

## THE BASIC APPROACH TO THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Considering the analysis of existing conditions in the field and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data along with community input, through workshops, focus groups and surveys, as well as national best practices, these are the recommendations for developing the design guidelines:

### Build on the Historic Preservation Ordinance

The Historic Preservation Ordinance includes criteria to be used when evaluating applications for Certificates of Appropriateness. To support the consistent interpretation of these criteria, the design guidelines should provide additional information that will:

#### Illustrate some of the Historic Preservation Ordinance criteria.

Regardless of how specific the criteria are, the design guidelines should include sketches and photos that illustrate compatible and incompatible expressions of each criterion. For example, the method of measuring plate height is defined in the ordinance. A simple sketch would help in understanding that definition.

#### Expand on the Historic Preservation Ordinance criteria that are broad and would benefit from clarification.

In some cases, the Historic Preservation Ordinance establishes an intent for certain design issues without prescribing how that intent should be achieved.

For these conditions, the design guidelines should provide additional information, including illustrations, to aid in interpreting (but not changing) the language in the Historic Preservation Ordinance. For example, the ordinance states: “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.” Providing an illustration of some materials that are considered compatible would help when interpreting this criterion.

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### **Tailor the Design Guidelines to Each Historic District.**

Each historic district is unique in terms of its content and the characteristics that contribute to its historic significance; those differences must be reflected in the design guidelines.

### **Use Consistent Language.**

The design guidelines should have the same organizational structure for all historic districts. While variations in the historic districts should be recognized in the design guidelines, the terms used and the way in which the material is presented should be the same. This will promote consistent interpretation and make the design guidelines documents easy to use.

### **Use *Prescriptive* (Measurable) Design Standards Where Possible.**

Some design guidelines should set numbers for variables such as wall height and building setbacks. This will enhance predictability and expedite the review process. A more detailed description of the proposed prescriptive standards follows later in this section.

### **Use *Qualitative* Design Guidelines to Address Appropriateness.**

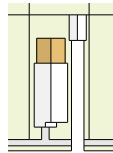
Some design guidelines will require judgment about how well a particular proposal meets the requirements. For example, if a guideline states “a new window shall have proportions that are similar to those on the historic building,” the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission (HAHC) will have to determine whether the proposed project has met that requirement. While the design guideline is discretionary, it can be applied objectively, by comparing the proposal with existing windows on a property.

## Use Illustrations to Identify Where Flexibility is Available.

In some design guidelines, flexibility should be available, but within a range that assures compatibility. Where flexibility is available, the design guidelines should include illustrated options for these. For example, one set of images may show alternative design solutions for constructing an addition to a contributing structure:

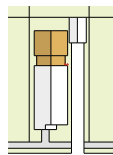
### REAR ADDITION 2: 1-STORY, OFFSET

- Addition is less than that of existing structure in height and width
- Roof pitch is identical to existing structure
- Offset maintains the corners of the existing structure



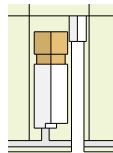
### REAR ADDITION 3: 1-STORY, CONNECTOR

- Connector offset is lower and maintains the corners of the existing structure
- Primary addition is identical to existing building in height, width and roof pitch
- Side wall length of addition is less than that of existing structure



### REAR ADDITION 4: 2-STORY, CONNECTOR

- Connector offset is lower and maintains the corners of the existing structure
- Primary addition is separated from existing structure
- Depth of addition is less than that of existing structure



Illustrations that indicate appropriate and inappropriate designs will be provided throughout the guidelines.

### CROSS-REFERENCE EXAMPLE:

**For more information about the Reno Park Addition Historic District see:**

*“Arvada: From Farming Community to Atomic Age Suburb, Historic Building Survey of Olde Town Arvada and the Allendale and Alta Vista Neighborhoods,” prepared for the City of Arvada by SWCA Environmental Consultants. March 2015.*

*“United States Department of the Interior National Park Service. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. August 23, 1999. Reno Park Addition 5JF1942.”*

**These documents are located at the City of Arvada Community Development Department.**

*An example of a cross-reference sidebar used in the Reno Park, CO Historic Design Guidelines*

## Include Cross-References and Links to Other Related Information.

More detailed information is available for a range of topics that would help property owners when developing designs for rehabilitation and new construction. For example, information about the architectural styles of contributing structures that are found in the historic districts can help when identifying the *key character-defining features* of a property. This can help in determining which features should be preserved and, alternatively, where some flexibility in making alterations may be considered. Links to these resources should be provided.

## **Publish the Design Guidelines in Modules.**

The design guidelines will be organized so that users can easily access the information they need. The design guidelines will be organized into “modules” (separate documents) so that the user can select those modules that apply to their project. For example, a property owner who is planning alterations to a historic house will not need the design guidelines for new infill construction.

Some modules will present information that applies to all the historic districts while other modules will be tailored to fit individual historic districts. The chart that follows in this section, illustrates the modular approach to the design guidelines.

### **Module 1: User’s Guide**

This first module will orient the user to the design guidelines system and explain how to determine which other modules are needed for a particular project. Links will also be provided to other related material, such as the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

### **Module 2: Introduction**

This will explain how the design guidelines were developed, how they relate to the Historic Preservation Ordinance and how they are formatted.

### **Module 3: Preservation Theory**

This module will include basic preservation principles, definitions of key terms, and a list of the steps that one should follow while planning a project. This will establish a foundation for the design guidelines that follow.

### **Module 4: Preservation Guidelines**

This module, which is common to all historic districts, will include the design guidelines for restoration, rehabilitation, and alteration of historic properties, with examples that illustrate a range of architectural styles and building periods.

### **Module 5: District Overview**

Module 5 will be custom-tailored to each historic district. It will identify key character-defining features and architectural styles, and describe how context area is to be applied. Any historic district-specific exceptions and special conditions for approval will be included in this module.

**Module 6: Additional District Guidelines**

Any special design guidelines that are specific to an individual historic district and apply equally to contributing structures and noncontributing structures, as well as to new infill buildings, will be included in this module. For example, one historic district may have specific policies for awnings or for signs, which would apply to a rehabilitation project as well as a new infill building. Any design guidelines that a historic district may wish to have removed from the list of exemptions or administrative approvals in the Historic Preservation Ordinance will also go here.

**Module 7: Additions Guidelines**

Design guidelines for additions to historic properties will be in this module, tailored to each individual historic district. The module will focus on minimizing the impact of an addition on the integrity of a historic structure. Some of these design guidelines may be measurable design standards, such as a height limit that is appropriate in an individual historic district.

**Module 8: New Infill Guidelines**

This module will provide design guidelines for compatible new construction (infill) buildings. It will be tailored to each historic district. The design guidelines will address the mass, scale, materials, and building elements appropriate for new infill buildings. They also will apply to existing noncontributing structures so that an addition or alteration will be compatible with its context area, just as a new building should. This is because preserving the character of a noncontributing structure is not an objective, as opposed to a contributing structure. Instead, an alteration to a noncontributing structure should be reviewed based on its compatibility with the context area.

**Module 9: Miscellaneous Guidelines**

Module 9 will serve as a “catch-all” location for design guidelines that apply to all historic districts and don’t fit into any other module, such as relocation and demolition.

**Module 10: Appendices**

A limited number of appendices will be published as part of the design guidelines. One appendix will include an illustrated glossary of terms and another will address best practices for topics that are not under review by the commission, including those defined as exempt in the Historic Preservation Ordinance, such as locating solar panels.



# HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES | MODULE STRUCTURE

MODULE: 1	MODULE: 2	MODULE: 3	MODULE: 4	MODULE: 5	MODULE: 6	MODULE: 7	MODULE: 8	MODULE: 9	MODULE: 10
<b>USER'S GUIDE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Start Here" Introductory Material that helps Orient the User</li> <li>• How To Use the Documents (Modules)</li> <li>• Chart Illustration of All Modules, Indicating which to use for Specific Project Types</li> <li>• Links to Related Material</li> </ul>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the Guidelines were Developed</li> <li>• How the Guidelines Relate to the Ordinances</li> <li>• Links to Related Material</li> </ul>	<b>PRESERVATION THEORY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Preservation Principles &amp; Terms                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Significance</li> <li>- Integrity</li> <li>- Compatibility</li> <li>- etc...</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How to Plan a Preservation Project                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering Context Area</li> </ul> </li> <li>• General Overview of Character Areas, and How to Use Them</li> </ul>	<b>PRESERVATION GUIDELINES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rehabilitation Guidelines                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guidelines for Altering a Historic Property</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Guideline Topics:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Features</li> <li>- Porch Design</li> <li>- Materials</li> <li>- Doors</li> <li>- Windows</li> <li>- Paint &amp; Color</li> <li>- etc...</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Links to NPS Historic Preservation Briefs</li> <li>• Possibly have Side-Bar Notes that Explain Specific Guidelines for Specific Districts?</li> <li>• Impact on Integrity of Historic Resource</li> </ul>	<b>DISTRICT OVERVIEW</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief History of the Historic District</li> <li>• Key Features of the District                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual Buildings</li> <li>- District as a Whole</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Architectural Styles Found in the District                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Character</li> <li>• Defining Features of Styles Found in the District</li> <li>• Reference to Other Architectural Styles Information</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>ADDITIONAL DISTRICT GUIDELINES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guideline Topics:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awnings</li> <li>- Materials</li> <li>- etc...</li> </ul>                             (To Be Determined)                         </li> <li>• Reference to Deed Restrictions and other Regulations</li> <li>• List of Exceptions and Exemptions for the District</li> <li>• Administrative Review for the District</li> <li>• Context Area Definition for the District</li> <li>• Additions to nonconforming structures</li> </ul>	<b>ADDITIONS GUIDELINES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measurable &amp; Quantitative Guidelines                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lot Coverage?</li> <li>- Building Envelope</li> <li>- Wall Offset</li> <li>- etc...</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Guideline Topics:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mass &amp; Scale</li> <li>- Location</li> <li>- Character</li> <li>- Porch Design</li> <li>- Features</li> <li>- Materials</li> <li>- Doors</li> <li>- Windows</li> <li>- Paint &amp; Color</li> <li>- etc...</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reference "Shall Approves"</li> </ul>	<b>NEW INFILL GUIDELINES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measurable &amp; Quantitative Guidelines                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lot Coverage?</li> <li>- Building Envelope</li> <li>- Wall Offset</li> <li>- etc...</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Primary Structure Guidelines                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secondary Structure Guidelines</li> <li>• Non-Contributors</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Guideline Topics:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mass &amp; Scale</li> <li>- Height</li> <li>- Style &amp; Character</li> <li>- Porch Design</li> <li>- Features</li> <li>- Materials</li> <li>- Doors</li> <li>- Windows</li> <li>- Paint &amp; Color</li> <li>- etc...</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>MISC. GUIDELINES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relocation</li> <li>• Demolition</li> </ul>	<b>APPENDICES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illustrated Glossary                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Including some from the Ordinance</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Best Practices                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Site Design</li> <li>- Streetscape</li> <li>- Street Trees</li> <li>- Borrow Ditches</li> <li>- Parking Access</li> <li>- Solar Panel Location</li> <li>- etc...</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**SPECIFIC TO DISTRICT**  **UNIVERSAL (Applies to All Districts)**

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRESCRIPTIVE STANDARDS

Section 4 of this Strategy Paper describes and illustrates a range of measurable design tools. Each tool was evaluated to determine whether it would effectively provide clarity during the design review process. This process utilized the findings from the Compatible Design Survey, a study of the historic development patterns as documented in Sanborn fire insurance maps as well as the data from GIS maps, and an analysis of existing buildings that are currently classified as contributing structures in the historic districts. Our analysis found that many of the design tools could be applied to all of the historic districts, with different calibrations to fit individual districts. The measurable limits for each tool reflect historic precedent, but in some areas, permit a moderate increase in the scale of development, while still assuring compatibility.

Note that, for the Houston Heights Historic Districts (East, Est and South) the same numbers are proposed for the recommended prescriptive standards. Even though some differences appear in their responses to individual questions in the Compatible Design Survey, these are not enough to merit different standards. Some adjustments may be available through the flexibility measures that are recommended later in this section. Other differences will be addressed in the qualitative design guidelines.

Exceptions and special conditions may be included while drafting the design guidelines. In addition, some form of flexibility may be built into the design tools. This may be particularly important when applying the tools to an addition to a historic structure, because existing conditions may limit options for meeting some of the quantitative limits or requirements.

The measurable design tools that are recommended to be used as prescriptive standards are listed on the following pages. First a table lists all of the tools that were considered for use as prescriptive standards and indicates which are recommended. Next, short narratives for each of the design tools that are recommended to be used are presented. Those that address building design are addressed first, followed by the ones that address site design. Appendix B presents a chart summarizing the preliminary dimensional standards and requirements that are recommended for each historic district.

### NOTE:

**The recommended design standards are in draft form for discussion purposes only. This material has not been reviewed by the City's legal counsel and is not final until after council consideration.**

<b>Potential Prescriptive Design Standards with Recommendations for their Use</b>			
<b>BUILDING DESIGN STANDARDS</b>		<b>STANDARD?</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
<b>Building Height Limits</b>			
	Maximum height to eave	Yes	This is currently used and should be continued.
	Maximum to mid-point of roof	No	Other height limits address issues more directly.
	Overall maximum height limit	Yes	
	Maximum side wall height at minimum setback line	Yes	Embedded in Maximum Building Envelope standards
	First floor height range	Yes	Based on contributing structures in the context area
	Garage height limit	Yes	Overall maximum
<b>Horizontal Wall Offset Requirement</b>			
	Side wall offset	Yes	Maximum length based on contributing structures in the district
	Front wall offset	Yes	Maximum length based on contributing structures in the district
<b>Vertical Wall Offset Requirement</b>			
	Side wall height increases as side setback increases	No	The Maximum Building Envelope accomplishes this.
<b>One-story Element Requirement</b>			
	Front one-story porch	Yes	Porch to be required
	Side one-story element	No	The Maximum Building Envelope accomplishes this.
<b>Maximum Building Envelope</b>			
	Envelope A (one-story in front)	Yes	Applies based on context area
	Envelope B (two-story in front)	Yes	Applies based on context area
	Envelope C (Bungalow form)	Yes	Applies based on context area
<b>Floor Area Ratio</b>			
	Maximum FAR (occupied space)	Yes	Varies by lot size and by historic district
<b>Roof Pitch</b>			
	Sloped primary roof	Yes	Established by contributing structures in the context area
<b>SITE DESIGN STANDARDS</b>		<b>STANDARD?</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
<b>Building Setbacks</b>			
	Minimum building setback	Yes	
	Minimum side setback	Yes	Includes special provision for corner lots
	Minimum rear setback	Yes	
	Minimum garage setback	Yes	
<b>Maximum Lot Coverage</b>		Yes	
<b>Impervious Surface Limit</b>		No	Include as advisory guideline in Best Practices
<b>Parking Location Standards</b>			
	Garage location	Yes	Established by contributing structures in the context area



## Height Limits

Height limits should be established for the following different measurements. Note that the current methods of measuring height, including eave height, would be continued.

### Overall building height limit (ridge height)

A maximum height limit should be established for each historic district. This should be measured from existing natural grade to the ridge (top) of a roof. Some secondary architectural features, such as a decorative finial or turret may be excluded from this height limit.

### Sidewall height limit

Sidewall heights should be lower at the minimum side setback line and then be permitted to increase in height as they move inward on the property. This will reduce the perception that a house is “looming” over a neighboring property. The Maximum Building Envelope tool (described on the following page) will accomplish this. (See Appendix B for specific dimensions per district.)

### Height range for the first floor (finish floor elevation)

A range for finished floor heights should be established that indicates the minimum elevation required as well as a maximum height permitted for the first floor of a new building. This should be set to reflect development patterns of contributing structures in the context area. In the Houston Historic Districts, this is measured from existing natural grade to the porch floor.

## Maximum Side Wall Length

A maximum length for a side wall should be established. In some of the historic districts, there is a consistency in the dimensions of front and side walls that contributes to a sense of visual continuity among properties. For example, in one historic district, the traditional length of a side wall ranges between 40 and 45 feet. Any additional building mass that extends deeper than that dimension into the lot traditionally is offset (typically inset) from this primary side wall plane. These dimensions are documented in the city’s GIS data and historic Sanbon maps. By establishing a maximum side wall length, a new building will appear to be more in scale with the contributing structures in the historic district, even when the overall size is larger than historic precedents.

## One-story Building Element in Front

A one-story element should be required. A “one-story element” refers to a porch or occupied space, depending upon its relationship to the front setback requirement. Some maximum building envelopes will require a one-story element, but in some settings a one-story porch may be required specifically. Where this is the case, appropriate dimensions will be included.

### NOTE:

See Appendix B for specific numbers that are recommended for the standards discussed here.

## Maximum Building Envelope

Maximum building envelopes should be applied in each historic district. This tool is very effective at shifting parts of a building to locations on a lot that are more compatible with historic development patterns. Three different shapes for maximum building envelopes are proposed. These are designed to promote building forms appropriate to different settings.

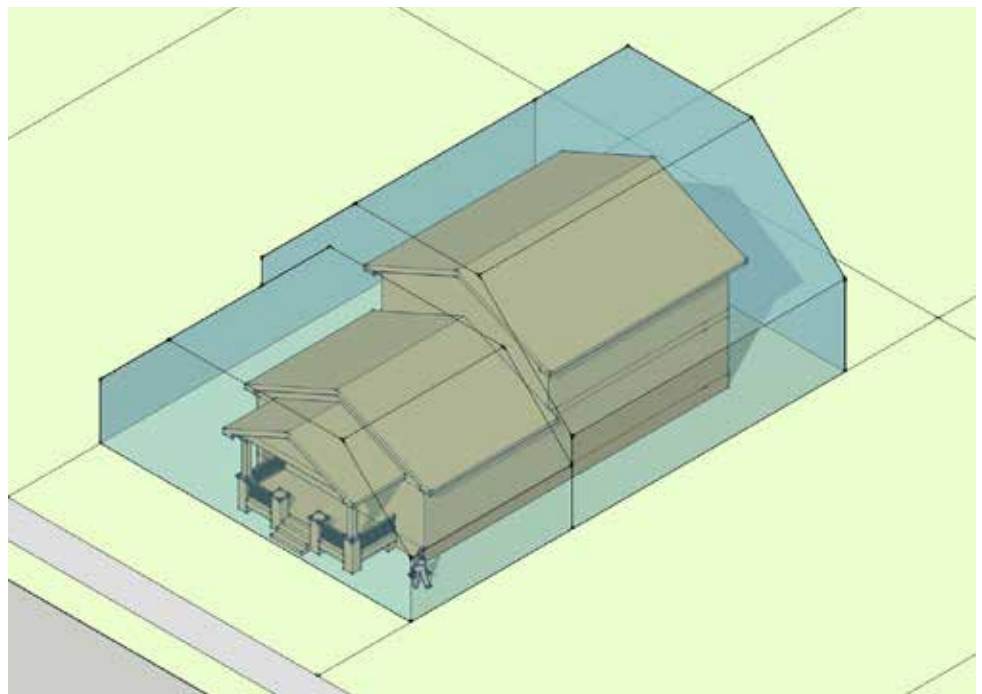
Which of the Maximum Building Envelopes (MBE) are to be permitted within individual districts will be defined during the development of the guidelines. Where clear consistency in building form exists throughout an entire district, the MBE may be applied district-wide. In other cases, those forms to be permitted will be determined by examining the development patterns within the context area defined for a project. For example, some differences in responses to building forms are noted in the survey responses among Houston Heights Districts (East, West, and South). These would be taken into consideration in such cases.

**Maximum Building Envelope A:** This envelope has two parts, with different heights. It is shaped to permit a one-story portion in the front of the lot, with a taller two-story portion permitted in the rear. It is useful where historic, one-story buildings are typical, but where some two-story portions also could fit in, if sufficiently set back from the street.

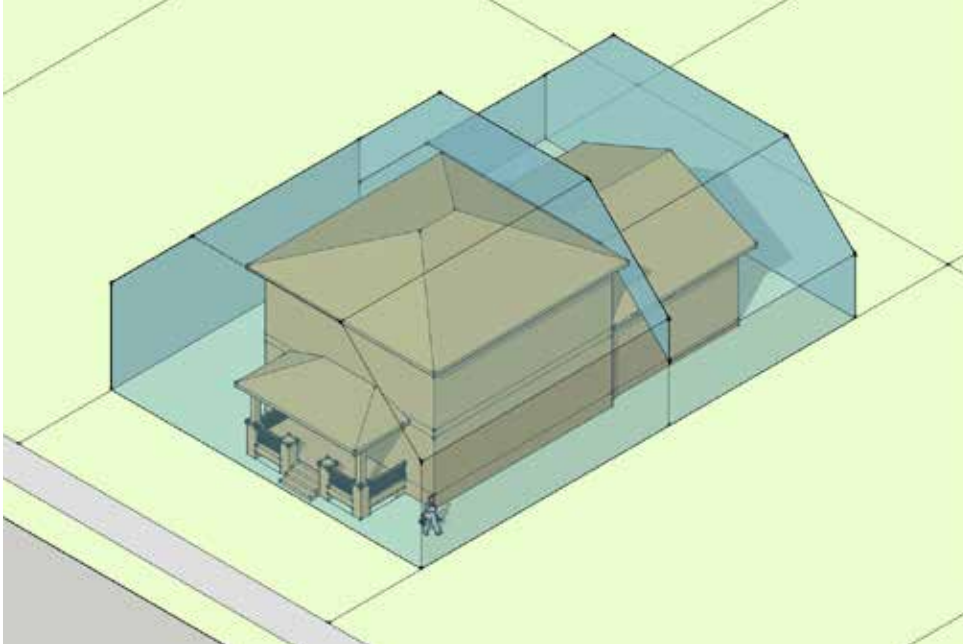
*Envelope A is useful where historic, one-story buildings are typical, but where some two-story portions would also fit in.*

*In this illustration, a new house with an assumed maximum permitted FAR for a 5,000 sq. ft. lot size condition is shown. It demonstrates that the Maximum Building Envelope is larger than the maximum permitted floor area. This provides flexibility in building design.*

For this scenario:  
 Lot size: 5,000 sq. ft.  
 Total floor area shown: 2,200 sf  
 Max. permitted FAR: .44  
 Actual FAR shown: .44



**Maximum Building Envelope B:** This envelope also has two parts, but is the opposite of Envelope A. It permits a two-story building in front, with a lower one-story portion permitted in the rear. It is useful where historic two-story buildings occur frequently in a historic district and where maintaining a sense of open space in the rear portion of the property is desirable.



*Envelope B is useful where historic two-story buildings occur frequently in a historic district and where maintaining a sense of open space in the rear portion of the property is desirable.*

*In this illustration, a new house with an assumed maximum permitted FAR for a 5,000 sq. ft. lot size condition is shown. It demonstrates that the Maximum Building Envelope is larger than the maximum permitted floor area. This provides flexibility in building design.*

For this scenario:

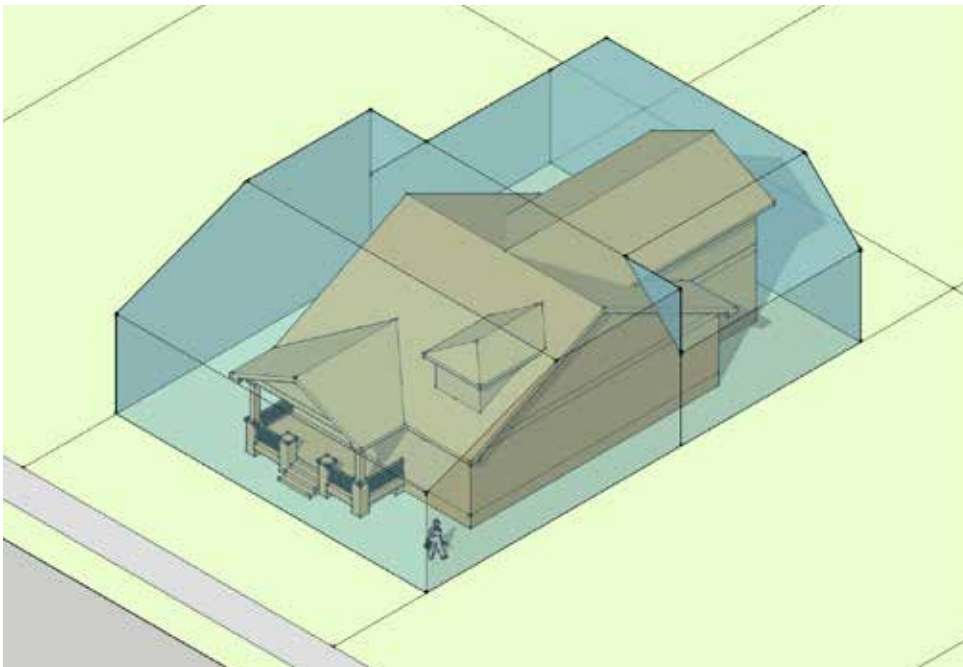
Lot size: 5,000 sq. ft.

Total floor area shown: 2,200 sf

Max. permitted FAR: .44

Actual FAR shown: .44

**Maximum Building Envelope C:** This envelope also has two parts, but is tailored to fit in settings where the historic development pattern includes houses with long roofs that slope toward the street. Many bungalows have this form.



*Envelope C is tailored to fit in a setting where the historic development pattern includes houses with long roofs that slope toward the street.*

*In this illustration, a new house with an assumed maximum permitted FAR for a 5,000 sq. ft. lot size condition is shown. It demonstrates that the Maximum Building Envelope is larger than the maximum permitted floor area. This provides flexibility in building design.*

For this scenario:

Lot size: 5,000 sq. ft.

Total floor area shown: 2,200 sf

Max. permitted FAR: .44

Actual FAR shown: .44

The type of envelope to be applied should be based on precedents of contributing structures in the context area. The dimensions for the envelopes should be tailored to each historic district.

## Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

The survey documents a clear preference for buildings that appear in scale with the historic setting and that is in proportion to lot size. The proportion of a building size to its lot size often determines how different building types and styles fit within their sites and their surroundings. A maximum FAR should be set to reflect the character of historic development patterns and, where appropriate, to accommodate moderately larger buildings when those are designed to be compatible with the context area. The responses to the Compatible Design Survey also provide an important base of information for establishing FAR. The FAR should include a cap for very large lots and a guaranteed minimum house size for very small lots.

The chart below illustrates the FAR recommended for the historic districts. The ratio of floor area declines as lot size increases, which provides for larger houses on larger lots, but still within a range that is in keeping with historic development patterns. Note that not all lot sizes appear in every district, but if an unusual size does exist, the table provides for this. These ratios were established by considering the responses to the Compatible Design Survey, examining the size of existing contributing structures in the district, and experience in other communities. The recommendations for the design standards take into consideration differences that appear among the districts in the responses to the Compatible Design Survey. This is seen in the different numbers which are proposed for maximum floor area ratios in the table that follows. Further refinement to some of these numbers would occur when drafting the design guidelines.

<b>Recommended Maximum FAR in the Houston Historic Districts</b>						
Lot Size	< 4000	4000-4999	5000-5999	6000-6999	7000-7999	8000+
Historic Districts	Recommended FAR					
Freeland	.44	.44	.44	.42	.40	.40
Houston Heights East	.48	.48	.46	.44	.42	.40
Houston Heights South	.48	.48	.46	.44	.42	.40
Houston Heights West	.48	.48	.46	.44	.42	.40
Norhill	.44	.44	.44	.42	.40	.40
Woodland Heights	.44	.44	.44	.42	.40	.40

*These ratios exclude garages, to remain consistent in the way in which floor area is currently calculated by assessors.*

## Roof Pitch

Minimum and maximum roof pitches should be established. New buildings and additions should be designed and constructed with roof pitches in the range of those seen historically. This should include a minimum slope requirement, tailored to each historic district. They should be based on the prevailing roof pitches of contributing structures in the context area.

## Building Setbacks

These setback limits should be used:

### Side Setback:

A minimum side setback should be established that is compatible with those of existing contributing structures in the context area. In addition, a cumulative side setback requirement should be introduced. For example, a minimum side setback may be established as 5 feet, and the cumulative total would be established at 15 feet. This means that on one side, if a building is set at the 5 feet minimum, then the other side setback must be 10 feet. This can accommodate a driveway or a large side yard. In another example, one side setback could be at 7 feet, and the other would be at 8 feet. This cumulative side setback requirement provides flexibility for where a house may be located while assuring that a reasonable amount of open space is maintained along the sides of a property.

### Front Setback:

A front yard setback range measure should be used. This should be based on the existing setbacks of contributing structures within the context area. Establishing a range that is defined by contributing structures in the context area is recommended (except where deed restrictions provide for an alternative method).

## Lot Coverage

Compatible Design Survey results indicate that respondents value highly open space. A maximum lot coverage should be established to maintain this feature. This should be based on historic development patterns.

This chart illustrates the maximum lot coverage that is recommended for each historic district. The percentage decreases as lot size increases. Note that not all lot sizes appear in every district, but if an unusual size does exist, the table provides for this. These percentages were established by considering the responses to the Compatible Design Survey, examining conditions for existing contributing structures, and experience in other communities.

<b>Recommended Maximum Lot Coverage in the Houston Historic Districts</b>						
<b>Lot Size</b>	<b>&lt; 4000</b>	<b>4000-4999</b>	<b>5000-5999</b>	<b>6000-6999</b>	<b>7000-7999</b>	<b>8000+</b>
<b>Historic Districts</b>	<b>Recommended Lot Coverage</b>					
Freeland	46%	46%	44%	42%	40%	38%
Houston Heights East	44%	44%	42%	40%	38%	36%
Houston Heights South	44%	44%	42%	40%	38%	36%
Houston Heights West	44%	44%	42%	40%	38%	36%
Norhill	42%	42%	40%	38%	36%	36%
Woodland Heights	44%	44%	42%	40%	38%	36%

## Providing flexibility in the prescriptive standards

The prescriptive standards are not to be exceeded, but there may be a situation in which some flexibility in applying them should be considered.

The prescriptive standards provide limits in building size and lot coverage that are based on the findings in the survey in combination with the analysis of historic development patterns in each of the historic districts. The intent is to establish clear parameters for determining appropriateness. They provide a starting point for the basic location, size, and shape of building that can occur. Qualitative guidelines would then be applied to consider appropriateness of other aspects of design, including materials and architectural details. These are more flexible by nature.

For the prescriptive design standards, a need for flexibility may occur on a site with a contributing structure that is constrained in such a way that one of the measurable requirements cannot be met, and yet a compatible design can be conceived. In such a case, the HAHC could have the ability to adjust the requirement, but only within a limited range. (A variation of 5% is an example). If a property owner were to seek any greater exception to a measurable tool, they would appeal to the Historic Preservation Appeals Board, as provided in the ordinance.

## **SPECIAL DESIGN POLICIES TO ADDRESS IN THE DESIGN GUIDELINES**

The design guidelines will address many other topics that are not set by measurable standards. Many of these are related to alterations to contributing structures while others are relevant to new construction. The non-prescriptive (discretionary) guidelines will address these. Many of these topics appear in design guidelines across the country and are straightforward in terms of writing them.

There are a few topics, however, that merit an expanded discussion in the design guidelines. During the data analysis and collection of input from the community, members of the public expressed confusion about some topics that need clarification. These are:

1. Replacing a historic window – when it may be appropriate and when it may not
2. Alternative siding materials on contributing structures – when matching the original should be required and when alternatives may be considered
3. Additions to contributing structures – How to remain subordinate and to be compatible
4. Porch design – how scale, proportion, style, and detail should be treated
5. Window design in a new addition – how a new window should relate to those on the contributing structure
6. Differentiating old from new construction in historic districts – why this is important and ways to achieve it
7. Treating an older addition that has taken on historic significance
8. Relocating windows and doors on historic structures

### **NOTE:**

**See Appendix A for examples of discretionary (qualitative) design guidelines.**



## **REVISIONS TO THE DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR OLD SIXTH WARD PROTECTED HISTORIC DISTRICT**

The existing design guidelines for Old Sixth Ward Protected Historic District will be updated, to include the measurable tools and expanded qualitative guidelines. These revisions will be based on input from focus group meetings with district representatives and an analysis of historic development patterns.

The prescriptive standards that are recommended for the other districts will be considered, but calibrated to fit the character of Old Sixth Ward Protected Historic District. This includes lot coverage, building size, height, and form.

Other topics to be updated for Old Sixth Ward Protected Historic District include:

- Revisions to work subject to administrative approvals
- Additions to contributing structures, including the use of connectors
- Adding dormers
- Consideration of site and setting in the review process
- Roof pitch
- Porch design, including scale, and proportion
- Building materials
- Window design in new construction
- Parking, including carports, and similar structures
- Signage
- Lighting
- Fences



## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER WORK (OUTSIDE THE DESIGN GUIDELINES PROJECT)**

Some topics outside the scope of this project arose during the analysis phase and should be addressed in other work programs. Recommendations for actions related to those issues are listed in this section. Each of these actions will enhance the sense of fairness, predictability, and efficiency in the design review process.

### **Update the Historic Inventories**

Some discrepancies appeared in the listings of contributing and noncontributing structures. For example, a structure presently may be listed as contributing, even though a later alteration that occurred after its rating has severely diminished the integrity of the structure, and it now should be reclassified as noncontributing. This could affect which sections of the design guidelines will apply to these properties. Updating the inventories would expedite project planning and better inform design review. Ideally, historic district inventories would be reviewed and updated on a regular basis; best practice in historic preservation suggests that this be done every ten years.

### **Update the GIS Data and Related Maps**

Some GIS data appears to be out of date. The data layer of historic inventories, for example, will need to be updated as inventories are updated. Other maps recording building age, floor area, and lot coverage also should be reviewed for accuracy. For example, if a historic structure has a new addition, this additional square footage should be incorporated into the GIS data.

### **Update the Description of Architectural Styles**

The classification of buildings by architectural styles, and descriptions of architectural styles, helps to identify which character-defining features should be preserved. Presently, architectural style names and descriptions of key features are inconsistent across historic district inventories, the Historic Preservation Manual, and historic designation applications. This can be confusing. The City should apply consistent styles descriptions globally to all related documents.

## NEXT STEPS

This Strategy Paper provides a check-point in developing the design guidelines for the historic districts that are engaged in this process. The paper will be presented to the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission on March 29, 2017 and in a public workshop on March 30. A comment period will follow. Details for the comment period will be published on the City's website. After comments are collected, and guidance from City Council is received, the formal drafting of the design guidelines will proceed. The drafting of the design guidelines for Houston Heights Historic Districts (East, West, and South) will be first.

This Strategy Paper sets forth many recommendations for the design guidelines, including a description of the general approach to writing them, the modular structure to be used, and the key topics to address. The topics include those that would have prescriptive standards and those that would be qualitative.

During that drafting process, a detailed topical outline will be a first step. This will expand on the modular structure described earlier in this section of the Strategy Paper. Details for the recommended prescriptive standards also will be finalized at that time. These will relate to rules of measurement, such as:

- How height is to be measured
- How FAR is applied to lot sizes other than those most frequently appearing in the historic districts
- How floor area is calculated (for example, what qualifies as habitable space and how measurements are taken)
- How exceptions to height limits are addressed (such as decorative finials or cresting)
- Exceptions to encroachment limitations for the Maximum Building Envelope (such as portions of a gable or dormer)
- How accessory structures (such as gazebos and pool houses) are counted in lot coverage

Testing of potential designs will also continue, using the proposed prescriptive standards, to assure that the requirements will help to achieve compatible designs in terms of lot coverage, building size, height, and form.