HOUSTON HEIGHTS HISTORIC DISTRICTS

DESIGN GUIDELINES







City of Houston, Texas

Council Adopted: July 2018

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NOTE

These design guidelines were prepared pursuant to the direction given by the City Council of the City of Houston by Ordinance No. 2016-848, and have been prepared in accordance with the authority granted to the City of Houston under the Constitution and laws of the State of Texas, to protect and promote the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Physical Address (with appointment):
Historic Preservation Office
City of Houston Planning & Development Department
611 Walker Street, 6th Floor
Houston, Texas 77002

Phone: 832-393-6556

Email: historicpreservation@houstontx.gov

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

This set of historic district design guidelines has been developed for Houston Heights Historic District East, Houston Heights Historic District West, and Houston Heights Historic District South. The design guidelines illustrate how the City of Houston's historic preservation ordinance (as amended in Fall 2015) applies to resources in these three historic districts. Although these three historic districts were designated independently of one another, they share a common history and patterns of community development and, therefore, can be covered by the same design guidelines.

Property owners and their design professionals (architects, builders, etc.) should consult these design guidelines as early as possible when planning a project that involves a change to the exterior of a building, including an addition, or the construction of a new building within these historic districts. The City's Historic Preservation staff in the Planning and Development Department and the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission (HAHC) will also use these design guidelines to determine whether to approve an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for a project that proposes to make changes to a building in these historic districts.

When all of the people who are involved in the COA process — property owners, design professionals, Planning staff, and members of the HAHC — are using the same reference material as provided in these design guidelines, the results should be more consistent and predictable.

This section explains where to find the information you need in this document, how and why these design guidelines were developed, and what the City of Houston's historic preservation ordinance means to you.

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PLEASE NOTE:

These design guidelines can be downloaded as PDF files from the City of Houston Historic Preservation website at: http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/HistoricPres/hist_pres.html.

FOR ASSISTANCE:

Property owners should always consult with planners in the City's Historic Preservation Office for assistance before beginning design work, as well as during the planning and design of a project.

To reach the Planner of the Day, call the Historic Hotline at 832-393-6556 or send email to historicpreservation@houstontx.gov.

You can also visit in person (with an appointment):
City of Houston Historic Preservation Office
Planning & Development Department
611 Walker Street, 6th Floor
Houston, Texas 77002

ABOUT THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Design guidelines are used in historic communities all over the United States. Upon adoption by City Council, they become requirements that must be used by the HAHC in addition to the standards in the historic preservation ordinance in making their decisions. **Like the historic preservation ordinance, design guidelines do not require property owners to make changes to their buildings.** Together, these tools regulate what changes can be made, and how, in order to preserve the overall character of a historic district.

Because the City contains many historic districts, which can be very different from one another, the historic preservation ordinance must be written broadly enough to apply to all of them. That broad language must then be interpreted by property owners, their design professionals, the Historic Preservation Office staff, and the HAHC as they prepare and consider Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) applications.

The City has developed these design guidelines to make the COA process easier and assist property owners in planning projects that are likely to be approved. They illustrate how to apply the ordinance criteria for the three historic districts located in the former city of Houston Heights: Houston Heights Historic District East, Houston Heights Historic District West, and Houston Heights Historic District South.

Types of Guidelines

This document contains both **measurable standards** and **qualitative guidelines**. The measurable standards apply to the construction of additions and new buildings; these requirements must be met in order to obtain a COA. Measurable standards refer to minimum or maximum dimensions (or a range) and explain how to take those measurements.

The qualitative guidelines encompass the more aesthetic elements of a design and are considered on its own merits, taking into account the circumstances of a particular property and the work that is being proposed.

The relative importance of particular guidelines and standards will depend on the proposed project. The design review process considers individual design elements, as well as how different design elements interact. **A project that might be appropriate for one property might not be appropriate for another.** Although this requires interpretation, these design guidelines help by providing structure and consistent reference points for that process.

Design guidelines also include useful information that is not regulatory, such as the history of the historic districts and what kind of buildings can be found there (Section 3), and other informational resources that are available to property owners (Section 8).

Organizational Structure

This set of design guidelines are made up of eight sections. Each section is available as a separate PDF file so that you can select the sections that you need for your particular project.

Format of the qualitative guidelines
Developing the Design Guidelines

Legend

A Topic
Describes the design topic addressed by the Design Guidelines that follow.

B Purpose
Explains the desired outcome for the design topic and provides a basis for the design guidelines that follow. If a guideline does not address a specific design issue, the intent statement will be used to determine appropriateness.

C Desired Outcomes
Describes a desired performance-oriented design outcome.

D Additional Information
Provides a bulleted list of suggestions on how to meet the intent of the design guideline. These are not the only alterations that can be applied.

E Images
Clarify the intent of the design guideline by illustrating appropriate and inappropriate design solutions (see below):

Appropriate
Images marked with a check illustrate appropriate design solutions.

Inappropriate
Images marked with an X illustrate inappropriate design solutions.

Sample Qualitative Guidelines

A → **Historic Building Materials**

B → These design guidelines apply to all materials that are original to the building, including wood, stone, brick, metal, stucco, plaster, and concrete. Historic building materials should be preserved in place, as much as possible, and repaired when necessary. If the material is damaged beyond repair, only then should you consider replacing it. Only replace material that is damaged, and use replacement material that matches the original.

If historic materials have been covered, consider removing the covering; do this carefully, so that the underlying original building material is not damaged, and repair the original material as needed, once it is exposed.

C → **4.5 Preserve historic building materials.**

- Do not remove original material that is in good condition.

D →

- Provide proper drainage away from historic materials to minimize damage to them. For example, provide storm drains, flashing, coping, gutters, etc.
- Do not cover or obscure historic building materials.
- Consider removing later covering materials that are inappropriate.

E →

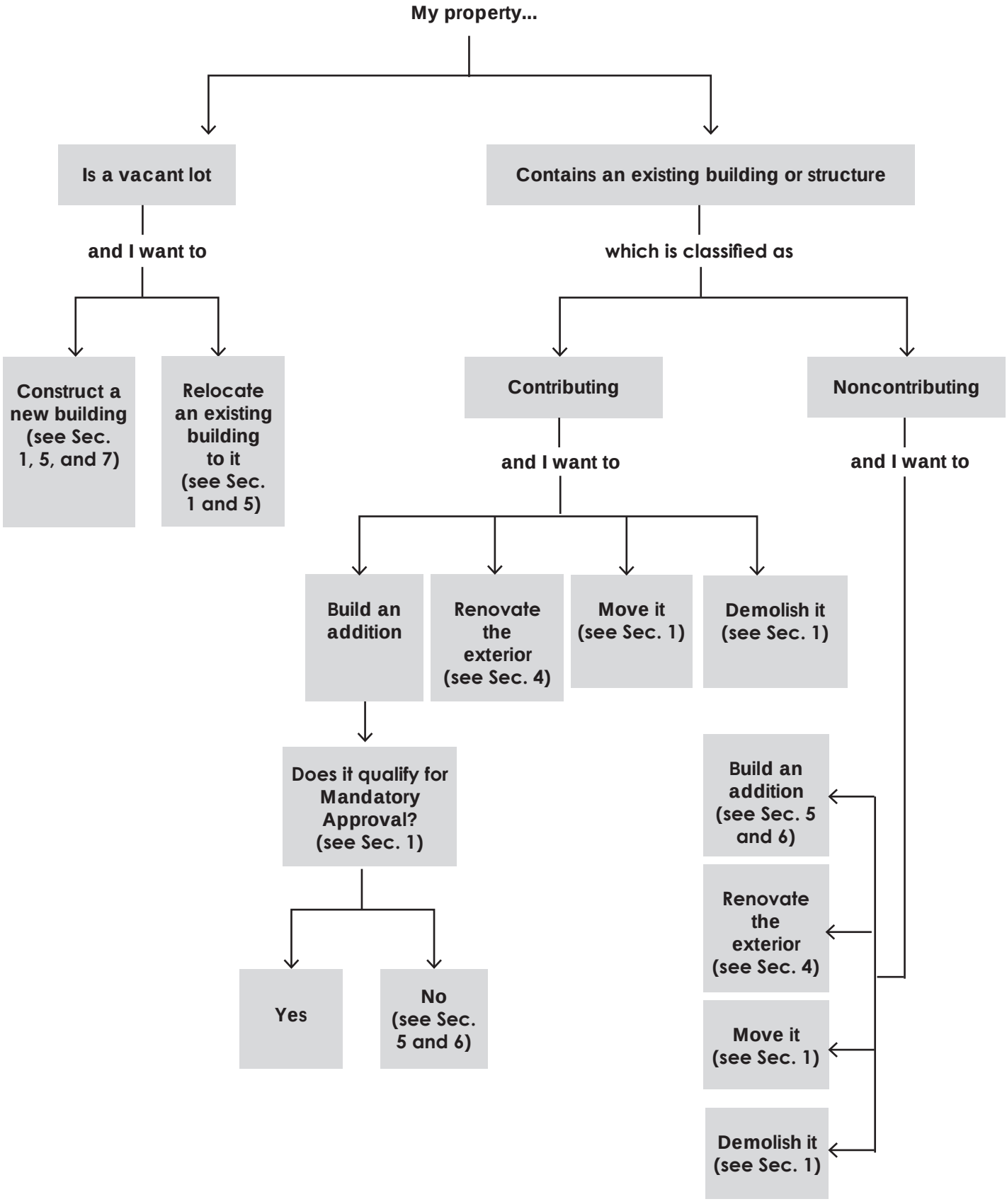


Before: A historic house with inappropriate synthetic siding



After: The same house, after the historic siding was uncovered

FINDING THE INFORMATION YOU NEED



This project began in Fall 2015, when the City of Houston adopted amendments to its historic preservation ordinance. Since 2010, all new historic districts have been required to have design guidelines. In 2015, the ordinance was amended to allow the creation of design guidelines for historic districts established before 2010.

Another 2015 amendment required design guidelines to be developed for the three Houston Heights Historic Districts. Property owners and building professionals in those historic districts had requested design guidelines that would make the COA process more predictable.

Design guidelines consultants Winter & Company conducted research and data analysis to learn about the historic districts and what property owners in those districts hoped to achieve. They analyzed data from the City's Geographic Information System (GIS), historic maps, and other existing documentation, and combined that with their own observations from several site visits during the project. In addition, Planning staff and the consultants met with people in the community on numerous occasions to gather their input and feedback as the project went along. At workshops, community members discussed issues and challenges, their priorities, and types of development that would be compatible in their district. Many people also expressed their opinions through a Compatible Design Survey that was mailed to every property owner.

Finally, these design guidelines include and promote best practices in historic preservation that have developed in communities over the past 50 years. The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) was passed by the U.S. Congress in 1966. NHPA establishes a framework for historic preservation at the federal, state, and local levels. This includes city ordinances that protect historic properties and historic districts through oversight by a locally appointed commission. Cities throughout the United States have established more than 2,300 historic districts.

Design guidelines have been in use throughout the United States for decades, and this document takes advantage of the lessons learned and standards of practice that have become established during that time. This knowledge provides a foundation for developing workable solutions that allow historic districts to evolve, while still preserving and enhancing their unique character.



A community meeting for the design guidelines project included hands-on activities.



Participants work in groups during a community meeting for the design guidelines project.

HOUSTON'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

The City designates historic districts, and manages changes to properties within those districts, through its historic preservation ordinance (Ch. 33, Article 7 of the City of Houston Code of Ordinances). This ordinance is a local law that establishes the City's authority and responsibilities regarding historic landmarks and districts. It also establishes the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission (HAHC), a group of knowledgeable citizens and qualified professionals who are appointed by City Council to interpret and administer the historic preservation ordinance.

An inventory of buildings within each historic district was prepared when the district was designated. That inventory classifies each building as *contributing* to the historic character of the historic district or *noncontributing*.

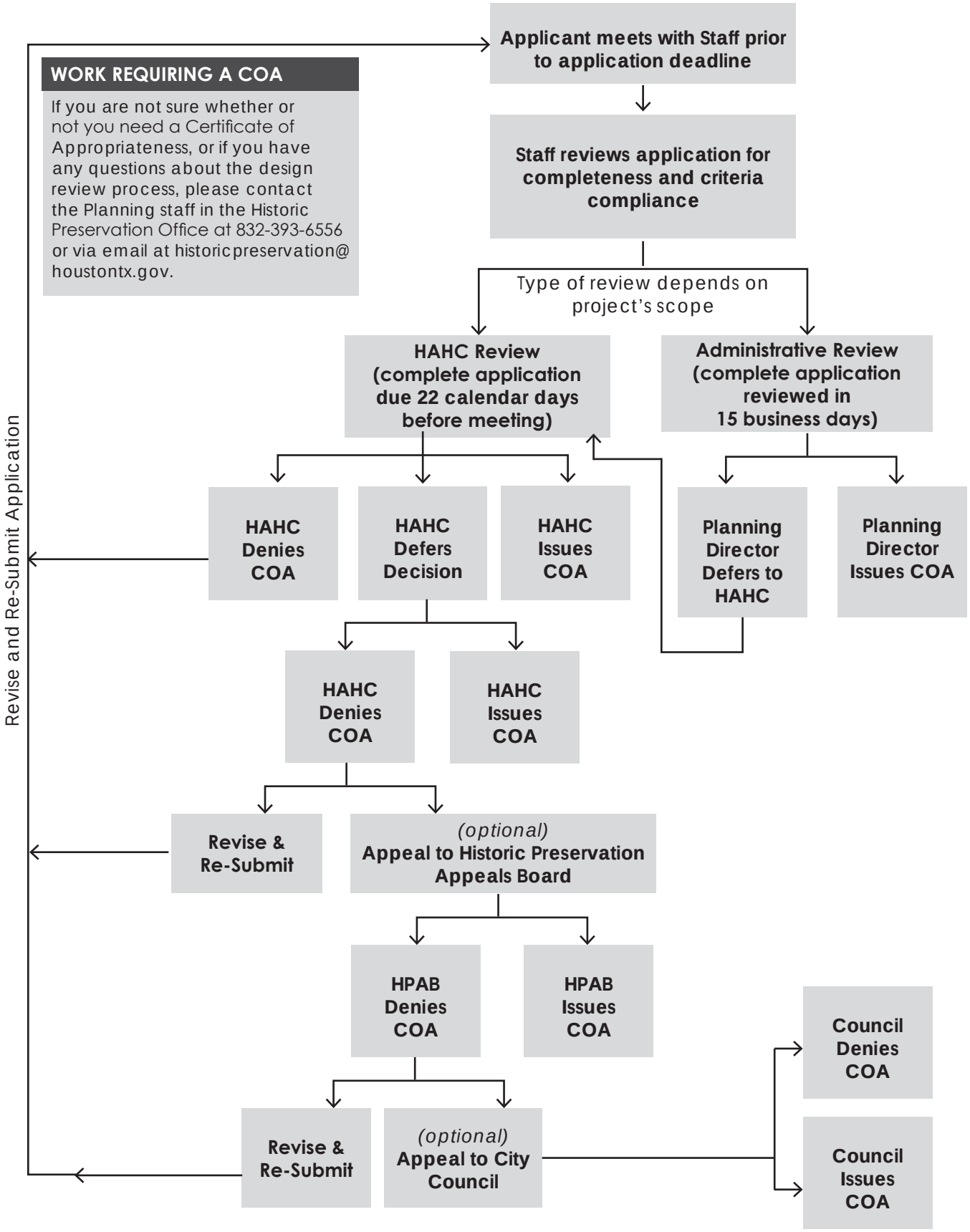
The ordinance requires property owners to receive approval from the City before making certain changes to buildings in a historic district. To get the City's approval to make any of these changes, a property owner must apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). The Planning staff in the Historic Preservation Office can help property owners with their application, which is processed through that office. **A property owner must obtain a COA before beginning any work that is regulated under the historic preservation ordinance.** Other City building permits also may be required.

Some changes, as well as ordinary maintenance and repair, are exempt from this requirement and do not require a COA. Other changes require a COA application but can be approved administratively by the Planning Director, without going before the HAHC. All other changes require a COA application to be considered in a public hearing, before the HAHC; this includes most alterations to the exterior of a building, additions, new construction, relocation of a building into or out of a historic district, and demolition.

Each month, the HAHC considers and makes decisions about COA applications at a public hearing. The Historic Preservation staff base their recommendations, and the HAHC members base their decisions, on the criteria for evaluating COA applications as listed in the ordinance. Those criteria are provided on the following pages, in plain English, for your reference.

The entire planned project should be presented in the Certificate of Appropriateness application. Applicants who hold back "future phases" of a project in order to gain approval for initial work may find that subsequent proposals will not be approved, if the cumulative effect of all of the changes is too great and, collectively, diminishes the integrity of the building.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS (COA) PROCESS



PLEASE NOTE:

Property owners may present additional information to supplement their COA application or to make a case for considering a different context area or adjusted measurable standards. HAHC will consider, but is not required to agree with or apply, such information.

CONTEXT AREA

When a property owner applies for a Certificate of Appropriateness, members of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission (HAHC), with help from Planning staff in the Historic Preservation Office, must decide if the proposed changes are compatible with the surrounding historic district. Rather than compare the project to the entire district, the City of Houston's historic preservation ordinance establishes a smaller area, called the *context area*, for comparison purposes. This is especially important in large districts where the character of the district varies within the district.

The ordinance defines the context area as the blockface on which the proposed project is located and opposing blockface, as shown in the diagram below.



Context area for a subject property (shown in red)

The context area may be defined differently, if the HAHC and staff find that unusual and compelling circumstances exist or if it is described differently in design guidelines. The HAHC may decide to expand the context area for a particular project, if not many buildings within the context area are contributing structures, or if the proposed project is unusual for the area. For example, a new church building could be compared to existing historic church buildings, rather than to residential buildings in the same block.

Note: Only *typical, existing* contributing structures are used to determine compatibility of the proposed project.

This set of design guidelines does not include an alternate definition of context area for Houston Heights Historic District East, Houston Heights Historic District West, or Houston Heights Historic District South.

Note: The information on this page is taken directly from the City's historic preservation ordinance and was accurate at the time of publication. Please check with the Historic Preservation Office staff to ensure that you are using the most current ordinance criteria.

EXEMPTIONS (NO COA REQUIRED)

The following types of work **do not require a Certificate of Appropriateness**.

- *Ordinary maintenance and repair.* This generally means the least amount of work necessary to preserve the historic materials and features of a building, and in-kind repairs. *In-kind* means using the same material type, design, dimensions, texture, detailing, and exterior appearance.

  Note: *Replacement* of historic materials (even in-kind) is an alteration and requires a COA. Please contact staff if you are unsure whether you need a COA for your project.

- Re-roofing with in-kind materials (see above) with no change to the structure, shape, or pitch of the roof.
- An alteration that cannot be seen from the street because the view is blocked by the original structure. (The view cannot merely be blocked by fencing, landscaping, non-historic additions, etc.)
- Installation or removal of:
  - Gutters and downspouts
  - Storm windows and storm doors
  - Window screens and screen doors
  - Temporary emergency weather protection, such as plywood coverings over windows
  - Porch ceiling fans
  - Light fixtures
  - HVAC units
- Landscaping
- Fences
- Removal of non-historic (aluminum, 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.
- Removal of burglar bars
- Removal of accessibility ramps or lifts
- Removal of solar panels
- Removal of satellite dishes or antennae
- Installation of solar panels, satellite dishes, antennae, low-profile skylights, or other roof equipment **on the rear half of the roof**
- Installation or removal of free-standing signs







Examples of items not regulated by the historic preservation ordinance: (from top) satellite dishes, air conditioning units, fences

Note: The information on this page is taken directly from the City's historic preservation ordinance and was accurate at the time of publication. Please check with the Historic Preservation Office staff to ensure that you are using the most current ordinance criteria.

- Painting non-masonry surfaces on a contributing building
- Repainting previously painted masonry surfaces
- Reconstructing a contributing or noncontributing structure that was completely or partially destroyed by a fire, natural disaster, or other damage not intentionally caused by the owner of the structure. **This only applies** if the reconstruction is built within the same footprint and has the same exterior features as the damaged or destroyed contributing structure.
- Demolition of a noncontributing structure

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS

The following types of work **require a Certificate of Appropriateness**, which may be approved by the Planning Director:

Removal of:

- A window or door that was not original to the contributing structure and replacing it with a window or door that **meets all of the following conditions**:
  - It is appropriate to the historic significance of the structure.
  - It does not change the size, shape, or location of the opening from which the window or door elements are to be removed.
  - It does not change the trim, molding, or other features associated with the opening.
- Exterior wall cladding that was not an original feature or characteristic of the structure and replacing it with appropriate cladding.
- Non-historic additions, including attached garages or carports
- Non-historic decorative elements, such as shutters or eave brackets
- Non-historic, low-profile skylights
- Canopies or awnings
- Signs attached to the building

Replacement of:

- Historic materials that are damaged beyond repair with materials of the same size, shape, material, and pattern. For example, if a small amount of siding is damaged beyond repair, it may be replaced with new material that matches exactly.

See next page for more Administrative Approvals.

Note: The information on this page is taken directly from the City's historic preservation ordinance and was accurate at the time of publication. Please check with the Historic Preservation Office staff to ensure that you are using the most current ordinance criteria.

Installation of:

- Burglar bars
- Accessibility ramps or lifts
- Low-profile skylights, solar panels, antennae, satellite dishes, or other roof equipment **on the front half of the roof**
- Shutters
- Awnings or canopies

The following types of work **require a Certificate of Appropriateness**, which may be approved by the Planning Director:

Installation of:

- Architectural details (including porch elements) that have been partially lost or removed, if you can provide proof that they used to exist, either through existing elements that are still in place or by historical documentation, such as architectural plans or photographs
- Signs attached to the exterior of the building that **meet all of the following conditions**:
  - It does not compromise historic exterior features on the structure, such as siding or trim, porch elements, etc.
  - It is 25 square feet or less in total area.
  - It is installed without damage to significant historic material.

Construction of:

- Free-standing (detached) garages and garage apartments, free-standing carports, and other secondary structures, as long as they have a footprint of 600 square feet or less and are located at the rear of the lot
- A rear porch that is not taller than the existing structure and does not extend beyond the existing side walls of the structure

Repair or reconstruction of internal structural elements (such as interior shiplap) that are essential to support the building envelope to which they are attached. The following conditions must be met:

- You must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Director that the structural repair or reconstruction can be accomplished without harming those exterior features of the structure that are visible from the right-of-way.
- You must provide a written statement from a structural engineer, licensed by the State of Texas, that the proposed repair or reconstruction can be accomplished without harming those exterior features of the structure that are visible from the right-of-way.

WHEN IS A PROPERTY CONSIDERED SINGLE FAMILY VS. MULTI-FAMILY?

A property may contain two dwelling structures and still retain its classification as Single Family Residential property, as long as the secondary structure (such as a garage apartment) is not larger than 900 square feet and contains only one living space.

A property with a main house plus a garage apartment building with two apartment units, or a main house plus a garage apartment with one unit over 900 square feet, would be classified as Multi-Family and subject to the applicable building code.

Note: The information on this page is taken directly from the City's historic preservation ordinance and was accurate at the time of publication. Please check with the Historic Preservation Office staff to ensure that you are using the most current ordinance criteria.

MANDATORY APPROVALS FOR ADDITIONS

The City of Houston's historic preservation ordinance provides that the Planning Director shall issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of any one, but not a combination, of the following additions to a contributing structure in a historic district. This has been referred to in the past as "shall approve" criteria.

In order to qualify for Mandatory Approval, your project must meet **all** of the following conditions for **one** of these types of additions.

REAR ADDITION "SHALL APPROVE"

A rear addition that:

a. Is not taller than the existing structure;

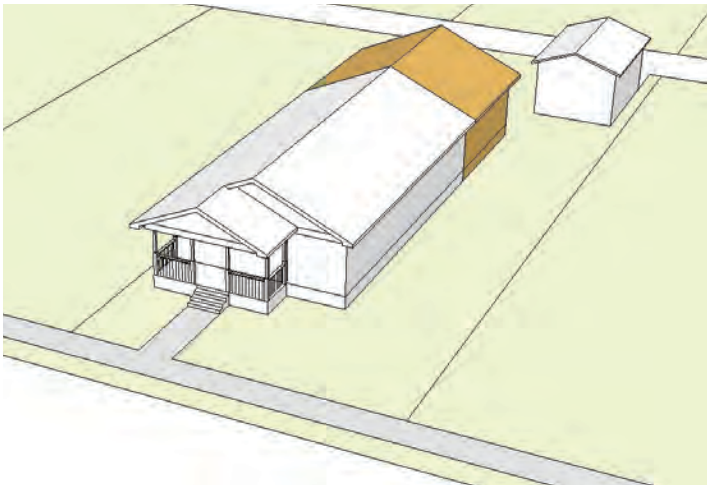
b. Is set back from the side property lines at least as much as the structural walls of the existing structure;

c. Is not wider than the wall to which it is attached;

d. Does not require the demolition of any portion of the existing structure except for the rear wall to which the addition will be attached;

e. Has a roof pitch that is less than or equal to the existing structure; and

f. Is not constructed on a building that has already had an addition approved with a Certificate of Appropriateness.



Note: The width of the addition may not exceed the width of the structural rear wall to which the addition is attached.

- If the existing house features a small open or screened-in side porch, that porch is not used to determine width.
- If the proposed addition includes a side porch, the porch is included in the width of the rear addition.
- If a porch is desired, consider instead incorporating one which is inset, with the front of the porch in line with the side wall of the addition.

Note: The information on this page is taken directly from the City's historic preservation ordinance and was accurate at the time of publication. Please check with the Historic Preservation Office staff to ensure that you are using the most current ordinance criteria.

PARTIAL SECOND-STORY ADDITION "SHALL APPROVE"

A partial second-story addition that:

a. Is constructed on top of a one-story structure;

b. Does not extend outside of the footprint of the existing structure;

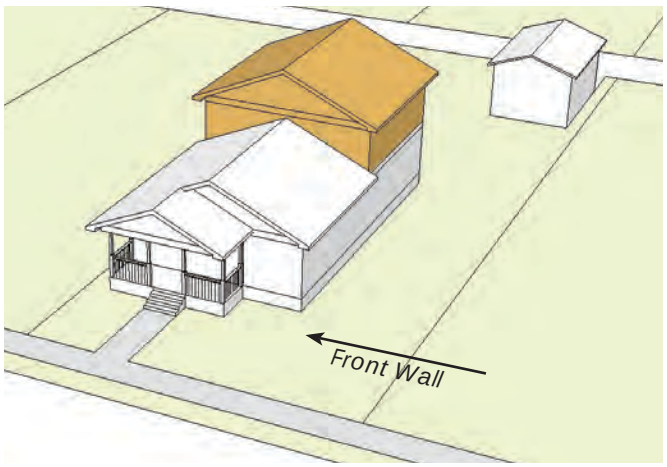
c. Is set back from the front wall of the existing structure at least half the distance between the front wall of the existing structure and the farthest point of the rear of the existing structure;

d. Has a plate height that does not exceed the plate height of the story beneath the proposed addition;

e. Has a roof pitch that is less than or equal to the existing structure;

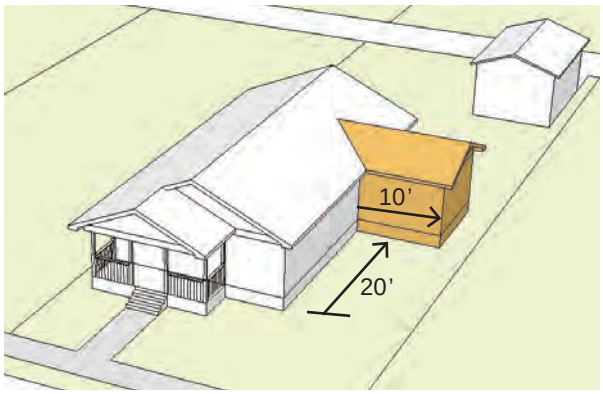
f. Is constructed without the removal of any existing exterior walls; and

g. Is not constructed on a structure that has already had an addition approved with a Certificate of Appropriateness.



Note: The front wall of the porch is NOT considered to be the front wall of the house.

SIDE ADDITION "SHALL APPROVE"



Example: This addition is set back 20 feet from the front of the side wall, so the addition may not be more than 10 feet wide.

A side addition that:

a. Is not taller than the existing structure;

b. Is attached only to one exterior wall of the existing structure and does not extend past the existing rear wall of the side to which it is attached;

c. Is set back from the front of the wall to which it is attached at least 30% of the distance between the front of the wall to which it is attached and the rear of the wall to which it is attached;

d. Is not wider than half the distance that the addition is set back from the front of the wall to which it is attached;

e. Does not require the demolition of any portion of the existing building except for the exterior wall to which the addition is attached;

f. Does not deviate from the roof pitch of the existing structure, except for cross-gabled or hipped roofs; and

g. Is not constructed on a building that has already had an addition approved with a Certificate of Appropriateness.



A contributing structure

OTHER ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS TO CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES

All other activities, including additions, require a Certificate of Appropriateness and must meet the criteria for exterior alterations as established in the historic preservation ordinance (Sec. 33-241):

1. The proposed activity must retain and preserve the historical character of the property.
2. The proposed activity must contribute to the continued availability of the property for a contemporary use.
3. The proposed activity must recognize the building, structure, object or site as a product of its own time and avoid alterations that seek to create an earlier or later appearance.
4. The proposed activity must preserve the distinguishing qualities or character of the building, structure, object or site and its environment.
5. The proposed activity must maintain or replicate distinctive stylistic exterior features or examples of skilled craftsmanship that characterize the building, structure, object or site.
6. 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.
7. The proposed replacement of exterior features, if any, should be based on accurate duplication of features, substantiated by available historical, physical, or pictorial evidence, where that evidence is available, rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other structures.
8. Proposed additions or alterations must be done in a manner that, if removed in the future, would leave unimpaired the essential form and integrity of the building, structure, object or site.
9. The proposed design for any exterior alteration or addition must not destroy significant historical, architectural, archaeological or cultural material, including (but not limited to) siding, windows, doors, and porch elements.
10. The proposed alteration or addition must be compatible with the massing, size, scale, material, and character of the property and the context area.
11. The distance from the property line to the front and side walls, porches, and exterior features of any proposed addition or alteration must be compatible with the distance to the property line of similar elements of existing contributing structures in the context area.

Note: The information on this page is taken directly from the City's historic preservation ordinance and was accurate at the time of publication. Please check with the Historic Preservation Office staff to ensure that you are using the most current ordinance criteria.

CRITERIA FOR CHANGES TO NONCONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES

A structure may be classified as *noncontributing* because it was less than 50 years old when the district was designated, or because it has been altered in a way that removes or conceals character-defining features or otherwise does not share the characteristics that make the historic district, as a whole, significant. Since noncontributing buildings already do not support the historic qualities of the district, the criteria for making changes to them are less strict than those for contributing structures. However, the visual qualities of noncontributing structures still impact the character of the historic district, so many changes to them must be managed.



This noncontributing house was constructed in 2004.

In addition, a building that is classified as noncontributing due to previous inappropriate alterations may have the potential to be restored. **Neither the historic preservation ordinance nor these design guidelines require any property owner to restore a building.** However, it is important to recognize whether a building has the potential to contribute to the significance of the historic district, and avoid destroying that potential with additional changes, if possible.

Most changes to noncontributing structures within a historic district require a Certificate of Appropriateness. If the Historic Preservation Office staff find that a proposed alteration or addition to a noncontributing building is appropriate, the Planning Director can approve it administratively. If staff find that the proposed project is inappropriate, or if they are unable to make a determination, the Planning Director can send the COA to HAHC for review.

Alterations, Rehabilitation, or Restoration

The HAHC is required to review any application for a Certificate of Appropriateness that proposes the alteration, rehabilitation, or restoration of a noncontributing structure if the proposed change requires the removal or replacement of the structural elements (not including the foundation) within **67% or more** of the structure. 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.

An addition, alteration, rehabilitation, or restoration of a noncontributing structure that *does not require* the removal or replacement of the structural elements (not including the foundation) within 67% or more of the structure, can be approved administratively by the Planning Director, **if it meets both of the following conditions**:

- The proposed activity must recognize the building, structure, object, or site as a product of its own time and avoid alterations that seek to create an earlier or later appearance; and
- The proposed activity must match the architectural features, materials, and character of either the existing noncontributing structure or the contributing structures within the context area.

Note: The information on this page is taken directly from the City's historic preservation ordinance and was accurate at the time of publication. Please check with the Historic Preservation Office staff to ensure that you are using the most current ordinance criteria.

Additions Must Also Meet These Criteria

Proposed additions to a noncontributing structure are eligible for administrative review, as long as they meet the following conditions:

- The front and side setbacks (the distance from the property line to the front and side walls, porches, and exterior features) of any proposed addition or alteration must be compatible with the front and side setbacks of existing contributing structures in the context area.
- The noncontributing structure with the constructed addition is compatible with the typical proportions and scale of existing contributing structures in the context area.

Regardless of style and features, additions to a noncontributing building must be compatible with the contributing buildings in the context area in terms of mass, scale, and proportion. If your building is already larger than the contributing buildings in the context area, an additional expansion may not be appropriate.

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.

Relocation

A noncontributing structure can be **moved out of** a historic district without a Certificate of Appropriateness.

In order for a noncontributing structure to be **moved within or into** a historic district, it must meet the criteria for new construction. This applies to structures that come from non-historic district areas, as well as buildings that were classified as contributing or noncontributing within another historic district. A contributing classification in another historic district does not automatically transfer.

Demolition

Demolition of a noncontributing structure does not require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Note: The information on this page is taken directly from the City's historic preservation ordinance and was accurate at the time of publication. Please check with the Historic Preservation Office staff to ensure that you are using the most current ordinance criteria.

NEW CONSTRUCTION

Historic districts can change over time and still retain the qualities that make the area historically, culturally, and architecturally significant. For the purposes of this document, "new construction" means an entirely new building or structure, rather than an addition. The construction of any new building or structure within a historic district requires a Certificate of Appropriateness.

The City of Houston's historic preservation ordinance establishes clear requirements for new construction within a historic district. These rules seek to differentiate old from new, while ensuring that all buildings within the district are compatible with one another.



A contemporary infill house in a historic district in Little Rock, Arkansas

Accommodating Contemporary Design in Historic Districts

Many changes can take place within a historic district. New construction, alterations to existing buildings or structures, and other changes can all affect the character of a historic district. The Planning staff and members of the HAHC are charged with determining whether those alterations are *compatible* with the district — in other words, whether the proposed change preserves the character of the district.

Compatibility does not require new buildings to mimic historic properties. In fact, the City encourages contemporary design within its historic districts. When a new building is constructed, its design should relate to historic buildings in the area through mass, form, scale, proportion, siting, and materials, but a new building should be "of its own time."

New buildings can relate to historic buildings in the context area by being similar to:

- The way contributing buildings (and their front doors) are oriented to the street
- The basic forms and materials of contributing buildings
- The height of contributing buildings' foundations, porches, eaves, and walls
- The arrangement of windows and doors on the front of contributing buildings

These basic design elements are more important than the details of individual architectural styles. As a result, new buildings can be compatible with the historic district even when they are clearly of contemporary design and construction.

Note: The information on this page is taken directly from the City's historic preservation ordinance and was accurate at the time of publication. Please check with the Historic Preservation Office staff to ensure that you are using the most current ordinance criteria.



The mass and scale of this new infill building would be appropriate in some Houston Heights contexts. In addition, the materials, porch, and window features would be appropriate if they were similar to other buildings in the context area.



The mass and scale of this infill building might be appropriate for Houston Heights, but the stone materials, shutters, and solid-to-void ratio are incompatible.

The construction of any new building or structure within a historic district requires a Certificate of Appropriateness, which must meet the following criteria:

Any new building or structure must be compatible with the existing contributing structures in the context area in the following ways:

1. Front and side setbacks (the distance from the property line to the front and side walls, porches, and exterior features).
2. Exterior features.
3. Scale and proportions, including the relationship of the width, overall heights, eave height, foundation height, porch height, roof shape, and roof pitch, and other dimensions to each other.

   Note: Special circumstances, such as an atypical use, location, or lot size, may warrant an atypical scale and proportions.
4. Height. The new construction must not be taller than the typical height of existing contributing structures in the context area unless special circumstances, such as an atypical use, location, or lot size warrant an atypical height.

   However, in the Houston Heights Historic District East, Houston Heights Historic District West, and Houston Heights Historic District South, a new two-story building may be constructed in a context area with only one-story contributing structures as long as:

   - the proportions of the first story of the new building are compatible with the contributing structures in the context area, and
   - the second story has similar proportions to the first story.

Note: The information on this page is taken directly from the City's historic preservation ordinance and was accurate at the time of publication. Please check with the Historic Preservation Office staff to ensure that you are using the most current ordinance criteria.

RELOCATION

Relocation, for the purposes of the City of Houston's historic preservation ordinance, includes the following activities:

- Moving a structure into a historic district
- Moving a structure out of a historic district
- Moving a structure to a different location on the same lot or to a different lot within the same historic district

Relocation may be used as a tool to protect a contributing structure from demolition resulting from a public improvement project, or as an alternative to demolition, following an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition.

Relocation of historic buildings from other, similar areas of the City into one of the Houston Heights Historic Districts is an acceptable strategy for infill. Buildings being relocated into the districts should be appropriately sized to be compatible with the existing neighborhood. Infill on vacant lots is encouraged.

The ordinance lists different requirements for these activities, depending on where the structure is being moved and whether it is classified as contributing or noncontributing.

In order to **move a contributing structure within the same historic district**, the applicant must meet all of the following criteria:

a. The structure can be relocated without significantly diminishing the integrity of the historic district in which it is located.

b. The structure can be moved without significant damage to its physical integrity.

   Note: It may be necessary to install structural supports within the building during the move. Consult a qualified structural mover, who can assess the condition of the structure and take the appropriate steps to stabilize it before, during, and after relocation. Secure the building to prevent unauthorized entry while it is unoccupied.

c. The structure will be located to an area that is compatible with and retains the distinguishing qualities and historical and architectural character of the contributing structure.

d. There are compelling circumstances justifying the relocation of the structure.

e. The front and side setbacks of the structure in its new location will be compatible with the front and side setbacks of existing contributing structures in the new context area.

These criteria apply to either moving the structure to a different location on the same lot or moving it to a different lot within the same historic district. *Note: the original primary building on a lot should not be relocated behind a new main house.*







These houses were relocated from various locations within the City of Houston.

Note: The information on this page is taken directly from the City's historic preservation ordinance and was accurate at the time of publication. Please check with the Historic Preservation Office staff to ensure that you are using the most current ordinance criteria.

Moving a contributing structure out of a historic district is equivalent to demolishing that building. The applicant must comply with all of the criteria listed on the previous page. They also must establish that relocation is necessary to prevent an unreasonable economic hardship by meeting **all of the following criteria (the same criteria that are required for demolition)**. The applicant must prove that:

1. The property is incapable of earning a reasonable return, regardless of whether the return is the most profitable return, including without limitation, regardless of whether the costs of maintenance or improvement of the property exceed its fair market value;

2. That the owner has demonstrated that the property cannot be adapted for any other use, whether by the current owner, by a purchaser, or by a lessee, which would result in a reasonable return;

3. That the owner has demonstrated reasonable efforts to find a purchaser or lessee interested in acquiring the property and preserving it, and that those efforts have failed; and

4. If the applicant is a nonprofit organization, determination of an unreasonable economic hardship shall instead be based upon whether the denial of a Certificate of Appropriateness financially prevents or seriously interferes with carrying out the mission, purpose, or function of the nonprofit corporation.

This applies even if the structure is proposed to be moved into another historic district.

A **noncontributing structure may be moved out of a historic district** without a Certificate of Appropriateness.

In order to move any structure into a historic district, it must meet the criteria for new construction, as established in the historic preservation ordinance. This applies to structures that come from non-historic district areas, as well as those that were classified as contributing or noncontributing within their own historic district; a previous contributing classification does not automatically transfer.

Note: The information on this page is taken directly from the City's historic preservation ordinance and was accurate at the time of publication. Please check with the Historic Preservation Office staff to ensure that you are using the most current ordinance criteria.

DEMOLITION

Demolition should be a measure of last resort. A historic district is created in order to protect an area that has historic and architectural significance, and designating an historic district in the City of Houston requires the support of 67% of property owners. All of the properties in an historic district, together, establish the character of the neighborhood. The removal of a contributing house or building is damaging to the neighborhood as a whole.







Examples of demolition

Demolition of a contributing resource is not allowed, except when:

1. The building, structure, or object has seriously deteriorated to an unusable state and is beyond reasonable repair; and

2. The HAHC finds, based on the preponderance of credible evidence presented by the applicant, the existence of an unreasonable economic hardship, per criteria established in the historic preservation ordinance, Sec. 33-247(c), or the establishment of an unusual and compelling circumstance, Sec. 33-247(c).

Substantial documentation and evidence is required to establish these claims, and the burden of proof rests on the applicant. An application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition **requires all of the following information:**

1. Photographs and other documented evidence detailing the deteriorated state of the property and the inability to reasonably repair the property;

2. A certified appraisal of the value of the property conducted by a certified real estate appraiser that takes into account that the property is a landmark, protected landmark, or contributing structure in a historic district, as well as the two most recent assessments of the value of the property, unless the property is exempt from local property taxes;

3. All appraisals obtained by the owner in connection with the acquisition, purchase, donation, or financing of the property, or during the ownership of the property;

4. All listings for the sale or lease of the property by the owner within the last year, and a statement by the owner of any bids and offers received and counteroffers given on the property;

5. Evidence of any consideration by the owner of uses and adaptive reuses of the property;

6. Itemized and detailed rehabilitation cost estimates for the identified uses of the property;

7. Any financial statements showing revenue and expenses incurred for the property;

8. Complete architectural plans and drawings of the intended future use of the property, including new construction, if applicable; and

(continued on next page)

Note: The information on this page is taken directly from the City's historic preservation ordinance and was accurate at the time of publication. Please check with the Historic Preservation Office staff to ensure that you are using the most current ordinance criteria.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Please refer to the historic preservation ordinance (Sections 33-246 and 33-247) if the proposed project would relocate a building, structure, or object into or out of an archeological site.

9. Plans to salvage, recycle, or reuse building materials, if a Certificate of Appropriateness is granted.

10. An applicant that is a nonprofit organization shall provide the following additional information:

    a. A comparison of the cost of performance of the mission or function of the nonprofit organization in the existing building and in a new building;

    b. The impact of the reuse of the existing building on the organization's program, function, or mission;

    c. The additional cost, if any, attributable to the building of performing the nonprofit organization's function within the context of costs incurred by comparable organizations, particularly in the Houston area;

    d. Grants received, applied for, and/or available to maintain or improve the property;

    e. The nonprofit organization's budget for the current and immediately past fiscal year.

11. In addition, an applicant may be required to provide any additional information the Planning Director determines is reasonably necessary to the review of the application.

The removal of non-historic additions, including attached garages or carports, requires a Certificate of Appropriateness, but that can be approved administratively by the Planning Director.

Demolition of noncontributing structures does not require a Certificate of Appropriateness. However, historic garages that are visible from the public right-of-way should be maintained and preserved when possible.

Note: The information on this page is taken directly from the City's historic preservation ordinance and was accurate at the time of publication. Please check with the Historic Preservation Office staff to ensure that you are using the most current ordinance criteria.

SECTION 2: PRESERVATION FUNDAMENTALS

Historic preservation seeks to:

- Keep properties and places of historic and cultural value in active, productive use
- Accommodate appropriate changes that maintain the viability of historic places
- Maintain the key character-defining features of historic properties and districts
- Keep cultural resources intact for the benefit of future generations
- Promote neighborhood livability, sustainability, economic development, and cultural appreciation

In order to accomplish these goals, cities create historic preservation ordinances that establish rules for the changes that may be made to historic landmarks and within historic districts. Those ordinances, including the City of Houston's historic preservation ordinance, use terms and are based on standard concepts that are central to preservation practice. These include:

- Significance
- Period of significance
- Integrity
- Contributing and noncontributing classifications
- Character-defining features

These historic preservation concepts, and the benefits of utilizing them in decision-making for historic landmarks and districts, are explained on the following pages.

IN THIS SECTION

Key Historic Preservation Concepts....2-2
Significance....2-2
Integrity....2-4
Period of Significance....2-5
Contributing and Noncontributing Classifications....2-5
Character-Defining Features....2-6
Mass, Form, and Scale....2-8
Alternative Treatments for Historic Resources....2-11
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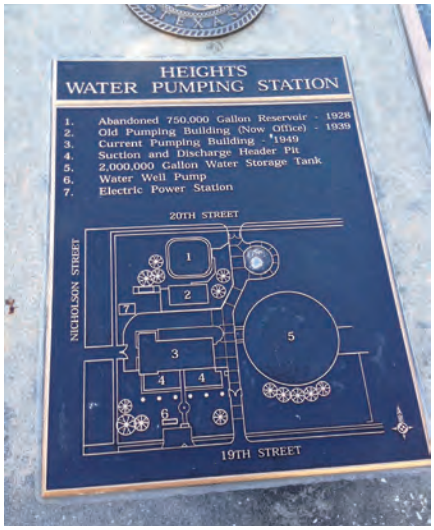
Benefits of Historic Preservation....2-13
Quality of Life....2-13
Promotes Economic Sustainability....2-14
Promotes Environmental Sustainability....2-16



The Heights Theater is a City Protected Landmark, as are the other buildings pictured below.



The Robert and Dena Cole House, 945 Harvard Street



Plaque showing the layout of the Heights Water Pumping Station, a City Protected Landmark

KEY HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONCEPTS

The following concepts are complementary and work together in preservation practice.

Significance

A historic resource — a building, structure, object, site, or district — may be considered important for a variety of reasons. If the resource meets certain criteria established by local, state, or federal laws, it may be considered *significant*. Usually, these criteria include the quality of architecture, whether the resource is associated with important people or events, or if it might be an important archaeological site.

While individual resources within a historic district might not have high significance on their own, they have significance as a collection or group. Losing one contributing building may not destroy the district, but every such loss reduces the district's integrity. Over time, the cumulative loss of buildings can harm the district substantially.

Government agencies are in charge of historic designations at the local, state, and federal level. Each agency has determined what criteria it will use to evaluate whether a historic resource is significant or not. It is common for local or state criteria to be based on the National Register of Historic Places criteria for the evaluation of significance, as stated below:

> The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:
>
> A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
>
> B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons from our past; or
>
> C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
>
> D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield information important in history or prehistory.

The State of Texas, through the Texas Historical Commission, recognizes buildings that are particularly significant because of their architecture. These Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks also must be significant for their association with people or events, or for their importance to the community.

The City of Houston uses eight criteria to evaluate the significance of a potential historic Landmark or Historic District (Houston Code of Ordinances, Sec. 33-224):

1. Whether the building, structure, object, site, or area possesses character, interest, or value as a visible reminder of the development, heritage, and cultural and ethnic diversity of the city, state, or nation;

2. Whether the building, structure, object, site, or area is the location of a significant local, state, or national event;

3. Whether the building, structure, object, site, or area is identified with a person who, or group or event that, contributed significantly to the cultural or historical development of the city, state, or nation;

4. Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area exemplify a particular architectural style or building type important to the city;

5. Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area are the best remaining examples of an architectural style or building type in a neighborhood;

6. Whether the building, structure, object, or site or the buildings, structures, objects, or sites within the area are identified as the work of a person or group whose work has influenced the heritage of the city, state, or nation;

7. Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present; and

8. Whether the building, structure, object, or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.

In addition, either the building (or the majority of the buildings within a district) must be at least 50 years old at the time of designation.

Note: It is helpful to know why a historic district or landmark was designated, because the basis for its significance comes into play when we consider the concepts presented on the following pages.

Integrity

When a historic resource retains the characteristics that are associated with its significance, we say that it has *integrity*. This can mean, for example, that a building looks much as it did when it was built, or that a park maintains its original design. Sometimes, changes that are made over the years become old enough that they achieve historical significance of their own; in such cases, those alterations do not weaken the resource's integrity. Other changes — especially those that cover or remove important character-defining features — can damage or destroy a resource's integrity, so those types of changes should be avoided. The City of Houston's historic preservation ordinance is intended to prevent the destruction or removal of character-defining features, which would damage a building's integrity.

The illustrations below show how integrity can be lost through alterations. One major alteration can destroy integrity, but a series of multiple smaller changes — which singly might be fine — can have the same cumulative, negative effect.

It is also important to note that a building can be altered without losing its integrity. The presence of alterations does not mean that integrity has necessarily been damaged. In cases where integrity has been impacted, it can be restored by returning a historic resource to the condition it was in during the period of significance. While that is possible, it is better to maintain a building's integrity through good preservation practices than to restore it later.

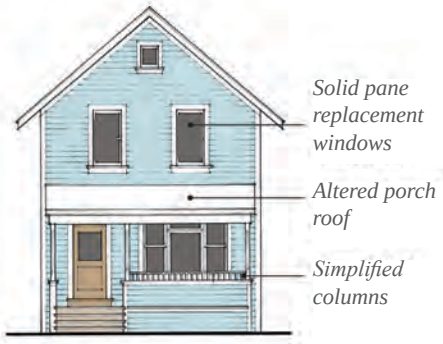
Building Integrity

Original design



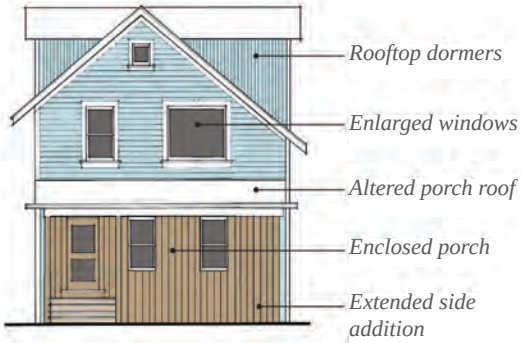
This building retains its integrity.

Partially altered



Some alterations: This building remains contributing with opportunity for restoration.

Substantially altered



Major alterations: This building does not retain its integrity.

Period of Significance

No matter which government agency is evaluating the significance of a historic resource, the basis for significance is always tied to a specific period of time during which the important activities took place. This is called the *period of significance*; it may be as short as a single year or many decades long.

The period of significance usually begins with the construction date of a building or the start of an event. For example, the city of Houston Heights was founded in 1891, so its period of significance begins that year. A period of significance usually ends when construction or the association with a person or event ends. For example, the subdivision of Glenbrook Valley was built between 1953–1962. and that is the period of significance for the Glenbrook Valley Historic District. For the three Houston Heights Historic Districts, the 1940s are generally considered the end of the period of significance.

Contributing and Noncontributing Classifications

When a historic district is designated, the City creates an inventory that lists each historic resource (building, structure, object, or site), along with its address, legal description, construction date, and whether the resource is *contributing* or *noncontributing* to the district.

Each inventory is established at the time of the district's designation and does not reflect changes that have occurred on a property since then. This is especially true in Houston Heights Historic Districts East and West, which were designated two or more years before the historic preservation ordinance was changed to add protections for historic resources. During that time, from 2007–2010, a property owner whose COA application was denied only had to wait 90 days before doing whatever they wanted. Many buildings were demolished and new buildings constructed during those years.

In addition, at the time when the Houston Heights Historic Districts were designated, the City used three classifications: contributing, noncontributing, and potentially contributing. The "potentially contributing" classification was used to indicate that the building could become contributing if previous inappropriate alterations were reversed. Buildings classifed as potentially contributing were subject to the same criteria for design review as contributing buildings, and in 2010, the "potentially" part of the term was eliminated to reduce confusion. The design review criteria for contributing buildings remained the same before and after 2010.

The inventory for each historic district is provided online in the City's Historic Preservation Manual; inventories for the Houston Heights Historic Districts are provided in the Appendix to this document. A map of each district is provided at the end of Section 3.

The City's historic preservation ordinance says that a resource is considered contributing when it "reinforces (or has conditions which, if reversed, would reinforce) the cultural, historical, or architectural significance of the district" as a whole. The presence of alterations do not automatically make a building noncontributing, however, just as changes do not necessarily impact integrity.

The contributing/noncontributing classification applies to each resource, not to the entire property; a single property may contain multiple buildings with different classifications, such as a contributing house and a noncontributing garage or shed. Some garages and garage apartments (especially on corner lots) were included in the inventory, but many were not. If a building or structure is not listed in the inventory, it is considered noncontributing.

A building that was constructed during the period of significance could be considered contributing even if its architectural style differs from the rest of the district. On the other hand, any building that was constructed outside of the period of significance is considered noncontributing, even if it looks like a historic building. That is because contributing status is based on the property's ability to convey the significance of the district, not its appearance or compatibility with historic properties.

Finally, the historic preservation ordinance was amended in 2015 to allow the contributing/noncontributing status of properties to be reclassified if they are found to be incorrectly classified or in the event of "unusual and compelling circumstances," at the discretion of the Planning Director.

Character-Defining Features

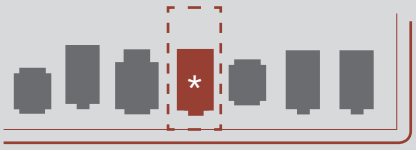
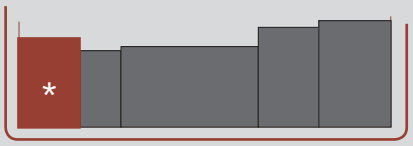
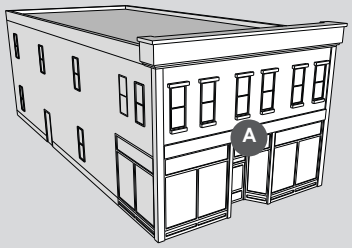
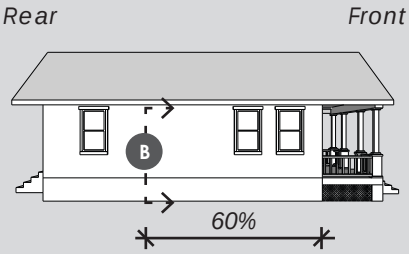
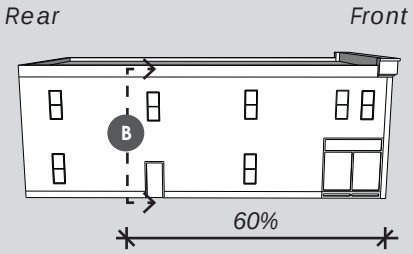
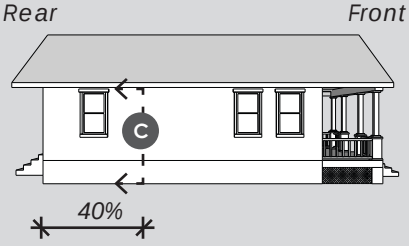
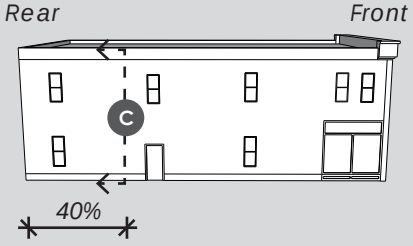
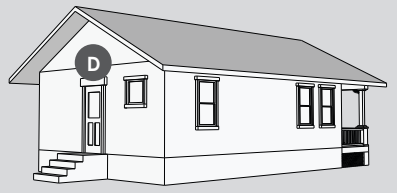
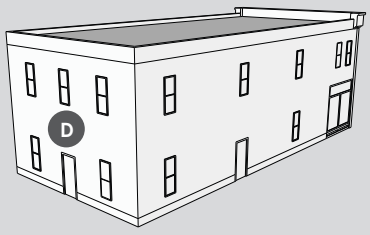
We can judge whether a historic resource is significant and retains its integrity based on its character-defining features. These are visible, physical parts of a building and include the overall shape of the building, the materials with which it was built, evidence of craftsmanship in design and construction, decorative details, and elements of the site. The historic preservation ordinance states that the "distinguishing qualities or character" of a property should be preserved.

The individual components of a building and its architectural details are often associated with architectural styles, such as Craftsman, Queen Anne, Tudor Revival, or Ranch. By identifying the features that contribute to an architectural style (or more than one style, in some cases), we can make informed decisions about which features are character-defining and, therefore, should be preserved.

In addition to character-defining features that represent a style of architecture and are located on a relatively prominent or visible part of the building, any examples of skilled craftsmanship (such as carpentry or masonry) should be preserved. These may include turned columns, brackets, exposed rafter tails, jigsaw ornaments, moldings, trim, and similar architectural details, as well as decorative brickwork and other patterns in masonry walls.

PRIORITIZING CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES BY LOCATION

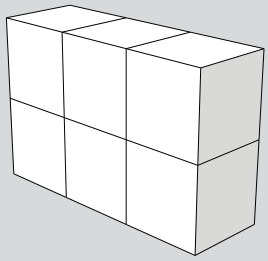
The relative importance of character-defining features also depends on their location. Building elements that are located on or toward the front of the building tend to be more important than those located toward the rear of the building, although that is not always the case. For example, when a building is located on a corner lot, features on the entire side that faces the street, as well as portions of the rear wall that are visible, may be significant.

	RESIDENTIAL BUILDING	COMMERCIAL BUILDING
		
LOCATION A: PRIMARY FAÇADE For most historic buildings, the front facade is the most important to preserve intact.		
LOCATION B: HIGHLY VISIBLE SECONDARY WALL Many side walls are also important to preserve where they are highly visible from the street. Location B is the front 60% of the historic side wall length, measured from the front wall plane.		
LOCATION C: LESS VISIBLE SECONDARY WALL Portions of a side wall that are not as visible have more flexibility. Location C is the rear 40% of the historic side wall length, measured from the front wall plane.		
LOCATION D: NOT VISIBLE REAR WALL The rear wall is usually the least sensitive location. Alterations to the rear that are not visible from the street do not require a Certificate of Appropriateness.		

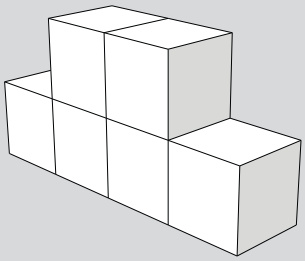
This chart illustrates the relative position of the most sensitive parts of a contributing structure. While each building is considered on a case-by-case basis, this type of analysis will be used to determine where a change may occur. As an example, a new window might be installed in Location C without a negative effect to the historic character of a building. On the other hand, locating a new window opening in Location B would have a negative effect.

MASSING CUBE ARRANGEMENT

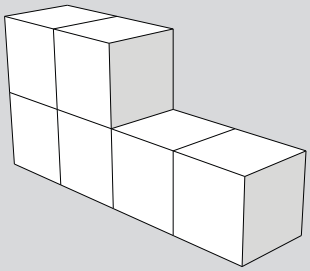
Arrangement #1



Arrangement #2



Arrangement #3



Arranging equally-sized cubes into different configurations changes the effect of massing while keeping the volume equal.

Mass, Form, and Scale

A building's size and shape have as much effect on its overall appearance as do stylistic details and decorative accents. In architectural terms, size and shape are more precisely described by the terms mass, form, and scale. These three characteristics are important by themselves, but together they determine a building's visual impact. They are among the most important character-defining features of a historic building and for new infill construction.

Mass

Mass, or massing, is a combination of building volume (height x width x depth) and the arrangement of the shapes and forms that make up the building. Each dimension in the volume equation also contributes individually to the overall visual effect of the building. For example, a building might be made up of six equally sized cube forms; no matter how you arranged the cubes, the volume would be the same, but the overall effect would be different. The building could be long and low, tall and skinny, or something in between. (See diagram at left.)

The arrangement and the size of differently-shaped building components, in relation to one another, contribute to the building's overall massing.

Scale

Scale includes not just the overall height and width of a building, but also to the sizes and proportions of building elements and details, as they relate to each other and to people. A sense of scale is also affected by the size and proportions of a building as it relates to its neighbors.



Although the two houses are quite different in design, the overall effect is harmonious, thanks to similar massing, scale, and form.

Form

These four examples of houses in the Houston area (below)are all similar in size, but the building volume is arranged very differently from house to house. In large part, that is because they were built in different decades, and the design of each house reflects changing tastes and trends in architecture.



1960s



2000s



2015

We can look at those houses another way: in terms of the building blocks that are put together to create those volumes. This is what we mean by the arrangement of forms in a building and how that contributes to massing. Massing can be simple, as in the 1960s or 2015 examples, or complex, as in the 2000s example.



1960s



2000s



2015

The Cumulative Effect of Multiple Alterations

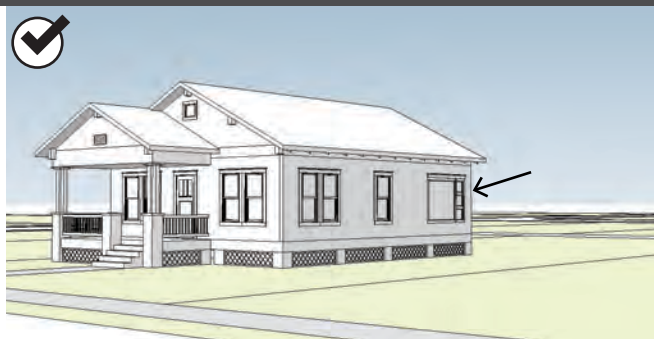
As noted above, a series of multiple changes to a building can have a negative impact on integrity and, as a result, contributing status. Therefore, all proposed changes must be considered as part of a whole. A project that might be found appropriate, if the building has not already been altered, could be considered inappropriate as the latest in a series of changes, each of which chip away at character-defining features and the overall integrity of a building.

Keep in mind that the entire planned project should be presented in the Certificate of Appropriateness application. Applicants who hold back "future phases" of a project in order to gain approval for initial work may find that subsequent proposals will not be approved, if the cumulative effect of all of the changes is too great and collectively diminishes the integrity of the building.

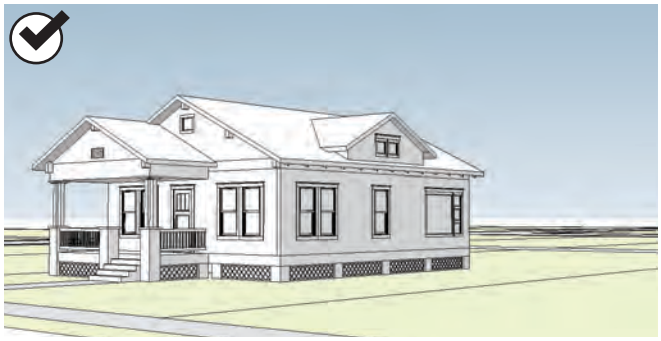
CUMULATIVE EFFECTS DIAGRAM



1. Original condition



2. Window on the side has been altered



3. Dormer has been added.



4. Large rear addition

Alternative Treatments for Historic Resources

What is the appropriate approach for work on a historic resource that will help to maintain its integrity? Four treatments are recognized by the National Park Service: *preservation, restoration, reconstruction,* and *rehabilitation*. Although these approaches are not part of the City of Houston's historic preservation ordinance, they are included here for informational purposes, and property owners are encouraged to consider them during project planning.

Preservation focuses on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property's form as it has evolved over time.

Rehabilitation acknowledges the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses, while retaining the property's historic character.

Restoration returns a property to its appearance at a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods.

Reconstruction re-creates vanished or non-surviving portions of a property for interpretive purposes.

It is common to combine more than one of these approaches in a single project.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (which are available free of charge online at: www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm) provide a practical guide to applying these concepts to real-world situations. While Houston's historic preservation ordinance does not refer to the Secretary's Standards directly, the Standards incorporate some of the same concepts and include a great deal of useful information, and are, therefore, recommended reading.



Preservation of historic materials



Restoration to a previous period by removal of "stone" paneling



A commercial building before rehabilitation



The same building after rehabilitation





Reconstruction of the porch on a historic house: (top) before; (bottom) after

Preferred Sequence of Work

This set of design guidelines is organized based on the recommended order for undertaking work on a historic resource, as shown in the chart below.

1. Preserve

If a historic feature is intact and in good condition, preserve it with regular maintenance to maintain its integrity.

↓

2. Repair

If a historic feature is deteriorated or damaged, repair it to its original condition.

↓

3. Replace

Replacement is only permitted for a feature or portion of a feature that cannot be reasonably repaired. If replacement is permitted, replace the feature *in-kind* (that is, using the same materials, detail, and finish).

↓

4. Reconstruct

If all or part of a historic feature is missing, reconstruct it based on appropriate evidence, such as historical photographs or from studying features on similar adjacent properties.

BENEFITS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic areas within a city, when preserved and maintained, are often attractive places to live and work. Each historic district has its own distinctive character, created by the collection of historic resources within its boundaries. Because every historic building contributes to the qualities of the district as a whole, changes to any one building can impact the district's overall character. A historic district can only be preserved through the protection of individual buildings.

Historic preservation programs and activities — whether carried out by the City, nonprofit organizations, businesses, or individuals — add value to the City of Houston in many ways. Investing in historic resources to keep them in good condition and productive use returns a variety of benefits.

Quality of Life

Historic districts appeal to individuals, families, and businesses that value an authentic sense of place. Unlike modern suburban development, most historic neighborhoods contain a variety of buildings that were constructed over time. As a result, they feel genuine, rather than manufactured or designed. The architectural styles found in historic districts also distinguish these areas from newer areas of the city and attract property owners who want to own and maintain buildings that represent our heritage.

Whether in a residential neighborhood or a commercial district, the size and scale of historic buildings are often smaller than that of modern buildings being constructed today. While this is due in part to changing consumer expectations, the growing popularity of narrow houses, townhouses, and the "tiny house" movement signals a return to the efficient utilization of space that can be found in, for example, 1920s bungalows. In fact, downsizing has been recognized as one of the most important trends in real estate in the past five years. Citing affordability, individuals and families of all ages are choosing to live in smaller spaces, particularly in urban areas. Historic commercial and converted residential buildings are also often right-sized for start-ups, small businesses, and entrepreneurs.

HOW MILLENNIALS ARE CHANGING THE HOUSING MARKET



Source: Nationwide Mortgages, as reported in *Inc. Magazine*, July 13, 2017.

Promotes Economic Sustainability

Historic preservation is an effective economic development tool. Commercial, residential, and mixed-use neighborhoods have all benefited from the injection of new vitality that comes with the appropriate rehabilitation of older buildings. The economic benefits of investing in historic buildings and preserving historic districts is well-documented through studies nationwide and here in Texas, such as the report *Economic Impact of Historic Preservation in Texas*, by the University of Texas and Rutgers University, first published in 1999 and most recently updated in 2015. According to that report, "Historic preservation is a major industry in Texas. The numbers tell the story: in 2013, preservation activities in Texas generated more than $4.6 billion of state gross domestic product (GDP) in Texas, and supported more than 79,000 Texas jobs. This produced significant net tax revenue for both state and local governments in Texas, equaling over $290 million annually."

Supports the Local Economy

Projects that involve rehabilitating existing buildings contribute more to the local economy than tearing down a building and constructing a new one. Most of the cost of a rehab project (up to 70%) is usually spent on labor, which tends to be local and often made up of job-creating small businesses. Those workers spend their earnings in the community and support the local economy. At least 50% of the budget for new construction, however, typically goes to buy materials, which are likely manufactured by non-local companies. Even if a new building is being constructed by a local contractor, much of the money associated with that building leaves the community in the form of payment for materials. Rehab projects also typically create 50% more jobs than new construction projects, according to the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Supports Stable Property Values

Designated historic districts have been shown, though multiple studies all over the United States, to protect the investments of those property owners who have spent time and money to preserve the character of the area. (See *The Economic Impact of Historic Preservation in Texas* by the Texas Historical Commission for more details.)

When the size of new construction and additions in a historic district is not managed, however, speculative development can drive up property values until the land is more valuable than the building that occupies the lot. As a result, property owners can be forced out of the neighborhood by rising property taxes. This happened in several Houston neighborhoods, before the City's historic preservation ordinance was changed to protect buildings in historic districts.

Supports Local Business Development

Unlike many large office buildings, historic commercial spaces are often right-sized for new businesses. Historic homes also may be repurposed as office space, or for retail establishments or restaurants, such as on Heights Boulevard. As *Entrepreneur Magazine* wrote about Boston in 2016, "While shiny, new buildings are nice for impressing out-of-town visitors or luring Fortune 500 companies, gritty old cheap space is essential if we want to be a city that has room for fledgling companies focused on the future."

May Include Tax Breaks

Tax incentives for historic preservation are available through the following programs:

- Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives offer a 20% credit against federal income tax for projects that follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Information about this program is available from the National Park Service and the Texas Historical Commission.
- The Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program offers a tax credit worth 25% of qualifying expenses, which can be transferred through the state comptroller's office. For-profit businesses, nonprofit organizations, and city/county governments are all eligible to participate, under certain conditions. This program can be combined with the federal incentives. The Texas Historical Commission manages this program.
- The City of Houston offers a Historic Site Tax Exemption program, which freezes property taxes at pre-improvement levels for up to 15 years, when a historic property undergoes significant rehabilitation. More information is available through the Planning and Development Department and the Historic Preservation Office. (See Code of Ordinances Ch. 44.)

PLEASE NOTE:

For more information about tax incentives for historic preservation, visit the Texas Historical Commission's website: http://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-and-programs/preservation-tax-incentives/about-preservation-tax-incentives.



Heritage tourists at a historic site

Enables Heritage Tourism

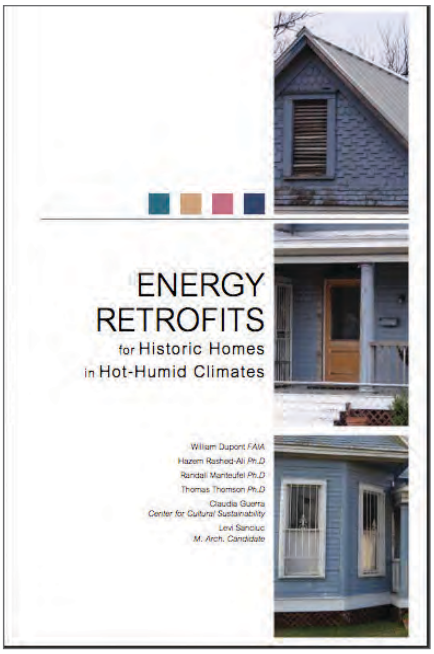
Many cities have experienced the economic benefits of heritage tourism, which the National Trust for Historic Preservation defines as "people traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past." According to the 2015 *Economic Impact of Historic Preservation in Texas* report, heritage tourism is a $7.3 billion dollar industry in Texas and accounts for more than 10.5% of all travel in the state. Studies show that heritage travelers stay longer and spend more money than other tourists, and this economic activity helps to create and sustain jobs in travel, retail, restaurant, and service businesses.

Promoting heritage tourism is an important part of the City of Houston's adopted Arts and Cultural Plan, which identifies heritage as a component of *culture*, which is defined as: "traditions, historical resources, community heritage, and practices and forms of expression that are valued, practiced, and preserved by a community." The Plan specifically recommends that, among other things, the City should develop a program of neighborhood-based cultural tourism with the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau and other partners.

Neighborhood-based cultural tourism is most likely to occur in historic districts, where the authentic architecture and character of the neighborhood has been preserved. Historic areas inherently provide a strong foundation for the arts and other cultural activities. The City of Houston's historic preservation program, therefore, directly supports these tourism objectives.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For more information, please see a 2017 study from the University of Texas-San Antonio: *Energy Retrofits for Historic Homes in Hot-Humid Climates*, online at: https://www.sanantonio.gov/portals/0/Files/HistoricPreservation/Retrofit_Pamphlet_CCS.pdf.



Promotes Environmental Sustainability

Sustainable development and conservation are central principles of historic preservation. Reusing an existing building keeps construction materials out of landfills and reduces the need to produce new materials. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has estimated that 40% of the nation's waste every year is made up of construction materials. A study by the National Association of Home Builders found that about 8,000 pounds of waste material — mostly wood, drywall, and cardboard — is created from the construction of a 2,000-square-foot home.

Careful maintenance and continuing to use an existing building preserves the resources that were invested in its construction. According to the Preservation Green Lab of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, "It can take between 10–80 years for a new energy-efficient building to overcome, through efficient operations, the climate change impacts created by its construction. The study *The Greenest Building: Quantifying the Environmental Value of Building Reuse* finds that the majority of building types in different climates will take between 20–30 years to compensate for the initial carbon impacts from construction."

The most cost-effective energy savings in historic buildings are usually achieved not by replacing original building materials but by repairing, weather-stripping, and insulating them. For instance, you can save energy at a higher rate by properly caulking windows and doors and adding insulation to attic spaces than by replacing single-pane windows. In addition, the materials used to build historic houses (such as old-growth lumber) are more durable than materials available today. A 100-year-old window is made of stronger wood than a new wood window; vinyl is a plastic, petroleum-based product that is not as recyclable as wood and may not be as durable.

SECTION 3:
ABOUT THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS

This section describes the history of Houston Heights, the character of the three Houston Heights Historic Districts, and the architectural styles and significant buildings contained within them. Although strictly informational, this material will help property owners and design professionals understand what makes these historic districts significant, as well as how to identify character-defining features of historic buildings and prioritize those features for preservation during a project.

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- Original Character and Changes Over Time 3-7

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One-story buildings are common to the Houston Heights Historic Districts.



A mature tree canopy is present throughout the Houston Heights Historic Districts.

THE HISTORY OF HOUSTON HEIGHTS

Houston Heights was founded in 1891, incorporated as its own city in 1896, and annexed by the City of Houston in 1918. It contains a variety of architectural styles from around the turn of the 20th century.

Houston Heights was Texas' earliest planned community. It was developed by the Omaha and South Texas Land Company, which formed in 1887 as a subsidiary of the American Loan and Trust Company. Founder Oscar Martin Carter, a former bank president from Nebraska, hired one of his bank employees, Daniel Denton Cooley, to be the treasurer and general manager of the new company. In 1890, company representatives came to Houston to look for land and to start a new town. The next year, they purchased 1,756 acres of land, northwest of Houston and 23 feet higher in elevation. The elevation was important to the new development's success; because of Houston's low elevation near the coast, mosquitoes were plentiful and yellow fever, malaria, and cholera outbreaks were common and often fatal. As the city of Houston grew and developers tried to solve this problem through improved sanitation and water systems, they also looked to the area north of downtown, which — at a higher elevation — seemed to have fewer mosquitoes. This area became a popular location for Houston's new suburbs.

In 1892, the Omaha and South Texas Land Company sent Cooley and other representatives to oversee the development of their land. The company built streets, sidewalks, and utility systems, and led efforts to electrify Houston's streetcar system and extend the streetcar lines to Houston Heights, allowing people to work downtown but live in the new community.

The neighborhood was laid out on a rectangular grid with a north-south emphasis, with Heights Boulevard as the central spine. The north-south streets have names; the east-west streets are numbered. Heights Boulevard also serves as the dividing line between 'East' numbered streets and 'West' numbered streets. Some streets were named for colleges and universities, such as Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and Oxford. Other streets were named for cities in New England, where the American Loan and Trust Company was founded. Heights Boulevard features a 60-foot-wide esplanade inspired by Commonwealth Avenue in Boston.

Lots were platted in a variety of sizes so that both wealthy and working-class people could afford to buy them. After the land was platted, the Omaha and South Texas Land Company needed to do something so that people would buy lots in the neighborhood. It hired the Houston Land and Trust Company to build 17 elaborate homes along Heights Boulevard and Harvard Street. One of those was Cooley's own house, at the northeast corner of 18th Street and Heights Boulevard where Marmion Park is now located. Carter also built several commercial buildings, including a hotel, on West 19th Street, near Ashland Street. The commercial area started to grow, which attracted new residents.

The City of Houston Heights was incorporated in 1896. W.G. Love served as its first mayor. He was followed in that office by John A. Milroy, David Barker, and Robert F. Isbell. J.B. Marmion was the last mayor of Houston Heights before it was annexed by the City of Houston. Two parks in the Heights are named for former mayors: Marmion Park, at 18th Street and Heights Boulevard, and Milroy Park at Yale and 12th Streets, near the former fire station.



A vintage map of Houston Heights

Houston Heights had its own schools, city hall, jail, fire department, and hospital. In 1918, residents of Houston Heights agreed to be annexed to the City of Houston, in order to access a broader tax base for school funding. As part of the annexation agreement, the Heights kept its "dry ordinance," which banned the sale of alcoholic beverages in large portions of the neighborhood. The dry ordinance was passed in 1912, eight years before Prohibition became law across the United States. Even after the end of Prohibition in 1933, the Heights remained dry. The ordinance was upheld by the Texas Supreme Court in 1937 and remains in place in portions of the Heights.

Houston Heights' original development included deed restrictions that controlled setback, use, quality, and size of construction in the city. The deed restrictions created a consistent look and feel for Houston Heights. After it was annexed to the City of Houston in 1918, the deed restrictions were no longer enforced and properties began to change; small houses were built in the spaces between large houses, and some large homes were replaced by apartment buildings. The neighborhood eventually began to decline.

In recent years, the neighborhood has been revitalized. Modern buildings are being built on vacant lots, using traditional details in order to blend in with the rest of the neighborhood. The Houston Heights Association was organized in 1973 to promote revitalization. That organization currently has about 1,000 members and manages new deed restrictions adopted in various sections of the neighborhood.


One-story buildings align within this Houston Heights context.



Heights Church of Christ



Miller House, 1245 Yale Street



Wilkins House, 1541 Ashland Street

Significant Buildings and Sites

Many properties within Houston Heights are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NR). Some of those are also Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks (RTHL), City Landmarks (CL), or City Protected Landmarks (CPL). Below is a small sample of individually significant institutional and religious buildings, residences, and sites located within the Houston Heights Historic Districts.

Burnett House (NR, CL), located at 219 W. 11th Street, is a well-preserved example of the ornate, Queen Anne cottages built in the Heights. It remains in the family of the original owner, George Burnett, who built it around 1904.

Jones House (NR), located at 1117 Allston Street, was built in 1905. It is an excellent example of one of the most common house types in the district: a bungalow with a hipped roof.

Lula J. Doughty House (NR, CL), located at 1233 Yale Street, is an elaborate, one-story Queen Anne home built in 1909.

Miller House (NR), located at 1245 Yale Street, was built in 1913 in the Classical Revival style. Its two-story columns support a front gable roof. On the second floor, the original porch has been enclosed between the columns to create an additional room.

Wilkins House (NR), located at 1541 Ashland Street, was built in 1894. It was designed by architect Silas D. Wilkins in the Colonial Revival style.

East Heights Christian Church (original) (NR), 1703 Heights Boulevard, was built in 1927. Architect C. N. Nelson designed it in the Classical Revival style. Today, it is used by Opera in the Heights. The congregation now meets at 1745 Heights Boulevard, built in 1965 in a Neo-Gothic style.

Heights Church of Christ (RTHL, CPL), 1548 Heights Boulevard (aka 120 E. 16th Street), was designed by architect Alfred C. Finn in the Neoclassical style and built in 1924.

Heights Methodist Episcopal Church, was renamed Grace United Methodist Church in the 1950s. The church originally met in a red brick building that faced Yale at 13th Street. The congregation built a Craftsman-style church hall at 1240 Yale (aka 116 West 13th Street) in 1926. The original sanctuary was demolished in 1970. A new sanctuary was built in 1971 directly in front of the original one, at 1245 Heights Boulevard. Iron rings for hitching horses are still present in the curb in front of the church hall. They probably were installed when the 1912 church was built.

Houston Heights City Hall and Fire Station (NR, CL 2001, CPL 2005), located at 107 West 12th Street, was designed by architect Alonzo C. Pigg. It was built in the Jacobean Revival style, which combined Gothic and Classical elements. The two-story red brick building was built in 1914. It also served as the fire station and jail. After Houston Heights was annexed in 1918, the City of Houston used it as Fire Station No. 14.

Houston Heights Woman's Club Building (NR, CPL), 1846 Harvard Street. The Woman's Club combined several earlier ladies' clubs that focused on arts and crafts, music, and literary pursuits. Daniel D. Cooley, who managed the Omaha and South Texas Land Company, owned many lots in Houston Heights. He often gave his wife land for her birthday or their anniversary. She donated one of her lots to the Woman's Club for its clubhouse. The members raised $1,500 to construct the building in 1912.

Houston Public Library, Heights Branch (NR, CPL), was the first branch library constructed in the City of Houston. It was designed by J. M. Glover and built in 1925, just one year after the main library in downtown Houston was constructed. The Heights Branch Library was built in the Italian Renaissance Revival style. This library's importance was recognized in 2005 when it was one of the first Protected Landmarks designated by the City of Houston.

Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church (original) (NR), is located at 1448 Cortlandt Street (aka 306 E. 15th Street). It was built in 1932 in the Gothic Revival style. The church's gymnasium/parish hall, also at 1448 Cortlandt Street, was built in 1949 with a barrel-vaulted roof. The parish built a new church in 1961 at 1447 Arlington Street. Although this building was threatened by demolition, community support encouraged the congregation to save and renovate it.

Masonic Lodge Buildings, both of which housed Reagan Lodge No. 1037. The first lodge was built in 1918 at 1100 Harvard Street. It was an elaborate Classical Revival style building (now converted to condominiums). In 1948, the lodge built a new hall at 1606 Heights Boulevard in the Neoclassical style.

Second Church of Christ, Scientist, 1402 Harvard, is a Craftsman-style building constructed in 1922. It is now a residence. When it was restored in 1997, a wing on the north side of the church was detached, moved to 1416 Harvard, and converted to a single-family home.

South Donovan Park, located on Heights Boulevard at 7th Street, was named for James G. Donovan, the last city attorney of Houston Heights. The park is owned by the Houston Heights Association, not the City of Houston. Donovan drafted the ordinance in 1912 prohibiting the sale of alcohol within the city.



Heights Women's Club Building



1918 Masonic Lodge Building


Southwestern Bell Building

Former All Saints Catholic Church Rectory (NR), built in 1912, was sold to a private owner and moved from its original location at 1002 Harvard Street in 1927. (It is now a private residence with the address 943½ Cortlandt Street.) The original 1909 church building was demolished that year to make way for a larger church. Several other buildings are located on the church campus at 201 East 10th Street, which is just outside the boundaries of this district. These include a school constructed in 1913 for children of parishioners and a newer school building. The church's administration building and grotto are also historic.

Harvard Elementary School, located at the corner of 8th and Harvard. The original one-room school was constructed in 1898. It was expanded, and then replaced in 1911 by a two-story brick schoolhouse. The current school was built in 1923 and expanded in 1979.

Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Church was located at 945 Oxford Street. It was built in 1930. Although the sanctuary was demolished, the educational hall remains and has been turned into a residence.

Southwestern Bell Telephone Company Building (NR) is located at 743 Harvard Street. It was built in 1926–1927 in the Renaissance Revival style. This building was designed to complement the Harvard School on the opposite corner.

Heights Boulevard Esplanade (NR). When Houston Heights was developed, the Boulevard was the first street constructed. (A boulevard is a strip of land in the middle of a street, also called a median or an esplanade.) Heights Boulevard has a wide landscaped esplanade between the northbound and southbound lanes of the street. It was patterned after Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, Massachusetts. Today, the esplanade contains a walking path, gazebos, benches, street lamps, and monuments.

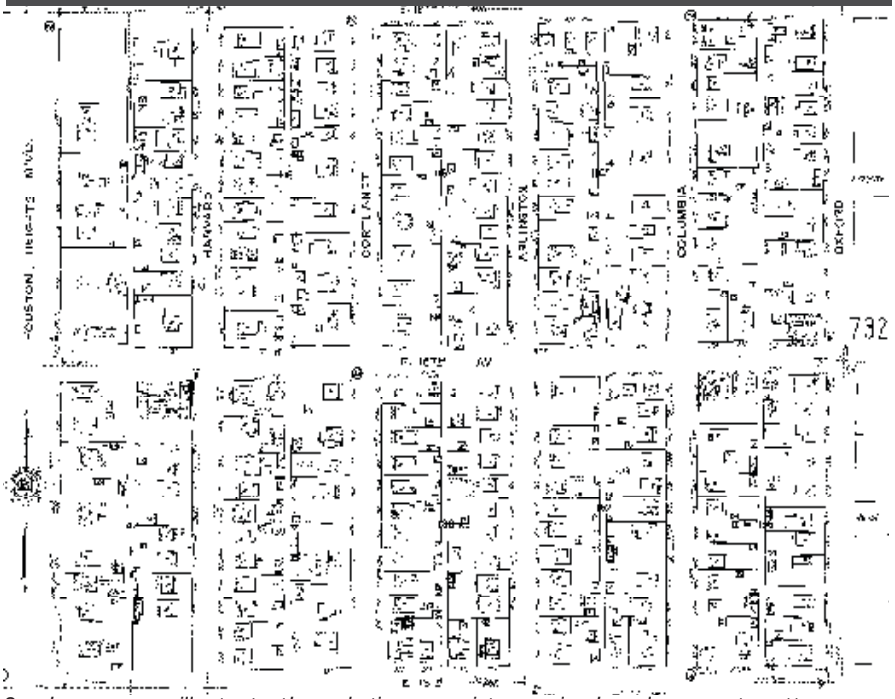
Pattern-Book Houses. Some houses in Houston Heights were built from designs published in pattern books. George Barber, an architect from Knoxville, Tennessee, was one of the most famous pattern-book publishers in the United States. Several dozen homes in Houston Heights were built from Barber's designs or adapted by local builders from his patterns. Those still standing include the Mansfield House (1802 Harvard), the Milroy House and carriage house (1102 Heights Boulevard), and the house at 443 Heights Boulevard.

Original Character and Changes Over Time

The typical residential block in Houston Heights contains 24 residential lots, each 50 feet wide by 132 feet deep. Corner lots and lots allocated for churches, schools, or important houses on or near Heights Boulevard, were often larger in size. The residential lots were oriented so that most buildings face east or west, which helped counter Houston's hot humid summers and subtropical climate. Exceptions to this grid pattern were the areas west of Yale and north of 16th Street, which had a north-south orientation. Retail establishments were mainly located on 19th Street west of Heights Boulevard, but also developed along 11th and 20th Streets.

The town plan also included industrial and commercial areas to create a complete city where people could live, work, and shop. (Those areas have undergone significant changes and, therefore, are not included in any of the Houston Heights Historic Districts.) Many changes in Houston Heights have also taken place along Yale Street, East and West 11th Streets, East 19th Street and East 20th Street, and the frontage road of Interstate 10 (just south of 4th Street). In those areas, many historic buildings have been demolished to make way for commercial development. Historic buildings have been demolished west of Ashland Street, as well. The neighborhoods east of Oxford Street were not part of the original Houston Heights plats; the block sizes and shapes are varied, and the lots are oriented north and south. The original Heights commercial district was located north of West 16th Street and west of Yale Street, and the lots there are configured differently.

SANBORN MAP (1950)



Sanborn maps illustrate the relative consistency in development patterns that existed in Houston Heights. Houses were placed in the front half of their lots, with relatively similar front setbacks. Secondary structures (garages) were placed along alleys.

DESIGNATION OF THE HOUSTON HEIGHTS HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Houston Heights was designated as a Multiple Resource Area (MRA) in 1983 by the National Park Service. An MRA designation is used when an area contains multiple potential landmarks and historic districts that are not contiguous. Houston Heights qualified for an MRA designation because it had been an independent municipality of fewer than 50,000 inhabitants (between 1896–1918), it retained its own character and diversity when it was annexed by Houston, and it already contained many buildings which were individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places. During the MRA designation process, both the National Park Service and the Texas Historical Commission recommended establishing multiple historic districts within the original boundaries of Houston Heights.

Houston Heights currently contains three City-designated historic districts. They are named for their location within the original city of Houston Heights: West, East and South. Houston Heights West was designated as an historic district in December 2007; Houston Heights East was designated as an historic district in February 2008. Houston Heights South is the most recent of the three districts, designated in June 2011. The designations were based on the value of the areas as part of the City of Houston Heights, from 1891–1918; its identification with Oscar M. Carter, Daniel D. Cooley, and other notable residents; its residential, commercial, religious, and governmental architecture; and its importance to the community.

An inventory of all properties in each historic district, including contributing/noncontributing classification, is provided in the appendix to this document and online in the Historic Preservation Manual.

Houston Heights East

Houston Heights Historic District East is roughly bounded by Heights Boulevard to the west, Oxford Street to the east, West 20th Street to the north, and West 11th Street to the south. The 1200 block of Yale and two lots at Yale and 17th are also included. The district contains 34 full blocks and nine partial blocks of residential, commercial, and institutional buildings.





Contributing buildings in Houston Heights Historic District East

Houston Heights West

Houston Heights Historic District West is roughly bounded by West 16th Street to the north, Yale Street to the east, West 11th Street to the south, and Ashland Street to the west. It includes 13 full blocks and 14 partial blocks of mostly residential buildings. Smaller (33-foot-wide) lots were platted along Ashland, Rutland, and Tulane Streets, although two or more of these were often combined to make a larger lot.





Contributing buildings in Houston Heights Historic District West

Houston Heights South

Houston Heights Historic District South is roughly bounded by Heights Boulevard to the west, Oxford Street to the east, West 11th Street to the north, and West 4th Street to the south. The district contains 26 full blocks and 16 partial blocks of residential, commercial, and institutional buildings. It is directly south of, and contiguous to, Houston Height Historic District East.





Contributing buildings in Houston Heights Historic District South

PLEASE NOTE:

The City of Houston now uses a standard reference, *A Field Guide to American Houses* by Virginia McAlester, to classify buildings by architectural style. Inventories for the Houston Heights Historic Districts may include different style names that were used when the districts were designated.









Craftsman bungalows in the Heights

ARCHITECTURAL STYLES IN THE DISTRICTS

The Houston Heights Historic Districts contain both one- and two-story houses in a variety of styles, as well as some commercial and institutional buildings. Houses in these districts were mostly built with wood siding, on pier-and-beam foundations, and featured a prominent front porch. The architectural styles found in the districts reflect the changing tastes and trends around the turn of the 20th century, as the exuberant Queen Anne style gave way to the more subdued Craftsman bungalow.

The most common architectural styles in the Houston Heights Historic Districts are Craftsman, Queen Anne, Folk National, and Folk Victorian.

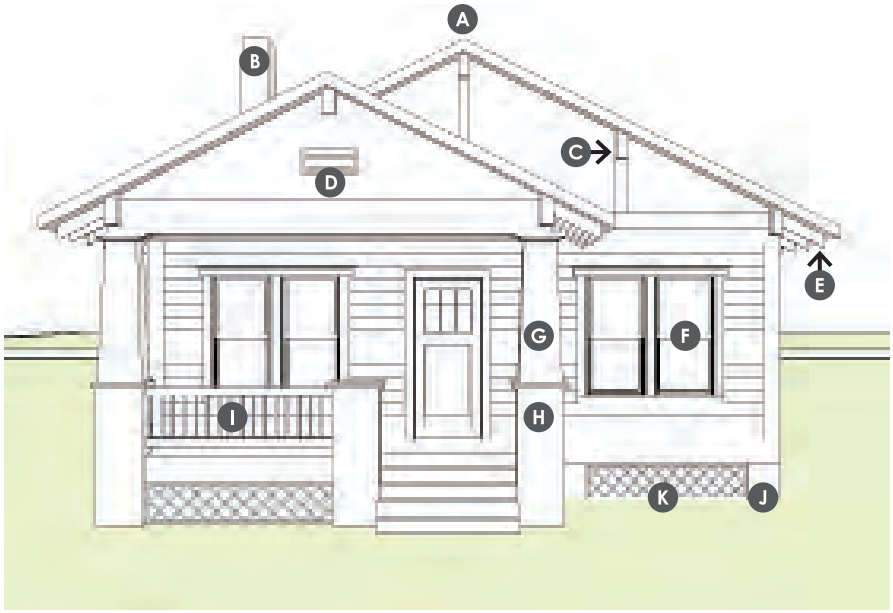
Craftsman

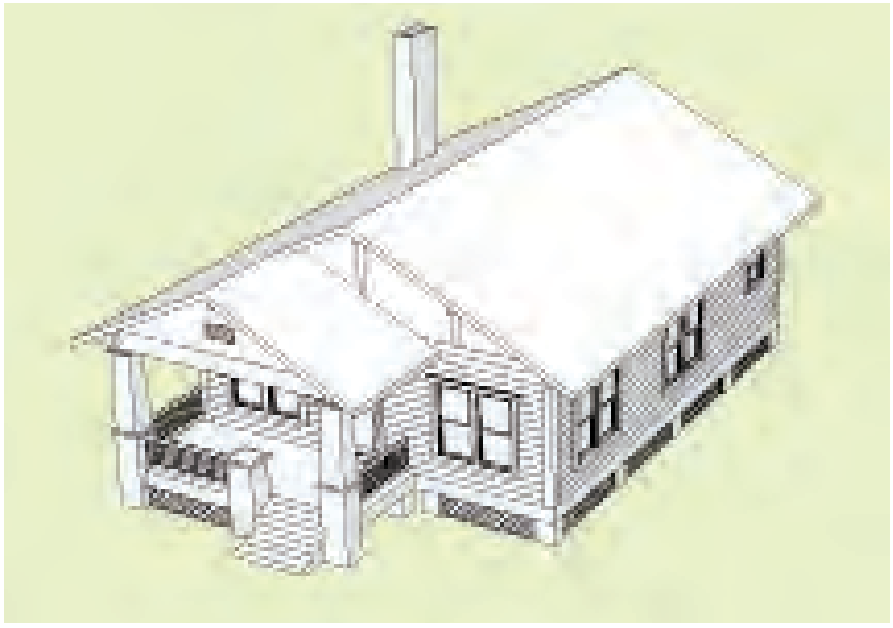
One-story Craftsman bungalows were very popular in Houston between 1905–1925. Characteristic Craftsman details include prominent front porches, low-pitched roofs, wide bracketed eaves, and groups (or "ribbons") of windows. Roofs may be gabled or hipped, or a combination of the two.



A Craftsman bungalow in the Heights

CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS: 1-STORY CRAFTSMAN HOUSE/BUNGALOW





KEY:	
A	Gabled Roof (can also be hipped)
B	Chimney
C	Decorative Roof Beam/ Triangular Brackets
D	Attic Vent or Window
E	Exposed Rafter Tail
F	Double-Hung Windows (often paired or multiple in the same frame)
G	Columns/Posts (sometimes tapered)
H	Squared Piers
I	Porch Railing
J	Foundation Piers
K	Foundation Screening

Typical Mass/Form/Scale:
one-story, front-gabled, two rooms wide by three rooms deep

Queen Anne

The Queen Anne style was popular during the Victorian era, particularly at the end of the 19th century. These houses typically have a front-facing gable and an asymmetrical façade. They often feature tall, narrow, two-over-two paned windows; large, sometimes wraparound porches; and decorative wood siding and ornamentation. Some Queen Anne homes are decorated with spindlework trim (also known as "gingerbread"). In this neighborhood, they tend to instead have more classical porch columns and railings.



The pattern-book Queen Anne house at 425 Heights Boulevard

Transitional Architecture

During the early 20th century, builders often combined the Queen Anne style, which was beginning to go out of fashion, with the newly popular Craftsman style. This was not uncommon, and the practice continued through the 20th century. As a result, it is not unusual to see buildings that historically combined details from different architectural styles.



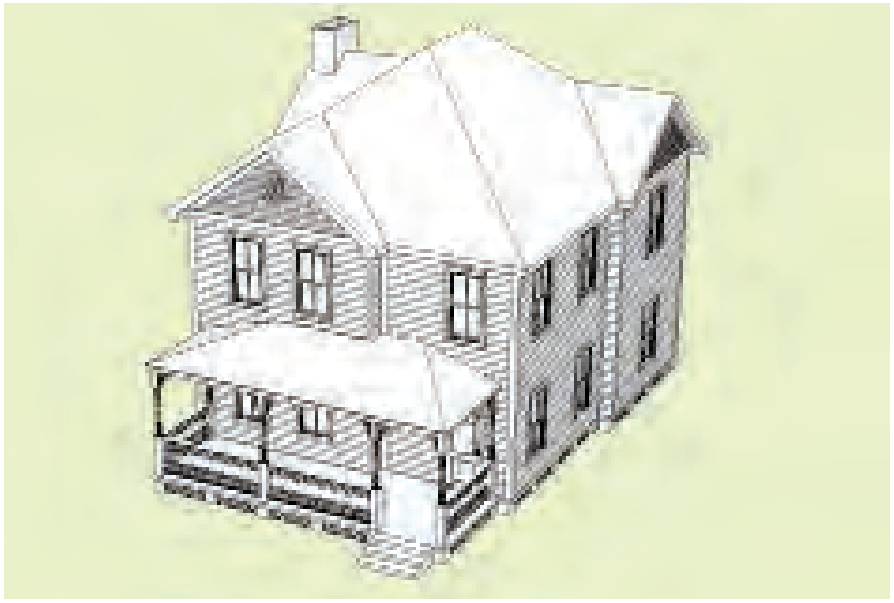
This house at 1213 Harvard Street incorporates a Queen Anne roof form and front door with a Craftsman front porch and paired windows.

CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS: 2-STORY QUEEN ANNE

KEY:	
A	Steep, Complex Hipped Roof
B	Chimney
C	Attic Vent or Window
D	Gabled Roof, Hipped Roof
E	Double-Hung Windows
F	Spindlework or Jigsawn Elements
G	Turned Columns/Posts
H	Primary Entry Door
I	Foundation Piers

Mass/Form/Scale:
Two-story, front-gabled roof, two rooms wide by two rooms deep







Folk National



Folk Victorian



Heights Public Library

PLEASE NOTE:

Buildings are classified as residential, commercial, or institutional based on their original function, rather than their current use.

Folk National and Folk Victorian

Sometimes described as cottages, these relatively small, modest houses are common in the Houston Heights Historic Districts. Many of the examples in this neighborhood have a front-gabled roof or a hipped roof with an inset porch (as shown in the top photograph, left). Full-width porches are also common.

Folk National houses were constructed from the mid-1850s through the 1920s. As a result, they may include or combine architectural details typical of other styles that were popular at the time, such as Craftsman-style bracketed eaves or Queen Anne-style turned porch supports.

When these simple houses are ornamented with spindlework and patterned siding, the resulting architectural style is called Folk Victorian. Some Folk Victorian houses in Houston Heights are two stories tall, with two-tier front porches.

Commercial and Institutional Buildings

The Houston Heights Historic Districts contain a small number of historic commercial buildings, as well as churches, schools, a fire station, the current and former Masonic Lodges, other meeting halls, and the Heights Library. Most of these buildings are one or two stories in height and are constructed with brick or stone masonry. They vary widely in style, design, and construction.

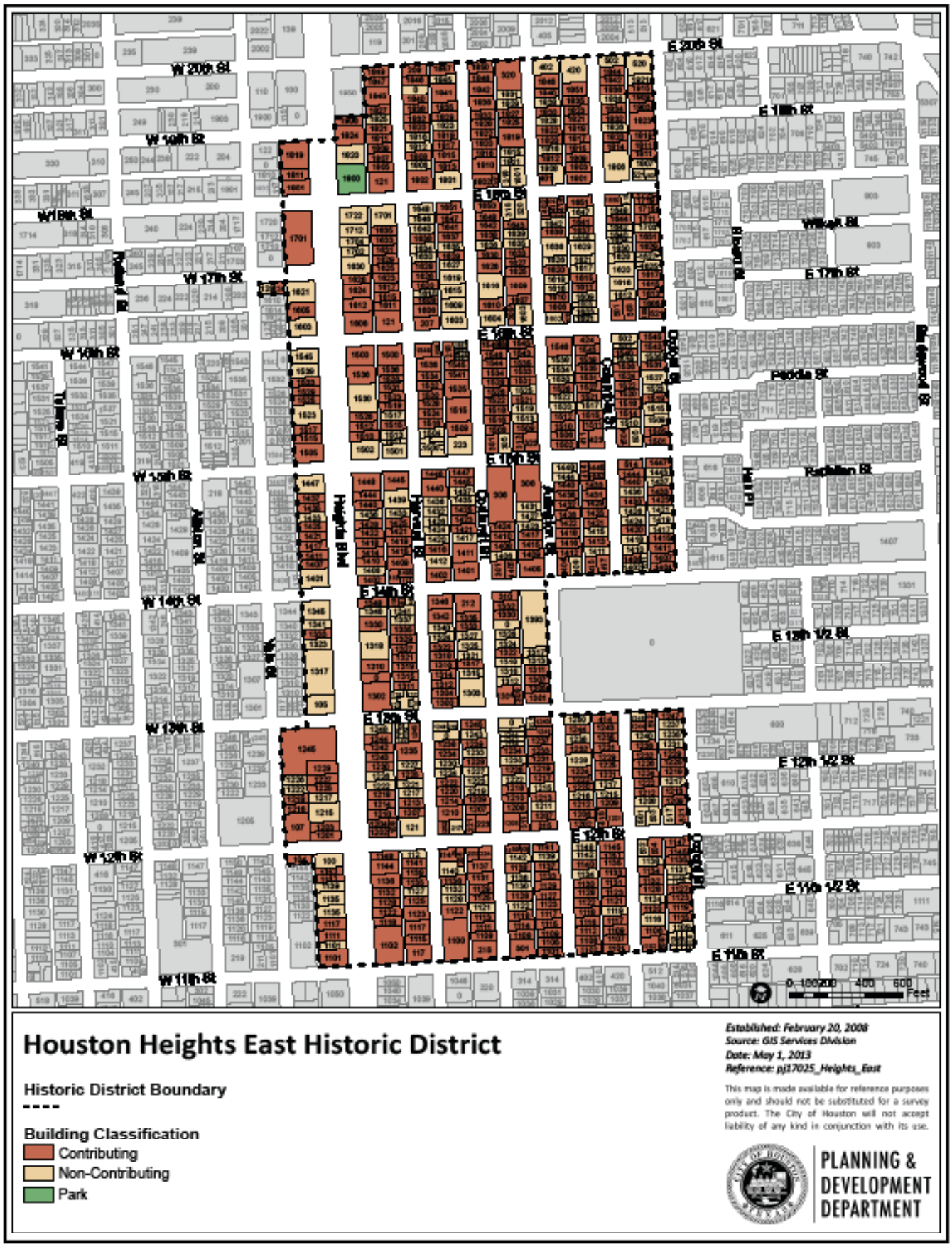
The guidelines and treatments for commercial and institutional buildings are generally the same as those for residential buildings. Where specific information in this document is provided for commercial buildings, that is clearly identified.

Objects and Sites

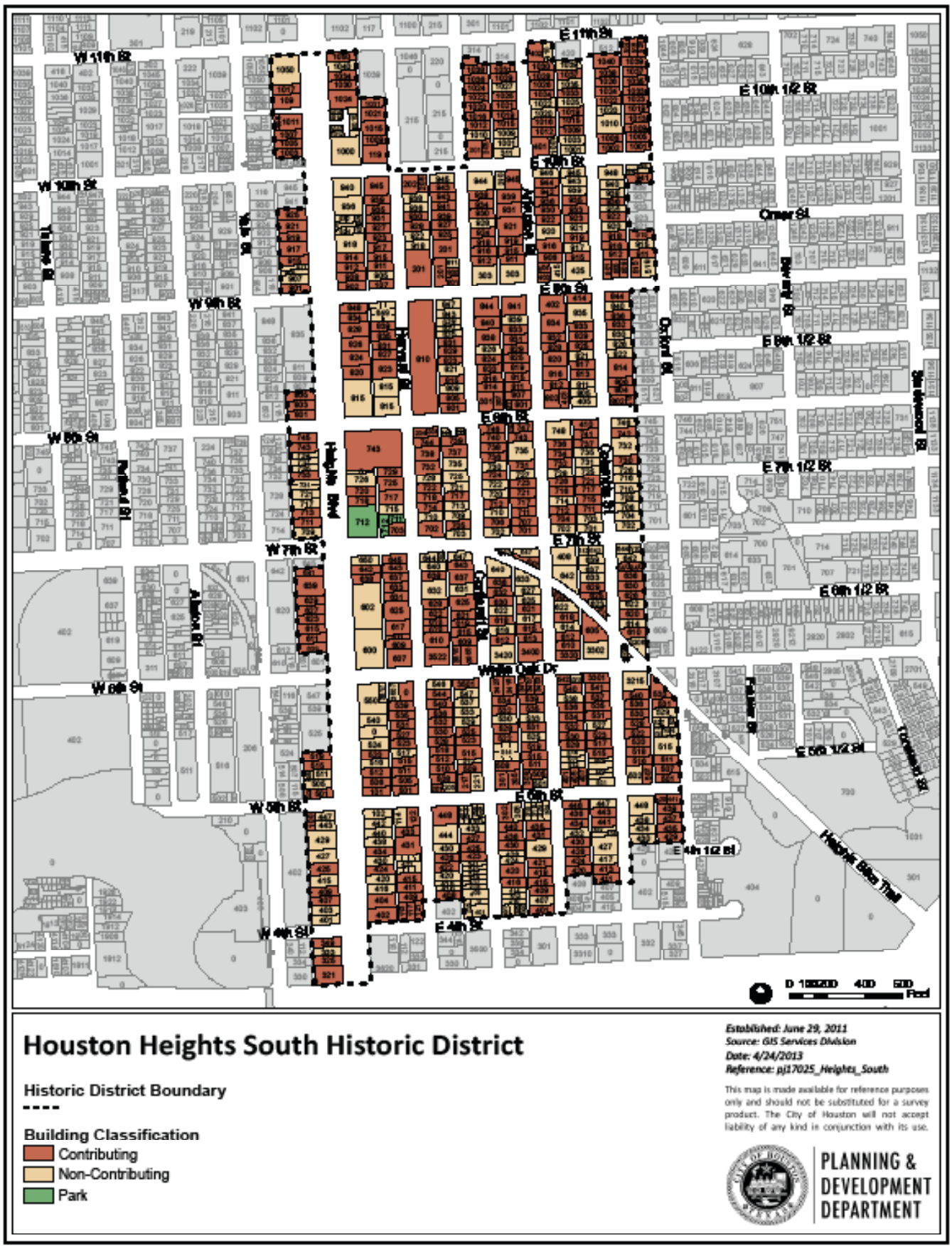
In addition to historic buildings and structures, the Houston Heights Historic Districts contain several other types of historic resources, including objects and sites. The following are classified as contributing resources:

- The hitching posts at 1522 Columbia Street
- The 1986 gazebo at 1800 Heights Boulevard
- The esplanade in Heights Boulevard from 11th Street to 19th Street

DISTRICT MAP: HOUSTON HEIGHTS EAST



DISTRICT MAP: HOUSTON HEIGHTS WEST



Houston Heights South Historic District

Historic District Boundary

Building Classification

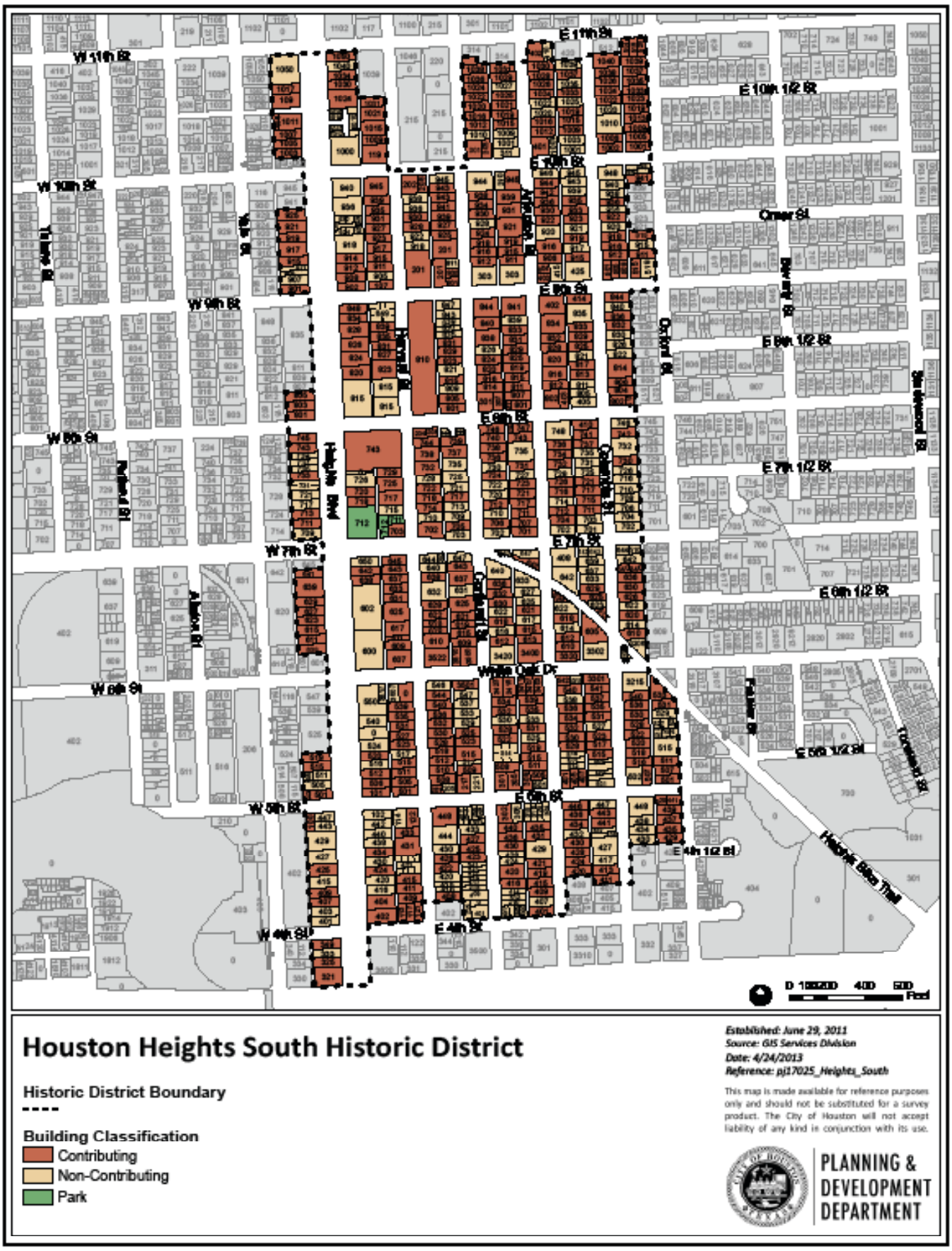
- Contributing
- Non-Contributing
- Park

Established: June 29, 2011
Source: GIS Services Division
Date: 4/24/2013
Reference: pj17025_Heights_South

This map is made available for reference purposes only and should not be substituted for a survey product. The City of Houston will not accept liability of any kind in conjunction with its use.

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

DISTRICT MAP: HOUSTON HEIGHTS SOUTH



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PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SECTION 4:
CHANGES TO EXISTING BUILDINGS

The City of Houston has established historic districts as a way to preserve the character of neighborhoods which possess cultural, historical, and architectural significance. Good stewardship involves the responsible use and management of historic properties, protecting them for future generations. This is best practiced by maintaining the features that define the character of individual historic buildings, structures, sites, and objects of historic significance. When individual historic resources are appropriately maintained, the historic district — the collection of those resources — will be preserved as well. By taking the time to learn about character-defining features and how to treat them sensitively, we can serve as good stewards for properties in historic districts while they are in our care.

Since noncontributing buildings already do not support the historic qualities of the district, the criteria for making changes to them are less strict than those for contributing structures. However, the visual qualities of noncontributing structures still impact the character of the historic district, so many changes to them must be managed. *Note: If a historic building, which was classified as noncontributing due to alterations, is restored, it may be reclassified as contributing, making the owner eligible for tax incentives and other benefits.*

This section includes qualitative design guidelines — that is, those rules that are not numerically based and may require interpretation — for exterior alterations. It also includes useful information about preservation and maintenance. This information will also be useful for property owners or design professionals who are planning additions or new construction.

IN THIS SECTION

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- Wood 4-5
- Historic Masonry 4-7
- Historic Metals 4-9
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PLEASE NOTE:

Check with the Preservation Office staff to determine if your proposed work requires a COA, may be approved administratively, or is exempted. (See Section 1.)

PLEASE NOTE:

See the National Park Service's Preservation Briefs for technical advice on best practices for maintaining and repairing historic building elements, at https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm

ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

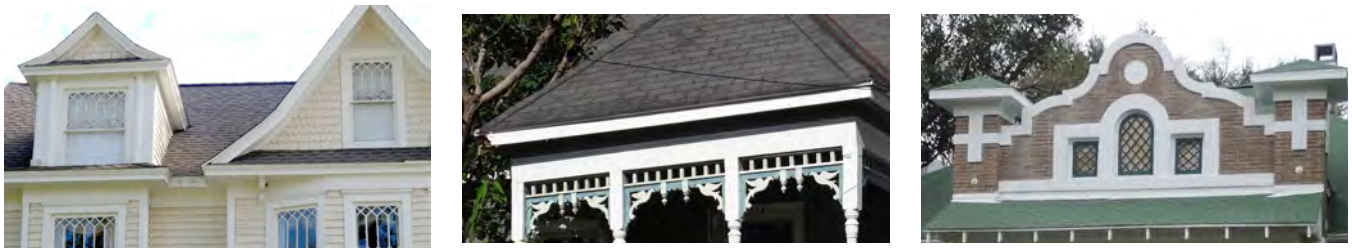
Identify those features which are character-defining, located in a prominent or visible location, and/or examples of skilled craftsmanship. Maintain and preserve those features in good repair.

4.1 Use care when cleaning or repairing an architectural element.

- Patch, piece-in, splice, consolidate, or otherwise address deteriorated elements using recognized preservation methods.
- Minimize damage to historic architectural elements when repairs are necessary.
- Use the gentlest means possible when cleaning or repairing an architectural feature.
- If an architectural element must be removed for repair, use methods that minimize damage to surrounding materials and that will make the item easy to reinstall.
- Before removing the architectural element, document its location with photographs and sketches so it can be reinstalled correctly.

4.2 If repair is impossible, replicate an architectural element accurately.

- When an architectural element is too deteriorated to repair, it may be replaced with an accurate replica of that element or an identical one.
- If exact replication is not possible, due to the lack of a source element, use a design that is substantiated by physical or pictorial evidence to avoid creating a misrepresentation of the building's history. Use the same kind of material as the original detail, when feasible. A substitute material may be acceptable if the size, shape, texture, and finish conveys the visual appearance of the original. Alternative materials are usually more acceptable in locations that are less visible or where they are unlikely to receive direct physical contact, such as a cornice at the top of a wall.
- Avoid adding architectural details such as decorative millwork or other ornaments that were not part of the original structure; doing so can create a false sense of history.



Distinctive stylistic features and other examples of skilled craftsmanship are character-defining features of a historic building and should be preserved. Examples include decorative glazing, shingles, dormers, brackets, and parapets.

HISTORIC BUILDING MATERIALS

These design guidelines apply to all materials that are original to the building, including wood, stone, brick, metal, stucco, plaster, and concrete. Historic building materials should be preserved in place, as much as possible, and repaired when necessary. If the material is damaged beyond repair, only then should you consider replacing it. Only replace material that is damaged, and use replacement material that matches the original.

If historic materials have been covered, consider removing the covering; do this carefully so that the underlying original building material is not damaged, and repair the original material as needed once it is exposed.

PLEASE NOTE:

For more information about appropriate maintenance methods, please see the National Park Service's Preservation Brief No. 47: *Maintaining the Exterior of Small and Medium Size Historic Buildings.*



A house with original building materials

4.3 Keep historic building materials clean.

- If building materials become dirty or mildewed, use gentle cleaning products and methods rather than harsh chemicals or abrasive treatments.
- A low-pressure water wash is preferred; avoid high-pressure or abrasive methods, which can damage historic building material.
- Mild chemicals should be tested in an inconspicuous location before using on larger areas.

4.4 Preserve historic building materials.

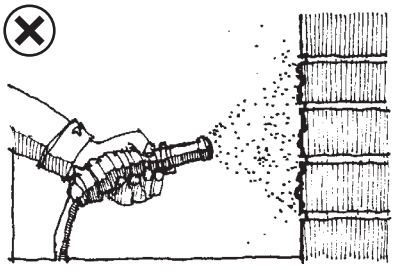
- Do not remove original material that is in good condition.
- Do not cover or obscure historic building materials.
- Consider removing later covering materials that are inappropriate.
- Repair historic building materials.
- Use storm drains, flashing, coping, gutters, etc. to provide proper drainage away from historic materials and minimize damage to them.



Inappropriate siding being removed from a historic brick Italianate building



Brick showing damage from inappropriate cleaning (photo courtesy of Heritage Ohio)



Harsh cleaning methods, such as sandblasting, can damage historic materials, changing their appearance.

PLEASE NOTE:

For technical information about the causes of damage and suggestions for appropriately repairing historic materials, please see the National Park Service's Preservation Briefs, available online at https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm.

4.5 Regularly inspect materials, so that damage can be caught and repaired early.

- Repair deteriorated historic building materials by patching, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing the material.

4.6 Replace historic materials in kind.

- Remove and replace only the material which is deteriorated or damaged beyond reasonable repair. For example, if a few pieces of siding are damaged beyond repair, replace only those boards, not the entire wall.
- Use replacement material that matches the original in profile, shape, finish, and size.
- Consider relocating historic material from a less visible area to replace damaged building material in a key location.
- An alternative material may be considered for a location that is not critical to the integrity of the property, such as a rear wall. (See "Prioritizing Character-Defining Features by Location" on page 2-7 for more information.)

Wood

Early woodwork includes siding, wall corner boards, window sashes and frames, doors, trim around window and door openings, foundation skirting, and soffits. When properly maintained, original wood building elements can last for many years.

4.7 Maintain a coat of paint on wood surfaces; repaint only as needed to prevent deterioration.

Paint is used to protect wood surfaces, but because it weathers over time, paint must be reapplied; the National Park Service recommends re-painting every 5–8 years, after properly preparing the painted surface.

- Avoid repainting for cosmetic reasons only.
- Do not use paints or sealants that are described as being water-repellent or water-proof; these can trap moisture within the wood and cause damage.
- Prime and coat all sides and edges of new wood, including cut ends, to block moisture and extend service life.

4.8 Repair, rather than replace, damaged wood whenever possible.

No matter how well wood building materials are maintained, sometimes exposure to moisture results in small areas of rot or other damage.

- Small areas of damage can often be easily repaired using an epoxy wood consolidant. These consolidants are available as liquids or putties, and are also formulated to be flexible, so that they do not crack as wood shrinks or swells with changes in humidity. Unlike wood fillers, epoxy can be shaped, carved, sanded, and painted just like wood.
- If a patch or Dutchman repair is appropriate, remove the least amount of material needed to properly execute the repair. Use wood as close to the original material as possible (same species, grain pattern, and color) for a less visible result.
- Identify the source of the moisture or damage and take steps to prevent further damage.
- Consider replacing rotten wood with a putty consolidant, or leave the damaged wood in place and consolidate it with the liquid version.
- When the repair is complete and the wood has been appropriately shaped and sanded, paint it to protect the rest of the original wood, as well as the repair.
- Regularly inspect for and address any ongoing problems.

PLEASE NOTE:

See the National Park Service's Preservation Brief No. 10, *Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork*, for information about appropriately dealing with painted wood. https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/10-paint-problems.htm



Maintain protective coatings to retard deterioration and ultraviolet damage.
© iStockPhoto.com/YinYang

4.9 If repair is not possible, replace only the damaged wood.

- Do not replace undamaged wood or a larger area than necessary.
- Use hand tools and take care to avoid damaging adjacent wood during removal.
- Replace the damaged boards with siding of the same species, texture, size, and profile.
- Use stainless steel nails to prevent corrosion and staining from rust.

4.10 Do not replace or cover undamaged wood.



Before: A historic house with inappropriate synthetic siding



After: The same house, after the historic siding was uncovered

Historic Masonry

Masonry is a type of construction that uses individual building units, such as bricks or stones, and binds them together with a *mortar*, a stiff paste that hardens as it dries. Mortar is usually made by mixing sand, water, and a binder; historically, lime was used as a binder, but it was replaced by Portland cement, which began to be manufactured in the United States in 1875 and became widely used by the early 1900s. The spaces between masonry units, which are filled with mortar, are called *mortar joints*. These joints can be *struck* or *tooled* (shaped) to give a variety of appearances and to channel water away from the surface of the masonry wall.

Brick is probably the most common masonry material used in Houston's historic districts. Natural stone, cast stone, structural clay tiles, and various types of concrete tiles and blocks are less commonly found in historic buildings here. Decorative tiles, which are set in mortar, and stucco, a plaster coating sometimes used over a masonry structure, are also common.

Masonry construction is designed to allow moisture to move from the inside of a wall or building to the outside, through evaporation or weep holes. **If moisture is a problem, address the source of the leak or infiltration directly**; avoid paint, coatings, or sealers which can trap moisture inside a building or masonry wall and cause damage and deterioration.

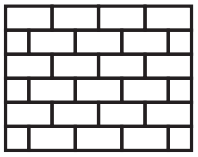
4.11 Preserve original masonry materials.

- Preserve significant masonry features, including cornices, pediments, steps, and foundations.
- Avoid dismantling and rebuilding a masonry wall (or a portion of it) if the wall can be repaired or repointed instead. Consult a qualified mason.
- Do not paint previously unpainted masonry without first obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness.
- Clean masonry materials using gentle products designed for that specific material or type of stone. Graffiti may be removed with a poultice (see Preservation Brief No. 1 by the National Park Service).
- Do not use high-pressure methods, including power washers, sandblasting or abrasive material of any kind; do not scrub with a wire brush. Abrasion from any of these sources can damage the face of masonry units (particularly bricks) and strip mortar from joints.

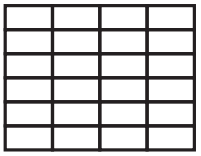
PLEASE NOTE:

For more information about appropriate maintenance methods, please see the National Park Service's Preservation Brief No. 1: *Assessing, Cleaning, and Water-Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings*. https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/1-cleaning-water-repellent.htm

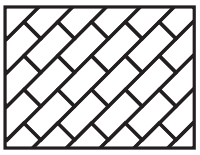
COMMON MASONRY PATTERNS



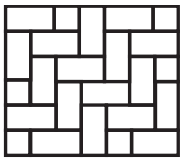
Running Bond



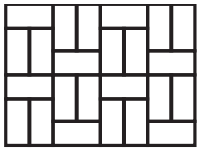
Stacked Bond



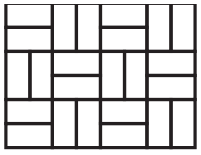
45 Degree Running Bond



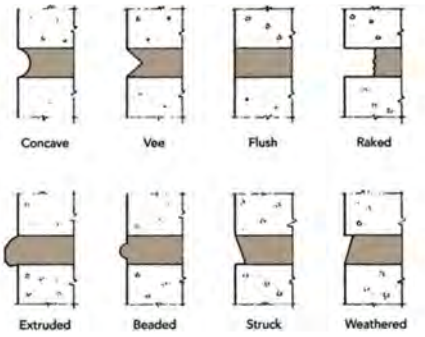
90 Degree Herringbone



Single Basketweave



Double Basketweave



Typical mortar joint profiles



Re-point mortar joints where there is evidence of deterioration.

4.12 Repoint a deteriorated mortar joint.

- Duplicate the original mortar in strength, composition, color, and texture. Mortar color-matching and composition analysis can be provided by a qualified laboratory for a relatively small fee.
- Avoid using mortar with a high Portland cement content if a softer mortar was used originally. Mortar is supposed to be the "sacrificial" element of a masonry wall system; that is, mortar must be softer than the masonry units, so that any cracks that occur will spread through the mortar, rather than the bricks.
- Match the original mortar joint in depth, width, and profile. A qualified mason can appropriately clean, repoint, and strike mortar joints.

4.13 Replace damaged masonry units only as a last resort.

- Match a replacement masonry unit to the rest of the historic masonry in the building. For example, salvaged, reclaimed, or color-matched historical bricks are available from suppliers.
- If a large masonry feature, such as a cornice or column, is too damaged to repair, replicate it in either the same kind of material or a compatible alternative material. Consult with the Historic Preservation Office staff for technical assistance.

Historic Metals

Historically, metals were used for a variety of applications. Cast iron columns, railings, and skylights; copper or zinc roofs, gutters, and downspouts; wrought iron balcony and stair railings; and other structural and decorative features were common and can still be found on many historic buildings. More recent historic buildings have incorporated steel and aluminum components. In some cases, a building component may be constructed from one type of metal and then plated (coated) with a different metal.

Like other materials, metal must be appropriately maintained. Damage can be caused by moisture, weathering, corrosion, impact damage, and failure of the material or its connections. For example, galvanic corrosion is an electrochemical reaction caused when two different metals, such as aluminum and steel, come into direct contact with one another and an electrolyte.





Historically, metals were used for a variety of applications, including columns, roofs, balcony railings, and other decorative features.

4.14 Preserve historically significant architectural metals.

- Identify the type of metal used and how it is expected to perform over time; regularly inspect the condition of metal components.
- Maintain protective coatings (including paint) on exposed metals, to prevent corrosion.
- If necessary, identify and consult with building restoration or conservation professionals who have expertise in specific types of metal (such as steel windows or cast iron).

4.15 Repair a metal feature, rather than replace it.

- Some metal building components may appear to be decorative, but may actually be structural. If you are not sure, consult with a qualified engineer or architect before beginning repair work.
- If the repair involves "hot" techniques such as welding, brazing, or soldering, be sure to use materials appropriate for the specific type of metal being repaired. Consult a qualified welder.
- For patching, splicing, reinforcing, and other "cold" repairs, use stainless steel parts and fasteners.

4.16 Replace a metal feature in kind only when it is beyond repair.

- Match the replacement to the original feature in design, character, and finish.
- Ensure that the new metal is compatible with the original. Avoid combining metals that would result in galvanic corrosion.
- If a connector fails between two pieces of metal, replace it with another appropriate connector, rather than using caulk or other adhesive to join the pieces of metal together.



Installation of fiber-cement siding



Faux-stone, panelized wall cladding (not appropriate for the Houston Heights Historic Districts)

Alternative Materials

An alternative material is one which is different from that used originally for a specific application. Such materials may also be called "substitute," "replacement," "synthetic," or "imitation" materials, and can include:

- Vinyl siding
- PVC or composite decking
- Aluminum siding
- Cementitious fiber siding
- Synthetic stucco (EIFS)
- Panelized brick
- Other non-original material

Substitute materials may sometimes be used to replace historic architectural features, such as a resin-cast cornice used in place of a stamped metal cornice. An alternative material may be traditional when used for other applications, but new for the particular detail being considered.

Alternative materials may be considered by the HAHC on a case-by-case basis as replacement materials or for use on a new addition or new building in a historic district. In evaluating alternative materials, HAHC will consider:

- **Potential impact on historic significance.** Because removing original material diminishes the integrity of a historic building, retaining the original material is always preferred. If this is not possible, an alternative material may be considered if it conveys the character of the original—including detail and finish—to the extent that is feasible.
- **Durability.** An alternative material should have proven durability in similar applications.
- **Appearance.** An alternative material should have a similar profile, texture, and finish to the original. For example, some synthetic siding has an exaggerated rusticated finish that is an inaccurate representation of original clapboard; many vinyl products have a glossy sheen that is out of character with painted wood or metal.
- **Cost.** Some alternative materials are promoted because their initial costs appear to be less than repairing or maintaining the original material. The lifecycle of a new material, and its long-term costs, should be considered.
- **Environmental impacts.** Consider the impacts associated with manufacture, transportation, installation, and ability to recycle.
- **Location.** Rear walls are not typically regulated (except on corner lots); parts of the building away from the street can be treated more flexibly than front walls or walls closer to the street.

PARTS OF A BUILDING

Siding

Siding is often identified by its *profile*, or the shape of the cut end of a board. Some particularly distinctive shapes are beveled, drop, and shiplap siding. The 117 and 105 profiles are particularly common in many of Houston's historic districts. The size of the *reveal* (the portion of the siding board that is visible after installation) and the finish of the siding, whether smooth or textured, also contribute to the overall visual impact of siding.

The most common types of siding found on historic houses in the Houston Heights Historic Districts are wood siding and decorative shingles (on gables).

In modern construction, siding usually covers a framed structural system. Shiplap siding, used in some early types of construction methods, may also serve as part of the structure of a building. As a result, structural siding must not be removed unless you have taken precautions to protect the structural integrity of the building. Please consult with the Planning staff in the Historic Preservation Office if you are unsure whether this applies to your project.



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Wood Siding

4.17 Preserve and maintain wood siding in good condition.

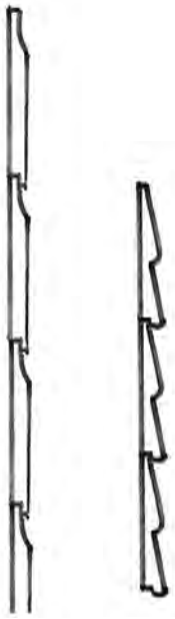
- Keep siding painted or stained to provide a protective coating against the weather.
- Regularly inspect siding for damage, and re-attach loose siding to prevent water intrusion into the wall.

4.18 Replace wood siding in kind.

- Replace the least amount of siding necessary. Wholesale replacement is not recommended and requires a COA.
- Match the original siding in size, profile, and thickness.
- Choose a durable and sustainable species of wood, such as cedar, cypress, or Douglas fir.
- Changing to a synthetic material is not recommended.

4.19 Determine whether siding components are damaged beyond repair.

- Individual pieces of siding may be replaced in-kind, per the ordinance. If more than 50% of siding on one wall/elevation is damaged beyond repair, it may be replaced with siding of the same material, profile, and finish. This requires a COA. Please contact the Historic Preservation Office staff for information about the documentation required to substantiate this level of damage.



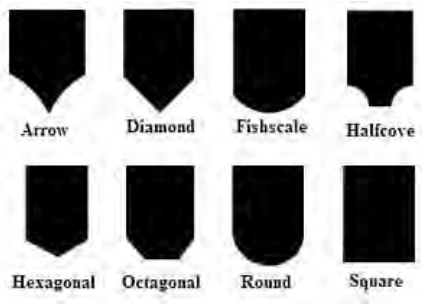
Typical siding profiles in the Heights: (left) 105 and (right) 117







Examples of decorative shingles in various shapes and patterns



Typical shapes for decorative wood shingles

Asbestos Siding

Asbestos-cement siding was made by combining Portland cement with asbestos fibers. Developed by the Johns-Manville Company, asbestos siding was popular between 1900 and 1950 for its durability and resistance to fire, termites, and rot. Asbestos siding can be painted.

4.20 Do not attempt to remove or cover asbestos siding yourself. Contact a qualified professional.

- Asbestos siding does not need to be removed; if left alone, it is not dangerous. However, breaking, cutting, sanding, or otherwise destroying any material containing asbestos is dangerous and creates a health hazard by releasing asbestos fibers into the air. Do not clean asbestos siding with a pressure washer, which can break it.

Decorative Shingles

Decorative shingles are used to create a textured wall surface. They often are used on front gables, particularly on Queen Anne and Folk Victorian houses. Fish-scale, dog-ear (octagonal), sawtooth, diamond, square, and rectangular shapes are common, and these may be combined and painted to create patterns and designs.

Decorative shingles are often made of cedar, which is moisture-resistant but not "waterproof." Shingles should be kept painted, stained, or sealed with an appropriate coating for best protection against weathering. Even so, cedar shingles may crack or deteriorate over time, and broken shingles should be replaced as needed.

4.21 Preserve and maintain decorative wood shingles in good condition.

- Keep shingles painted or stained to provide a protective coating against the weather.
- Regularly inspect shingles for damage and to ensure that they are still nailed securely. Re-attach loose shingles to prevent water intrusion into the wall.

4.22 Replace decorative shingles in kind.

- Replace the fewest shingles necessary.
- Match the original shingles in size, shape, and thickness.
- Choose a durable and sustainable species of wood, such as cedar or Douglas fir.
- Back-prime and paint all surfaces before installation.

Windows

Most windows are character-defining features and can help with the identification of architectural styles. This information applies to all types of windows, as well as window-like wall openings, such as gable vents, which provide ventilation for attic spaces.

The proportion, profile, lite pattern, material, and location of windows all contribute to the character of a window. For example, Queen Anne houses often have tall, narrow windows, reflecting the more vertical orientation of that architectural style. On the other hand, Craftsman houses tend to be more horizontally oriented, and their windows similarly are likely to be less tall, although still vertical in dimension. Windows on a Craftsman house are often arranged in pairs or horizontal *ribbons* (multiple windows, side-by-side) within a single frame. Some windows are more decorative than others, with leaded glass or multiple panes in an upper sash; these windows are usually found at the front of a house and are particularly important to preserve.

Windows in historic buildings were historically made of wood. Metal windows are also found in historic buildings; steel windows were common in industrial settings, and aluminum windows became popular in residential construction in the mid-20th century.

PLEASE NOTE:

The National Park Service publishes Preservation Brief No. 9: *The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows*, which is available free of charge online at https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/9-wooden-windows.htm.



A house with intact historic windows.

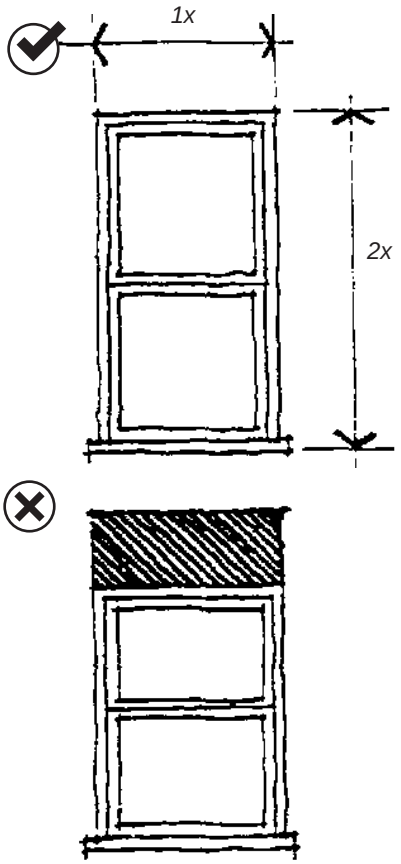
Wood Windows

Historic wood windows that were built before 1940 are likely to have been constructed with old-growth timber, which grew slowly and naturally, resulting in strong wood with a tight grain. Lumber available today is farmed to grow quickly, resulting in a product that is not as hard, strong, or stable. The quality of historic wood windows is usually far superior to a new wood window, and historic windows should be preserved and repaired, not replaced. In many cases, a historic window that is damaged or deteriorated can be repaired by re-glazing, patching, and splicing wood elements. A homeowner with a few hand tools can complete most window repairs, with no special skills needed.

Although studies have shown that 90% of energy loss from a building is through attics, doors, and floors — not windows — historic windows can be made more energy efficient. Repair and weatherization is usually less expensive than replacement. If an original window has been so damaged that it cannot be repaired, however, its replacement should be in character with the historic building.

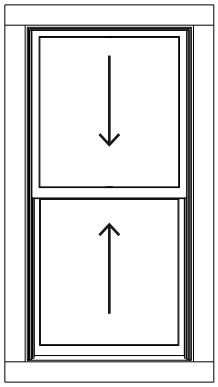
4.23 Preserve the proportions of historic window openings.

- Preserve the original size and shape of a window opening.
- Restore altered window openings on primary façades to their original configuration, when feasible.
- Do not significantly increase the amount of glass on a primary façade as it will negatively affect the integrity of the structure.

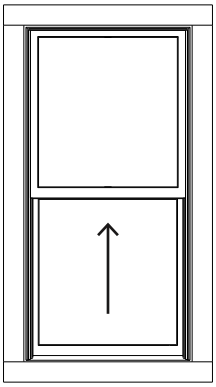


Choose a window that fits the opening; don't use a smaller window and fill in above it.

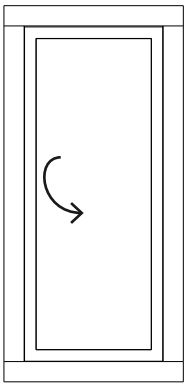
TYPICAL WINDOW TYPES



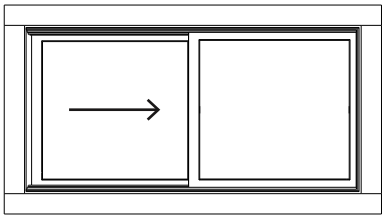
Double-Hung Window



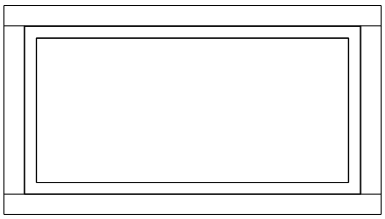
Single-Hung Window



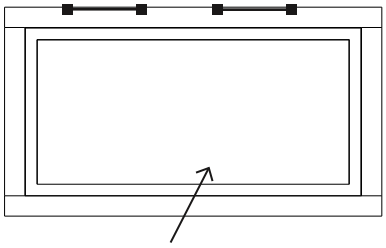
Casement Window



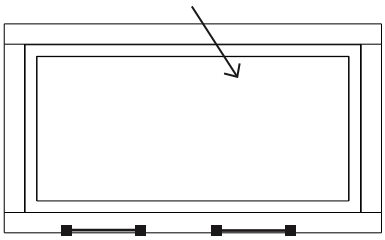
Sliding Sash Window



Fixed Window



Awning Window (hinged at top)



Hopper Window (hinged at bottom)

4.24 Preserve historic window components.

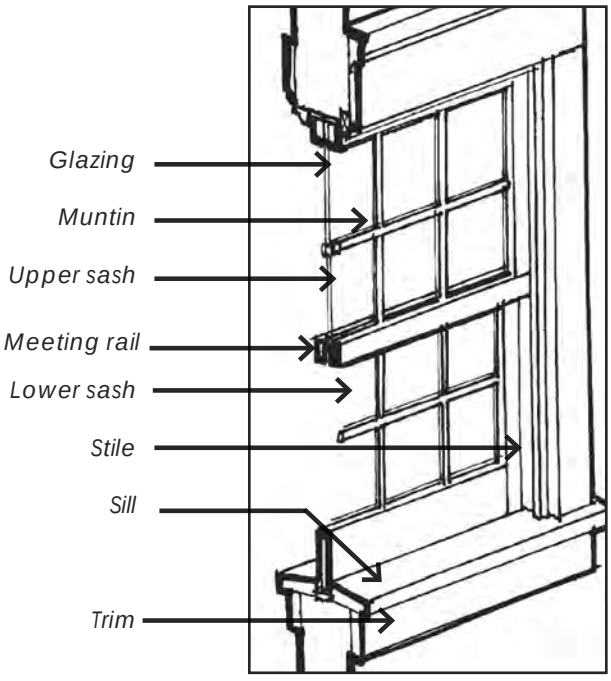
- Preserve the original size, position, number, and arrangement of historic windows in the wall of a building.
- Preserve historic window components, including the frame, sash, panes, muntins, mullions, glazing, sills, heads, jambs, moldings, operation, and groupings of windows.



Replacing glazing putty
© iStockPhoto.com/Elaine Odell

4.25 Repair, rather than replace, frames, sashes, and other features.

- **Windows that have been painted shut are not considered damaged.** Use hand tools, such as a putty knife or five-in-one tool, to cut carefully through paint around the window sash without damaging it. Gently pry the window open, using a small pry bar, if necessary.
- Broken sash cords can be replaced by a handy homeowner with just a few tools.
- Brittle or missing glazing putty or glazing strips can be replaced; do not use caulk instead of appropriate glazing material.
- Small areas of rot or similar damage are most likely to be found at the window sill, where water may pool or splash onto the lower edge of the sash. Consider using a wood consolidant in these locations to preserve the original wood.
- If a patch or Dutchman repair is appropriate, remove the least amount of material needed to properly execute the repair. Use wood as close to the original material as possible (same species, grain pattern, and color) for a less visible result.
- Avoid painting windows shut.
- If using heat to strip paint from windows, take care to remove or otherwise protect the glass.



Double-hung window components



The profile of this window and its trim both lack the proper depth.



Unfinished metal windows such as these alter the character of window openings, and should not be used in highly visible locations.



Appropriate new windows are the right size and material.

4.26 Determine whether window components are damaged beyond repair.

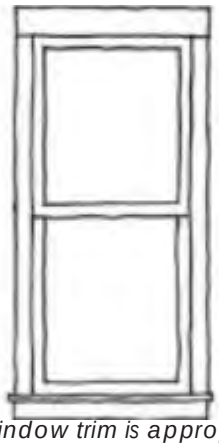
Damage beyond repair is determined on a case-by-case basis. Discuss with Historic Preservation Office staff for application requirements and resources.

4.27 Enhance the energy efficiency of an existing historic window, rather than replacing it.

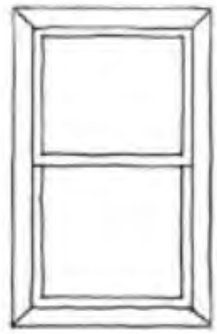
- Add weatherstripping and caulking around the window frame.
- Install a storm window or insulated window shade. Interior storm windows are available and easy to install and remove. Exterior storm windows may be added without a COA.
- Use clear ultraviolet (UV)-blocking films or low-E films to prevent heat gain. If using low-E films, place them on the most exterior window surface (such as a storm window).

4.28 If replacement cannot be avoided, match a new window to the original.

- Do not replace an entire window if new components, such as sash packs, are available. Replace the frame as a last resort.
- Match the original sash configuration: single-hung, double-hung, casement, etc.
- If damage is confined to one sash, look for a historic salvaged replacement sash.
- Select a similar profile and depth of trim, as well as the arrangement and number of layers of trim from the frame to the glass. (No flat boards.) All new windows must be recessed.
- If the original window had divided panes (lites), select a replacement window that is made with genuine muntins, with panes of glass set between them. Do not choose a window with strips of material located between large panes of glass to simulate muntins.
- Use the same material as the original window, especially on highly visible walls. Consider an alternative material only if the appearance of the window components will match those of the original in dimension, profile, and finish. The type of material is likely to affect the dimensions of the sash components: Historic wood windows often have more narrow sashes and frames than modern synthetic windows due to the nature of the material and manufacturing process.
- Although the City does not regulate glass, consider using clear window glass (glazing) to convey the visual appearance of historic glass. Visible differences in the reflectivity of new vs. historic glass can have a negative impact. If transparent low-E glass is used, ensure that the low-E glass is the outermost surface to avoid damaging a storm window.
- While windows with unfinished metals, metallic finishes, and reflective window glazing are allowed if mounted appropriately, they are not recommended.
- Vinyl windows are not recommended. If used, they must be recessed and inset to simulate a traditional window profile. Fin-mounted windows are neither appropriate nor compatible within the historic districts.



This window trim is appropriately sized and includes a proper sill.



Avoid using same-sized trim with mitered corners.

Altering an existing window opening

Although preserving all historic windows is recommended, a change in the size and shape of an original window opening may be considered (a) in a location that is not highly visible from the street, such as on a side wall toward the rear of the building, and (b) when the existing window is not a key character-defining feature. Do not alter a window opening on or near the front of a building.

4.29 Reuse the original window to replace another that is beyond repair; move to another location, when feasible; or store it.

- If a window opening is to be altered, resulting in the removal of an original window, consider using that window to replace another that is beyond repair.
- Original windows that have been removed may also be used in an addition in some cases.
- Store an original window in a location where it will be protected from damage and weather. Store the window upright and elevated on plastic-covered blocks to keep moisture from wicking from the ground to the window. Do not store a window in a flat orientation where glass is more likely to be broken, or stack windows on top of one another.

4.30 Design a new window to be compatible with the historic building.

- Use a simple shape for the window with a profile that is simple in character to identify the window as being new.
- More flexibility in window design, including size and detailing, may be considered farther back on the side wall of a building.
- Reglazing with frosted glass is permitted if privacy is a concern.

Installing a window in a new location

Occasionally, a new window may be needed in a location that did not have one historically. This may be considered where (a) the new window would not be in a highly visible location and (b) creating the opening would not destroy any key character-defining features, such as on a side wall toward the rear of the building. Do not create a new window opening on the front of a building.

Be aware that shiplap is a structural element of an exterior wall, so installing a window in a new location may not be a simple task.

4.31 Design a new window to be compatible with the historic building.

- Use a simple shape for the window, with a profile that is simple in character, to identify the window as being new.
- More flexibility in window design, including size and detailing, may be considered farther back on the side wall of a building.
- Properly detailed trim around openings should mimic a structure: the jambs should appear to rest on the sill and to support the lintel. The lintel should be deeper than the jamb width. Avoid mitered corners.

Doors

Many types and styles of front doors can be found on historic Houston buildings. Some are solid wood with decorative panels, while others are wood with glass lites; some have sidelights and transoms. The door is often one of the primary character-defining features of a historic building, and a door's character is based on its design, materials, and location. When a new door is needed, it should be in character with the building, especially when it is the primary entrance.

4.32 Preserve the proportions of a historic door and its opening.

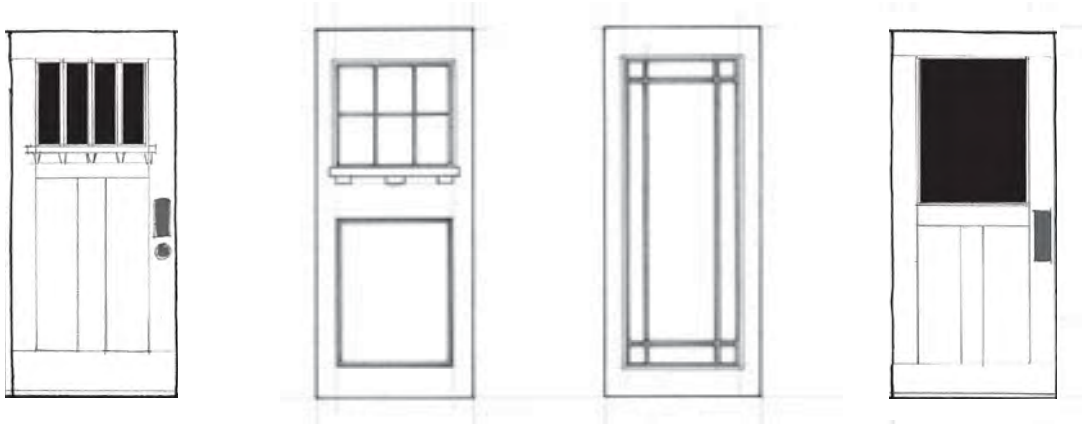
- Preserve a door's character-defining features, including its location, size, frame, panels, panes, muntins, glazing, thresholds, and moldings.
- Keep doors appropriately painted or stained to protect the wood from weather.
- Do not alter the original size and shape of a historic door opening that is located in a highly visible location.
- When possible, restore a previously altered door opening in a highly visible location.

PLEASE NOTE:

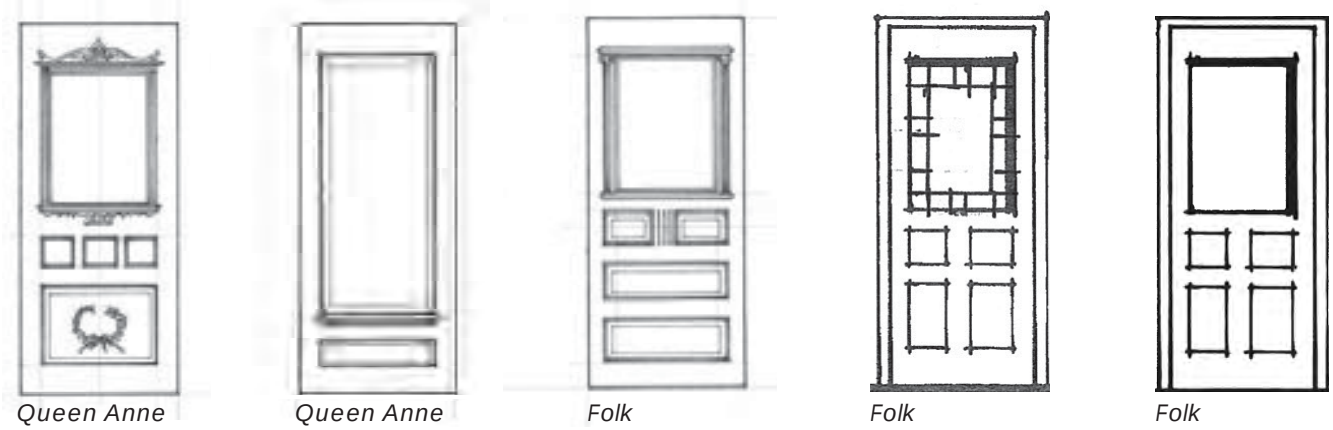
If **security** is a concern, install long-throw deadbolt locks with reinforced deadbolt and lockset strike plates. Use extra-long (3") screws to attach strikeplates through the doorjamb and into the studs.

For **energy efficiency**, apply caulk around the interior door frame and maintain or install weatherstripping. Historic solid and paneled wood doors have good thermal properties.

TYPICAL CRAFTSMAN RESIDENTIAL DOORS



TYPICAL VICTORIAN ERA RESIDENTIAL DOORS



Queen Anne *Queen Anne* *Folk* *Folk* *Folk*



This door with a transom above is appropriate for a Victorian-era house.



This replacement door with ornate, faux leaded glass would be inappropriate on many historic buildings.

4.33 Repair, rather than replace, a historic door.

- For information about repairing the window or lites in a door, see information about repairing historic wood windows.
- For small areas of damage, consider using a wood consolidant to preserve the original wood.
- If a patch or Dutchman repair is appropriate, remove the least amount of material needed to properly execute the repair. Use wood as close to the original material as possible (same species, grain pattern, and color) for a less visible result.

4.34 If a door cannot be repaired, match its replacement to the original.

- If a similar door on the same building is available to be moved from a less prominent location, this option is preferred.
- If an existing replacement door is not available, match the new replacement door to the original door's design. For example, the number, size, and arrangement of panels and lites should be the same.
- Match the material of the original door, or choose a material that will look similar after it is painted.
- If the original door design is unknown, use a design that is appropriate to the architectural style of the house.

Altering an existing door opening

A change in the size and shape of an original door opening may be considered if (a) the door is not highly visible from the street, such as on a side wall toward the rear of the building, and (b) the existing door is not a character-defining feature of the building and, therefore, may be altered without substantially affecting the integrity of the historic building. Do not alter a historic door opening on the front of a building. If a change is appropriate:

4.35 Design the new door to be compatible with the historic building.

- Use a design that is simple in character and of its own time, so that the door will be easy to identify as being new.
- More flexibility in door design, including size and detailing, may be considered farther back on the side wall of a building.

4.36 Reuse the original door in another location, if possible, or consider storing it for future use.

- If a door opening is to be altered, consider using the original door to replace another door in a more prominent location that is beyond repair.
- Store a historic door in a location where it will be protected from weather and moisture. If storing a historic door in a garage, keep it in an upright position and elevate it above the floor on blocks covered in plastic, to prevent moisture wicking up from the ground.

Doors on a duplex

When converting a duplex with two front doors to single family use, the treatment depends on whether the building was originally a duplex or not.

4.37 Preserve both front doors on a duplex when they are original.

- Retain both front doors; one may be made inoperable.
- Alternatively, replace one of the doors with a window and leave the other door as-is.

4.38 A previously altered front entry may be restored.

- If a building was converted from single-family use to a duplex, and historical evidence for a single front entry door is available, you may restore the front entry to its original configuration.

Installing a door in a new location

In some cases, a new door may be needed in a location that did not have one historically. This may be considered where (a) the new door would not be highly visible from the street and (b) creating the opening would not destroy any key other character-defining features. (See page 2-7 for diagrams that illustrate sensitive and less-sensitive locations for alterations.)

4.39 Design the new door to be compatible with the historic building.

- Use a design that is simple in character and of its own time, so that the door will be easy to identify as being new.
- More flexibility in door design, including size and detailing, may be considered farther back on the side wall of a building.



Preserve the proportions of a historic door and its opening.



This replacement door is a style popular in the mid-20th century and would be inappropriate for a contributing building in the Houston Heights Historic Districts.



A wrap-around porch

Porches

Porches are one of the most important character-defining features for houses in Houston's historic districts. Front porches frame and shelter primary entrances, and they often include distinctive decorative details which help to define an architectural style. Front porches often establish a consistent one-story line along a blockface. Some porches *wrap around* from the front to one or both sides of a house.

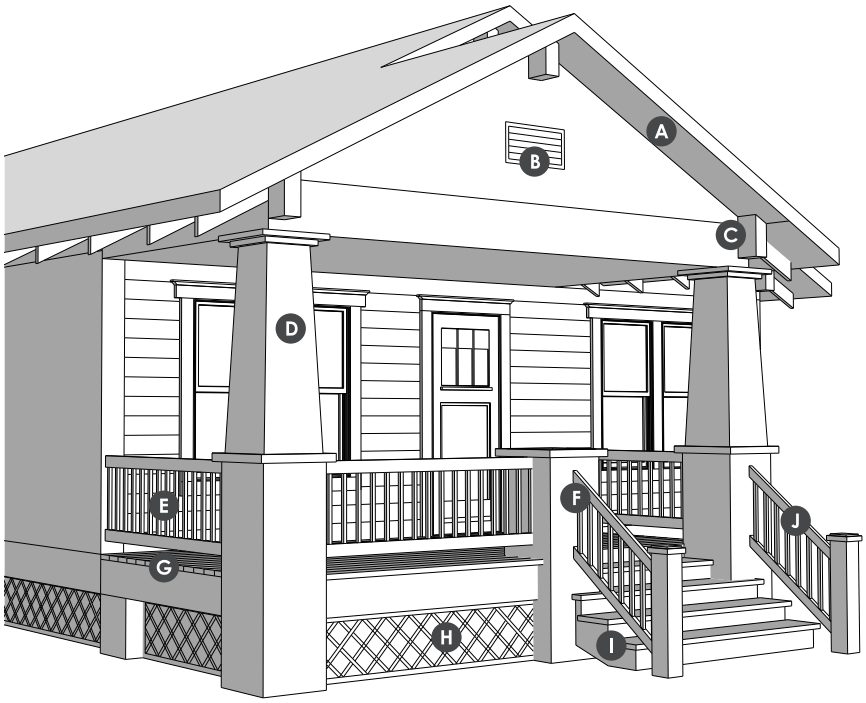
Separate side porches are present on some historic houses. When visible from the street, side porches contribute to the character of both the property and the historic district, particularly when the house is located on a corner lot and the side porch faces a street.

Porches typically consist of the following parts: a hipped, gabled, or shed roof, which is supported by posts or columns and finished with a ceiling; a guardrail/balustrade between the posts, which includes top and bottom rails, with balusters in between; a floor or deck; and steps from the ground to the porch, which may be flanked on either side by posts or piers and sometimes handrails.

Note: Please refer to the Houston Building Code for additional requirements for guardrails and handrails.

TYPICAL PORCH FEATURES

KEY:	
A	Porch Eave
B	Gable Vent
C	Decorative Roof Beam/ Triangular Knee Brace
D	Column
E	Balustrade/Guardrail
F	Raised Pier
G	Porch Deck
H	Skirting/Screening
I	Stringer
J	Handrail



Porches are such important visual elements that inappropriate changes can have a negative impact on the entire house. For example, original porch materials may have been replaced with inappropriate designs, porch components or details may be missing, or a porch may have been partially or completely enclosed to create more living space. Most of these alterations are, fortunately, reversible; many off-the-shelf products match historic designs, and custom fabrication is readily available when necessary. A property owner who wishes to restore a porch should refer to historic photographs of the property and consult with Historic Preservation Office staff, who can provide helpful guidance.

For Existing Porches

4.40 Preserve an original porch, including its form, materials, and details.

- Keep wooden porch elements painted.
- Maintain the height and pitch of a porch roof.
- Do not enclose a front porch in a way that alters its open character.
- When screening a porch, do not damage or remove existing porch elements, such as posts and railings.
- Maintain the original location of front porch steps.

4.41 Repair, rather than replace, damaged portions of a porch.

- For small areas of damage, consider using a wood consolidant to preserve the original wood.
- If a patch or Dutchman repair is appropriate, remove the least amount of material needed to properly execute the repair. Use wood as close to the original material as possible (same species, grain pattern, and color) for a less visible result.
- Do not replace an entire porch when repair is possible.

REPAIRING PORCH RAILINGS

Avoid removing original materials that are in good condition or that can be repaired in place.



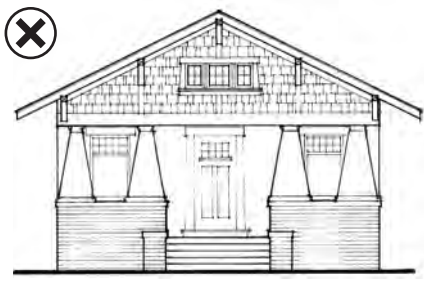
Before: A deteriorated handrail



After: Handrail repaired and the post replaced in kind



This original porch has been preserved in an appropriate manner.



Oversized columns like these are a modern interpretation of historic details and are appropriate for new construction, but not an existing historic porch.



Consider restoring a porch to its original condition. This porch enclosure is inappropriate.

4.42 If repair is not possible, replace only those elements of the porch which are not repairable.

- Replace a historic porch element to match the original.
- Use materials that match the style, texture, finish, composition, and proportion of the original.
- Match the guardrail (balustrade) of a historic porch in scale, profile, and character.
- Replace wooden porch steps with the same size material and profile. Substitute materials, such as composites, may be appropriate if their appearance matches that of the original material.

4.43 Replace porch decking with similar materials.

- When replacing deck boards, use the same size material and profile (such as tongue-and-groove). Substitute materials, such as composites, may be appropriate for porch decking.
- Do not replace undamaged deck boards.
- Do not replace a wooden porch deck with concrete.
- Do not cover porch decking with tile.

Adding a New Porch to an Existing Building

A new porch may be added in a location where it will not affect the integrity of the contributing building, such as at the rear of the building or toward the rear on a side wall. A new porch can also be included as part of a larger addition, particularly when the porch helps to reduce the perceived mass and scale of the addition. A new front porch may be added to a noncontributing building where one did not originally exist.

4.44 Design a new porch to be compatible with the existing building.

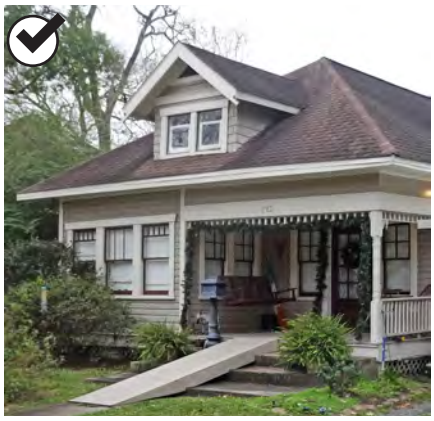
- Keep the scale, proportion, and character of the new porch compatible with the historic structure.
- Match the finished floor height of the new porch to the existing building.
- The eave height of a new porch can match the eave height of an existing front porch or be lower.
- Use materials that are similar in scale, proportion, texture, and finish to an existing front porch.

4.45 If a porch element or the entire porch is to be reconstructed, base the new design on historical evidence.

- Where an entire original porch is missing, base the replacement design on physical evidence (such as ghosting of post profiles remaining on wood surfaces) or on photographic evidence. Sanborn maps can show the location of the previous porch and whether it was full or partial width. If no photographic evidence exists, look at houses of the same style in your context area and design the porch using simplified versions of those porch elements.
- Size columns and posts appropriately for the porch roof they are supporting and for the bases on which they rest. For example, slender posts will be visually out of balance with large roofs and massive bases.
- Select columns and posts that are appropriate for the architectural style of the house. For example, slender turned wood columns are typical for Queen Anne houses, while thicker square-tapered columns are typical for Craftsman houses.
- Do not use metal columns or railings unless there is clear evidence that they were used historically.
- Use a brick base beneath a wood column only for a Craftsman house and where evidence is available that this previously existed. Stone is not appropriate in the Houston Heights Historic Districts.
- Choose a railing that is in character with the style of the building, and not more elaborate than what existed historically.
- If a one-story porch has its own roof, the height of the porch roof should be lower than the main roof.
- The roof of the porch may be hipped, gabled, or shed. It is not required to match the main roof of the house.



Replacement porch elements (unpainted) match the original components.



A temporary ramp that does not alter character-defining features is appropriate.

Accessibility

If accessibility solutions, such as ramps or lifts, are needed, owners of historic properties should comply to the fullest extent possible with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Texas Accessibility Design Guidelines (TAS) provisions, while also preserving the integrity of the character-defining features of their buildings and sites. Design accessibility solutions to minimize impacts on a historic structure.

Installation of accessibility ramps and lifts require a Certificate of Appropriateness but can be approved administratively by the Planning Director. The **removal** of ramps and lifts does not require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

4.46 Adapt historic doorways to make them accessible.

- Instead of widening an existing door opening, install offset or "swing wide" door hinges to increase the usable size of a door opening by two inches.
- Consider replacing door thresholds with beveled alternatives, no higher than ¾ inch, to allow wheelchairs and scooters to maneuver over them easily.
- If historic door hardware is removed for replacement with accessible alternatives, such as lever handles, store the original hardware in a secure location where it will be protected from weather, so that it may be reinstalled at some point in the future.

4.47 Add ramps or lifts to provide access to at least one door.

- The Americans with Disabilities Act recommends that a ramp to be used by someone in a wheelchair or scooter should have no more than a 1:12 slope; that is, for every one inch in height between the starting point and ending point, the ramp should be one foot long.
- If porch components must be removed in order to create access for a ramp or lift, take photographs to document the original condition of the porch. Use hand tools and take care that the components to be removed are not damaged. Store the original components in a secure location, away from weather, with a copy of the photo documentation (also protected from weather). Additional notes about the project may help someone to re-install the removed porch elements in the future.

Building Foundations

Every building sits on a *foundation*, which transfers the weight of the building to the ground. Historically, many 19th-century buildings (regardless of size) were constructed on pier-and-beam foundations. Piers were usually built using bricks or stone blocks, laid together with mortar to create a load-bearing column. Later, piers were built using concrete blocks or poured concrete and sometimes covered in brick or stone veneer. (When wooden posts were used instead of masonry piers, that is a *post-and-beam* foundation.)



A foundation with masonry piers

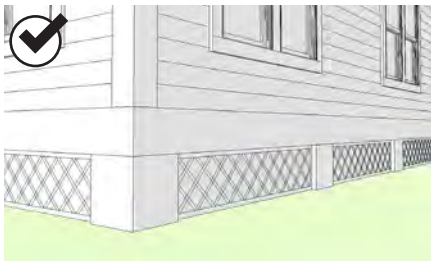
To construct a pier-and-beam foundation, piers were placed at the corners of the building, then equally spaced around the perimeter and across the interior of the foundation. Heavy beams were laid across the piers, with floor joists resting on the beams, and the floor atop the joists. The house was then built on that platform. Pier-and-beam foundations have many benefits, including good ventilation and drainage, easy access to plumbing and other utilities within the crawlspace under the building, and the ability to move with Houston's heavy clay soils as they swell and shrink.

The design of a building's foundation, including the materials used, height of the finished floor, and screening details (where present), are character-defining features.

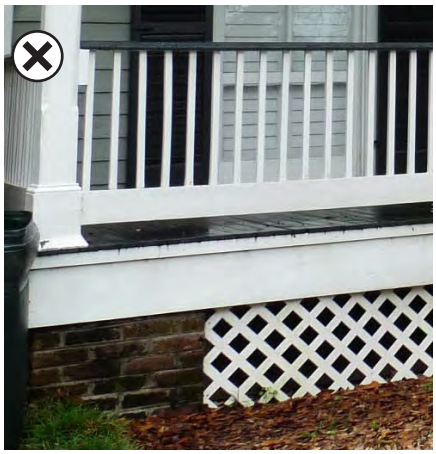
4.48 Maintain the historic height of the finished floor above natural grade, if possible.

HAHC may allow structures to be raised to maintain an appropriate height above the soil, if there is a demonstrated need. Please contact the Historic Preservation Office staff to discuss your individual situation and how best to address the conditions specific to your property.

- Foundation height should not be changed unless required to preserve the integrity of the foundation, such as problems that can occur with insufficient space between the ground and the structure. Changing the height of a foundation may damage porch piers and chimneys, which also must be raised.
- Have piers adjusted or shimmed, if needed, to keep the house level. Consult a qualified foundation professional for more information about this process.



Screening panels may be installed between foundation piers. Screening panels should be framed around the lattice pieces.





Examples of Inappropriate unframed lattice

4.49 Maintain (or add, if desired) screening between piers. To keep animals out of the crawlspace area, it was and is common for homeowners to install *skirting* or *screening* between foundation piers, particularly under the porch. Historically, this consisted of framed lattice panels, sawn wood balusters, or horizontal wood siding. Because these materials are in contact with the ground, maintenance is essential, and they may need to be repaired or replaced at regular intervals.

- Repair foundation components that are damaged or deteriorated.
- Keep screening materials painted and secured to the piers.
- Periodically inspect and repair any damage to wooden screening material.
- Re-point any eroded mortar joints, to prevent moisture infiltration and damage.

4.50 New screening panels may be installed between piers.

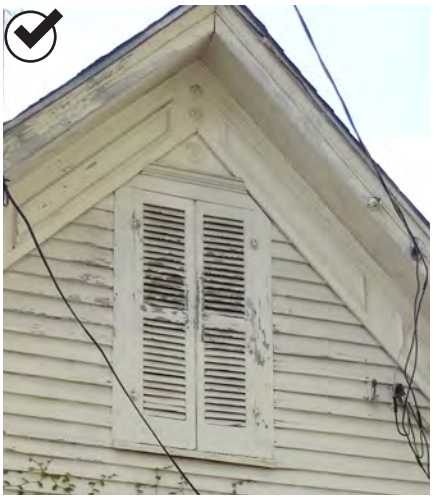
- Choose a screening design that is consistent with the architectural style of the house. Diagonal or square lattice is a good choice for most houses.
- Create panels by setting wood lattice, siding, or balusters into a frame. Do not use unframed materials. Do not use paneling that gives the appearance of stone or brick, or fill the space between piers with concrete blocks or other masonry.
- If using lattice, choose a pressure-treated wood product rather than plastic "garden" lattice, which has very large holes that are likely to admit animals into the crawlspace. If you build your own lattice, you may wish to use wooden slats that measure 1½ inches wide by ¼ inches thick and are arranged with a 1-inch x 1-inch space between, for a historically authentic appearance that will keep out animals.
- If using square (vertical-horizontal) lattice, install so that the vertical pieces are toward the outside.
- Inset the screening panels from the face of the foundation piers. Do not lean or attach panels against the outside of the house or piers, or cover the lower portion of a wall.
- Secure screening panels in a way that does not damage historic materials; for example, attach to mortar joints, rather than drilling into brick.

Historic Shutters

Wooden shutters are found on many historic buildings, although the number of houses in Houston Heights that may have originally had shutters is unknown. Shutters provide security and protection from weather. In the southern United States, shutters typically were constructed with angled, adjustable louvers to allow ventilation while blocking the sun. Not all historic houses had shutters, however, and while historic shutters should be preserved, shutters should not be added to a building that did not historically have them.

4.51 Preserve a historic shutter.

- Do not remove historic shutters.
- Shutters are meant to be operational; do not nail them to the wall. Use original hardware, if it still exists, or source appropriate replacements.
- Louvered shutters should be installed so that the louvers angle down and back toward the house when the shutters are open.
- Keep shutters painted, particularly on the upper surfaces, which are more prone to weathering. If painting shutters, ensure that they remain operational afterward.



Preserve a historic wood shutter.

4.52 Repair historic shutters, rather than replacing them.

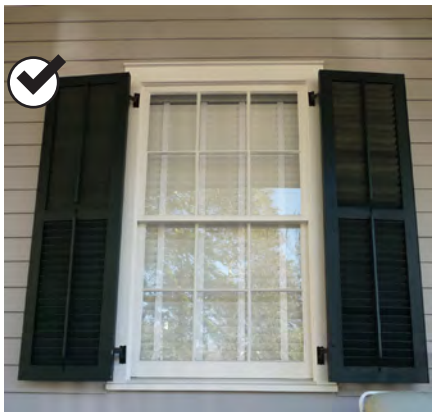
- Small areas of rot or similar damage are most likely to be found at the window sill, where water may pool or splash onto the lower edge of the shutter. Consider using a wood consolidant in these locations to preserve the original wood.
- If a patch or Dutchman repair is appropriate, remove the least amount of material needed to properly execute the repair. Use wood as close to the original material as possible (same species, grain pattern, and color) for a less visible result.



Use a replacement shutter that fits the window opening.

4.53 If repair is not possible, match a replacement shutter to the original.

- Match the size, depth, texture, and scale of the original shutters. The type of material is not regulated, as long as it is visually compatible.
- Shutters should appear to be operable (even if they are not).
- Do not install shutters that are narrower than the associated window or opening.



Use operable blinds or shutters hung with hinges.

4.54 Do not add shutters to a building that did not have them historically.

- Document the historic presence of shutters through photographs.
- Match the historic shutters in design, size, and proportion.
- Shutters should appear to be operable.

PLEASE NOTE:

For more information, refer to the National Park Service's Preservation Brief No 44: *The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings, Repair, Replacement and New Design*. https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/44-awnings.htm





Maintain awning frames and any moving parts.



Awnings are still present on the Milroy House today.

Awnings

Awnings can provide shade and heat control in the summer and may be considered as a preferred alternative to installing replacement windows. Otherwise, awnings are most appropriate when evidence such as photographic evidence or *ghosting* (physical marks on the house) suggests that they were used historically. Fabric awnings have a limited service life of about eight to ten years, if left up year-round. When replacing fabric awning covers, choose a durable, weather-resistant material, such as canvas or a similar woven fabric. A COA is not needed to replace fabric, as long as the awning frame is left intact.

4.55 Preserve and repair an original awning, if possible.

- Do not remove an original historic awning that is made of a material other than fabric.
- Maintain awning frames and any moving parts.
- Keep awnings clean.

4.56 If historical evidence shows that an awning was present, a new awning that fits the window or door opening may be installed.

- Use a shed-type awning for a rectangular window or door opening.
- Use rounded awning forms over arched windows to match the curve of the window opening.
- Do not install a rounded (bubble or dome) awning over a rectangular opening.
- Do not install awnings so that they cover transom lights or decorative millwork, unless historical evidence or documentation shows this condition.



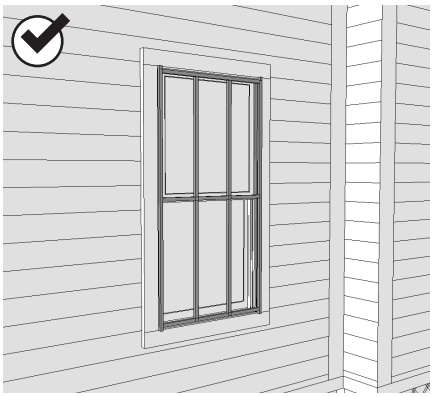
Awnings are visible on the Milroy house in this historic photo (courtesy of Randy Pace).

Burglar Bars

If it is necessary to install security bars (aka *burglar bars*) on a historic building, the bars should be as inconspicuous as possible and must not alter character-defining features of the building. Consider using interior, operable, or transparent devices which will not alter the exterior appearance of the building. The installation of burglar bars requires a Certificate of Appropriateness, but this can be approved administratively by the Planning Director. Removal of burglar bars does not require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

4.57 Minimize the visual impact of burglar bars and similar security devices.

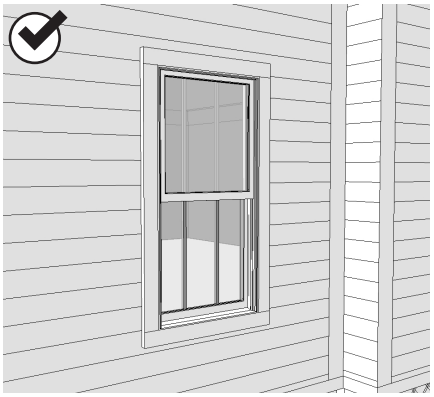
- Locate security bars inside the structure, if possible.
- Avoid an ornate design that would be out of character with the historic building.



Minimize the visual impact of burglar bars by avoiding ornate designs and not damaging features of the building.

4.58 Do not damage character-defining features when installing burglar bars and similar devices.

- Identify character-defining features in advance and plan to avoid drilling, cutting, or removing them during the installation process. The installation of burglar bars must be reversible.



Locate burglar bars inside the structure, if possible.

PLEASE NOTE:

Roof pitch, or steepness, is described as "X-over-12" where X is the number of inches the slope rises vertically for every 12 inches that it runs horlizontally.



A front gabled roof



A hipped roof



A hip-on-gable roof

Roofs

A roof is a prominent character-defining feature of a historic building. The shape, pitch, complexity, materials, and treatment of eaves and soffits are all key characteristics of a roof.

Many roofs on older residential buildings have one of the following shapes: gabled, hipped, pyramidal, hip-on-gable, gable-on-hip, or some combination. Roof shapes may be simple or complex; they may be sloped with a steep pitch or a low pitch. Craftsman roofs typically have a 5-over-12 or 6-over-12 pitch, while Queen Anne roofs are steeper, with an 8-over-12 pitch or higher.

"Flat" (actually flat-appearing, but still slightly angled) roofs are found in many commercial and some later Mid-Century residential buildings. Along with a roof's shape, its complexity and pitch can help identify a building's architectural style.

Typical 19th and early 20th century roofing materials included slate, metal, wood shingles, clay tile, asbestos-cement tile, and composition materials. Today, dimensional composition shingles are common. Slate and clay tile roofs are secured with metal fasteners, which may deteriorate over time and need to be replaced. These roofs can be damaged by unskilled repair attempts; consult with a qualified roofing company that specializes in these products in historic applications.

Eaves may be boxed with soffits, or open with exposed rafter tails. They may be wide or narrow, and may be ornamented with brackets or braces. All of these character-defining details are stylistically distinctive.

While slate, metal, and tile roofing materials should be preserved, composition shingles are designed to have a limited service life. When replacing roofing materials, the new material should be similar in size, shape, and texture with what was used historically, if that is known. If documentation is not available, examples from similar buildings may be considered. A Certificate of Appropriateness is not required for re-roofing with in-kind materials, as long as there is no change to the structure, shape, or pitch of the roof.

If you have or are seeking windstorm insurance, the roofing contractor may need to use impact-resistant shingles, install them in a certain way, and possibly install strapping to secure the roof deck to the trusses, in order for your roof to receive windstorm certification by a qualified inspector. Please consult your insurance agent for more information.

4.59 Preserve the original form of a historic roof.

- Maintain the perceived ridge line, eave line, and orientation of the roof, as seen from the street.
- Maintain the size, shape, and pitch of the historic roof (and dormers, where present).
- Do not alter the pitch of a historic roof.

4.60 Preserve the original eave depth and design.

- Maintain traditional overhangs; these contribute to the building's historic character.
- Do not cut back soffits or exposed roof rafters.

4.61 Repair, rather than replace, historic roofing materials and details, if possible.

- Re-attach loose shingles or other materials.
- Fix any roof leaks or damage immediately.
- When roof materials such as glazed clay tile or slate are in need of repair, consult with a qualified roofing company that specializes in these materials on historic buildings.
- Patch and replace only those areas that are damaged, rather than replacing the entire roof.
- Do not attempt to repair an asbestos-cement shingle roof yourself. Walking on asbestos-cement shingles can cause cracking and other damage. Contact a qualified contractor that specializes in slate or tile roofs.



Do not cut back a roof eave so it is flush with the wall.



Asbestos-cement shingles have an estimated 50–70 year service life.



Maintain traditional overhangs: These contribute to the perception of the building's historic scale and its character.



Patch and replace damaged areas of the existing roof.

PLEASE NOTE:

A certificate of appropriateness is not required for ordinary maintenance and repair, or for reroofing with in-kind materials with no change to the structure, shape, or pitch of the roof.

Re-roofing includes replacing shingles and/or underlayment/ decking. Repairing or reinforcing existing roof joists or rafters as needed to meet windstorm certification requirements, or adding hurricane straps, also does not require a COA.

See: DIVISION 4. - CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS
Sec. 33-237. - Exemptions.



The red metal roof on this house is more appropriate for a commercial building, not a residential one.

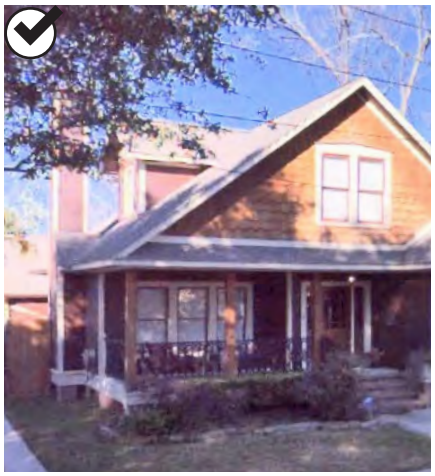
4.62 Apply new roof materials that convey a scale and texture similar to historic materials.

- Use materials that appear similar in texture, pattern, and finish to the original roof material.
- An asphalt or asphalt-fiberglass composition shingle is appropriate for most styles and periods, unless specialty roofing materials (such as slate or clay tile) are present. Either three-tab or architectural (dimensional) shingles may be used. Windstorm-certified, impact-resistant shingles are permitted.
- If new roof decking is needed, consider using a material with a reflective coating on the underside for better energy efficiency.
- If installing a new metal roof, apply it in a manner that is compatible with the historic character.
- Metal roofs are allowed for additions to **residential buildings.**
  - Material should be a typical metal color (silver, bronze, etc.) with a matte, nonreflective finish.
  - Material should be appropriately sized for a residential building. For example, standing seam metal roofs should measure approximately 18–24 inches between interlocking seams. (If ribs are present between the interlocking seams, measure between the seams, not between the seam and the rib.)
- Metal roofs for additions to **commercial buildings** should be appropriately sized and may be finished in a neutral color.
- A tile or slate roof is only appropriate where documentation indicates that it was used historically.

Dormers

A dormer is a small structure that projects from (sticks out of) the roof and has its own roof, window(s), and walls. Dormers were often used, historically, to house a window so that light could enter an attic space. In some cases, dormers were used to create headroom in upper floors and finished attics, creating additional livable space. Dormers may be found singly or in pairs; their roofs are typically the same style (gabled, hipped, etc.) as the main roof of the house. Lower-profile, shed-roofed dormers can be found on some bungalows.

Dormers are subordinate in scale and character to the primary roof. Where they are already present, historic dormers should be preserved. New dormers, if desired, should be compatible with the character of the historic building and subordinate to the primary roof.



Preserve and maintain a historically significant dormer.

4.63 Preserve and maintain a historic dormer.

- Maintain the original size and shape of a dormer.
- Original dormers which are located on a front-facing roof should be preserved.
- For additional information about the parts of a dormer, refer to the guidelines for preserving and maintaining roofs, windows, and walls.

4.64 Repair, rather than replace, deteriorated or damaged elements of a dormer.

- See the guidelines for repairing roofs, windows, and wall materials.

4.65 If repair is not possible, replace only those elements that are beyond repair.

- See the guidelines for repairing roofs, windows, and wall materials.



Locate a new single dormer in a location that is toward the rear of the house and on the side of the roof that is as close to the middle of the lot as possible.



This dormer overwhelms the house and is inappropriate.

4.66 Design a new dormer to be compatible with the historic structure.

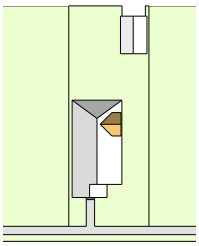
- Dormers must be functional — to create additional living space or allow light to enter an attic space — not merely decorative.
- The style of a new dormer should be in keeping with the style of the house.
- Locate a new single dormer in a location that is toward the rear of the house and on the side of the roof that is as close to the middle of the lot as possible. Do not locate a new dormer on a front-facing roof.
- If two dormers are desired on the same side of the roof, they may be arranged with a historically appropriate spacing between them and do not necessarily need to be located toward the rear of the building.
- If two dormers are desired and they will be on opposite sides of the roof, they may not extend to or cover the ridge of the roof, and they must be located in the rear half of the roof.
- Use a simple design that can be distinguished from, but is compatible with, any historic dormers.
- Do not cover the ridge of the roof with a new dormer.
- Do not extend the dormer over the eave of the roof; set it back from the eave.
- A dormer must be inset from the first-floor side wall below it.

APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE DORMER DESIGNS

These images illustrate how the design guidelines for adding a dormer would apply to a series of alternatives.

Single Gable Dormer at Rear of Roof

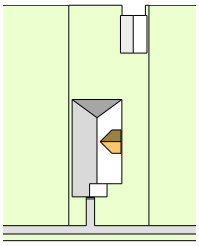
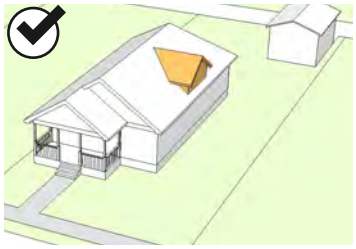
- Ridge line maintained
- Eave line maintained
- Dormer in historic proportions





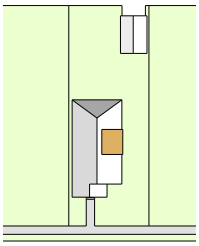
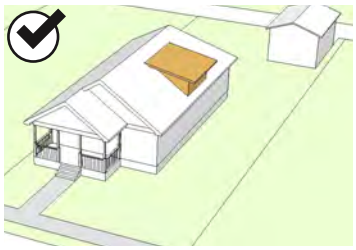
Single Gable Dormer at Mid-Point of Roof

- Ridge line maintained
- Eave line maintained
- Dormer in historic proportions

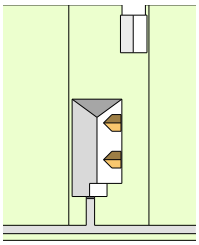

Single Shed Dormer at Mid-Point of Roof

- Ridge line maintained
- Eave line maintained
- Dormer in historic proportions


Two Gable Dormers, Traditional Spacing

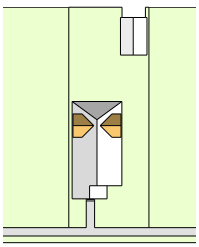
- Ridge line maintained
- Eave line maintained
- Dormer in historic proportions





Two Gable Dormers, Aligned at Rear of Roof

- Ridge line maintained
- Eave line maintained
- Dormer in historic proportions

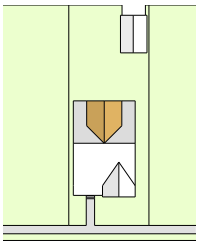
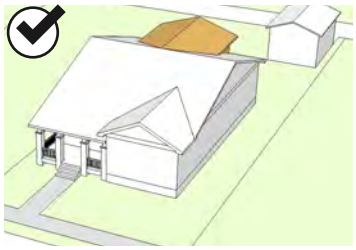




APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE DORMER DESIGNS

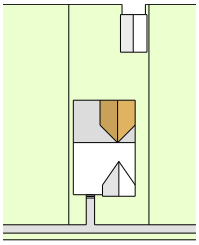
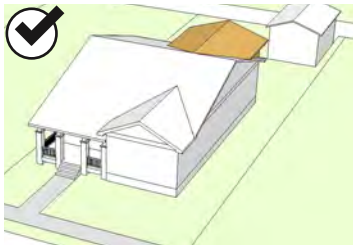
Single Gable Dormer at Rear of Side-Gable Roof (centered)

- Dormer aligns with historic ridge line
- Eave line maintained
- Dormer in historic proportions
- Dormer hidden from street view

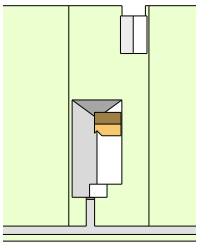
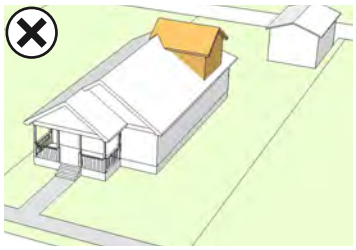

Single Gable Dormer at *the Rear of Side-Gable Roof (moved to one side)*

- Dormer aligns with historic ridge line
- Eave line maintained
- Dormer in historic proportions
- Dormer minimally visible from street view

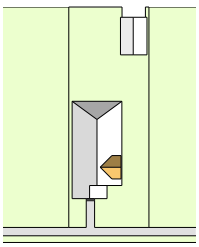
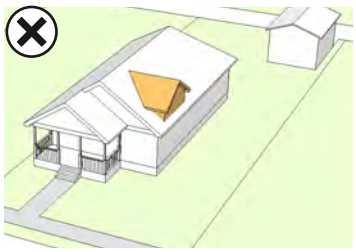

Tall Gable Dormer at Rear of Roof

- Dormer extends past ridge line
- Eave line not maintained
- Dormer is out of proportion

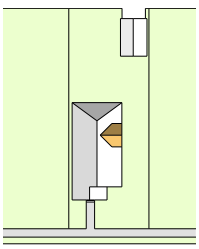
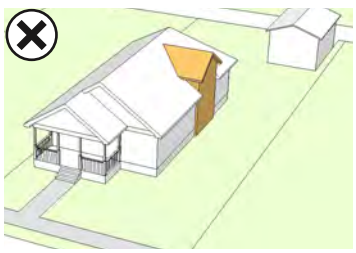

Single Gable Dormer at Front of Roof

- Dormer is not in a subordinate location
- Ridge line maintained
- Eave line maintained
- Dormer in historic proportions


Single Gable Dormer at Mid-Point of Roof Extending Out to the Side

- Dormer extends past the historic sidewall
- Ridge line maintained
- Eave line not maintained


Chimneys

Chimneys appear on many historic buildings. In addition to being functional, chimneys are distinctive features which accent rooflines. They should be preserved when feasible.

In Houston, exterior chimneys historically were located on any side of a building: Interior chimneys are also found in historic buildings.

Common chimney problems include blockages from creosote and other materials, cracks or other damage to the chimney flue, cracks or deteriorated mortar in the brickwork, and issues with the chimney cap or crown, which protects the top of the chimney opening from weather and pests.



A typical brick chimney

4.67 Preserve a historic chimney.

- Do not cover a historic brick chimney with any other material.
- For more information about cleaning, maintaining, and preserving historic masonry, see pages 4-7 and 4-8.

4.68 Repair a historic chimney that has deteriorated.

- Consult with a qualified chimney professional to regularly inspect and repair a chimney, as needed. A mason can help with brick, mortar, or stucco damage.

4.69 Construct a new chimney to be in character with the style of the house.

- Brick or stucco are appropriate materials. Stone is not allowed.
- Do not cover a chimney with siding or leave a metal chimney pipe exposed.
- If there is already a historic chimney, locate any new chimney in a less visible location.



Many historic chimneys are located on the sides of houses in Houston.

PLEASE NOTE:

For information about installing solar panels on the roofs of historic buildings, please visit https://www.nps.gov/tps/sustainability/new-technology/solar-on-historic.htm.

Roof Equipment

Equipment such as antennas, skylights, satellite dishes, and solar panels may be installed on a roof. A Certificate of Appropriateness is required before these items can be installed on the front half of a roof, but the Planning Director can approve that administratively. No Certificate of Appropriateness is needed in order to install roof equipment on the rear half of the roof.

Solar panels should be designed, sized, and located to minimize their effect on the character of a historic building.

4.70 Locate and size roof equipment to minimize its effect on the character of a historic building.

- Locate roof equipment to the side of the roof, below the ridge line, and set it back from the front wall. Do not locate a skylight so that it spans the ridge of the roof.
- Do not locate equipment on front-facing roof slopes.
- Skylights must be low-profile or flush with the roof. Bubble skylights are inappropriate.
- Size the solar panels to remain subordinate to the roof.
- Mount solar panels flush with the roof slope.
- Use a solar panel design that is similar in color to the background of the roof when feasible.
- Ensure that any exposed hardware, frames, etc., have a matte finish, and blend with the roof color (to the extent feasible).
- If possible, locate solar panels toward the rear of the roof.

4.71 Do not damage character-defining features when installing roof equipment.

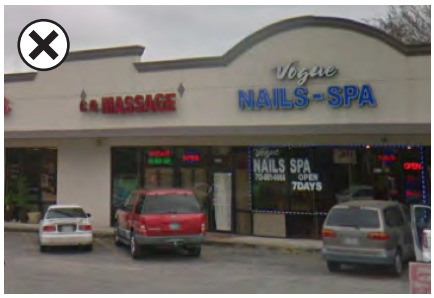
- Protect exterior woodwork, masonry, and trim details.
- Minimize the amount of historic roof material that is to be removed when installing a skylight.
- Avoid obscuring character-defining features such as ornamental details and decorative shingle designs.
- Locate a solar panel so that the ridge line and edges of the roof remain visible.
- Locate a solar panel so that the roof form and materials remain prominent. A substantial amount of the roof surface should remain visible.
- Use the least invasive method to attach solar panels to a roof.
- Do not damage the structural integrity of the roof when installing a solar panel.
- Technologies change over time. Install a solar panel so that it can be removed and the original character of the roof can be restored.

PLEASE NOTE:

For more information about historic signs, see the National Park Service Preservation Brief No. 25: *The Preservation of Historic Signs. https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/25-signs.htm*



A small hanging/bracket sign located under a canopy in the public right-of-way



A noncontributing strip center with internally-lit plastic channel letter signs

Signs

Signage options for traditionally commercial buildings are different than those for residential buildings that have been converted for commercial use. Painted signs on a previously unpainted masonry wall require a COA; no other paint-only signs do. All other types of signs require a COA.

All signs must meet the City of Houston Sign Ordinance (Chapter 46).

4.72 Do not remove or damage historic signs.
Historic signs are those which have gained historic significance due to age: Photographic documentation may support this.

- Historic signs which advertise businesses that are no longer on the property may be kept intact or refaced.
- "Ghost" signs (painted on a building) may be restored if this work is done appropriately.

4.73 Use minimal hardware to attach a sign to a building.

4.74 Signs must be appropriate in size, scale, and number.

- Design a sign to be is in scale with the size of the building.
- Appropriately designed signs that are 25 square feet or less in area may be administratively reviewed.
- A commercial sign on a strip shopping center must fit within the storefront space allotted to that business.
- Depending on the building size and location, more than one sign may be appropriate

4.75 Locate and mount a sign appropriately for the type of building.

- Signs should be parallel or perpendicular to the public right-of-way and may not obstruct key character-defining features of the building.
- Signs on commercial building may be placed:
  - Flat against the wall above entrances, windows, storefronts, canopies, or awnings; may not cover windows or decorative architectural elements such as cornices
  - Hanging beneath a canopy, perpendicular to the building
  - Projecting from and perpendicular to the building, mounted on a bracket or vertical fin/blade
  - As painted lettering directly on the building (COA required for masonry buildings)

- Signs on residential buildings which have been converted to commercial use may be placed:
  - Hanging from and in line with a front porch beam
  - Flat against a front porch beam
  - Flat against wall within gable
  - As painted lettering directly on the building (COA required for previously unpainted masonry buildings)
  - As lettering on a canopy or awning
  - On a bracket mounted perpendicular to the building
- Roof signs are not allowed.
- Consider using window signs or decals, monument signs, or pole signs (none of which are regulated) as an alternative to attaching a sign to a building. Window signs should not cover more than 50% of a window.

PLEASE NOTE:

Plastic cabinet signs or channel letters may be considered **only** for a noncontributing structure.



Open faced, individual letters inset with neon lighting, located above the entrances and canopy on stilts instead of against the wall face

4.76 Select an appropriate material for the sign.

Decisions about appropriate materials may depend on the type and style of building. Signs may be fabricated from the following materials:

- Wood
- Metal
- Paint applied directly to the building
- Fabric
- Neon
- Individually cut metal channel letters/graphics
- Acrylic non-illuminated letters

Creative signs that represent the kind of business being advertised are encouraged.

4.77 If desired, select an appropriate method of lighting a sign.
If a sign is lighted, it must be illuminated indirectly, using an external light source. Signs may be illuminated using the following methods:

- Flood lighting or gooseneck lighting
- Neon
- Lighting inside open-faced metal cabinet letters
- Reverse-channel (backlit) individual letters mounted on the building with a separate light source behind each one
- Signs may not be internally illuminated.



A noncontributing building with signs located within allotted storefront space, placed above entrances along the canopy

SECTION 5:
MEASURABLE STANDARDS AND RELATED GUIDELINES FOR ADDITIONS AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

The City of Houston's historic preservation ordinance requires changes to existing buildings, including additions and all new construction within the historic districts, to be compatible with contributing buildings in the context area in terms of massing, form, scale, and proportions. Property owners, builders, and architects have asked for more specific guidance to help them plan projects that are likely to be approved by the HAHC. In response to those requests, this document includes measurable (quantitative) standards which do not require interpretation; the standards are either met or they are not.

These standards were developed using the City of Houston's Geographic Information Systems data about contributing properties in the three Houston Heights Historic Districts, as well as input and feedback from the community, gathered over more than 24 months through numerous public meetings, a historic district-specific Compatible Design Survey, and comments from individuals.

This section includes measurable standards for additions and new (infill) construction. Additional qualitative design guidelines for additions are provided in Section 6. Additional qualitative guidelines for new construction are provided in Section 7.

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Building Orientation..... 5-3

Measurable Standards.....5-8

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A streetscape with front porches and yards encourages neighborly interaction.



A streetscape of townhouses

INTRODUCTION

The collection of buildings along a blockface creates a streetscape. The size and shape of those buildings, along with their distance from the street and orientation, together affect the overall look and feel of the neghborhood.

The way that buildings relate to the street and each other affects the way that people relate to them, as well. For example, consider a block full of tall townhouses with front-loading garages and little or no lawn and landscaping between the buildings and the street. Contrast that with a neighborhood where one- and two-story houses are all set back from the street far enough to create a sizeable front yard, with room for plenty of flowers and shrubs, but close enough to the sidewalk so that neighbors sitting on their porches can converse with passersby.

To maintain a consistent streetscape, buildings must be appopriately sized and sited on their lots. In order to determine what is appropriate for the Houston Heights Historic Districts, the City has evaluated the historic buildings within the districts to determine typical lot and building sizes, massing, orientation, and setback from the street.

GUIDELINES RELATED TO MEASURABLE STANDARDS

The following guidelines are intended to supplement the measurable standards that follow.

Lot Size and Orientation

Although lot sizes vary, most lots in the Houston Heights Historic Districts are 50 feet wide by 132 feet deep, or 6,600 square feet.

Building Orientation

The way in which buildings address the street is an important characteristic of the streetscape. Most buildings in the Houston Heights Historic Districts face the street, with very few exceptions. In most cases, front doors also face the street, although some houses have inset porches with side-facing doors that open onto the front-facing porch. Some commercial buildings, which are located on corner lots, have cutaway doors at the corner of the building.

For Existing Buildings with Additions

5.1 Maintain front-facing primary facades, porches, and entry doors.

- Do not remove a front porch.
- Maintain primary entry doors that were originally side-facing and open to the porch.
- Preserve corner doors on commercial buildings where these exist.

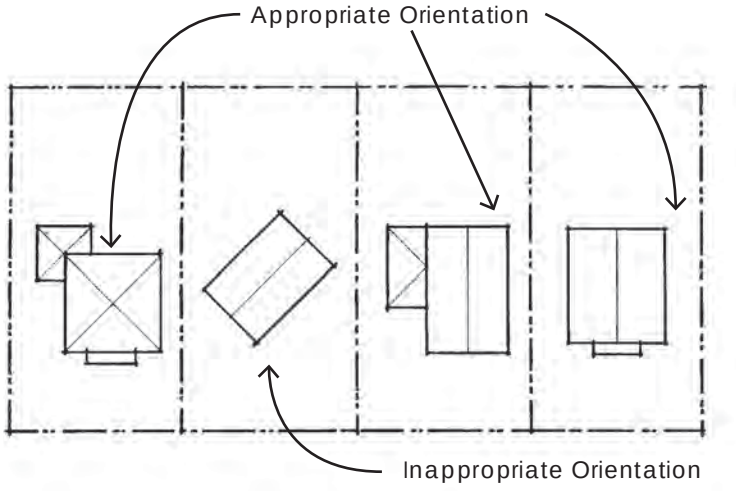
For New Construction

5.2 Design the building with a primary entry door that faces the street, rather than a side property line.

- Site a building with its front wall parallel to the street.
- A residential or commercial building on a corner lot should have a clearly identifiable primary entrance.



Orient the face of a building to the street.



A new building should be oriented to be compatible with contributing buildings in the context area.

Building Size and Compatibility

The Houston Heights Historic Districts contain both contributing and noncontributing structures. Contributing buildings, which are used to determine compatibility for alterations to existing buildings, as well as additions and new construction, are mostly one- and two-story single-family residential buildings. The districts also contains some contributing commercial buildings, which are also mostly one or two stories in height. Most of these historic commercial buildings are located in Houston Heights Historic District East.

The districts also contain noncontributing buildings of various sizes, some of which are quite large. These include houses, multi-family apartment complexes or condominiums, and commercial buildings. Many of these were constructed before protections for the historic districts were established through the historic preservation ordinance.

Some buildings have been expanded through additions. The presence of an addition does not necessarily affect a building's contributing status, but an addition that greatly encroaches on a historic building or that has resulted in the removal of substantial historic material may cause a building to be reclassified as noncontributing at some point in the future, if the district inventory is updated. Such a reclassification may result in the loss of eligibility for the Historic Site Tax Exemption program.

Because the City's historic preservation ordinance has evolved over time, some additions to contributing buildings which were previously approved by the HAHC might not be approved today. Each COA application is considered based on its own merits, the unique conditions of the property in question, and the ordinance criteria and design guidelines in place at the time of application.

For Additions to Contributing Buildings

Because contributing structures are the most important buildings in the historic district, they must remain prominent. That means that an addition should be visually subordinate to the original building.

5.1 Keep additions visually subordinate to the historic building.

- Locate the addition where it will not be highly visible from the public right-of-way.

5.2 Manage the addition's size, scale, and proportions (relationships between building elements).

- A rear addition may be one story or two stories tall. Plate heights should be similar to those of the existing building.
- One-story side additions may be added to a one-story or two-story building. Two-story side additions may be added only to two-story buildings.
- The finished-floor height of an addition should match the finished-floor height of the existing building.
- Eave heights for an addition should be the same or lower than the existing building when the addition is attached directly to the existing building. When the existing building and addition are separated by a connector, the eave height may be 12–18 inches taller, as long as the addition remains visually subordinate.
- 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.

For Additions to Noncontributing Buildings

Additions to noncontributing structures are required to be compatible with the scale and proportion of the contributing buildings in the context area. This applies to the building overall, as well as to individual building elements.

5.3 Design an appropriately sized addition.

- Design the addition with overall height, porch eave height, main roof eave height, and ceiling (plate) heights that are consistent with the existing noncontributing structure or with contributing buildings in the context area.

For New Construction

Because contributing structures are the most important buildings in the historic district, they must remain prominent. New construction must be compatible with the scale and proportion of contributing buildings in the context area. This applies to the building overall, as well as to individual building elements. New buildings should not overshadow contributing structures within the context area.

5.4 Design a new building to be compatible with the scale and proportion of contributing buildings in the context area.

- A new building may be one story or two stories in height.
- First-floor finished-floor height may not exceed 36 inches above natural grade unless the finished-floor height of contributing buildings in the context area is greater measured at the front of the structure. (Please provide supporting data.)
- Wall cladding materials, such as siding or brick, may be traditionally-sized or larger.
- Design the building with porch eave height, main roof eave height, and ceiling (plate) heights that are consistent with contributing buildings in the context area.
- Use header heights for doors and windows that are similar to contributing buildings in the context area.

NOTE: Finished-floor height standards may change if new data becomes available. For example, 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 using applicable technical data. Please contact Historic Preservation Office staff with any questions.

To apply for approval of a finished-floor height above 36 inches, please see the instructions on page 5-8.

Mass, Form, and Scale

Massing, or architectural form, is the overall shape and volume of a building. The proportion of *solid* surfaces (walls, roof) to *voids* (windows, doors, porches) also affects the perception of form and volume. A building's size and shape have as much effect on its overall appearance as do stylistic details and decorative accents. In architectural terms, size and shape are more precisely described by the terms mass, form, and scale. These three characteristics are among the most important character-defining features of a historic building. (For more information about mass, form, and scale, see Section 2.)

Most contributing houses in the Houston Heights Historic Districts are relatively small, with simple rectangular shapes. Subordinate building elements are mostly rectangular and, generally, project from the main house in the form of front porches and small additions. Where additions increase both the size and complexity of contributing buildings, they are located far enough from the street to be visually subordinate to the traditional forms of the original houses.

For Additions

5.5 Preserve the original walls of the building.

Walls enclose and make visible the forms that make up a building. In architecture terms, a wall may be a single plane (that is, a flat continuous surface) or it may be articulated, with areas that are set in or project out.

5.6 Preserve the original corners of the building, wherever those occur.

5.7 Preserve the shape of the roof.

5.8 Preserve any historic porches.

5.9 Maintain the historic heights, widths, and proportions of building elements and architectural details (including doors and windows).

For Additions and New Construction

5.10 Avoid complex building forms or roof shapes, such as those typically found on 21st century houses.

5.11 Use traditional proportions of solid walls to voids (windows, doors, and porches).

MEASURABLE STANDARDS

The following pages contain the quantitative (numerical) standards for the Houston Heights Historic Districts. These standards are to be used for all context areas, unless the applicant can provide adequate documentation that contributing buildings in the proposed project's context area typically exceed these standards.

If an applicant wishes to propose alternative numbers in such a situation, they must provide the following evidence:

- A list of all contributing buildings in the context area, by street address
- For each building, the applicable measurement (to the nearest inch)
- A statement explaining how the measurements were collected; i.e., using a physical measuring tool or a digital approach
- The proposed alternative numerical standard

The Planning staff in the Historic Preservation Office will verify the data presented by the applicant and provide HAHC with the applicant's data and, if necessary, any corrections to that data.

HAHC will consider the data presented and determine whether or not to use the applicant's proposed numerical standards when considering the application.

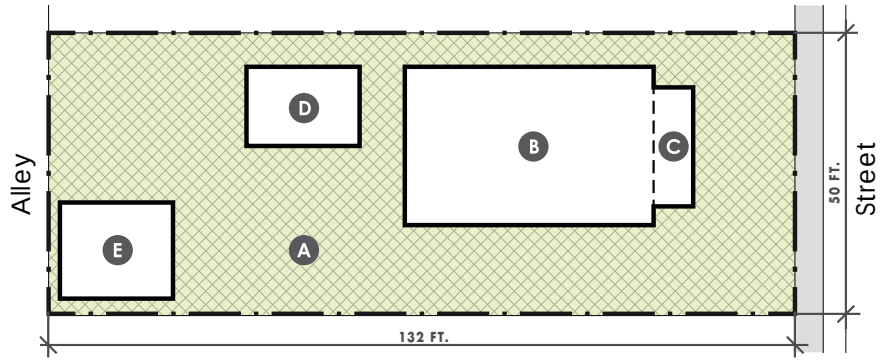
- HAHC may consider mean and/or median values, but is not obligated to do so.
- The City's Historic Preservation Ordinance defines *typical* as "being within commonly occurring values in a group. Extreme values within a group are not necessarily typical of that group." HAHC may choose to disregard outliers, such as a single, especially large building in a context area.

To request approval to increase 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.

Maximum Lot Coverage

Lot coverage is a measure of the percentage of a lot's surface that is covered by buildings, expressed as a decimal (such as .44). 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.

CALCULATING LOT COVERAGE



KEY	
A	Lot area
B	House ground floor area
C	Porch ground floor area
D	Detached accessory building ground floor area
E	Detached garage ground floor area

LOT SIZE	MAXIMUM LOT COVERAGE
<4000	.44 (44%)
4000-4999	.44 (44%)
5000-5999	.42 (42%)
6000-6999	.40 (40%)
7000-7999	.38 (38%)
8000+	.38 (38%)

To calculate the maximum square footage (sf) allowed for your lot, multiply the area of the lot by the percentage shown in the table.

For example:

6,600 sf lot x 0.40 = 2,640 sf max. coverage
4,560 sf lot x 0.44 = 2,006 sf max. coverage
9,000 sf lot x 0.38 = 3,420 sf max. coverage

Include these in lot coverage calculations:

- Primary structures (such as houses or other main buildings)
- Attached garages and storage space
- Detached garages (area over 528 square feet)*
- Sunrooms or enclosed porches with walls and windows

Exclude these from lot coverage calculations:

- Detached garages (up to 528 square feet)*
- Roof overhangs
- Open or screened-in porches; uncovered decks or patios
- Detached accessory structures other than garages or garage apartments
- Carports
- Pavement and driveways
- One-story garages attached to one-story structures (up to 264 square feet)

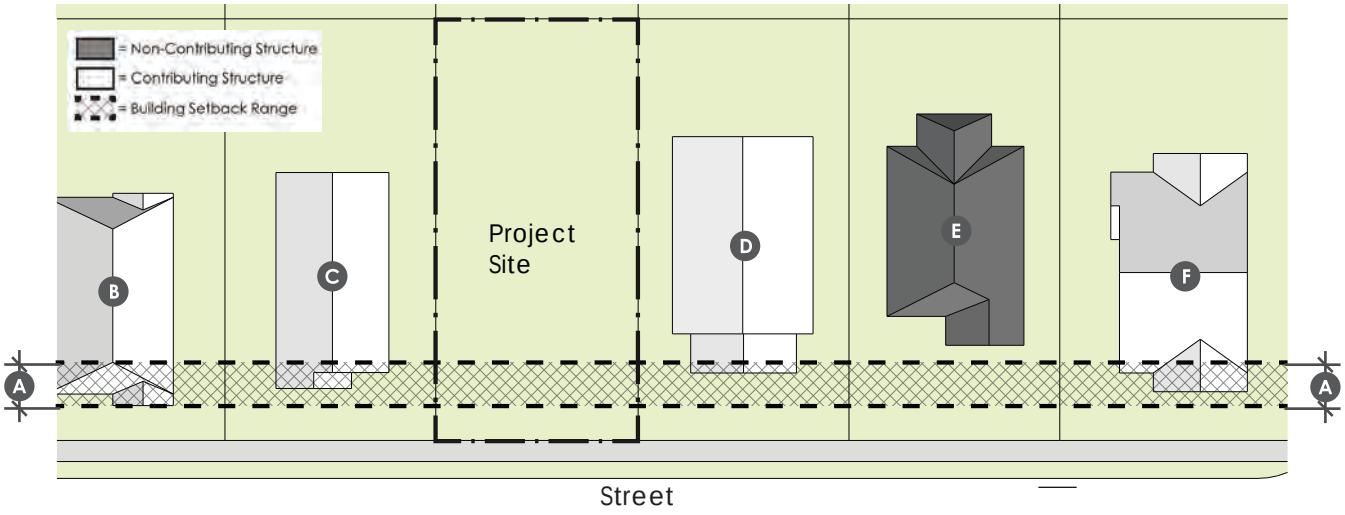
* When calculating lot coverage, you may exclude that portion of the footprint of a detached garage which measures 528 square feet or less. For example, if the footprint area of a detached garage is 316 square feet, you may exclude the entire 316 square feet from the lot coverage calculation. If the footprint area of the detached garage measures 600 square feet, you may exclude 528 square feet, leaving 82 square feet to be included.

Front Setbacks (for New Construction)

A setback is the distance from the property line to the front wall, porch, or other exterior feature of a building. The amount of setback at the front of a residential building determines the size of the front yard and affects how the building relates to the street. As a practice, when introducing a two-story house on a predominantly one-story home blockface, HAHC recommends that the two-story house be set back 1–3 feet from the prevailing setback line. If deed restrictions or minimum building line requirements also apply to a property, the most restrictive standard shall be used.

Historic Preservation Office staff may already have this data for your block; please check with them first.

FRONT SETBACK RANGE



KEY	MEASUREMENT	APPLICATION
A	RANGE	Locate the front of the primary building within the range of front setbacks for contributing buildings within the context area.

When all contributing buildings in the context area have approximately the same front setback, make new construction consistent with that.

When front setbacks vary for contributing buildings within the context area, place new consruction within the range of front setbacks, as shown above. If front setbacks are varied within the context area, matching the immediately adjacent properties will yield the most compatible result.

Rear Setbacks

The City of Houston requires a minimum setback of three feet from the rear property line for all properties, except under the following circumstances:

- A front-facing garage which is located with its rear wall at the alley may have a zero-foot setback.
- An alley-loading garage generally must be located to establish a minimum of 20 feet of clearance from an opposing alley-loading garage door, the rear wall of a front-facing garage, or a fence; a 24-foot clearance is preferred.

Side Setbacks (for Additions and New Construction)

New structures and additions must be located at a minimum distance from the front and side property lines. Those distances, also known as setbacks, are measured from the property line to the closest wall, porch, or exterior feature.

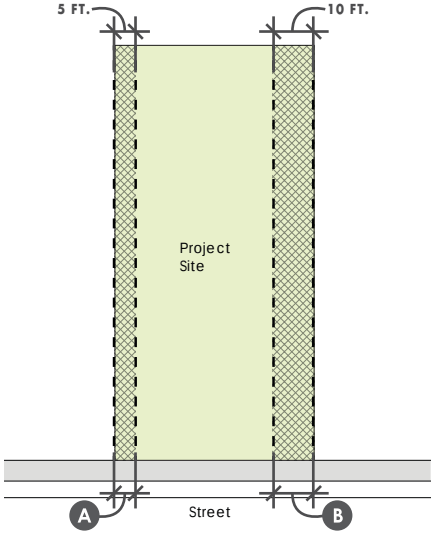
The City of Houston requires a minimum three-foot side setback for all properties, unless an easement or other agreement allows a smaller distance. On a corner lot, the building must be at least 10 feet from a "local" street on street-facing sides. A larger setback may be required for other types of 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.

Within the Houston Heights Historic Districts, the side setback is increased to a minimum of five feet on each side and a cumulative total of 10 feet for one-story houses and 15 feet for two-story houses. This standard was established to reinforce traditional development patterns, and in response to numerous complaints from property owners about their neighbors building tall walls at the three-foot property line, resulting in a loss of privacy and sunlight. In combination with eave height limits, these side setback requirements are intended to move the building mass toward the center of the lot and away from the property lines.

Please note the following important points:

- If the existing house is less than five feet from the property line:
  - A one-story addition can match the side setback of the existing house or a three-foot side setback, whichever is greater.
  - A two-story addition must have a minimum five-foot setback.
- For the purpose of determining maximum allowable eave height, the side setback for the entire building is measured at the portion of the building that is closest to the property line.
- Buildings on corner lots should be consistent with the front setbacks of existing contributing buidlings on both front and side streets.
- Minimum building lines on some blocks may also apply, if present.
- One-story garages with the front wall set no more than 33 feet from the back of the lot may have a 3-foot setback; two-story garages with front wall set no more than 33 feet from the back of the lot may have a 5-foot setback

SIDE SETBACKS



Note: This diagram shows just one example of a side setback configuration.

KEY	MEASUREMENT	APPLICATION
A	3 FT.	Minimum distance between side wall and the property line for lots less than 35 feet wide
	5 FT.	Minimum distance between the side wall and the property line
B	REMAINING	Difference between minimum side setback of 5 feet and minimum cumulative side setback
C	6 FT.	Minimum cumulative side setback for lots less than 35 feet wide
	10 FT.	Minimum cumulative side setback for a one-story house
	15 FT.	Minimum cumulative side setback for a two-story house

Maximum Floor Area Ratio

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is 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 both new infill construction and additions to existing buildings (contributing and noncontributing).

Include these in FAR calculations:

- Primary structures (such as houses or other main buildings)
- Sunrooms or enclosed porches with walls and windows
- Attached garages and storage space
- Detached garages (area over 528 square feet)*
- Detached garage apartments (area over 400 square feet)**
- Attics with dormers in new additions, new construction, and noncontributing houses

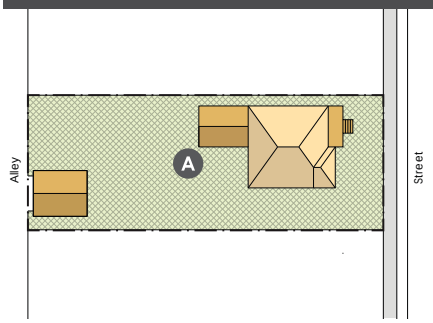
Exclude these from FAR calculations:

- Detached garages (area up to 528 square feet)*
- Detached garage apartments (area up to 528 square feet)**
- One-story garages attached to one-story structures (up to 264 square feet)
- All attics, with or without dormers, provided that the roof pitch on the second-story is within one degree of typical pitches in the context area
- Roof overhangs
- Open or screened-in porches; uncovered decks or patios
- Detached accessory structures, other than garages and garage apartments
- Carports
- Pavement and driveways

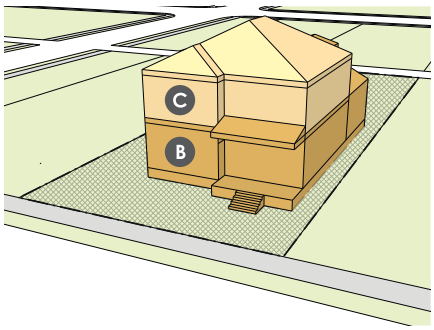
* When calculating FAR, you may exclude that portion of a detached garage which measures 528 square feet or less. For example, if the area of detached garage is 316 square feet, you may exclude the entire 316 square feet from the FAR calculation. If the area of the detached garage measures 600 square feet, you may exclude 528 square feet, leaving 72 square feet to be included.

** Additionally, you may exclude that portion of a detached garage apartment which measures 528 square feet or less.

CALCULATING FLOOR AREA RATIO



A	Lot Area
B	1st Floor Area
C	2nd Floor Area



LOT SIZE	MAXIMUM FAR
<4000	.48
4000-4999	.48
5000-5999	.46
6000-6999	.44
7000-7999	.42
8000+	.40

1. To calculate the maximum square footage allowed for your lot, multiply the area of the lot by the FAR number shown in the table (left).

For example:

6,600 sf lot X 0.44 = 2,904 sf

2. Measure the square footage of existing buildings.

For example:

1st Floor Area = 1,307 sf
2nd Floor Area = 1,280 sf
Detached Garage = 480 sf

3. Subtract the exemption for a detached garage or garage apartment, if applicable:

For example:
Detached Garage = (528 sf)

4. Calculate the total building area for the property.

For example:
1st Floor Area = 1,307 sf
+ 2nd Floor Area = 1,280 sf
+ Detached Garage = 600 sf
– Garage Exemption = (528 sf)
Total Building Area = 2,659 sf

5. Compare maximum allowed square footage vs. net square footage of existing buildings.

For example:
Max. square footage = 2,904 sf
Existing building area = 2,659 sf

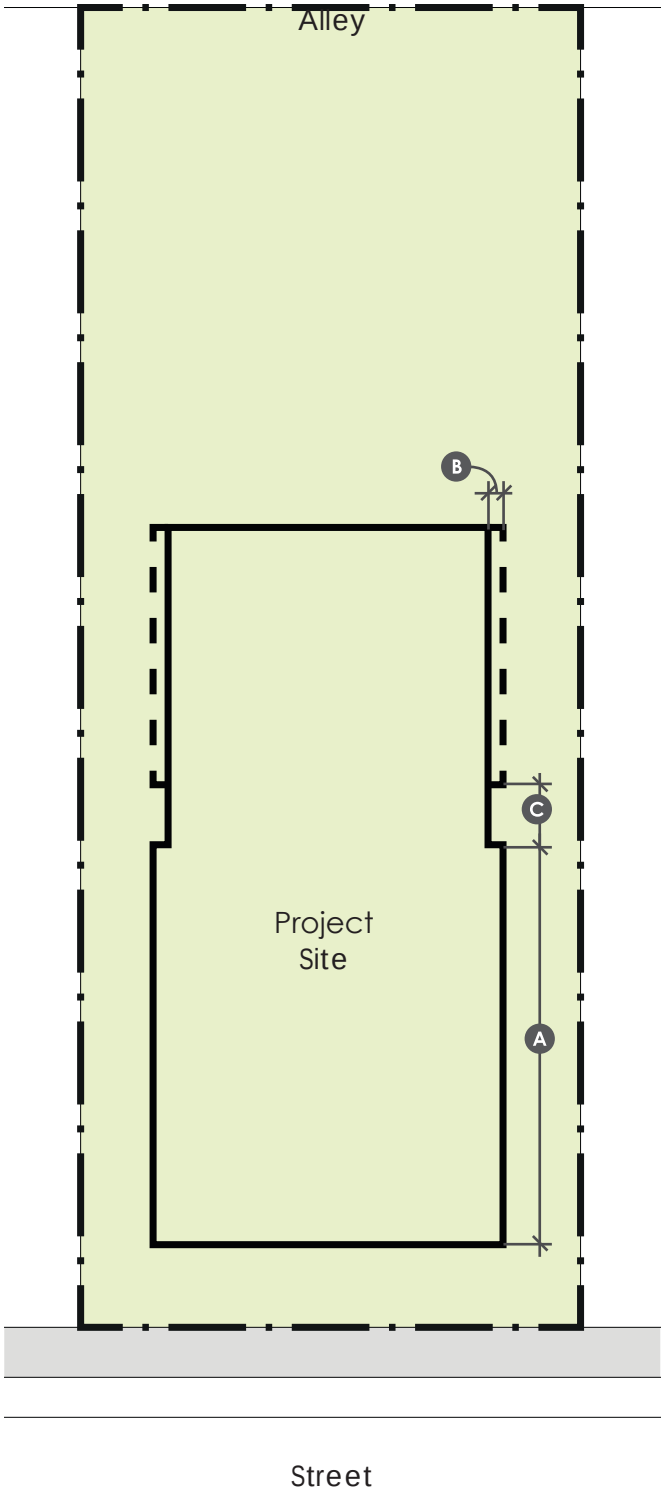
Existing building area is lower than maximum square footage by 248 sf, so an additional 248 sf could be added to this property.

Note: All attic space is not included in FAR.

Side Wall Length and Insets

Maximum overall wall lengths have been established for front walls and side walls. In addition, these design standards establish how long a wall can be before a portion of a wall must be inset relative to the rest of the wall. These measurements apply to both one-story and two-story buildings.

SIDE WALL LENGTH



SIDE WALL LENGTH

KEY	MEASUREMENT	APPLICATION
A	50 FT.	Maximum side wall length without inset (1-story)
	40 FT.	Maximum side wall length without inset (2-story)
B	1 FT.	Minimum depth of inset section of side wall (1-story)
	2 FT.	Minimum depth of inset section of side wall (2-story)
C	6 FT.	Minimum length of inset section of side wall

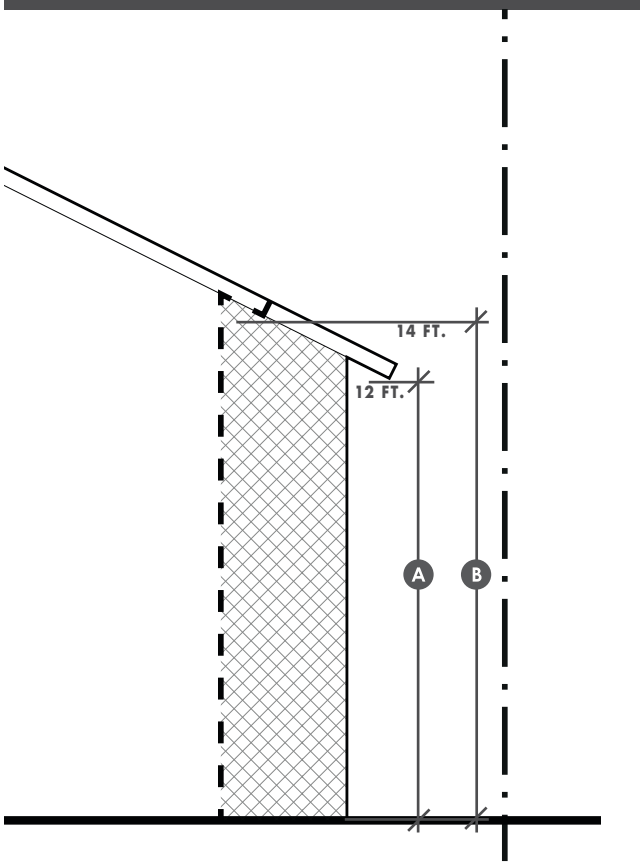
Eave Height

An eave is the overhanging lower edge of a roof. Eave height is the vertical distance from the ground to the 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. Measure to the eave where it is parallel to the ground.

Eaves on an addition should be the same height or lower than the eaves for the same floor of the existing contributing house. If the house and a new detached garage have the same number of stories, the eaves of the garage should be lower than those of the house.

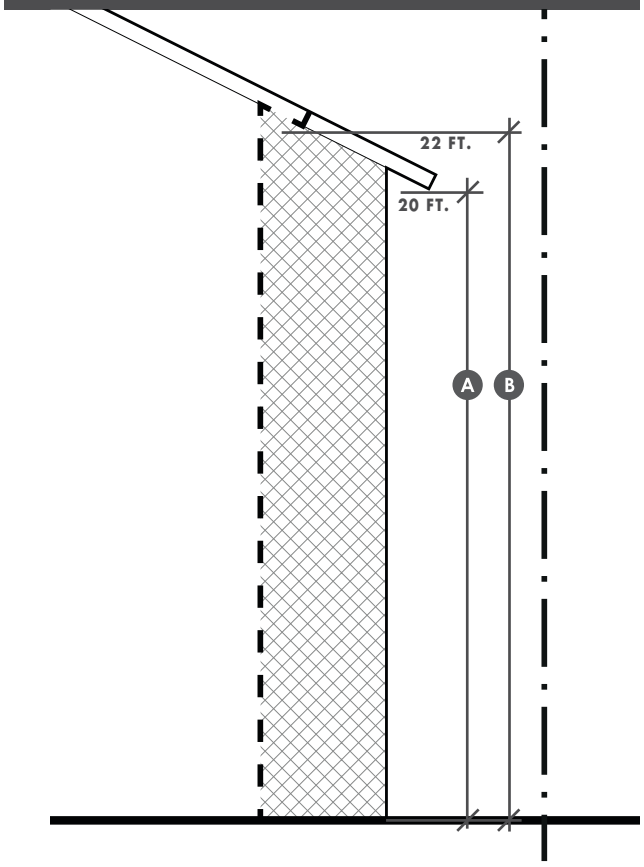
For new construction, the maximum eave height is established at the minimum side setback from the property line; it can increase one foot in height for each one foot increase in side setback up to the maximum allowable eave height. Smaller increases in side setback qualify for the equivalent increase in eave height; for example, an additional seven inches of side setback would result in a maximum of 14'-7" eave height for a one-story roof.

PRIMARY BUILDING 1-STORY EAVE HEIGHT RANGE



KEY	MEASUREMENT	APPLICATION
A	**12 FT.**	Maximum 1-story eave height at the 5 FT. minimum side setback
B	**14 FT.**	Maximum 1-story eave height at 7 FT. or greater side setback

PRIMARY BUILDING 2-STORY EAVE HEIGHT RANGE



KEY	MEASUREMENT	APPLICATION
A	**20 FT.**	Maximum 2-story eave height at the 5 FT. minimum side setback
B	**22 FT.**	Maximum 2-story eave height at 7 FT. or greater side setback

Building Wall (Plate) Height

Plate height is the distance from the subfloor of a building to the top of the framed wall; in other words, it is the height of one "floor" of the building.

Additions

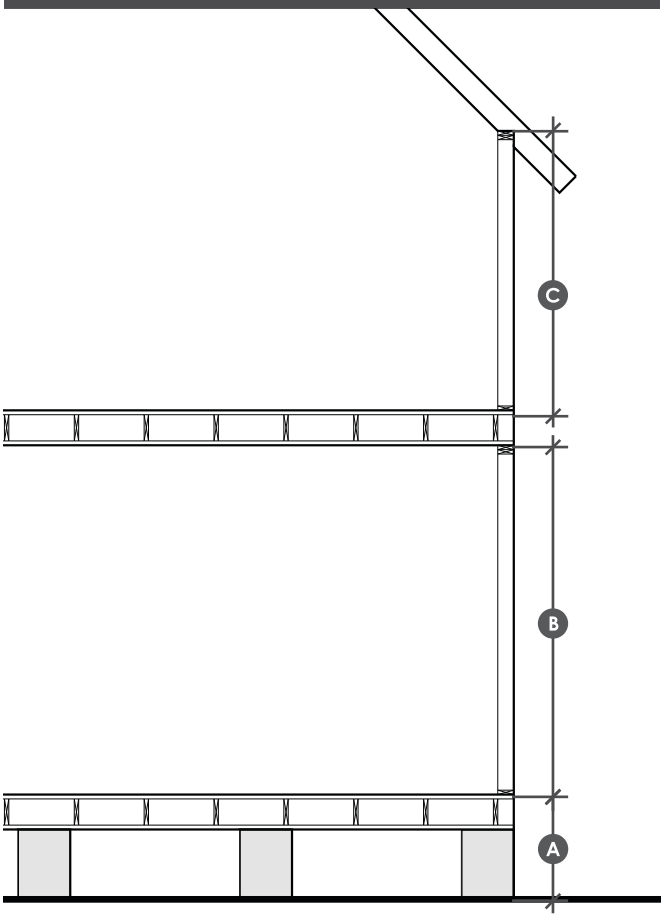
Plate heights for additions should appear to be the same or lower than those of the existing house.

New Construction

There are no plate height limits for one-story new construction.
Two-story new construction must not exceed the plate height limits shown below, unless data from contributing buildings in the context area indicates otherwise.

KEY	MEASUREMENT	APPLICATION
A	**36 IN.**	Maximum finished floor height (as measured at the front of the structure)
B	**10 FT.**	Maximum first floor plate height
C	**9 FT.**	Maximum second floor plate height

PRIMARY BUILDING WALL PLATE HEIGHT



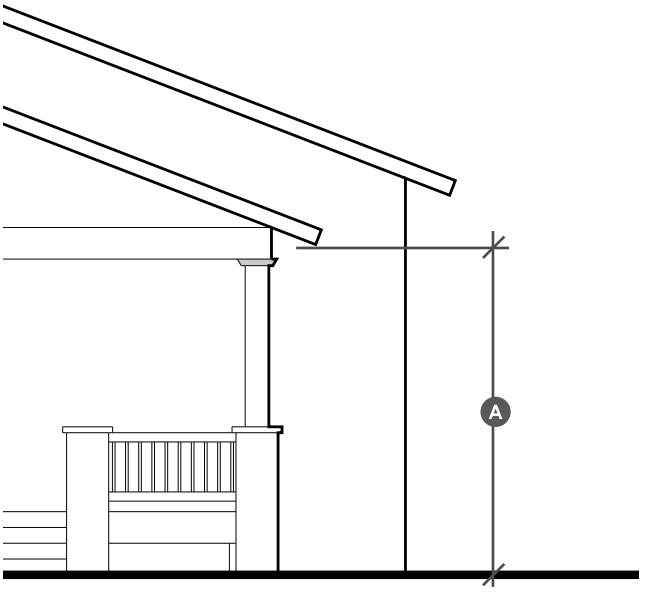
Porch Eave Height

A porch may be included as part of an addition. A porch eave is the overhanging lower edge of the porch roof. Eave height is the vertical distance from the ground to the 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.

Porch roofs should be lower than the main roof of the building, unless the main roof extends over the porch. Ideally, the porch beam will partially obscure the tops of the windows.

KEY	MEASUREMENT	APPLICATION
A	9-11 FT.	Minimum and maximum 1-story porch eave height.

FRONT AND SIDE PORCH EAVE HEIGHT RANGE



Front Wall Width and Insets

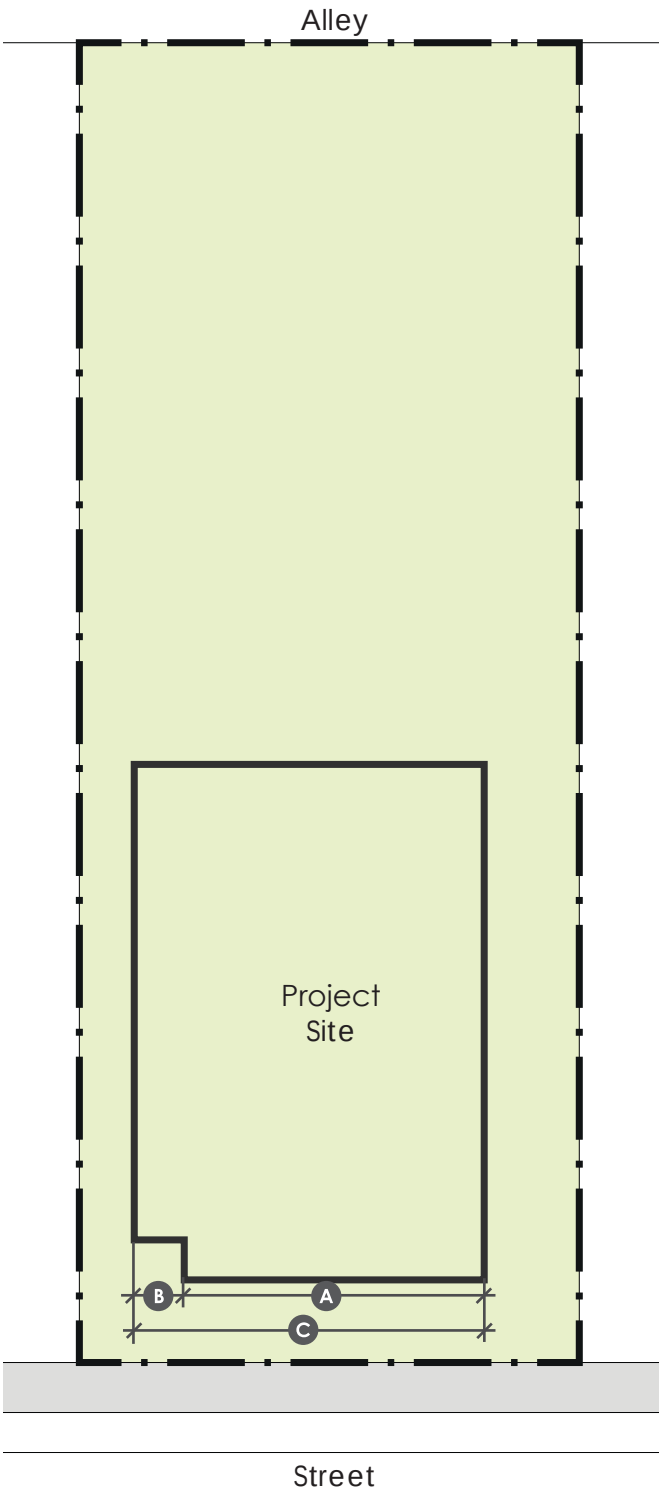
The following maximum overall widths have been established for front walls. In addition, these design standards establish how wide a wall can be before it must be inset, with a portion of a wall set farther in relative to the rest of the wall. These measurements apply to both one-story and two-story buildings.

Overall building widths are dependent on the width of the lot. The maximum width of a one-story building on a 50-foot-wide lot with a 10-foot minimum cumulative side setback is 40 feet. As a lot gets wider, the building can be wider, to a point; for every two feet of additional lot width, the building can be one foot wider. Smaller increases in lot width qualify for the equivalent increase in building width, using a 2:1 ratio; for example, a 60-foot-wide lot could have a maximum 50-foot-wide building.

Note; Use this standard when designing new construction or if you are proposing to widen a noncontributing house. Widening the front wall of a contributing house is not allowed.

KEY	MEASUREMENT	APPLICATION
A	**30 FT.**	Maximum front wall width before inset
B	**4 FT.**	Minimum width of inset section of front wall
C	**40 FT.**	Maximum width of 1-story building for lots </= 50 ft wide
	35 FT.	Maximum width of 2-story building for lots </= 50 ft wide
	50 FT.	Maximum width of building for lots > 50 ft wide

FRONT WALL WIDTH



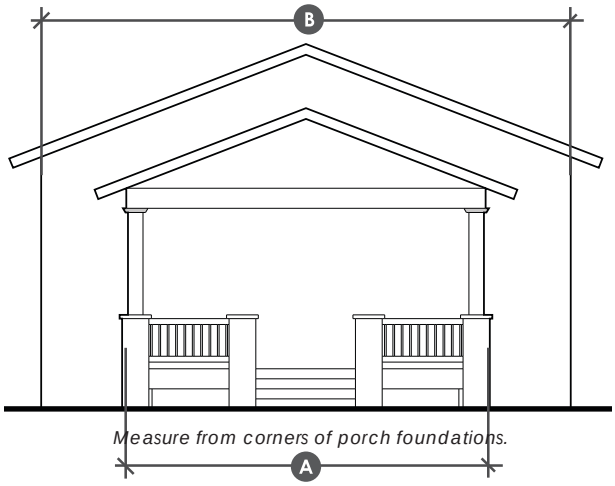
Front Porch Width and Depth

A one-story front porch must be *at least half as wide* as the front of the house. A two-story front porch may be *no more than half as wide* as the front of the house.

If a portion of the front wall is inset, the overall width (including the width of the inset section) is used for this calculation. The width of a porch is measured between the corners of the porch foundation at the front of the porch.

A front porch must be at least 6 feet deep; an 8-foot depth is recommended to accommodate porch columns while retaining usable space. Porch depth is measured from the front of the porch deck at the center of the steps, along a line perpendicular to the front edge of the porch deck, to the closest front wall of the house.

FRONT WALL-TO-PORCH WIDTH



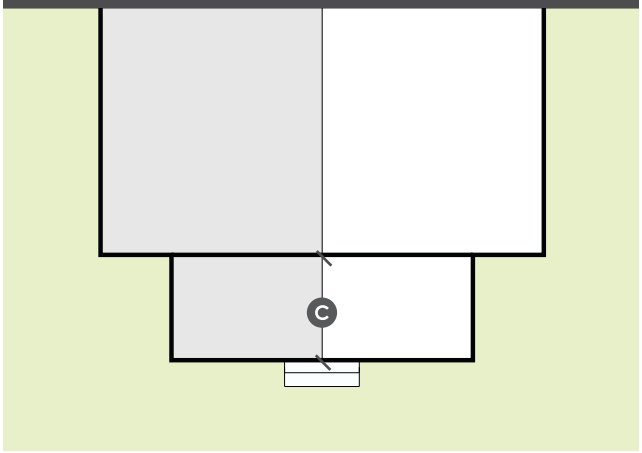
A	Porch Width
B	House Width at Front Wall

KEY	MEASUREMENT	APPLICATION
A	**50%**	Minimum percentage of front wall width that is covered by porch

Example:

18 ft.	Porch Width
÷ 26 ft.	Width of Front Wall of House
0.69 (69%)	Percentage of Front Wall Covered by Porch

FRONT PORCH DEPTH

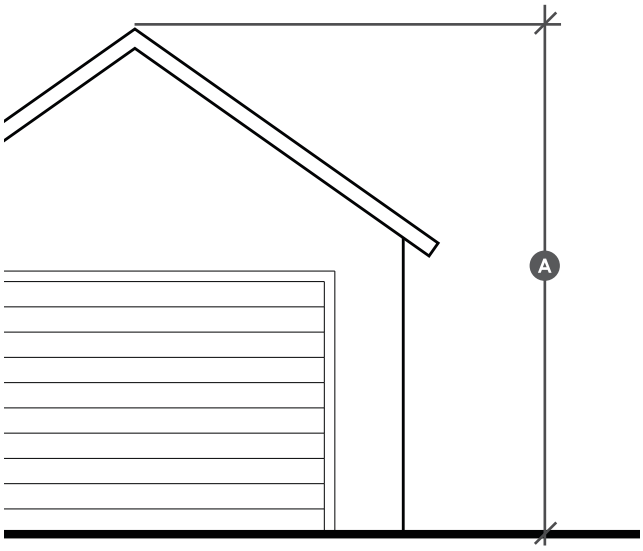


KEY	MEASUREMENT	APPLICATION
C	**6 FT.**	Minimum depth of front porch

Detached Garage Ridge Height

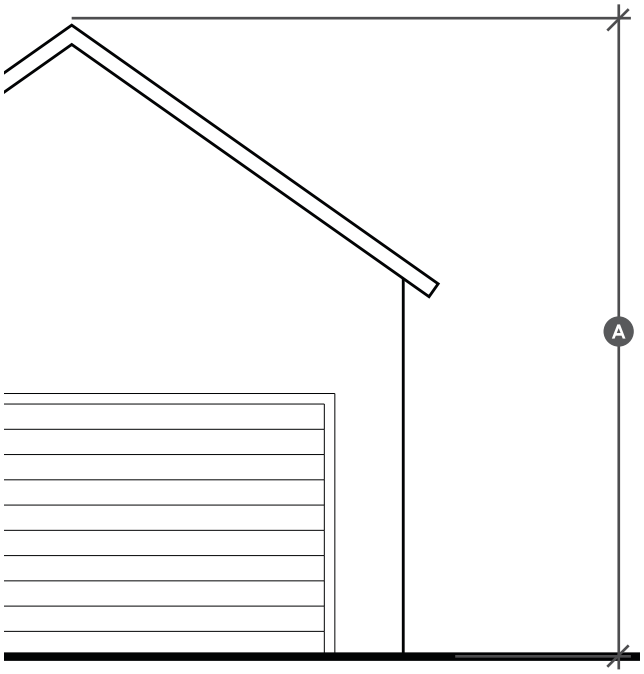
Ridge height is the distance from grade to the top of point of the roof (the "ridge"). These measurements apply to both one-story and two-story detached garages/garage apartments. For new attached garages, use the measurable standards for additions and new construction found elsewhere in this section.

GARAGE 1-STORY RIDGE HEIGHT



KEY	MEASUREMENT	APPLICATION
A	16 FT.	Maximum 1-story garage ridge height

GARAGE 2-STORY RIDGE HEIGHT



KEY	MEASUREMENT	APPLICATION
A	26 FT.	Maximum 2-story garage ridge height (for garage apartment)

SECTION 6: QUALITATIVE GUIDELINES FOR ADDITIONS

TO CONTRIBUTING AND NONCONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

Historic buildings change over time, sometimes with the addition of an extra room or rooms to add space or functionality. An addition to a contributing structure must be compatible with that structure and with other contributing buildings in the context area. It also must preserve the integrity of the existing structure. An earlier addition may be considered historic and, therefore, worthy of preservation, if it retains its historical and architectural integrity.

This section includes qualitative design guidelines for new *additions* to contributing and noncontributing structures. For measurable standards, see Section 5; for alterations to previous additions, see Section 4.

Some additions that meet very specific criteria can be approved by the Planning Director; those are sometimes referred to as Mandatory Approvals (or "shall approve") and are included in Section 1.

IN THIS SECTION

Introduction **6-2**

When Historic Materials are Present **6-3**

Design Considerations **6-6**
- Differentiation 6-6
- Location of the Addition 6-9
- Wall Cladding 6-11
- Windows and Doors 6-12
- Porches 6-13
- Foundations 6-13
- Roofs 6-14
- Dormers 6-15
- Shutters and Awnings 6-15
- Chimneys 6-15
- Other Items 6-15
- Addition Alternatives (Illustrations) 6-16

INTRODUCTION

The qualitative design guidelines that follow require interpretation and good judgment, to ensure that the proposed project is compatible with the contributing structures in the context area. Each project is considered on its own merits; even if the same addition were proposed for similar properties within the historic district, differences in the existing contributing structures and the context areas for those various locations could result in different decisions regarding compatibility.

Because contributing structures are the most important buildings in the historic district, they must remain prominent. That means that **an addition should be visually subordinate**, or secondary, to the original contributing building. This can be achieved by limiting the addition's size and the complexity of its design.

Additions to noncontributing structures are also required to be compatible with the scale and proportion of the contributing buildings in the context area. This applies to the building overall, as well as to individual building elements.



The walls of this appropriate two-story addition are inset from the historic building, so that the original rear corners remain visible. The side wall addition is small and preserves the original eave line.

WHEN HISTORIC MATERIALS ARE PRESENT

To determine whether an addition has achieved historic significance, first identify when it was built. Note that construction dates on tax appraisal records are often inaccurate before 1960.

6.1 Preserve an addition that has achieved historic significance.
Buildings evolve over time, and an addition that was made during the period of significance (such as a side porch or a bedroom wing) may be worthy of preservation.

If the addition was built within the period of significance, determine whether it is compatible with the original building and whether the addition retains integrity. If all of these conditions are true, the addition may be considered to have achieved significance in its own right. (See Section 2 for more information about these concepts.)

More recent additions, particularly if not sensitively designed, may detract from the building's historic character and can be removed with an approved COA.

6.2 Minimize the cumulative effects of multiple additions.
A series of multiple changes to a building can have a negative impact on integrity and, as a result, contributing status. Therefore, all proposed changes must be considered as part of a whole. A project that might be found appropriate, if the building has not already been altered, could be considered inappropriate as the latest in a series of changes, each of which chip away at character-defining features and the overall integrity of a building.



A side porch or a bedroom wing addition may have taken on historic significance and, thus, merit preservation.



This rear addition is compatible. It is set behind the primary contributing buildings, is separated by an inset, and is subordinate in height, mass and scale. It is also a successful contemporary addition.

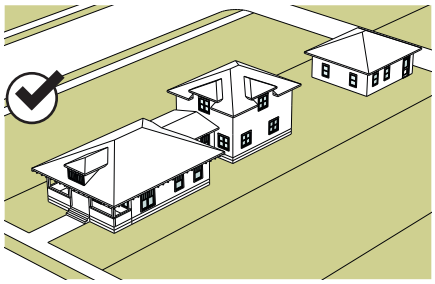


This is a compatible rear addition even though it is slightly taller than the historic building. It is compatible because it is offset, separated by a hyphen and uses compatible materials.

6.3 Minimize the removal of historic building material.

The construction of an addition necessarily requires removing some existing building material, such as part of a side or rear wall, or part of a roof. However, the historic preservation ordinance requires the project to preserve as much of the historic building material and character-defining features as possible.

- Avoid substantial alterations that would remove or destroy large amounts of historic material.
- A building's integrity is based on both exterior features and its underlying structure, which must remain stable during and after the construction activity; this includes interior and exterior shiplap that has a structural function. Do not remove shiplap without first consulting with the Historic Preservation Office staff.
- Consider connecting an addition to the original building with an appropriately sized hyphen. Historically, additions were connected to existing buildings with a hyphen, or connecting section. Hyphens have been used in the United States since the 1700s, when Georgian mansions were expanded by building a Federal house behind them, with a relatively small connector. The walls of a hyphen are set in from the walls of the original house and the addition, and the hyphen's roof may be lower than the roofs of the buildings it connects. This approach is preferred, because it minimizes the loss of historic building material and also enables the future removal of the addition, without significantly impacting the original building.



The rear addition is clearly differentiated with a connecting element (hyphen) to achieve an acceptable level of compatibility with the historic building.

6.4 Do not destroy historic material that could make a building contributing if inappropriate alterations were reversed.

Some buildings are classified as noncontributing because of inappropriate alterations that have substantially compromised their integrity. If those changes can be reversed, it is possible for a noncontributing building to be reclassified. Although **no one is required to restore a building,** please be aware of the reason for a noncontributing classification before undertaking additional projects that could make it impossible to reverse previous alterations.



This one-story addition to the side of a historic building is subordinate in scale, but the offset wall obscures the original rear corner in a highly visible location.

6.5 Do not remove or cover key character-defining features, including the basic form of the existing building.

This can be accomplished by preserving the roof line and the corners of the building, as well as by keeping the addition away from the front of the building, where the most important character-defining features are likely to be located.

- Locate the addition at the rear of the existing building.
- Preserve the corners of the existing building by insetting the side walls of the addition or using a hyphen to connect the building and the addition.
- Do not extend the existing side walls straight back into the addition, which would destroy the corners. A visible seam or trim board is not usually sufficient to differentiate the addition from the existing building.
- One-story rear additions that are appropriately scaled and proportioned may be offset so that the addition is inset from one side wall and extends past the other side wall.

6.6 Design a rooftop addition to maintain the ridge and eave lines of the historic structure.

A small rooftop addition may be permitted on a one-story building in order to create additional living space in the attic. In some cases, this can be combined with a small addition to the rear or side of the existing building, if the mass of the addition remains visually subordinate to the historic structure. See examples of appropriate and inappropriate additions starting on page 6-16.

- Locate a rooftop addition at the rear of the building.
- Inset the corners of a rooftop addition at least two feet, as measured from the outside of the existing walls, so that a substantial amount of the roof form and structure remains intact.
- Preserve a substantial portion of the historic ridge line of the roof, especially toward the front of the building.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The following pages provide guidance for the design of appropriate additions to contributing and noncontributing buildings. In some cases, guidelines apply to both types of buildings. **Where a design guideline is specific to either contributing or noncontributing resources, that is clearly stated.**

Differentiation

Additions must be differentiated from the existing building; in other words, a person looking at the property must be able to tell where the historic building starts and the addition begins.

6.7 Differentiate an addition from the contributing building.

Some options for achieving appropriate differentiation are provided below; this is not an exhaustive list. Which of these might be appropriate, as well as how many might be required to be used, will depend on the scope of the specific project. These apply to both residential and commercial/institutional properties.

- The size, profile, type, color, or orientation of materials may be different. For example, a building which is clad in wood siding may have an addition clad in cementitious fiber siding.
- An addition may be inset from the corners of the existing building or connected with a hyphen.
- Roof shape may be different; for example, consider a hipped roof on the addition to a house with a gabled roof.
- Roof height or pitch may be lower than the existing building.
- Eave height of the addition may be slightly higher or lower than the existing building.
- The first floor plate height of the addition may be lower than the existing building.
- Eave style may be different; for example, consider using boxed eaves on an addition to a house with open rafter tails; the eave depth (overhang) may be different.
- Windows in an addition may have a simpler lite pattern than the windows in the existing building.
- If the existing building design is fairly simple, the addition should similarly be modest. If the existing building is more highly ornamented or exuberant in design, the addition can reflect that higher level of complexity.
- A trim board may be used to cover the seam between an addition and the existing buildings only on modest, one-story additions.

6.8 For additions to noncontributing buildings, choose materials that are compatible with the existing building and other contributing buildings in the context area.

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.

If the existing noncontributing structure is in a style incompatilbe with the district, and the owner wants to change the entire structure to a more compatible style, that is acceptable.

If the materials for the addition to a noncontributing building are different:

- Alternative materials, such as smooth (not textured) cementitious fiber siding, may be used when they appear compatible with traditional materials (such as wood siding) used on the existing building and contributing buildings in the context area. Choose a material that is similar in size, texture, and finish, particularly if the addition is taller or wider than the existing building.
- Avoid over-scaled materials, such as extra-large bricks.
- Avoid materials that only approximate the look of traditional building elements, such as window sills that do not project from the wall, or imitation keystones above windows or doors.

6.9 The roof of the addition may be slightly different from the roof of the existing building.

- When the addition will be attached directly to the existing building (with no hyphen), a slight change in roof height may be appropriate, to distinguish old from new.
- When an addition will be separated with a connector of sufficient length, a small difference in eave height (12–18 inches) may be appropriate.
- The ridge of a two-story addition should appear subordinate to the historic building and should not exceed 30 feet.
- The pitch of the roof on the addition should be less than or equal to that of the historic building.
- Whether the existing house has a gabled roof or a hipped roof, a hipped roof can help to minimize the perceived size of a rear addition.
- Use roofing materials that match the original building when the addition will be differentiated in other ways. A subtle change in style or color is also appropriate.

6.10 Architectural details can be contemporary on an addition. An addition should look as if it were built in its own time, rather than like a historic replica. When using contemporary architectural details, ensure that they are appropriately sized (similar to the existing building). New interpretations of traditional detailing are encouraged.

Location of the Addition

Additions to contributing and noncontributing buildings should be limited to locations where they will not overwhelm the existing building. While there is more flexibility with noncontributing buildings, an addition should not make the existing building even more noncontributing, which could adversely affect the context area as well as the historic district as a whole. For more information, see "Prioritizing Character-Defining Features by Location," on page 2-7.

6.11 Select a less visible location for parts of the addition where more flexibility in design is desired.

Consider locating special design elements on rear walls, side walls toward the rear of the addition, and portions of the addition which are obscured from view by the existing building. Keep in mind, however, that although an addition should be compatible, overall, with the existing building and other contributing buildings in the context area.

6.12 Locate rooftop additions at the rear of the house.

- A combination rooftop-rear addition must be set back at least 75% of the distance of the existing side wall. In other words, it may only encroach on 25% of the existing roof.
- A "pop-up" rooftop addition must be set back at least 60% of the distance of the existing side wall.

6.13 Small additions may be added to side or rear walls.

When a bit of extra space is needed to accommodate a slightly larger bathroom, laundry room, staircase, bay window, etc., a small addition can be added to a side or rear wall.

- A small side addition may be located at or behind the midpoint of the side wall to which it is attached.
- Locate the small addition away from the corner of the building, in order to preserve the original building form.
- Only one small addition of this type may be added per wall.
- Use the same or similar material for wall cladding as the side wall to which the small addition is attached, and trim the joints appropriately.
- Cover the small addition with a pent, gabled, or hipped roof covered with the same or similar material as the main roof of the house.
- The eaves of this addition may be the same as or lower than the existing eaves.

PLEASE NOTE:

The entire planned project should be presented in the Certificate of Appropriateness application(s). Applicants who hold back "future phases" of a project in order to gain approval for initial work may find that subsequent proposals will not be approved, if the cumulative effect of all of the changes is too great and, collectively, diminishes the integrity of the building.



Historic precedent exists for small additions that are located on the side of a building.



This carport is inappropriate because it is attached to the house and is too close to the front of the lot.

6.14 Design a garage addition or carport to minimize its visual impact, as seen from the street.

Historically, garages were usually detached and located at the rear of the property; attached garages only became popular after the end of the Houston Heights historic districts' period of significance.

- Locate an addition with a front-facing garage in the rear third of the lot.
- An addition on a corner lot may have a garage which faces the side street.
- Use a hyphen to visually separate the garage from the existing building, or otherwise design an attached garage so that it appears to be detached, as seen from the street.
- An addition to an existing house which is not located on a corner lot can incorporate a side-facing garage door.
- *Although a carport is not considered an addition, this information is provided here for easy reference.* A carport must be located at the rear 50% of the lot and cannot be attached to a house or attached garage; it may be attached to a detached garage.

Wall Cladding

The structural wall system of a modern building or addition is covered with some form of cladding for both functional and decorative purposes. Wall cladding protects the interior of a building from weather and gives a building much of its character. Typical wall materials used today include siding, brick veneer, and stucco.

PLEASE NOTE:

Stone veneer and paneled siding (such as T-111, cementitious paneling, or imitation stone or brick paneling) are not appropriate for additions in the Houston Heights Historic Districts.

Siding

Siding is often identified by its *profile*, or the shape of the cut end of a board. Some particularly distinctive shapes are clapboard, beveled, rabbeted bevel (aka Dolly Varden), Dutch lap, drop, and shiplap siding. The 117 and 105 profiles are particularly common designs in many of Houston's historic districts. The size of the *reveal* (the portion of the siding board that is visible) and the finish of the siding, whether smooth or textured, also contribute to the overall visual impact of siding.

6.15 If siding is desired, select a product with a traditional profile and no imitation woodgrain texture.

- An addition to a sided, brick, or stucco building may be clad in siding.
- Decorative shingles may be installed in limited areas, such as within gables.
- The following siding materials are appropriate:
  - Wood siding, such as douglas fir or cypress
  - Cementitious fiber (fiber cement) siding
  - Vinyl siding (allowed but not preferred)

Masonry

Because very few houses in the Houston Heights Historic Districts were constructed in brick or stucco, these are not appropriate primary cladding material for most residential additions.

- An addition to an existing brick residential or commercial building may be clad with brick of the same or a different color or size, and the brick may be laid in a different bond pattern. A brick addition is not appopriate for a building clad in siding.
- An addition to an existing stucco building may be plastered with Portland cement-based stucco. Exterior insulation and finish system (EIFS, also known as "synthetic stucco") is not allowed.
- Stone is not allowed as a wall material.
- Brick cladding may be used for minor building elements, such as chimneys, porch columns, and foundation piers, regardless of wall cladding materials.
- Rusticated concrete masonry units (CMU) are only appropriate for porch columns and foundation piers.

Windows and Doors

Since windows and doors are key character-defining features of a historic building, it is important to choose window and door designs for an addition that will be complementary and compatible. Compatibility can be achieved through similar scale and proportions, design of individual units, and placement of windows in relation to one another. Greater flexibility in design and arrangement can be used in less visible locations, such as toward the rear of the addition.

6.16 Select windows and doors that are compatible with those in the existing building and other contributing buildings in the context area.

- Maintain a similar proportion (solid-to-void ratio) between window/door openings and solid wall surfaces on a new wall that will be visible from the street.
- Select windows and doors that are similar in scale and proportion to those on the existing building.
- Arrange windows and doors to be similar to the existing building. For example, if a historic house has paired windows, consider pairing windows on the addition as well.
- Windows on the addition may match the general lite pattern of windows on the existing house, or may be more simple, but may not be more complex. For example, if the existing windows are two-over-two, the addition windows could be two-over-two, two-over-one, or one-over-one.
- Historically, decorative windows were used primarily in front-facing locations. The presence of decorative windows on a historic building does not justify the use of decorative windows on the addition.
- Doors on the addition may match the design of doors on the existing building or may be more simple in design, but may not be more complex. For example, if the existing front entrance includes a door with transom and sidelights; an addition to that building might include a door with a similar design, but no sidelights or transom.
- Windows must be recessed and inset, with a traditional profile. Flush, fin-mounted windows are not allowed.
- Window and door openings must be finished with trim that is similar in size and finish to the trim found on the existing building. New trim may have a different profile.

Porches

A new porch may be added in a location where it will not affect the integrity of the historic building, such as at the rear of the building or toward the rear on a side wall. A new porch by itself is not considered an addition unless it is enclosed with windows and walls, like a sunroom.

A new porch can also be included as part of a larger addition, particularly when the porch helps to reduce the perceived mass and scale of the addition.

6.17 Design a new porch to be compatible with the existing building.

- Keep the scale, proportion, and character of the new porch compatible with the historic structure. New interpretations of traditional designs are appropriate; for example, a new porch on a Craftsman bungalow might incorporate full-height square-tapered porch columns instead of partial-height columns set on masonry bases.
- Match the finished floor height of the new porch to the existing building.
- The eave height of a new porch can match the eave height of an existing front porch or be lower.
- Use materials that are similar in scale, proportion, texture, and finish to an existing front porch.

Foundations

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.
- Piers may be poured concrete or concrete masonry units (CMU).
- Piers may be clad in brick for a traditional appearance.
- Use traditional or contemporary designs for skirting or screening an addition's foundation, but install the screening within a frame located between piers (see page 4-28).

Roofs

Although -- for simplicity's sake -- all of the examples of additions shown on the following pages have gabled roofs, the following types of roofs are allowed for additions:

- Gabled (front-gabled, side-gabled, cross-gabled)
- Hipped
- Hip-on-gable
- Gable-on-hip
- Shed (minimum of 3-over-12 pitch)

6.18 Design the roof of an addition to be compatible with the existing building.

- Roof pitch should be the same or less than that of the existing building.
- Asphalt or composition shingles are allowed in either three-tab or architectural (dimensional) styles.
- Metal roofs are allowed for additions to **residential buildings.**
  - Material should be a typical metal color (silver, bronze, etc.) with a matte, nonreflective finish.
  - Material should be appropriately sized for a residential building. For example, standing seam metal on a residential building typically measures18–24 inches between interlocking seams. If ribs are present between the interlocking seams, measure between the seams, not between the seam and the rib.
- Metal roofs for additions to **commercial buildings** should be appropriately sized and may be finished in a neutral color.
- Flat roofs are only permitted on commercial buildings. Roofs that appear to be flat (less than 3-over-12 pitch) are not allowed on residential buildings.

Dormers

Dormers may be used in any residential addition as a way to create livable space in an attic.

- Dormers may be added to a one-story addition. See appropriate configurations on pages 4-37 and 4-38.
- Second-story dormers are only allowed on rear-facing roofs.

Shutters and Awnings

Awnings and operable shutters can provide protection from the sun and help to limit heat gain to a building's interior. Shutters and awnings may be used in a residential addition. For more information about requirements for shutters and awnings, please see pages 4-29 and 4-30.

Chimneys

Chimneys may be used in a residential addition under the following conditions:

- The chimney must be built of or clad in brick.
- Bare metal chimney pipes and chimneys clad in siding are not allowed.
- Chimneys may be located on a side or rear wall or interior of the building. Chimneys are not allowed on front walls.

For more information about chimneys, please see page 4-39 in Section 4.

Other Items

The following may be used on a residential or commercial addition as part of its construction. They must be included in the COA for the addition. If any of these are to be installed later, that project will require a separate COA.

- Solar panels
- Satellite dishes or antennae
- Low-profile skylights
- Burglar bars on windows and doors, and other security devices
- Accessibility ramps or lifts
- Signs

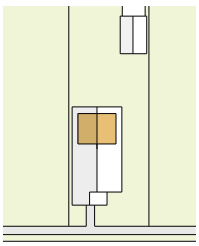
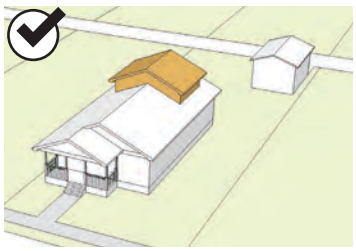
For more information about these items, please see Section 4.

APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE ROOF ADDITION ALTERNATIVES

These images illustrate how the design guidelines for adding a rooftop addition would apply to a series of alternatives.

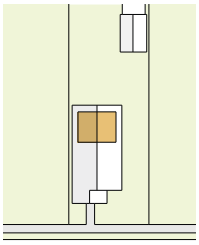
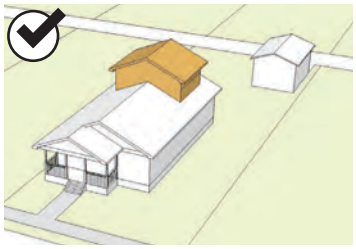
1. Addition Set Back 60% with Low Walls Inset from Historic Walls

- Addition is set back 60% of the length of the historic side walls from the front wall plane
- Roof pitch matches historic building
- Eave line is maintained

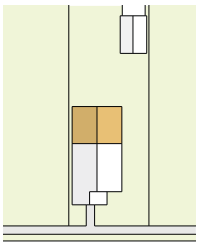
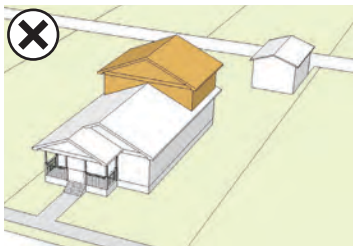

2. Addition Set Back 60% with Tall Walls Inset from Historic Walls

- Addition is set back 60% of the length of the historic side walls from the front wall plane
- Roof pitch matches historic building
- Eave line is maintained


3. Addition Set Back 60% with Tall Walls Aligned with Historic Walls

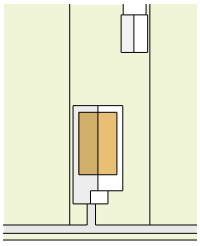
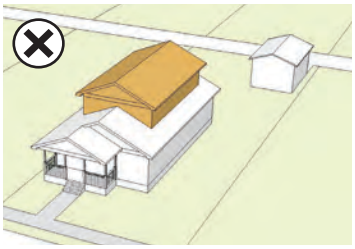
- Addition is set back 60% of the length of the historic side walls from the front wall plane
- Roof pitch matches historic building
- Eave line is maintained


APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE ROOF ADDITION ALTERNATIVES

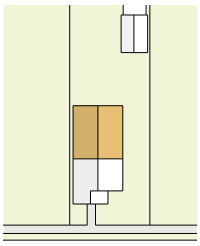
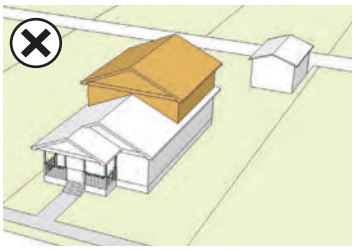
4. Addition Set Back 20% with Low Walls and Inset from Historic Walls

- Addition is set back 20% of the length of the historic side walls from the front wall plane
- Roof pitch matches historic building
- Eave line is maintained
- Addition is not subordinate to historic building

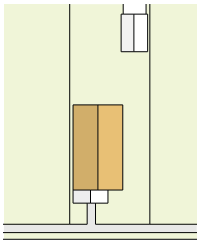
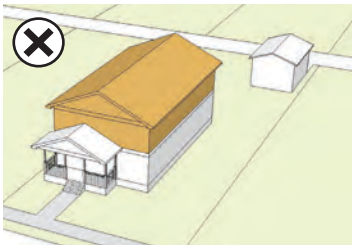

5. Addition Set Back 40% with Tall Walls Aligned with Historic Walls

- Addition is set back 40% of the length of the historic side walls from the front wall plane
- Roof pitch matches historic building
- Eave line is maintained
- Addition is not subordinate to historic building


6. Addition Set Back 0% with Tall Walls Aligned with Historic Walls

- Addition is set back 0% of the length of the historic side walls from the front wall plane
- Roof pitch matches historic building
- Eave line is not maintained
- Addition is not subordinate to historic building


APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE ADDITION COMBINATIONS

These images illustrate how the design guidelines for adding a combination of rear/rooftop addition would apply to a series of alternatives.

For one-story houses:

- One-story rear additions must be inset a minimum of one foot.
- Two-story rear additions require a minimum inset of two feet.
- In order to extend the addition past one side wall, the addition must be inset the same distance from the other side wall of the existing building.

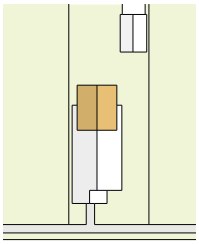
1. Combination of Rooftop Addition and Moderate Two-Story Rear Addition

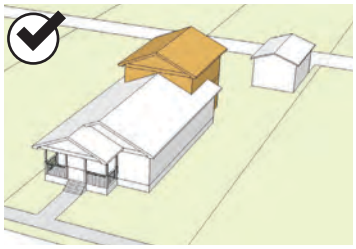
Rooftop Addition:

- Set back from front wall plane 75% of historic side wall length

Rear Addition:

- Inset from side wall: 3 ft.
- Addition length: 25% of historic side wall







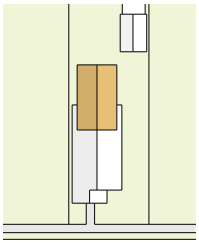
2. Combination of Rooftop Addition and Long Two-Story Rear Addition

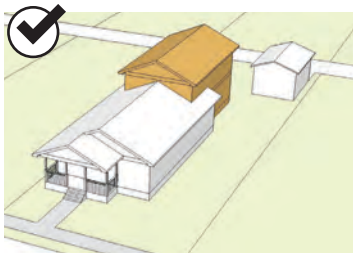
Rooftop Addition:

- Set back from front wall plane 75% of historic side wall length

Rear Addition:

- Inset from side wall: 3 ft.
- Addition length: 50% of historic side wall







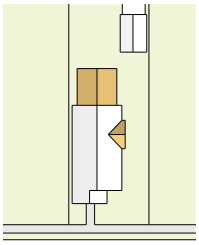
3. Combination of One-Story Side Addition and Moderate One-Story Rear Addition

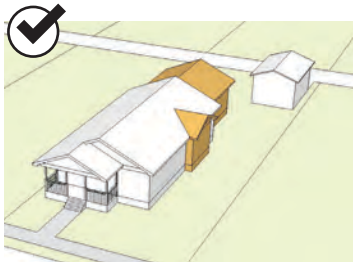
Side Addition:

- Set back from front wall plane 60%
- Projects 2 ft.
- Length: 25% of historic side wall length

Rear Addition:

- Inset from side wall: 3 ft.
- Addition length: 50% of historic side wall







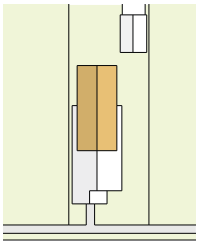
4. Combination of Large Rooftop Addition and Large Two-Story Rear Addition

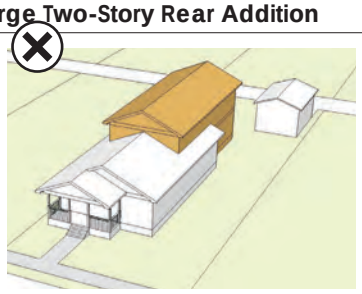
Rooftop Addition:

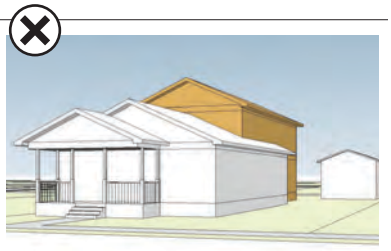
- Set back from front wall plane 50% of historic side wall length

Rear Addition:

- Inset from side wall: 3 ft.
- Addition length: 50% of historic side wall





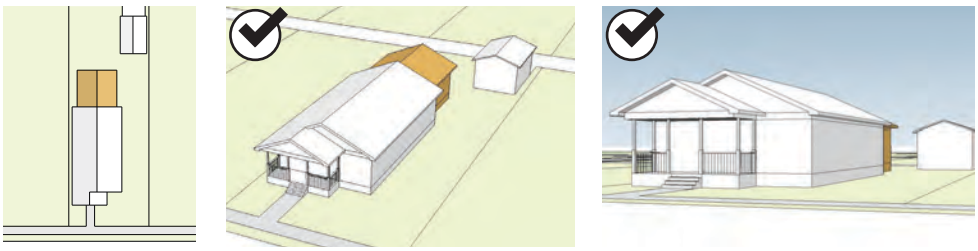


APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE REAR ADDITION ALTERNATIVES

These images illustrate how the design guidelines for adding a rear addition would apply to a series of alternatives.

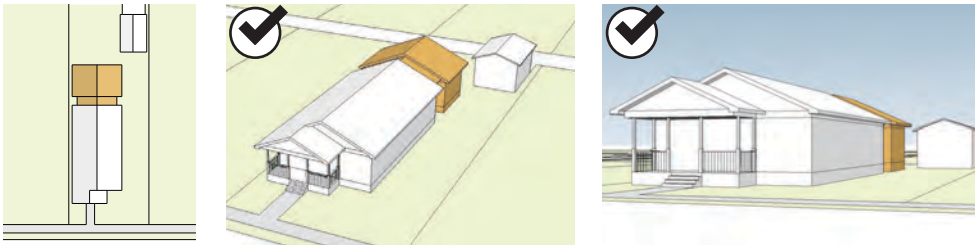
1. One-Story Addition Inset from Historic Walls

- Roof pitch matches historic building
- Eave line maintained
- Height and width of historic building is maintained
- Maintains all corners of historic structure



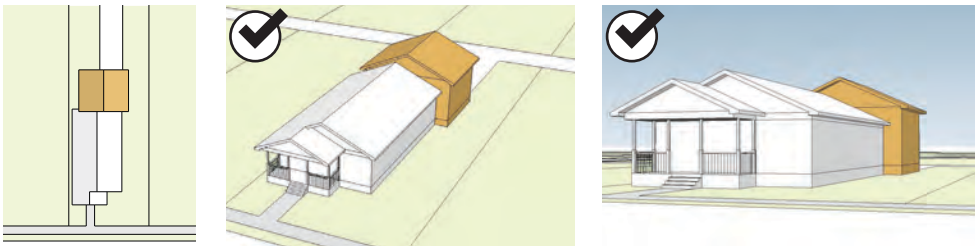
2. One-Story Addition with Connector and Walls Aligned with Historic Walls

- Roof pitch matches historic building
- Eave line maintained
- Height and width of historic building is maintained
- Maintains all corners of historic structure



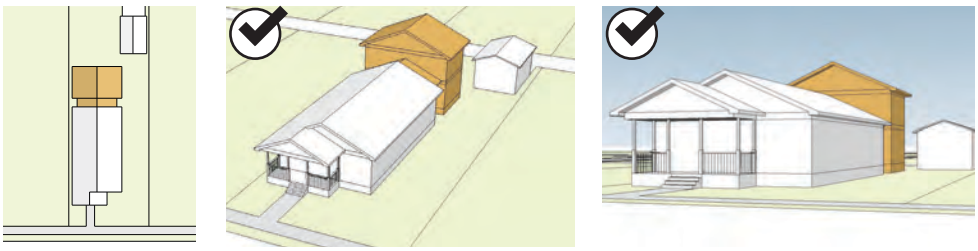
3. One-Story Addition Inset from One Historic Wall and Offset from One Historic Wall

- Roof pitch matches historic building
- Eave line maintained
- Width of historic building is maintained
- Maintains 3 corners of historic structure



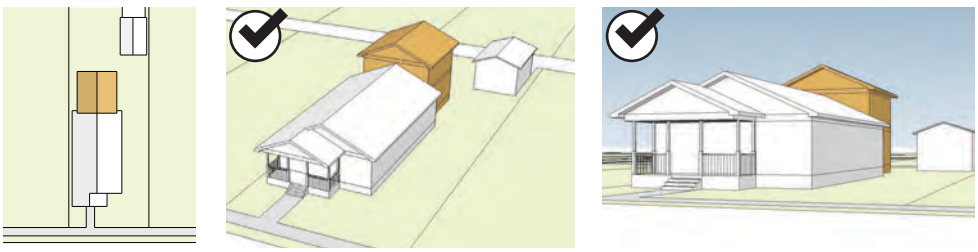
4. Two-Story Addition with Connector and Walls Aligned with Historic Walls

- Roof pitch matches historic building
- Eave line maintained
- Width of historic building is maintained
- Maintains all corners of historic structure



5. Two-Story Addition Inset from Historic Walls

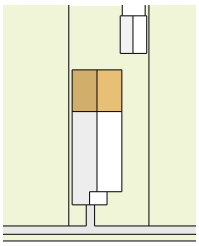
- Roof pitch matches historic building
- Eave line maintained
- Width of historic building is maintained
- Maintains all corners of historic structure

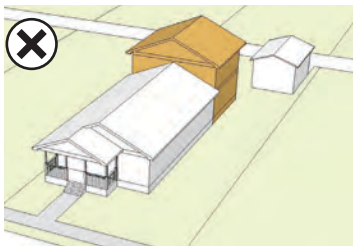


APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE REAR ADDITION ALTERNATIVES

6. Two-Story Addition with Walls Aligned with Historic Walls

- Roof pitch matches historic building
- Eave line maintained
- Height overwhelms historic building
- Does not maintain corners of historic structure

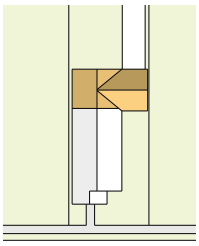


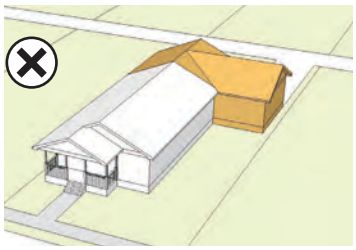




7. One-Story Addition with Offset from Historic Walls in "L-Form"

- Eave line maintained
- Width of historic building is not maintained
- Form is out of character
- Does not maintain corners of historic structure

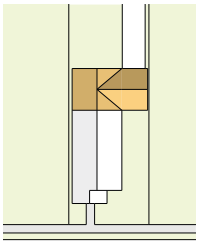


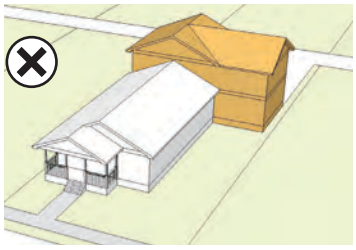




8. Two-Story Addition Offset from Historic Walls in "L-Form"

- Eave line maintained
- Height overwhelms historic building
- Does not maintain corners of historic structure
- Addition is not inset the same distance that it extends past side wall





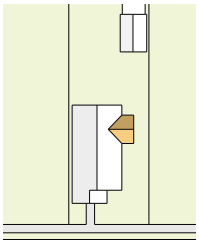
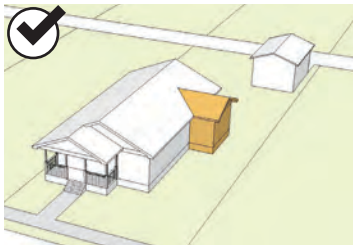


APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE SIDE ADDITION ALTERNATIVES

These images illustrate how the design guidelines for adding a side addition would apply to a series of alternatives.

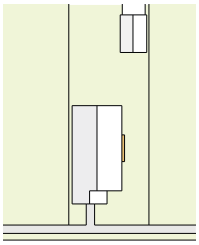
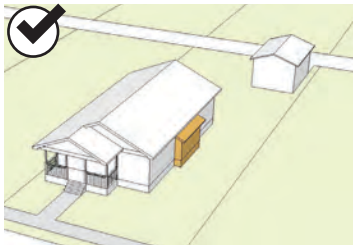
1. One-Story, Moderate Size Addition at Rear of Side Wall

- Addition is set back 60% of the length of the historic side walls from the front wall plane
- Addition is 30% as long as historic side wall
- Addition is 25% as wide as historic front wall plane length
- Eave line not maintained

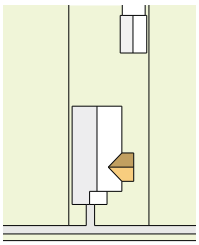
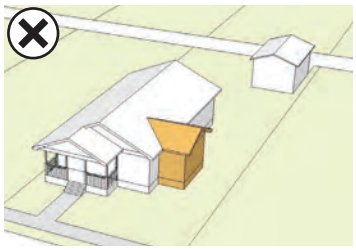

2. One-Story, Small Size Addition at Mid-Point of Side Wall

- Addition is centered at the mid-point of side wall
- Addition is 30% as long as historic side wall
- Addition is 7% as wide as historic front wall plane length
- Eave line is maintained

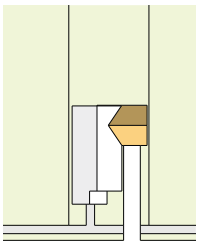
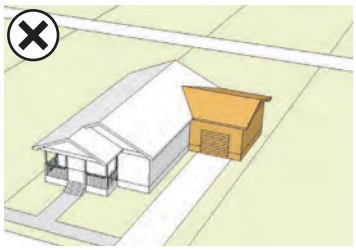

3. One-Story, Moderate Size Addition at Front of Side Wall

- Addition is set back 25% of the length of the historic side walls from the front wall plane
- Addition is 30% as long as historic side wall
- Addition is 25% as wide as historic front wall plane length
- Eave line not maintained


4. One-Story, Large Size Garage Addition at Rear of Side Wall

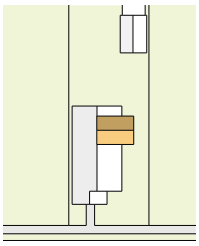
- Addition is set back 60% of the length of the historic side walls from the front wall plane
- Addition is 42% as long as historic side wall
- Addition is 50% as wide as historic front wall plane length
- Eave line is maintained

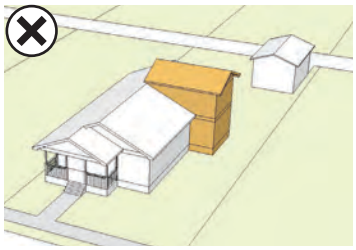




APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE SIDE ADDITION ALTERNATIVES

5. Two-Story, Moderate Size Addition at Rear of Side Wall

- Addition is set back 60% of the length of the historic side walls from the front wall plane
- Addition is 25% as long as historic side wall
- Addition is 30% as wide as historic front wall plane length
- Eave line not maintained

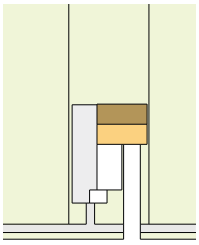


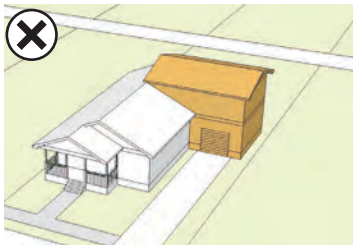




6. Two-Story, Large Size Addition at Rear of Side Wall

- Addition is set back 60% of the length of the historic side walls from the front wall plane
- Addition is 42% as long as historic side wall
- Addition is 50% as wide as historic front wall plane length
- Eave line is maintained

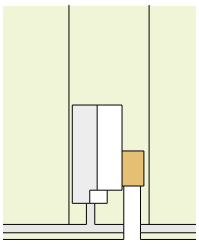


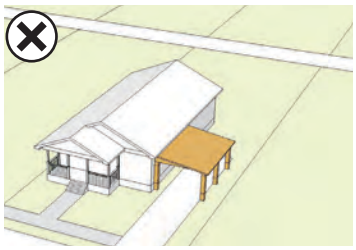




7. Attached Carport Addition at Front of Side Wall

- Addition is set back 60% of the length of the historic side walls from the front wall plane
- Addition is 42% as long as historic side wall
- Addition is 25% as wide as historic front wall plane length
- Eave line is maintained







SECTION 7: QUALITATIVE GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

Historic districts can change over time and still retain the qualities that make the area historically, culturally, and architecturally significant. We accomplish this by managing the construction of new buildings and changes to existing ones. For the purposes of this document, new construction means an entirely new building or structure, rather than an addition. The construction of any new building or structure within a historic district requires a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Compatibility does not require new buildings to mimic historic properties; in fact, the City encourages contemporary design within its historic districts. When a new building is constructed, its design should relate to historic buildings in the area through mass, form, scale, proportion, siting, and materials, but a new building should be "of its own time."

New buildings can relate to historic buildings in the area by being similar to:

- The way contributing buildings (and their front doors) are oriented to the street
- The basic forms and materials of nearby contributing buildings
- The height of contributing buildings' foundations, porches, eaves, and walls
- The arrangement of windows and doors on the fronts of contributing buildings

These basic design elements are more important than the details of individual architectural styles. As a result, new buildings can be compatible with the historic district even when they are clearly of contemporary design and construction.

This section includes qualitative guidelines for new infill construction. Measurable standards governing the size of new construction are provided in Section 5.

IN THIS SECTION

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Differentiation 7-4
Wall Cladding 7-4
Windows and Doors 7-5
Porches 7-6
Foundations 7-6
Roofs 7-7
Dormers 7-7
Shutters and Awnings 7-8
Chimneys 7-8





The mass and scale of these new infill buildings would be appropriate in some Houston Heights contexts.



This house uses new interpretations of classic Craftsman details. (Photo courtesy of Studio Z Architecture.)

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

This section provides qualitative design guidelines for new construction. These require interpretation and good judgment, to ensure that the proposed project is compatible with the contributing structures in the context area. Each project is considered on its own merits; even if the same building were proposed to be constructed in multiple locations within the historic district, the differences in context areas for those various locations could result in different decisions regarding compatibility.

7.1 Design a new building to reflect contemporary trends in architecture.

New construction should reflect the time period in which the building is built. While many people think that new buildings in a historic district should look "historic," best practices in historic preservation — in place for more than 50 years, and applied all over the United States — encourage new buildings and additions to look new.

Designs should be "differentiated but compatible." Attempts to design new "historic" buildings often fail because of inaccurate scale, proportions, and detailing. In addition to failed recreations of historic buildings, even an accurate design of a historic style is inappropriate since it confuses history and the understanding of the district.

Instead, new buildings and additions or changes to noncontributing structures should either incorporate new design elements with traditional building forms, or utilize traditional design elements but apply those to unconventional or contemporary building forms. Either approach, if executed well, can result in the design being compatible with the context area but still easily identifiable as new.

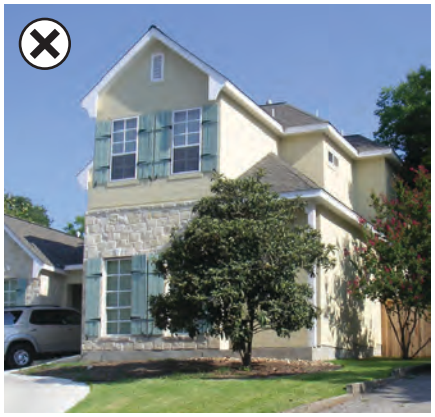
- Use materials that are similar in dimensions, profile, and finish to traditional materials.
- Do not use materials that only approximate the look of traditional building elements, such as faux window sills that are flush with the wall.
- Use new interpretations of porch columns, railings, windows, and doors to distinguish new construction from older buildings.
- Use contemporary designs for skirting or screening a foundation, but install the screening in a traditional manner.
- Use simple roof forms of moderate pitch.

No specific architectural styles are required.

7.2 Design a new building to be compatible in level of complexity.

If most contributing structures in the context area are fairly simple in design, the new building should similarly be fairly modest. In a context area where buildings are more highly ornamented or exuberant in design, a new structure could reflect that higher level of complexity.

New construction is required to be compatible with the exterior features of the contributing buildings in the context area; see the criteria listed on page 1-18.

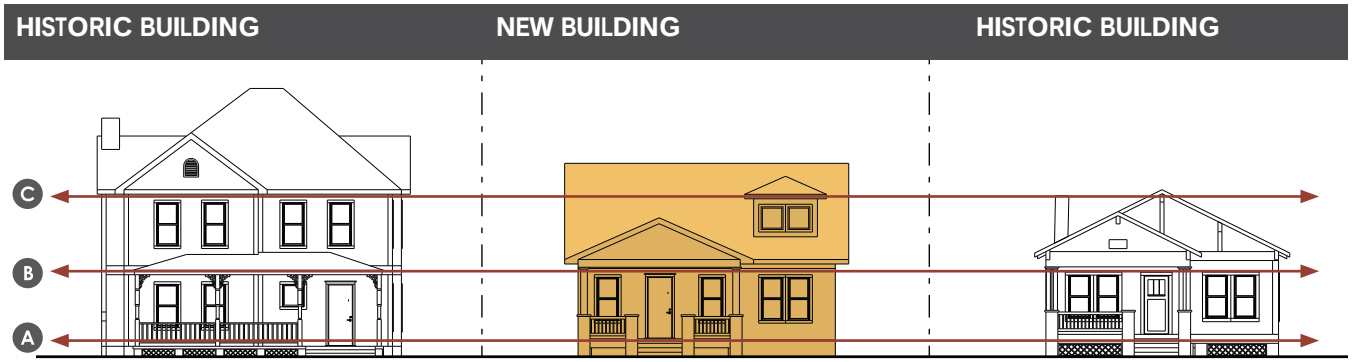


This new infill building would be incompatible within the Houston Heights Districts due to its scale, massing, lack of a front porch, and use of stone veneer.

7.3 Design a new building to be compatible with the scale and proportion of contributing buildings in the context area.

Because contributing structures are the most important buildings in the historic district, they must remain prominent. That means that new buildings should be visually subordinate, or secondary, to their contributing neighbors. New buildings should not overshadow (literally or figuratively) contributing structures within the context area.

- Design the building using the measurable standards provided in Section 5.
- Use header heights for doors and windows that are similar to contributing buildings in the context area.



Applying the measurable standards should help a new building's features align with contributing structures in the context area.

A Foundation and porch heights

B Porch eaves

C Main roof eaves



Use materials that are similar in dimensions, profile, and finish to traditional materials.

Differentiation

A new building should be compatible with, but differentiated from, the existing contributing buildings in the context area. This can be accomplished by making the mass, scale, and proportions of the new building compatible. If that is accomplished, more contemporary elements can be appropriate.

7.4 Consider using the following options to differentiate a new building.

- Siding materials, profiles, sizes, or patterns that are not traditional
- Design features, such as columns, which are abstracted versions of traditional designs
- Non-traditional window types, sizes, or styles

Wall Cladding

The structural wall system of a modern building or addition is covered with some form of cladding for both functional and decorative purposes. Wall cladding protects the interior of a building from weather and gives a building much of its character. Typical wall materials used today include siding, brick veneer, and stucco.

Siding

Siding is often identified by its *profile*, or the shape of the cut end of a board. Some particularly distinctive shapes are clapboard, beveled, rabbeted bevel (aka Dolly Varden), Dutch lap, drop, and shiplap siding. The 117 and 105 profiles are particularly common designs in many of Houston's historic districts. The size of the *reveal* (the portion of the siding board that is visible) and the finish of the siding, whether smooth or textured, also contribute to the overall visual impact of siding.

7.5 If siding is desired, select a product with a traditional profile and no imitation woodgrain texture.

- Either horizontal siding or vertical board-and-batten siding are allowed.
- Decorative shingles may be installed in limited areas, such as within gables.
- The following siding materials are appropriate:
  - Wood siding, such as douglas fir or cypress
  - Cementitious fiber (fiber cement) siding, including that with a larger profile or size than traditional wood (although always the smooth version, not imitation wood grain)
  - Vinyl siding (allowed but not preferred)

Masonry

Because very few houses in the Houston Heights Historic Districts were constructed in brick or stucco, these are not appropriate primary cladding material for most new buildings. Brick cladding may be used for minor building elements, such as chimneys, porch columns, and foundation piers.

- Exterior insulation and finish system (EIFS) is not allowed.
- Stone is not allowed as a wall material.
- Rusticated concrete masonry units (CMU) are only appropriate for porch columns and foundation piers.



An appropriate new-construction window

Windows and Doors

Windows and doors are key character-defining features.

7.6 Select windows and doors that are compatible with those in the existing building and other contributing buildings in the context area.

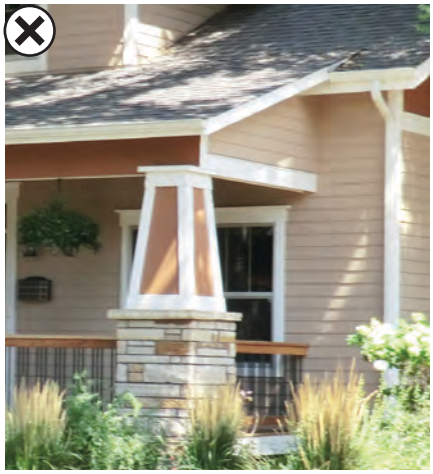
- Consider using new interpretations of windows, doors, and other features.
- Maintain a similar solid-to-void ratio between window/door openings and solid wall surfaces on walls that will be visible from the street, as compared to existing contributing buildings.
- Select windows and doors that are similar in scale and proportion to those in the context area. Other sizes and shapes are also acceptable.
- Decorative windows were used primarily for front rooms in historic houses.
- Windows must be recessed and inset, with a traditional profile. Flush, fin-mounted windows are not allowed.
- Window and door openings must be finished with trim.



Use doors and windows with proportions and materials that are compatible with the context area in locations that will be highly visible from the street.



Design a porch to be compatible with the context area.



This column is out of scale with the porch.



This example of new infill with contemporary design is compatible because of the mass, form and building elements such as the porch.

Porches

New residential buildings should have a front porch. Side or rear porches are also permitted.

7.7 Design a new porch to be compatible with the contributing buildings in the context area.

- Keep the scale, proportion, and character of the new porch compatible with the context area. New interpretations of traditional designs are appropriate; for example, a new porch on a Craftsman bungalow might incorporate full-height square-tapered porch columns instead of partial-height columns set on masonry bases. (See example on page 7-2.)
- The eave height of a new porch should be similar to the porch eave heights of the contributing buildings in the context area.
- Use materials that are similar in scale, proportion, texture, and finish to existing front porches.
- Design a new residential building with a one-story front porch that is *at least half as wide* as the front wall of the house.
- A new two-story house may have a two-story porch as long as the porch is *no more than half as wide* as the front wall of the house.

Foundations

A new building may be built on a pier-and-beam, concrete perimeter wall, or slab-on-grade foundation. Slab-on-grade is allowed by the City, as long as it is detailed to look like pier-on-beam construction. However, please be aware that slab-on-grade foundations may be prohibited on some deed-restricted lots. Please check with the Houston Heights Association for any applicable deed restrictions.

In the event that there is a conflict between the design guidelines and the building code, the more restrictive measure shall prevail.

- Piers may be poured concrete or concrete masonry units (CMU).
- Piers may be clad in brick for a traditional appearance.
- Use traditional or contemporary designs for skirting or screening an addition's foundation, but install the screening within a frame located between piers.
- 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 Certificate of Appropriateness application.

Roofs

The following types of roofs are allowed for new construction:

- Gabled (front gabled, side gabled, cross gabled)
- Hipped
- Hip-on-gable
- Gable-on-hip
- Shed (minimum of 3-over-12 pitch)

Flat roofs (less than 3-over-12 pitch) are not allowed on residential buildings.

7.8 Design the roof of a new building to be compatible with nearby contributing buildings.

- Asphalt or composition shingles are allowed in either three-tab or architectural (dimensional) styles.
- Metal roofs are allowed for additions to **residential buildings.**
  - Material should be a typical metal color (silver, bronze, etc.) with a matte, nonreflective finish.
  - Material should be appropriately sized for a residential building. For example, standing seam metal typically measures 18–24 inches between interlocking seams for residential application. (If ribs are present between the interlocking seams, measure between the seams, not between the seam and the rib.)
- Metal roofs for additions to **commercial buildings** should be appropriately sized and may be finished in a neutral color.

Dormers

Dormers may be used in new construction as a way to create livable space in an attic.

- Dormers may be incorporated into one-story buildings.
- For a two-story building, dormers may only be located on a rear-facing roof.

Shutters and Awnings

Awnings and operable shutters can provide protection from the sun and help to limit heat gain to a building's interior. Shutters and awnings may be used in a residential addition. For more information about requirements for shutters and awnings, please see pages 4-29 and 4-30 in Section 4.

Chimneys

Chimneys may be used in a residential addition under the following conditions:

- The chimney must be built of or clad in brick.
- Bare metal chimney pipes or chimneys clad in siding are not allowed.
- Chimneys may be located on a side or rear wall or interior of the building. Chimneys are not allowed on front walls.

For more information about chimneys, please see page 4-39 in Section 4.

Other Items

The following may be used on a residential or commercial building as part of its construction. They must be included in the initial COA. If any of these are to be installed later, that project will require a separate COA.

- Solar panels
- Satellite dishes or antennae
- Low-profile skylights
- Burglar bars on windows and doors, and other security devices
- Accessibility ramps or lifts
- Signs

For more information about these items, please see Section 4.

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.

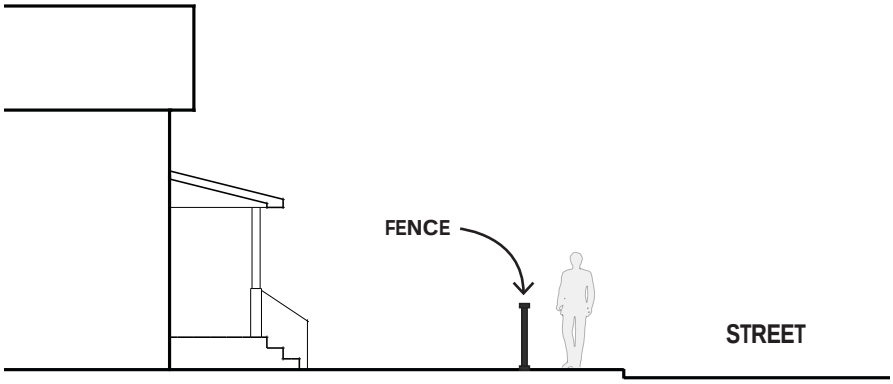
Install metal or wooden picket fences consistent with those found in the neighborhood. If using composite or synthetic materials, choose a durable alternative that looks like wood or metal.

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.

FRONT YARD FENCE HEIGHT



A fence height of 36–42 inches is appropriate.



Wooden picket fences should be regularly maintained and painted.





Maintain historic fences.



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.





Maintain historic sidewalks and walkways.





Maintain paved and unpaved driveways beside the house.



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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

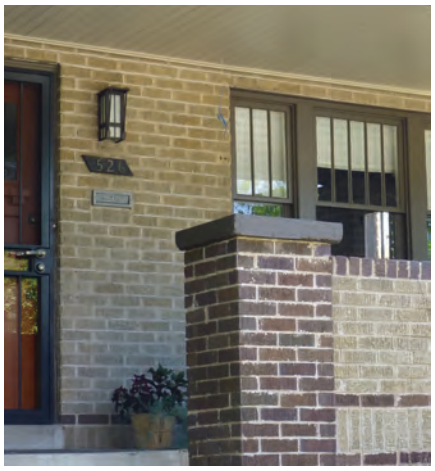
Flush-mounted or pendant-style lights may be installed to light porches or stoops.

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.



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.

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.

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.

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.

APPENDIX:
HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORIES

Inventories are created for each historic district at the time of designation. These include the street address, legal description, and other information about each property in the district. Because these inventories are not updated every time a property changes, the information provided here may be out of date for some addresses. Please contact the Historic Preservation Office with any questions.

INVENTORIES FOR HISTORIC DISTRICTS:

Houston Heights Historic District East **A-1**

Houston Heights Historic District West **B-1**

Houston Heights Historic District South **C-1**