic District West and Woodland Heights express strong levels of agreement with this statement, with more than two-thirds agreeing to some degree. Respondents in other historic districts are more divided: Houston Heights Historic District South (44% agree), Norhill (49% agree) and Freeland (48% agree). Nonetheless, these percentages are higher than those who disagree. (See the table below.) In the case of Norhill, neighborhood-wide deed restrictions limit house size, and Freeland has seen few infill projects. These factors may explain their responses.

Question 1. “Some recent new construction is too large.”				
	Disagree		Undecided	Agree
Freeland	43%		9%	48%
Houston Heights East	27%		9%	64%
Houston Heights South	42%		14%	44%
Houston Heights West	20%		10%	70%
Norhill	35%		16%	49%
Woodland Heights	25%		6%	69%

Question 4: “Most recent new construction has been compatible.”

In many of the historic districts, opinions are evenly distributed among those who agree, disagree and are uncertain about this statement. In other historic districts, a small majority of respondents agree or, in some cases, more disagree than agree. This indicates that, to some degree, a larger house may be designed to be compatible with its context area.

Question 4: “Most recent new construction has been compatible.”				
	Disagree		Undecided	Agree
Freeland	9%		35%	56%
Houston Heights East	36%		20%	44%
Houston Heights South	23%		23%	54%
Houston Heights West	38%		28%	34%
Norhill	28%		22%	50%
Woodland Heights	45%		17%	38%

Question 6: “Regulations that protect historic district character add value.”

In each of the historic districts, the majority of respondents agree with this statement, ranging from 61% to 65%. The exception is Houston Heights Historic District South, where 49% agree and 37% disagree.

Question 8: “Most recent renovation projects have been appropriate.”

In most of the historic districts, the majority agree with this statement, ranging from 50% in Woodland Heights to 74% in Freeland. The exception is Houston Heights Historic District East, where 49% agree and 28% disagree.

Question 9: “An addition to a historic house should be visually subordinate.”

In the individual historic districts, a majority of respondents agree with this statement, ranging from 50% in Freeland to 63% in Norhill. The exception is Houston Heights Historic District South, where 43% agree while 37% disagree. This indicates the need for guidelines that show how to design a compatible addition.

Survey Part 2: Design Tools

The second section of the survey presented a variety of different design tools which could be applied as prescriptive design standards to manage building mass and scale. For each tool, respondents indicated the degree to which they support that tool being utilized in the design guidelines for their historic district. Overall, property owners say that most of the design tools described should be used. Consistently across all historic districts, they express support for tools with dimensional requirements; the exception is Houston Heights South, where responses are more divided.

All agree with these statements

A majority of respondents in all historic districts agree to some extent with these two statements:

Question 12: “Guidelines that relate building size to lot size should be considered.”

Respondents in all historic districts agree to some extent with this statement, ranging from 57% in Houston Heights Historic District South to 82% in Houston Heights Historic District West. This indicates that a Floor Area Ratio tool, as described in Section 4 of this Strategy Paper, should be used.

Question 18: “Design guidelines should address appropriate parking locations.”

Respondents in all historic districts agree to some extent, ranging from 51% in Houston Heights Historic District South to 79% in Woodland Heights. Those in Houston Heights Historic District East, Norhill, and Woodland Heights express the strongest support. This indicates that guidelines for the location of garages should be included.

Statements with mixed responses

In this category, the majority of respondents in all historic districts except Houston Heights Historic District South agree to some extent with each statement listed below; in Houston Heights Historic District South more respondents agree with the statement than disagree, but the number of undecided responses kept the rate of agreement slightly below 50%.

Question 13: “A limit on the percentage of lot coverage should be considered to help maintain open space.”

The highest rate of agreement was in Houston Heights Historic District West (73%), while Houston Heights Historic District South is nearly evenly split, with 46% agreeing and 45% disagreeing. Note that in Part 3 of the survey, designs that retained more open space on a lot typically received higher favorable ratings.

Question 14: “Using a one-story element (such as a porch or a wing of a house) should be addressed in the guidelines.”

Support ranges from 58% in Houston Heights Historic District West to 70% in Freeland and Woodland Heights. In Houston Heights Historic District South, 48% agree, 32% disagree, and 19% are unsure. This indicates that this tool should be considered with application perhaps varying by district.

Question 15: “A Maximum Building Envelope should be considered as a tool to reduce perceived building size.”

The rate of agreement for this statement ranges from 61% in Freeland to 71% in Norhill. In Houston Heights Historic District South, 49% agree and 38% disagree. This indicates that this tool should be considered, with its application varying in form for different districts.

Question 16: “A side wall offset should be considered to reduce perceived building size.”

Support for this statement ranges from 52% in Freeland to 64% in Woodland Heights. In Houston Heights Historic District South, 48% agree and 36% disagree. This indicates that this tool should be considered.

Question 17: “A wall height limit should be considered as a tool to reduce perceived building size.”

The rate of agreement with this statement ranges from 57% in Freeland and Houston Heights Historic District East to 68% in Norhill. In Houston Heights Historic District South, 41% agree and 44% disagree.

The chart below summarizes the level of support for each of the potential design tools, by historic district:

Support For Potential Design Tools						
	Freeland	Houston Heights East	Houston Heights South	Houston Heights West	Norhill	Woodland Heights
FAR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lot Coverage	—	✓	—	✓	✓	✓
1-Story Element	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓
Building Envelope	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓
Horizontal Wall Offset	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓
Vertical Wall Offset	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓
Maximum Height	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓
Maximum Impervious Surface	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓
Parking Location	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Key:	
✓	The Majority Agree to Some Extent
—	Mixed Responses

Note that in no district did a majority respond negatively to using any of the potential design tools.

Applying the Data about Prescriptive Design Tools

Part 2 of the Survey focuses on the potential use of a variety of design tools that could be measurable standards. The data indicate that support exists for using many of these tools in the design guidelines. The guidelines should include some of these as measurable standards. The responses also suggest that consideration must be given to the conditions in each district in determining any specific standards. In all cases, the intent is that the HAHC will use prescriptive standards in determining appropriateness of a specific proposal. These would be balanced, and considered along with more qualitative guidelines.

Note that complying with the prescriptive standards in and of themselves alone does not mean that a design proposal automatically would be approved. It would still need to go through the formal design review process. Nonetheless, by complying with the measurable standards, there will be a higher probability of securing approval and in a more expeditious manner.



Birdseye and street level views of the model associated with the Norbill Historic District survey question below.

Survey Part 3: Building Scenarios

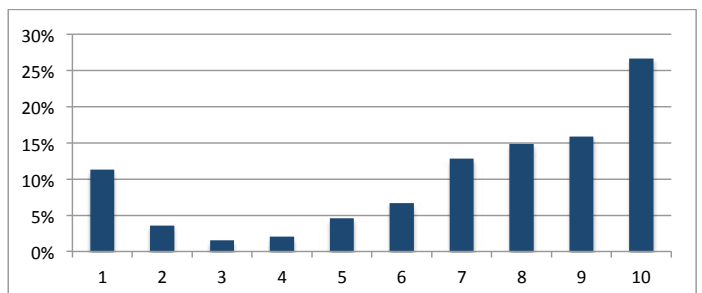
The responses to Part 3 of the Compatible Design Survey provide insights into the tolerance respondents have for house design in four variables: (1) lot coverage, (2) building size, (3) height, and (4) form. In the survey, a series of models presents alternative design scenarios that test changes in those four variables by combining them in various ways. Some models include a one-story mass in the front, with a taller part of the building in the rear. Other models show an opposite arrangement, with a taller portion in front and a lower part in the rear. Differences in lot coverage and wall heights also appear in the alternative scenarios. The dimensions of building heights and setbacks are known for each of the models, as are the statistics of floor area ratios and lot coverage.

Because respondents rated their opinions about compatibility in each of the four variables for individual design scenarios, it is possible to see how

44. "Overall size is compatible."

Answer Options	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree					Response Count
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
On-line Responses	5	1	0	2	5	8	9	13	13	23	79
Mail-in Responses	17	6	3	2	4	5	16	16	18	29	116
Total Responses	22	7	3	4	9	13	25	29	31	52	195
Response Percentages	11%	4%	2%	2%	5%	7%	13%	15%	16%	27%	
answered question											195
skipped question											10

This bar graph illustrates the relative distribution of those agreeing and disagreeing with the statement above about the compatibility of building size for the model shown. (Survey response graphic from Norbill Historic District, Part 3 Building Scenarios.) Similar bar charts appear in Appendix D for all the survey questions for each district.



a change in one variable influences perceptions of what fits with the part of the district that is illustrated. The details of the responses appear in Appendix D. An example from the survey for the Norhill Historic District appears at the bottom of the previous page.

In order to understand how this information is used in developing the recommendations for potential design standards, a sample of grouped survey responses showing the percentages of agreement from Houston Heights Historic District East is presented here with some observations about the lessons learned:

Model D

This scenario illustrates a new two-story home with a one-story portion in front. It also includes a one-and-a-half story garage located to the rear of the lot. This design retains some open space on the lot.

Statistics for this model:

Lot coverage:	30%
Floor Area Ratio:	.39

Compatible (grouped responses agreeing to some extent):

Lot coverage:	71% agree
Size:	63% agree
Height:	62% agree
Form:	67% agree

Observations:

1. The lot coverage and size appear to be within a range of tolerance for a clear majority of respondents.
2. Wall heights are relatively low, which may contribute to the high percentage of those agreeing.
3. A one-story portion of the building is in front, which may contribute to the high percentage of those agreeing with building form.

Model F

This scenario illustrates a new home with a one-story portion in the front and a two-story portion in the rear that extends to the side. This design reduces open space on the lot.

Statistics for this model:

Lot coverage:	48%
Floor Area Ratio:	.58

Compatible (grouped responses agreeing to some extent):

Lot coverage:	31% agree
Size:	30% agree
Height:	37% agree
Form:	31% agree



Model D



Model F

Observations:

1. The low percentage of those agreeing indicates that the lot coverage and building size exceed a range of tolerance.
2. Wall heights for the two-story portion are relatively high (21 feet), which may contribute to the low percentage of those agreeing.
3. Even with a one-story portion of the building in front, this form is unacceptable. When compared with the responses to Model D, which also has a one-story form in front, it suggests that a one-story form can only mitigate a larger mass and greater lot coverage up to a point.



Model G

This scenario illustrates a new two-story home with a one-story portion in front and along the side. It also has a detached one-story garage in the rear. This design retains some open space on the lot.

Statistics for this model:

Lot coverage:	30%
Floor Area Ratio:	.36



Model G

Compatible (grouped responses agreeing to some extent):

Lot coverage:	59% agree
Size:	49% agree
Height:	36% agree
Form:	35% agree

Observations:

1. The high percentage of those agreeing with lot coverage indicates that this is within a range of tolerance.
2. The moderate percentage of those agreeing with the building size indicates that this is just at a point of tolerance.
3. Wall heights for the two-story portion are relatively high (20 feet), which may contribute to the low percentage of those agreeing.
4. Even with a one-story porch, this form is not accepted. When compared with the responses to Model D, which has a longer one-story form, it suggests that a more substantial one-story portion in front is needed.

Model H

This scenario illustrates a new two-story building with a one-story front portion in the rear and a one-story front porch element. It also has a detached one-story garage in the rear. This design retains some open space on the lot.

Statistics for this model:

Lot coverage:	30%
Floor Area Ratio:	.41

Compatible (grouped responses agreeing to some extent):

Lot coverage:	56% agree
Size:	44% agree
Height:	32% agree
Form:	33% agree

Observations:

1. The percentage of those agreeing with lot coverage indicates that this is within a range of tolerance.
2. The moderate percentage of those agreeing with the building size indicates that this is just below a point of tolerance.
3. Wall heights for the two-story portion are relatively high (21 feet), which may contribute to the low percentage of those agreeing.
4. A one-story porch that is only on part of the front may not be sufficient to contribute to a sense of compatibility for a two-story building.



Model H

Conclusions to Survey Part 3

This sampling of the analysis of responses from one historic district to Part 3 of the Design Compatibility Survey shows that respondents can see the differences in changes to the design variables tested in the models. There also is a high degree of consistency in responses. For some models, the majority find a particular scenario to be compatible, and for others, a majority find a scenario to be incompatible. And, they can tell the difference when one variable changes, but not others. This is reflected in their answers.

This type of comparative analysis, was applied to the survey data from each district and provides a statistical basis for recommending prescriptive design standards related to the variables tested. That information, in combination with the analysis of historic development patterns from the background data described in Section 3, informs the recommended prescriptive standards that appear in Appendix B for each district.

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

During the public workshops and focus group meetings, many topics were discussed that provide insight to some public perceptions that should be addressed in the design guidelines. These are some perceptions among property owners about preservation principals and existing design policies:

- Some people don't understand that cumulative alterations to a contributing structure can negatively affect the historic resource.
- There is also a lack of understanding that, with the increasing percentage of noncontributing structures in a historic district, the integrity of the historic district is diminished. This underscores the need to preserve the integrity of each existing contributing property.
- Some people don't understand that the design guidelines cannot be more permissive than the ordinance.
- Many people assume that an older building is inherently less efficient in energy conservation whereas many can be highly efficient when appropriately used and maintained. This is especially relevant to questions about windows. Information about this fact should be presented in the design guidelines.

Other People Understand the Preservation Principles, but Question Them.

- For example, the concept of distinguishing new from old in the design of an addition or a new building is not understood (or accepted) by some people.
- An example is the degree to which an addition may encroach over a historic building. Some people feel that a larger addition should be permitted, because it may result in a well-functioning floor plan and believe that reason should take precedence over preserving the historic character of a building.
- Another example is understanding that an older addition may have taken on historic significance and merit preservation.
- Information about these topics should be included in the design guidelines.

Some People Perceive a Conflict Between Contemporary Lifestyles and Historic Buildings.

- For example, there is a perception that new lifestyles require larger rooms and taller ceiling heights.
- They also may seek to have a higher porch floor height.

What This Indicates

While these are only a few of the perceptions expressed, they are important because they indicate that the design guidelines should include material to better inform readers about these topics:

- The document needs to include some basic information about preservation principles.
- It needs to provide clarity for established policies (such as distinguishing new from old).
- It needs to identify where flexibility may be available (and where it is not) to meet “contemporary” needs.

GUIDELINES BASED ON THE ORDINANCE

The design guidelines will, of course, facilitate interpreting the criteria in the ordinance. Illustrations will be important in this regard. Illustrations that provide pictures of appropriate and inappropriate design solutions are needed. Many of these will relate to terms used in the ordinance.

Illustrations for Ordinance Definitions

These terms from the ordinance should be illustrated in the design guidelines:

- Block face
- Context area
- Massing
- Eave height

Illustrations for Broad Design Criteria in the Historic Preservation Ordinance

Some of the most important criteria in the ordinance are broad in nature. This is so they can be applied to many situations. But, because they are broad, some people may need help in interpreting their application to specific projects. Providing examples of how these criteria apply to the individual historic districts is essential. The design guidelines should include illustrations and sometimes additional text, to explain how to apply the criteria in the ordinance to specific projects. For example:

- *“The proposed activity must retain and preserve the historical character of the property.”* (Explaining “historical character,” and how it is “retained” while perhaps permitting alterations should be addressed in the guidelines.)

- “New materials to be used for any exterior feature excluding what is visible from public alleys must be visually compatible with, but not necessarily the same as, the materials being replaced in form, design, texture, dimension, and scale.” (What is “visible?” What is “compatible,” and what are the features, in terms of “form, design, etc.?” The design guidelines should help explain these concepts.)

How to Interpret Context Area

The ordinance defines a basic geographic area that is the “*default*” for considering how a proposed project relates to its surroundings. But, it doesn’t clearly state how context area influences decision-making; the design guidelines should help with this.

The ordinance permits using a different definition of context area when it is developed as a part of design guidelines for a specific historic district. The design guidelines should provide an explanation of how and when to apply a different context area for some historic districts. For example:

The Context Area should be expanded when one of these conditions exists:

1. Fewer than 50% of the primary structures within the one-block context area are contributing.
 - In this case, the *default* context area will not adequately convey the historic character of the setting. A larger area should be considered.
 - As a first step, a setting that extends an additional block in each direction along the street should be considered as the context area.
2. The historic district as a whole has a high degree of consistency. The entire historic district may be the context area when it has a high degree of consistency throughout. This is identified by:
 - A high percentage of contributing structures throughout the district
 - A uniform distribution of contributing structures throughout the district, and
 - A high degree of similarity in building form, size and, character throughout the district; these features are identified in the Character Area descriptions that are in Appendix G of this Strategy Paper.
3. The proposed project is unusual for the area.

For example, when an institutional or commercial building is proposed in an area that is primarily residential in character, a broader context area should be defined.

OTHER SUPPORTING INFORMATIONAL NEEDS

Updating Background Information

During the process of reviewing background information, instances appeared in which some data appeared to be out-of-date. For example, some building dates, as recorded in GIS data or assessor's records, are estimates. This may be due in part to the effects of more recent additions that have altered the effective building dates that the assessor uses. In any case, some of these are inconsistent with the dates shown on the resource inventories. Workshop participants reported errors in ratings of contributing and noncontributing structures in resource inventories. More recent alterations also may merit reclassifying some of these properties. Sometimes, even an approved project may result in a loss of integrity for a property and it therefore should be reclassified. A means of tracking additions and distinguishing their dates from those of the original buildings would be helpful.

While none of these data issues substantially affects the observations about existing conditions, these discrepancies could cause confusion for individual property owners as they contemplate work. Updating these materials would help expedite the review process.

FINDINGS

The information collected from community engagement, GIS data and field observations confirms that design guidelines can help in interpreting the ordinance and in addressing issues related to preservation and compatible new construction. It further indicates that some of these guidelines can be prescriptive standards, with numbers assigned to them. Dimensional standards, related to building height, floor area, and lot coverage are examples. In other cases, the guidelines must be more discretionary, because some judgement is needed to determine if the proposed work would be appropriate. Many of these topics relate to the treatment of character-defining features on contributing structures. Determining when a portion of exterior siding is beyond repair and needs to be replaced is an example.

The design guidelines also need to include some educational material that explains the principles that underlie the guidelines. Providing information related to enhancing energy conservation while preserving historic windows is an example.

Many of the design guidelines can apply equally to all of the historic districts, but some material must be tailored to unique conditions in each district. The data collected provides the information to do so. The approach to developing the design guidelines based on these findings is described in the final section of the Strategy Paper.

