

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES: Houston Heights Historic Districts Design Guidelines

*Steph McDougal, November 2017*

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At the HAHC meeting on November 14, 2017, project manager Steph McDougal will present a list of the substantive changes to be made to the draft design guidelines for the Houston Heights Historic Districts (East, West, and South) most recently updated on August 7, 2017. HAHC members may select any recommendation for discussion and individual consideration, and also may make suggestions for additional changes. HAHC will then consider and vote as follows:

- Commissioners ask questions about a recommended change and may suggest modifying the recommendation.
- Commissioners propose an additional change not covered in the presentation. The change is voted on by the Commission. Repeat for additional topics as needed.
- Commissioners vote on the entire package as amended.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES TO THE AUGUST 2017 DRAFT

*The following list of recommendations does not include corrections to formatting, grammar, spelling, or punctuation or minor editing changes that only clarify (do not change) meaning. Final edits may include the addition of photographs or graphics to help illustrate the text.*

Change the maximum finished floor height from 30" to 32" in all instances.

Page 1-6. Add a note that "Other City building permits may be required" in addition to a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Page 1-7. Add text to explain the "22 Business Days" and "15 Business Days" labels on the Certificate of Appropriateness Approval Process graphic.

Pages 1-8 – 1-22. Add a note on each page which contains current ordinance language: "This information was accurate at the time of publication. Check with Historic Preservation Office staff to ensure that you are using the current ordinance."

- Page 1-8. Add a heading to clarify that the bulleted items beginning with “Gutters and downspouts” and ending with “HVAC units” includes both installation and removal.
- Add an item: “Removal of non-historic (e.g., aluminum or vinyl) siding to reveal historic siding underneath. If no historic siding is present under non-historic siding, new replacement siding requires a COA but may be approved administratively. (See next page.)”
- Add a sidebar note: “Replacement of historic materials (even in-kind) may require a COA. See Sec. 241.1(c)(3). Please consult Historic Preservation Office staff to determine whether you need a COA.”
- Page 1-9. Remove the italicized example in “Removal of exterior wall cladding.” This is clarified by the new item on page 1-8.
- Following “Replacement of: Historic materials that are damaged beyond repair with materials of the same size, shape, material, and pattern,” add “For example, if a small amount of siding is damaged beyond repair, it may be replaced with new material which matches exactly.”
- Page 1-12. For the Partial Second-Story Addition, edit item C: “Is set back from the front wall ~~to which it is attached~~ of the existing structure ...” and add a label to the graphic to show the location of the front wall of the structure.
- Page 1-14. Move “Context Area” section to immediately follow “Houston’s Historic Preservation Ordinance” section on page 1-6.
- Page 1-15. In the fourth paragraph, change the last sentence to read, “In other words, that level of “alteration” qualifies as new construction and, therefore, must be reviewed by HAHC if the result conforms to the criteria for new construction.”
- Page 1-16. Change the first heading to “Additions Must Also Meet These Criteria” and change the third paragraph to read, “The Planning Director may approve a COA if they find that the application meets these conditions. If not the application will be reviewed by HAHC.”
- Page 2-5. At the end of the second paragraph, add a sentence: “For the three Houston Heights Historic Districts, the 1940s are generally considered the end of the period of significance.”
- Page 2-7. Change title of graphic to “Prioritizing Character-Defining Features by Location.”
- Page 4-1. Change the italicized note in the second paragraph: “Note: If a ~~noncontributing building~~ historic building which was classified as noncontributing due to alterations is restored ...”
- Add a note: “Check with the Historic Preservation Office staff to determine if any of your proposed work requires a COA, could be approved administratively, or is exempted. (See Section 1.)”

- Page 4-11. Under the heading Siding, change the second paragraph: “The most common types of siding found on historic houses in the Houston Heights Historic Districts are wood siding and decorative wooden shingles (in gables).”
- Under guideline 4.18, add the following sentence to the first bulleted item: “Wholesale replacement is not recommended and requires a COA.”
- Under guideline 4.18, add a fourth bulleted item: “Changing to a synthetic material is not recommended.”
- Page 4-18. Under guideline 4.30, add a bulleted item: “Reglazing with frosted glass is permitted if privacy is a concern.”
- Page 4-27. Under guideline 4.46, add a sentence: “Please contact the Historic Preservation Office staff to discuss your individual situation and how to best address any issues.”
- Page 4-34. Under guideline 4.60, fifth bulleted item, delete the phrase “under the following conditions” and change the two sub-bullets to say “Material should” instead of “Material must”.
- Page 4-42. Under guideline 4.73, list of locations where signs on residential buildings which have been converted to commercial use may be placed, add a bulleted item after the current second item: “Flat against wall within gable.”
- Page 4-43. Under guideline 4.73, same list, change the next bulleted item to read: “As painted lettering directly on the building (COA required for previously unpainted masonry buildings)”.
- Under guideline 4.74, add a bulleted item: “Acrylic non-illuminated letters.”
- Section 5. Re-organize this section to create a new sub-section for “Guidelines Related to Measurable Standards” including Lot Size and Orientation; Building Orientation; Building Size and Compatibility; and Mass, Form, and Scale and relocate text within the section accordingly.
- Page 5-3. Add a paragraph: “To request approval to increased finished floor height based on increased risk of flooding, please provide documentation such as photographs showing previous flooding of your property, proof of prior flooding into or close to existing structures, etc., as well as current finished floor height measurements of all structures on the property.”
- Page 5-5. To the list of items excluded from the Lot Coverage calculation, add “carports.”
- To the list of items excluded from the Lot Coverage calculation, change “open porches” to “open or screened-in porches”.
- Page 5-7. Move the instructions for Calculating Front Setbacks to an appendix.
- Add a note: “Historic Preservation Office staff may already have this data for your block; please check with them first.”
- Page 5-8. Add a note: “If front setbacks are varied within the context area, matching the immediately adjacent properties properties will yield the most compatible result.”

Page 5-9. Change the second paragraph: “The City of Houston requires a minimum three-foot side setback for all properties, unless an easement or other agreement allows a smaller distance. On a corner lot, the building must be at least 10 feet from a ‘local’ street on street-facing sides. A larger setback may be required for other types of streets or may be different in case of maintenance easements or if you have a neighbor’s written consent. For example, Heights Boulevard is considered a ‘major thoroughfare’ and requires a minimum 25-foot setback on street-facing sides.”

Add a note: “Minimum building lines on some blocks may also apply, if present.”

Page 5-12. Under guideline 4.3, delete the first bulleted item: “Design the addition to be smaller than the contributing structure.”

Under guideline 4.4, delete the third bulleted item: “The width of a side addition cannot be greater than the width of the front wall of the existing building, especially if the addition is taller than the contributing building.”

Under guideline 4.4, change the fourth bulleted item: “The finished floor height of an addition should match the finished floor height of the existing building.”

Under guideline 4.4, change the sixth bulleted item: “Plate heights of an addition should match those of the existing building; in general, second-floor plate height should be less than first-floor plate height.”

Under guideline 4.5, delete the bulleted item: “Use header heights for doors and windows that are similar to those of contributing buildings in the context area.”

Page 5-13. Under guideline 4.6, change the second bulleted item: “Finished floor height may not exceed 32” above natural grade unless the finished floor height of contributing buildings in the context area is greater. (Please provide supporting data.)”

Under guideline 4.6, change the third bulleted item: “~~Use Wall cladding materials, such as siding or brick, that are~~ may be traditionally sized or larger. ~~Do not use oversized cladding materials.~~”

Add a note about finished floor height: “If FEMA flood hazard maps, when updated, indicate that buildings in these historic districts are at risk of flooding, the maximum finished floor height will be revisited at that time and may be adjusted using applicable technical data.”

Add a note: “To apply for approval of a finished floor height above 32”, please see the instructions on page 5-3.”

Page 5-14. Change guideline 4.10: “Preserve any historic porches ~~from the period of significance (1891–1947).~~”

Page 5-15. To the list of items excluded from the Floor Area Ratio calculation, add “carports.”

Page 5-16. Change the graphic titles to just read: “Side Wall Length”.

Change Measurement B, Maximum depth of inset section of side wall: “1 ft. – 1-story building; 2 ft. – 2-story building”.

- Page 5-17. Change the second paragraph, second sentence: “If the house and a new detached garage will have the same number of stories, the eaves of the garage should be lower than those of the house.”
- Page 5-18. Add to the end of the sentence under New Construction: “... unless data from contributing buildings in the context area indicates otherwise.”
- In the table, change “Maximum foundation height” to “Maximum finished floor height” for consistency. (The meaning is the same.)
- Page 5-19. In the second paragraph, change the last sentence to: “Ideally, the porch beam will ~~skim~~ partially obscure the tops of the windows.”
- Page 5-20. In the table, Measurement C should be: “40 ft. – Maximum width of one-story building for lots  $\leq$  50 ft. wide; 35 ft. – Maximum width of two-story building for lots  $\leq$  50 ft. wide.”
- Page 5-21. Delete the second sentence in the second paragraph: “The width of a porch is measured between the corners of the porch roof.”
- Change the Front Porch-to-Wall Width diagram to show that Measurement A is measured from the outer sides of the porch column bases.
- Page 6-1. Change the title from “More Guidelines ...” to “Qualitative Guidelines ...”
- Page 6-7. Under guideline 6.8, additions to noncontributing buildings, change the first paragraph to: “The materials used in an addition may match or be compatible with the existing noncontributing building; matching is not required. The goal should be to avoid making a noncontributing building even more out of character with the historic district than it already is.”
- Page 6-13. Under Foundations, change the first sentence: “An addition may be built on a pier-and-beam, concrete perimeter wall, or slab-on-grade foundation, as long as it is detailed to look like pier-and beam. However, please be aware that slab-on-grade construction may be prohibited on deed-restricted lots. Please check with the Houston Heights Association for any applicable deed restrictions. The finished floor height of the addition should match that of the existing house.”
- Page 6-14. Under guideline 6.18, third bulleted item, delete the phrase “under the following conditions” and change the two sub-bullets to say “Material should” instead of “Material must”.
- Add to the end of the last bulleted item: “... on residential buildings.”
- Page 6-15. Under Dormers, change the first bulleted item to be specific to additions: “~~There are no restrictions on~~ Dormers ~~for~~ may be added to a one-story ~~house~~ addition. See appropriate configurations on pages 4-37 and 4-38.”
- Page 6-23. Fix these graphics to show more realistic proportions.
- Delete the bulleted items that say: “Inset 1.5 feet from front wall plane.”
- Under #2, Meets 5 ft. side setback, add a note: “The 15’ cumulative side setback only applies to two-story houses.”

Page 7-1. Change section title to “Qualitative Guidelines for New Construction.”

Page 7-6. Change maximum finished floor height from 30” to 32”.

Add a note before first bulleted item: “If conditions on a specific lot would require a different finished floor height in order to meet requirements of the building code, please provide that information in the COA application.”

Add a paragraph: “Slab-on-grade is allowed by the City, as long as it is detailed to look like pier-and-beam construction. However, please be aware that slab-on-grade construction may be prohibited on deed-restricted lots. Please check with the Houston Heights Association for any applicable deed restrictions.”

Page 7-7. Under Roofs: “Flat roofs (less than 3-over-12 pitch) are not allowed on residential buildings.”

Under guideline 7.8, second bulleted item, delete the phrase “under the following conditions” and change the two sub-bullets to say “Material should” instead of “Material must”.

Page 7-8. Under Dormers, change the first bullet: ~~“There are no restrictions on Dormers for~~ may be incorporated into one-story buildings.”

Section 8. Move the District Inventories to an appendix.