

SECTION 8: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

A wide variety of resources are available to assist property owners and design professionals as they plan building projects in historic districts.

City of Houston

Complete information about the City of Houston's historic preservation programs and design review process are available online at www.houstontx.gov/planning/HistoricPres/.

Texas Historical Commission

State-specific information about the National Register of Historic Places and preservation programs, including the Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit program, is available at www.thc.texas.gov.

National Park Service

Publications from the National Park Service include Preservation Briefs, which include technical information about the repair and maintenance of historic building materials and systems. Hard copies are available to order; electronic versions can be accessed online at www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm.

NPS also publishes *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, available online at www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm.

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GOOD PRACTICES

In addition to the architectural features described in Section 4, other design elements contribute to a neighborhood's overall visual appeal. These include fences and walks, walkways, driveways and parking areas, exterior lighting, building systems equipment, and paint colors.

Changes to these design elements generally do not require a Certificate of Appropriateness or building permit; the exceptions are noted in the pages that follow.

The Good Practices contained in this chapter are intended to provide useful information while planning projects that include these design elements.

Fences and Walls

Fences and walls should not create a visual barrier between a historic house and the street. Fences in the Houston Heights Historic Districts are often powder-coated cast metal with decorative finials. These fences have slender posts and balusters. They are commonly finished in a matte black or dark gray color and stand 36–42 inches high. (A fence more than 8 feet tall requires a building permit.)

Wooden picket fences, where present, should be regularly maintained and painted.

Solid wood fences or masonry walls are often used along side and rear property lines to provide privacy for the back yard.

Good Practices

Maintain historic fences.

Install metal or wooden picket fences consistent with those found in the neighborhood. If using composite or synthetic materials, choose a durable alternative that looks like wood or metal.

Use wooden privacy fences and masonry walls to screen the back yard, rather than in front of the house. The finished side of the fence should face the public right-of-way.

Avoid chain-link and wire fences, vinyl or PVC fence materials, and concrete block walls.

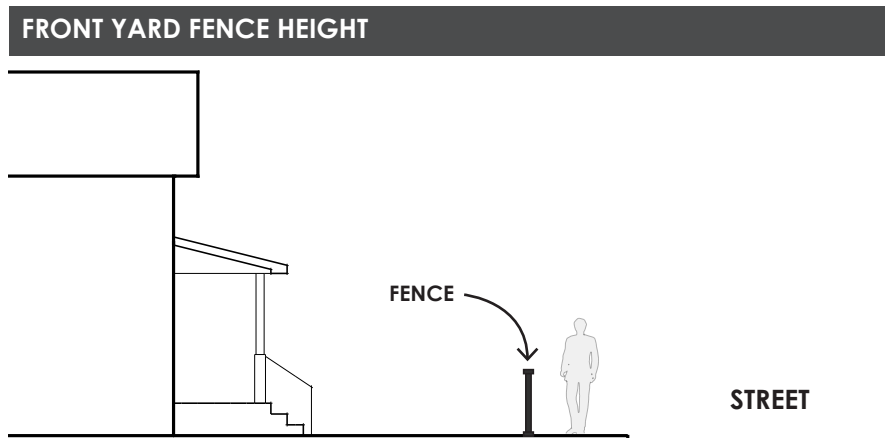
Avoid using brick columns in place of fence posts.



Wooden picket fences should be regularly maintained and painted.



Maintain historic fences.

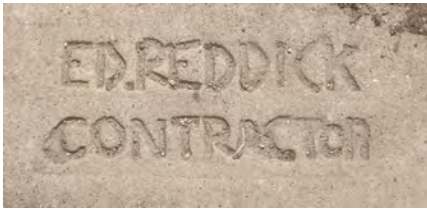


A fence height of 36–42 inches is appropriate.



Install metal fences consistent with those found in the neighborhood.

Reminder: changes to design elements identified in the Good Practices section of these design guidelines do not require a Certificate of Appropriateness, except where noted.



Sidewalks and Walkways

Houston Heights is a walkable neighborhood with public sidewalks along all streets. Paths or walkways connect front entrances to sidewalks and driveways. These walkways are often made of poured concrete.

The name of the sidewalk contractor, the street number, an owner's name, or other information may be stamped into the concrete.



Maintain historic sidewalks and walkways.

Good Practices

Maintain historic sidewalks and walkways.

Preserve pillar-style street name signs.

Preserve names and numbers stamped into concrete, where present.

When constructing new sidewalks or walkways, follow City Code requirements; obtain building permits.

Use traditional materials, such as poured concrete, masonry pavers, or flagstone.

Avoid creating loose gravel or dirt paths.

Avoid asphalt paving.



Driveways and Parking Areas

Driveways in the Houston Heights Historic Districts, where present, are usually located next to the house. Parking areas other than the driveway are located behind the house.

Driveways and parking areas are generally paved with poured concrete. In some cases, driveways may be paved in two strips to create wheel tracks, with grass growing between the paving.



Maintain paved and unpaved driveways beside the house.

Good Practices

Maintain paved and unpaved driveways beside the house.

Maintain paved and unpaved parking areas behind the house.

Unpaved driveways or parking areas may be paved with poured concrete, if desired.

Avoid creating parking pads in front of the house.

Avoid asphalt driveways and parking areas.

Use alley access if/when available.



Use appropriate fencing to screen a parking area from the street.

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Exterior Lighting

Lights are generally located above and/or next to entry doors. These should be appropriately sized and compatible with the overall style of the house.

Additional security lights are often located on garages, accessory buildings, and rear entrances. Lights should be appropriately sized for their purpose.

Lights in all locations may be motion-activated.

Good Practices

Where possible, maintain historic light fixtures.

New or replacement wall sconces may be mounted on either or both sides of the front door.

Flush-mounted or pendant-style lights may be installed to light porches or stoops.

Utility lights may be installed over or next to rear entry doors or garage doors, or on accessory buildings; where possible, these should not be visible from the right of way.

Where possible, use hoods over lightbulbs to direct light downward, which minimizes light pollution.

Avoid industrial or commercial light fixtures of a size, design, or strength that is inconsistent with residential use.

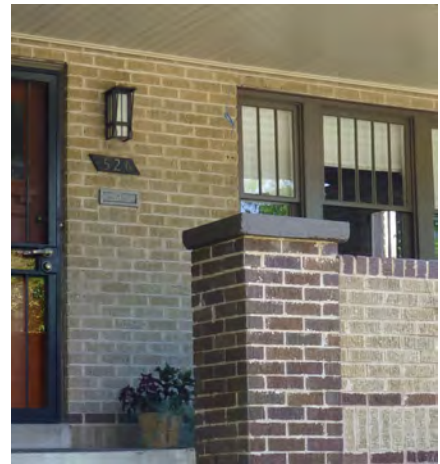
If lighting a commercial parking area next to a residence, ensure that the light fixture locations, directions, etc. meet City Code.

Building Systems Equipment

Air conditioning units, rain barrels, water heaters, and similar equipment may be installed outside the house in Houston.

Good Practices

If building systems equipment is located outside, it should be placed toward the rear of the house or in a location where it will not be visible from the public right-of-way. Fences, hedges, and other landscaping features may be used to screen these items from view.



Flush-mounted or pendant-style lights may be installed over porches or stoops.



Where possible, use hoods over lightbulbs to direct light downward, which minimizes light pollution.

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Painting and Exterior Colors

Historically, wood surfaces on the exterior of a building were painted to protect them from weathering. Concrete and stucco surfaces sometimes were painted, too.

When choosing a paint color for the exterior of a historic home, a traditional color palette is appropriate. Look for colors that are harmonious with the rest of the neighborhood. In many historic districts in Houston, neutral, pastel, and muted colors are most common.

Over time, layers of paint can become so thick (around 1/16") that the paint itself begins to fail, often at the original bond between the paint and the surface of wood. Although paint should be reapplied every 5–8 years to maintain its protective qualities, unnecessary painting should be avoided.

Be aware that paints or sealers advertised as water-repellent, waterproof, or maintenance-free can damage historic houses by trapping moisture inside the walls. These products should not be applied to historic building materials.

Good Practices

Maintain painted surfaces. Avoid repainting unless it is necessary. Test for lead paint before scraping or sanding.

Scrape or sand loose paint before recoating, using the most gentle means possible. Avoid sandblasting or other methods that involve the high pressure application of abrasive materials.

When repainting, choose a paint color that is harmonious with the rest of the neighborhood.

Painting unpainted brick is not permitted without a Certificate of Appropriateness, as doing so can cause damage by trapping moisture inside the brick. The color and texture of masonry are also character-defining features which would be covered by paint.

Previously painted masonry and all non-masonry surfaces can be painted without a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Reminder: changes to design elements identified in the Good Practices section of these design guidelines do not require a Certificate of Appropriateness, except where noted.

Hurricane Shutters

Houston is at risk of hurricanes and tropical storms for about five months out of the year. When possible, it is less damaging to use hurricane shutters (rather than plywood) to protect a historic building from windstorms.

Good Practices

Consider using impact-resistant window glass or window films that are transparent and not visible from the street.

When it is necessary to install hurricane shutters on a historic building, try to avoid damaging historic materials, such as siding and trim.

Use stainless steel hardware with plastic endcaps to prevent corrosion and minimize the visual impact of wall-mounted anchors.



When it is necessary to install hurricane shutters on a historic building, try to avoid damaging historic materials such as siding and trim.



Use stainless-steel hardware with plastic endcaps to prevent corrosion and minimize the visual impact of wall-mounted anchors like those shown in this photo.

Reminder: changes to design elements identified in the Good Practices section of these design guidelines do not require a Certificate of Appropriateness, except where noted.

GLOSSARY

This glossary includes terms used in the design guidelines. The City of Houston's historic preservation ordinance also includes a list of terms and definitions, and some of those are provided here for your convenience. Terms and definitions which appear in both places are marked with an asterisk (*). This glossary is intended to supplement, not replace, the definitions provided in the ordinance.

Accessory building or structure – a secondary building or structure, such as a shed or gazebo, which contains no living space and the use of which is associated with the principal building on a property.

Alteration – “any change to the exterior of a building, structure, object or site. Alteration shall include, but is not limited to, replacing historic material; changing to a different kind, type or size of roofing or siding materials or foundation; changing, eliminating, or adding exterior doors, door frames, windows, window frames, shutters, railings, columns, beams, walls, porches, steps, porte-cocheres, balconies, signs attached to the exterior of a building, or ornamentation; or the dismantling, moving or removing of any exterior feature. Alteration includes expanding an existing structure or the construction of an addition to an existing structure. Alteration includes the painting of unpainted masonry surfaces. Alteration does not include ordinary maintenance and repair, or the addition or replacement of fences that are not otherwise regulated by this article.” *

Awning – an overhang or covering placed on the exterior of a building, often above the upper edge of an opening or window, that provides shade, filters light, or provides shelter from weather.

Balloon framing – A system of framing where all vertical structural elements of the exterior bearing walls and partitions consist of single studs which extend the full height of the frame, from the top of the sole-plate to the roof plate; all floor joists are fastened by nails to studs. Queen Anne and Victorian-era buildings often were built with balloon framing.

Baluster – a vertical shaft or post, the form of which may be square, lathe-turned, or molded; used to support the handrail of a porch or staircase. Also known as a *spindle*.

Beam – a horizontal structural element that transfers the load of a building to a foundation, a supporting column or wall.

Bracket – a building element (often a piece of wood) used to support or strengthen an overhanging element, such as the eave of a roof; also, a decorative element that appears to be, but does not function as, a structurally supporting member.

Building mass – see *Massing*.

Building scale – see *Scale*.

Building setback – see *Setback*.

Capital – the uppermost component of a column or pilaster, sometimes based on ancient Greek or Roman examples; designs may be intricate or plain.

Casing – the decorative molding around an opening such as a window or door.

Certificate of Appropriateness – “current and valid permit issued by the HAHC or the director, as applicable, authorizing the issuance of a building permit for construction, alteration, rehabilitation, restoration, relocation or demolition required by this article.” *

Cladding – the material used to cover the exterior surface of a wall.

Clapboard – a narrow, horizontally laid board with one edge thinner than the other, attached to an exterior surface so that the wide edge of each board overlaps the thin edge of the board just below it.

Column – a building element made of a load-bearing base which supports a vertical shaft, topped with a capital. A column may be freestanding, but it is more often used to structurally support a horizontal beam.

Compatible – having qualities that preserve the character of a historic district or resource.

Conditioned space – space within a building which is heated or cooled.

Context Area – “the blockface and opposing blockface within the district where the proposed activity is located. Context area may include a different geographic area if the commission finds that unusual and compelling circumstances exist or if the context area is described differently in design guidelines.” *

Contributing Structure – “a building, structure, object or site that reinforces, or that has conditions, which, if reversed, would reinforce, the cultural, architectural or historical significance of the historic district in which it is located, and that is identified as contributing upon the designation of the historic district in which it is located. The terms also includes any structure that was identified as ‘potentially contributing’ in any historic district.” *

Cornice – the molded projection placed at the edge of the top of wall, entablature, or roof, thereby finishing or crowning the structure.

Cross gable – a roof shape that features two sets of gables, one set facing the front and back of the house and the other facing the sides, which cross to form a right angle.

Cumulative setback – a dimension calculated by adding the lengths of two side setbacks; see also Setback and additional information in Section 5.

Dormer – a building element that projects from a sloping roof surface, often inset with a window or vent, to provide light and ventilation to a room or attic space.

Double-hung window – a window having two panels (sashes), each of which is framed to hold one or more panes of glass, and both of which can be moved up and down.

Eave – the overhanging lower edge of a roof.

Eave height – the vertical distance from the ground to eave, as measured from existing natural grade relative to a fixed point in the right-of-way, such as the crown of the street or a manhole cover.

Elevation – one vertical side of a building or structure.

Exterior feature – an architectural element located on the outside of a building.

Fascia – a band of molding or trim board that runs horizontally along the uppermost edge of a wall, just below the eave.

Floor to Area Ratio (FAR) – the ratio of eligible building area to lot size. FAR is calculated by dividing the total square footage of conditioned and unconditioned space in eligible buildings by the square footage of the lot, with the result expressed as a two-digit decimal (such as 0.44). FAR applies to all construction, including both new buildings and additions to existing ones.

Foundation - the base supporting a building or structure, which transfers loads to the ground.

Fretwork – a decorative design cut out of a solid piece of material or carved in low relief on a solid background; may be a geometric, grid, lattice, or intertwined pattern.

Gable – the generally triangular portion of a wall between the two sloped edges of a roof.

Gable-on-hip – a roof structure in which a steeply sloped gable roof rests upon and extends from the top central surface of a hipped roof.

Glazing – a transparent pane which is set into a window sash or a door; often set into a groove within the frame and secured with triangular glazing points, putty, or a molding.

Handrail/guardrail – a rail attached to a surface or supporting structure, designed to be grasped for added stability.

Header (brick) – a brick laid within a wall so that the short end is exposed and the wide side is parallel to the ground.

Hip-on-gable – a roof structure in which the peak of a gable roof, instead of rising to a point, is clipped short and appears to turn downward. Also known as a clipped gable or jerkinhead.

Hipped roof – a roof form in which all sides slope down from a central peak or ridge and the sides also meet at ridges.

In-kind – of the same type, design, and material.

Integrity – the quality of retaining characteristics associated with historical, cultural, or architectural significance; see additional information in Section 2.

Jamb – a vertical piece or surface that forms the side of an opening, such as a window, door, or vault.

Joist – a structural member laid horizontally in a series from wall to wall or beam to beam, to support the weight of a floor, ceiling, or roof.

Latticework – a decorative panel made of thin strips of material in a criss-crossed pattern.

Lintel – a horizontal beam that carries the load above an opening, such as a window or door.

Lite (or light) – a piece or section of glass, set within a frame in a window or door. A single window unit may have multiple lites.

Lot coverage – a measure of the amount of a lot's surface that is covered by buildings, expressed as a percentage (such as 43%). Lot coverage is calculated by dividing the total area of included building footprints by the total area of the lot, where building footprints are measured at the outside of exterior walls.

Louvers – horizontal slats or fins, sometimes movable, which are set into an opening at a slant to admit light and air but keep out rain.

Mass (massing) – a combination of building volume (height x width x depth) and the arrangement of shapes/forms that make up the building. Each dimension also contributes individually to the overall visual effect of the building.

Molding – a decorative strip of material placed atop a surface for ornamental or finishing purposes.

Mullion – a vertical bar of metal, wood, or stone that separates adjacent window units in a row of windows.

Muntin – a thin vertical strip of wood or metal used to separate and hold in place the panes of glass within a window sash.

New (infill) construction – "a free-standing building or structure proposed to be constructed within a historic district designated by city council, whether that building or structure is on the location of a vacant lot or a lot with another structure on it." *

Noncontributing structure – “a building, structure, object or site that does not reinforce the cultural, architectural, or historical significance of the historic district in which it is located, and is identified as noncontributing upon the designation of the historic district in which it is located.” *

Ornament – a building element that is decorative rather than structural; may be used to conceal structural elements, indicate the function of a part of the building, or express a particular style or type of design.

Panel – a flat or raised surface, usually set into a frame.

Pent roof – a roof structure composed of a single slope.

Pier – a vertical structural element, constructed of masonry units, that supports a horizontal structural element (beam) laid across its upper ends.

Pier-and-beam – a simple type of construction system, composed of vertical structural members that support a horizontal structural member.

Pilaster – a shallow, often rectangular decorative element applied to the vertical surface of a wall, to create the look of a column without providing structural support.

Plane – a flat surface.

Plate glass – a flat sheet of glass, such as may be inserted into a window or door.

Plate height – “the distance from the subfloor of a building to the top of the framed wall.” *

Platform framing – A system of framing in which the studs are only one story high; the floor joists for each story rest on the top plates of the story below or on the soleplate of the first story; the bearing walls and partitions rest on the subfloor of each story, i.e., rest on the rough floor that serves as the base for the finish floor. Also called western framing.

Porch – a raised, usually unenclosed platform attached to one or more sides of a building and used primarily as a sitting area, outdoor living space, or covered access to a doorway.

Porte-cochère – a covered structure attached to a building, through which a vehicle can pass, which allows passengers to exit vehicles and enter the building under cover and out of the weather.

Post – a wooden vertical structural element that supports a horizontal structural element (beam) laid across its upper ends.

Post-and-beam – a simple type of construction system, composed of vertical structural members that support a horizontal structural member.

Pyramidal roof – a type of hipped roof with a square base and four sides that meet at a central peak.

Quoins – blocks, usually masonry or stone, but sometimes of wood, at the corner of a wall; may be structural or simply decorative; often laid so that they appear to wrap around the corner with alternating short and long sides.

Rafter – a structural member that rests on the top of a wall or other supporting surface and rises at a slope to the ridge or peak of the roof; a series of rafters supports the roof deck and eaves.

Rafter tail – the exposed end of a rafter, which may extend to or beyond the edge of the roof eave.

Ridge board – the horizontal beam at the central apex of a roof, to which the upper ends of the rafters are attached.

Ridge height – the vertical distance from the ground to the highest point on a building's roof, as measured from existing natural grade relative to a fixed point in the right-of-way, such as the crown of the street or a manhole cover. The "overall height" of a building is based on ridge height and does not include architectural features such as chimneys or decorative roof features such as crests or finials.

Roof pitch – "the slope of a roof surface expressed in inches of vertical rise per twelve inches of horizontal distance." *

Scale – the relationship between two or more objects, such as the size of windows, doors, and porches in relation to people ("human scale"), or the size of a new building as compared to its neighbors.

Setback – the distance from the property line to the front or side walls, porches, and exterior features of a building or structure.

Shingle – a standardized piece of roofing or wall material, used in overlapping courses to provide a weatherproof covering; may be cut into shapes (e.g., square, fish-scale, octagon, staggered, diamond, cove) to form patterns.

Shiplap – Wooden siding rabbeted so that the edge of one board overlaps the one next to it in a flush joint.

Sill – the horizontal structural member at the base of a wall or a window or door opening, to which vertical members (such as studs or posts) are attached.

Slab – a flat concrete plate, often reinforced with steel rebar, that forms the floor of a building.

Soffit – the underside of a construction element, such as a roof eave.

Step – part of a stairway, consisting of a tread (the horizontal piece upon which one steps) and a riser (the vertical piece between steps).

Stoop – a small landing or platform, often accessed with steps, which leads to an entrance of a building.

Structure – “that which is built or constructed, an edifice or building of any kind, or any piece or work artificially built up or composed of parts joined together in some definite manner.” *

Stucco – an exterior wall coating usually made of lime, Portland cement, sand, water, and other materials that add strength and flexibility; applied in a thin layer and frequently applied over a mesh that helps the stucco bond to the wall material.

Transom – the horizontal crossbar over a door or window (also known as a lintel); also, a window or group of windows above a door, window, or storefront which rests upon and may be hinged to the transom bar

Trim – material used to decorate or frame a building façade or an opening, such as a door or window.

Truss – a structural system made of straight members arranged into triangular units; typically used to support a roof, because a truss can carry heavier loads and span greater distances than a simple beam.

Veneer – a thin slice of material, usually of wood, brick, stone, or other masonry, used to cover a surface.

Verge board – an ornamental board attached to the projecting edge of a gable roof; also known as a *barge board*.

Wall offset – a change in the plane of a wall, where a portion of a wall is set farther in or out relative to the rest of the wall; may be horizontal or vertical.

Weep hole – an opening built into an exterior masonry wall, which allows water to pass from inside a wall system to the outside.