

## CHAPTER 5 - RESIDENTIAL BUILDING DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

### A. General

This chapter is devoted to design considerations for the rehabilitation, alteration, and construction of new additions and outbuildings associated with residential properties in the Historic Conservation Overlay District. Also addressed is fencing, driveways, parking, landscaping, mechanical equipment and access ramps. While residential properties are usually located in a residential neighborhood there are some historic residences adjacent to or within the commercial district. These situations are also treated in this Chapter.

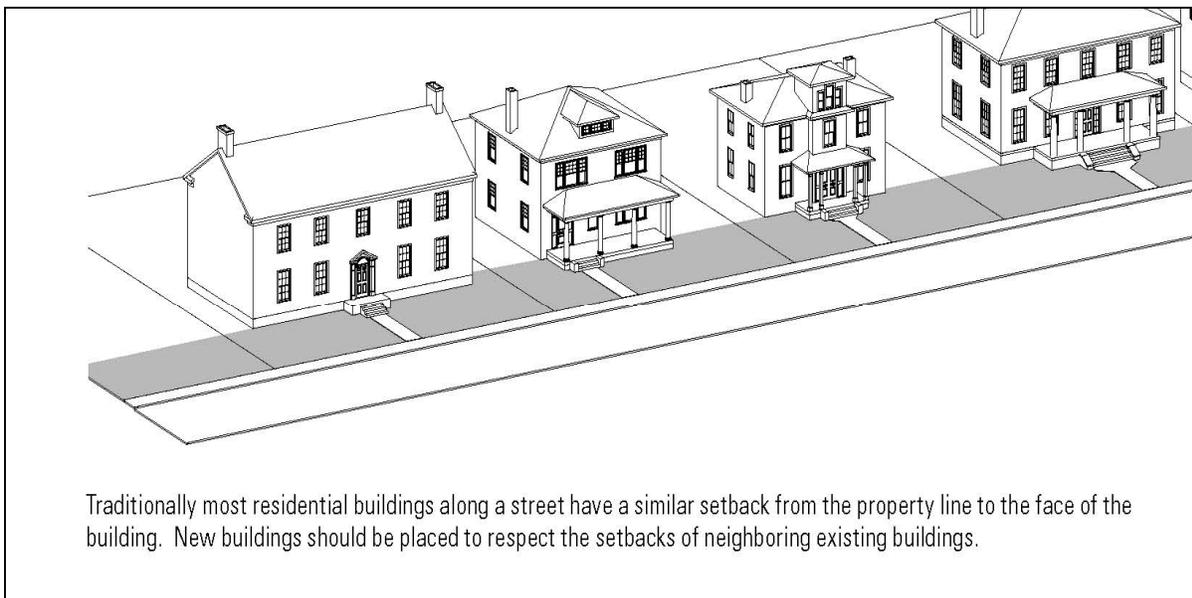
### B. Residential Siting Considerations

As used in the Chapter, siting considerations for residential properties within the historic district pertain to construction activities involving the building of a fence, an outbuilding, or an addition to an existing residence. For the purposes of these guidelines, site refers not only to the area that the building sits on, but also to the position of the building on the site and other related elements such as parking and landscaping.

*Note: Guidance for the construction of a new residence on an in-fill lot in the historic district can be found in Chapter 7, New Construction.*

### C. Setbacks

Setbacks are a requirement governing the construction of new additions or accessory structures to ensure that it is appropriately spaced back from the property line. Preservation of the historic pattern of setbacks within historic residential neighborhoods is an important objective. If an outbuilding or addition is planned as part of an existing historic house the following setback guidelines in addition to those found in the Unified Development Ordinance are applicable.



#### C.1 Front Yard Setbacks

For front yard setbacks additions should not project beyond the existing (average) setback of other historic residences along a typical street. New porches should not project beyond the typical setback for existing

porches. At transitional sites between two distinctive areas for instance between new commercial and historic residential, defer to the setback of the historic buildings.

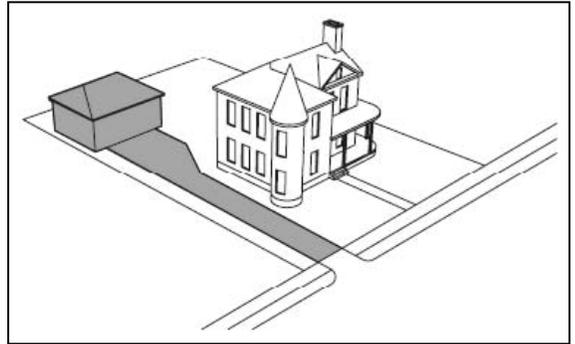
## C.2 Side Yard Setbacks

The spacing between buildings depends on the size of the lot, the size of the building, and side-yard setback zoning requirements. Consistent spacing between a row of buildings helps to establish an overall rhythm along a street. While a 10-foot spacing between residential buildings is common in the historic district there are exceptions associated with larger scattered lots.

For planning purposes, side yard setbacks should be spaced within 20 percent of the average spacing between houses on the same block. The sideyard setbacks defined in the Unified Development Ordinance should be followed, except where it would produce a side-yard building spacing which is substantially inconsistent with the historic pattern for the street. In cases where application of the default setbacks would exceed 20 percent of the average building-to-building spacing along the same street, then a request to the Board of Zoning Appeals for variance to the side yard setbacks should be considered.

## D. Off-Street Parking and Driveways

Most of the residential buildings in the historic district have driveways on the side of the house. Several dwellings that have been converted to apartment buildings have rear parking lots. Typically, driveways should be located such that they align with the side yard of the property and extend at least 20 feet past the front of the house. For properties with large lots and larger residences, loop driveways may be acceptable if they follow historic precedents.



Areas serving as parking areas should, to the maximum extent possible, be located only at the sides and rear of the lot. Parking lots are not permitted in front of residential buildings. Where parking lots are located in a side yard, screen fencing should be installed to visually screen the parking area from adjacent residences and public rights-of-way.

In terms of paving, driveways should have a traditional appearance, based on historic paving materials used for residential settings, such as river gravel, rotten rock, exposed aggregate concrete, colored concrete, brick, concrete pavers in a brick or cobble style, or other traditional paving type. Asphalt paving should be restricted to parking lots only.

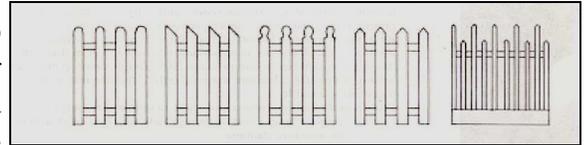


## E. Fences and Low Screen Walls

Fences and screen walls are utilized to perform various functions. Within the Suffolk Historic Conservation Overlay District historic fences and walls are made from a variety of materials including brick, wrought iron, and wood. These historic fences and screen walls shall be maintained in their original condition.

## E.1 General

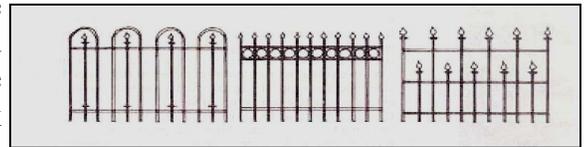
The installation of a new fence located in a side yard, attached to the rear portion of the structure and extending twenty (20) feet or less into a side yard, can be considered a minor action. When a portion of a fence needs replacing, salvage original parts and re-use in a prominent location. Fence replacements should match old fencing in material, height, and detail. If this is not possible, a simplified design of similar materials and height shall be used.



The following guidelines provide guidance for the construction of new fences and walls by type.

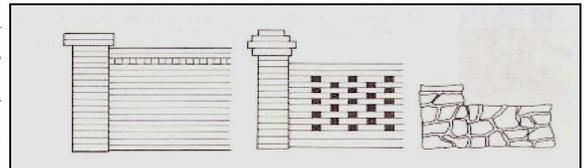
## E.2 Decorative Fences

Decorative fencing is usually used where fences will be visible from public streets in front and side yards to accent the yard and provide some degree of enclosure. Decorative fences can be made of wrought iron and wood pickets, with or without brick piers. No fence located in any required yard adjacent to a street which creates a solid screen may exceed 30-inches in height. If such fence is uniformly 50% or more opened, it may be erected to a maximum height of 48-inches. Side yard and rear yard fencing not visible from a public way can be the maximum height of six (6) feet as allowed by the Unified Development Ordinance. Plastic and vinyl fencing is not allowed unless specifically approved by the Historic Landmarks Commission. Chain link fencing and other wire fencing are prohibited.



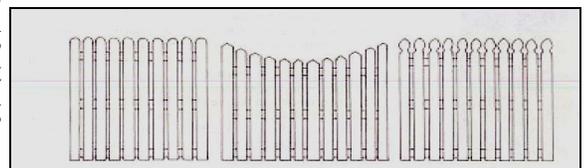
## E.3 Decorative Low Screen Walls

Decorative low screen walls are usually used where visible from public streets in front and side yards to accent the yard and provide some degree of enclosure. They can be made of wood boards, brick, or stucco (when the principal dwelling is stucco), generally block at least 75% of the view through the fence, and not exceed 30 inches in height. Wood fences should be painted or stained an opaque color. Plastic and vinyl fencing is not allowed unless specifically approved by the Historic Landmarks Commission. Concrete block without a stucco finish is prohibited.



## E.4 Tall Screen Fencing

Tall screen fencing is usually used for side and rear yards where it is not visible from a public way to enclose the yard for security, privacy and/or for restricting pets. These fences can be made of wood, brick, wrought iron, or stucco (when stucco is used for the principal dwelling). Tall fences should be constructed of wood slats of at least  $\frac{3}{4}$ " thickness to avoid warping and provide adequate durability. Where wood fencing is used, it shall be painted or stained an opaque color. Chain link fencing and other wire fencing is prohibited.



## E.5 Living Fences

Hedges, ivy, and other landscape materials can be used to establish screen fencing for front, side and rear yards. Approval by the Historic Landmarks Commission is not required.

## F. Other Site Features

There are other site elements, while not requiring architectural review, nevertheless affect the appearance of the site and can help to reinforce the image of the historic area.

### F.1 Landscaping

The wide variety of landscaping found in the historic district consists of natural site features such as grass, ground cover, shrubs, and trees. Several residences have extensive landscaping with attractive flowers, mature trees, manicured lawns, and foundation shrubs. The majority of the properties, however, have simpler, but mature, landscaping.



Retaining landscaping such as trees and shrubs helps to define the character of the district. When necessary, replace diseased or dead plants, especially large trees, with like species. Install new landscaping such as trees along the sidewalk and plants that are traditional or indigenous to the area to reinforce the character of the district. Select mulching or edging materials carefully. Avoid using plastic edgings, lava, crushed rock, and other historically unsuitable materials.

### F.2 Technological Advances

As advancements in modern technology continue to grow, a compromise must be met between these ever changing needs and the preservation of historic neighborhoods. If the location of these devices is not carefully planned, they can diminish the character of properties in the Historic District. As an example, satellite dishes shall be located where they are not readily visible from the street.



Included within technological advances are those modern conveniences required by code or added for convenience onto or around historic buildings, such as roof antennae, utility meters and utility wires. In accordance with the Unified Development Ordinance, as applicable, such items shall be screened from view from any adjacent public rights-of-way.

### F.3 Light Fixtures

In residential areas, use lighting fixtures that are understated and complement the residential quality of the surroundings. Avoid lights that are too bright, such as “crime” lights and bright floodlights, when surrounding lighting is subdued. Any lighting must be consistent with the lighting standards found in the UDO.



## F.4 Miscellaneous Exterior Items

Site appurtenances, such as overhead wires, utility poles and meters, antennae, exterior heat exchangers, and trash containers, shall be located where they are least likely to detract from the character of the site. Screen with landscaping or fences in accordance with the Unified Development Ordinance.



## G. Design of the Building Mass - Additions

A building's mass is comprised of its shape, the relationship of height and width, the foundation, and the roof. These elements are important in defining the character of a building and should be considered when planning an addition.

### G.1 Building Form

A building's form, or shape, can be simple (a box) or complex (a combination of many boxes or boxes with projections or indentations). The level of complexity usually relates directly to the style or type of building. Most houses in the Suffolk Historic Conservation Overlay District have a simple form.



### G.2 Form of Additions

An addition to an historic house should be designed so that its form is based on the form of the original house, with emphasis placed on ensuring that the original form is not overwhelmed by the addition.

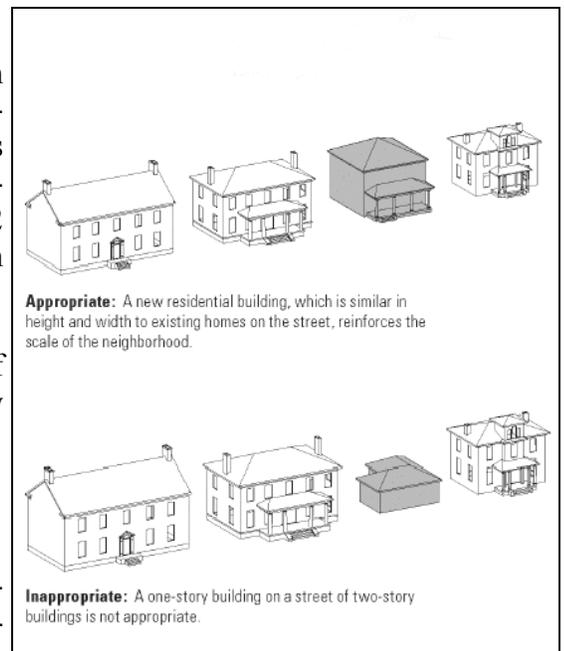
### G.3 Directional Expression

Directional Expression refers to the relationship of height and width of the front elevation of a building's mass. Every building is horizontal, vertical, or square in its proportions. Residential buildings in Suffolk are closely divided between horizontal and vertical orientation. Houses built after 1940 are more likely to be one or 1-1/2 stories in height as opposed to the more vertical styles from the turn of the century which are usually two or 2-1/2 stories in height.

An addition to a house should continue the directional expression of the original dwelling including eave heights, roof designs, window proportions and siding direction.

### G.4 Height and Width of Additions

The actual size of the building can either contribute to or be in conflict with an historic area. Height and width create scale or the rela-



For additions to historic residences, the height of additions should not exceed the height of the primary roof structure. Roofs should be stepped down from the main roof where possible so that the addition's roof does not dominate the original historic roof.

## H. Foundation Design

Together with the material it is made from, the foundation forms not only the base of a building but is also important in forming its historic character. On many structures, the material of the foundation is indistinguishable from the walls of the buildings while on others it is a different material or texture or is raised well above ground level. Solid Brick foundations are common for residential buildings in the district. Masonry Pier foundations are also typical with the spaces between the piers often filled in with brick.



The following guidelines relate to the maintenance, rehabilitation of, and addition to historic foundations.

### H.1 Maintenance Guidelines

Keep crawl space vents open so that air flows freely. Retain any decorative vents that are original to the building. Insure that the land is graded so that water flows away from the foundation; if necessary install drains around the foundation. Remove any vegetation that may cause structural disturbances at the foundation.

### H.2 Rehabilitation Guidelines

Repoint or rebuild deteriorated brick porch foundations matching materials as closely as possible. Where the masonry has deteriorated, refer to the masonry section of this Guideline for guidance.

### H.3 Additions Guidelines

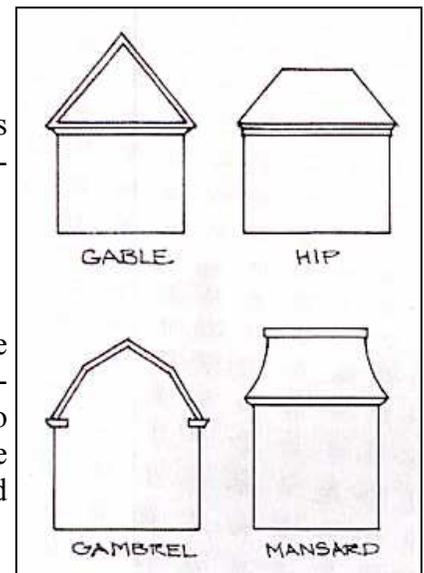
When designing an addition to an historic house, match the original foundation using a traditional foundation treatment based on the historic treatments on the existing building. Also, respect the foundation's height, contrast of materials, and textures of foundations on surrounding historic buildings.

## I. Roofs

The roof is one of the most important elements of a structure since it serves as its "cover" from the elements. As a consequence, roof maintenance is absolutely critical for ensuring the preservation of the rest of the structure.

### I.1 Design

Roof designs, as depicted in following figures, vary considerably within the Historic Conservation Overlay District and are one of the key character-defining elements of the style of the house. The type of roof covering is also important in defining the character, formality, stature, and texture of the house and the street. Consequently, historic roofing materials should be preserved and maintained.



## I.2 Preserve Historic Roof Elements

Historic roof elements such as chimneys and roof ornamentation that contribute to the style and character of the building shall be retained.

## I.3 Maintain Historic Roof

Maintain critical flashing around joints and ensure proper functioning of the gutter system. Keep metal surfaces painted with the exception of copper roofs, and use the appropriate primer for the particular types of metal roof. Insure proper ventilation of the attic spaces to prevent condensation.



## I.4 Preserve Historic Roof Materials

When replacing a roof, match original materials as closely as possible. Avoid, for example, replacing a standing seam metal roof with asphalt shingles, as this would dramatically alter the building's appearance.

## I.5 Hide Appurtenances from View of Public Way

Place solar collectors and antennae on inconspicuous roof locations. Do not add new elements such as vents, skylights, or additional stories that would be visible on the primary elevations of the building.

## I.6 Design of Roof Additions

Roof forms for additions to residential buildings can vary but should be pitched and not flat. They must also relate to neighboring historic buildings in type, level of complexity, and materials.

## I.7 Roofing Materials for Replacement Roofs

Traditional roofing material such as standing seam metal are preferred over asphalt shingles but are not required.



## I.8 Policy Statement on Roof Replacement

When the original roofing material has already been replaced with asphalt shingles and re-roofing becomes necessary, then, at a minimum, the roofing material shall be upgraded to an architectural-grade shingle.

## I.9 Condition Statement

A signed statement, with exhibits, from a licensed general contractor stating the condition of the existing roof, ability to be repaired, need for replacement, proposed corrective measures, and options to replacement is required as supporting documentation for any application for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

## J. Residential Porches and Entrances

Entrances and porches are often the primary focal points of an historic building. In addition to being functional and ceremonial, elements for all buildings, their decoration and articulation, help define the style of the structure. For residential buildings, porches have traditionally served as a social gathering point as well as a transition area between the exterior and interior. The retention of porches is critical to maintaining the integrity of the historic dwelling's original design.



The majority of the residential buildings in the Suffolk Historic Conservation Overlay District have porches, either full-width front porches or porticoes, with a few wrap-around and secondary porches. While many of the porches are in good condition, some have missing decorative details, inappropriately replaced or missing elements, or paint problems.

### J.1 Typical Entrances and Porches

- *Full-Width, One-Story Porches* have columns and decorative details that vary according to style and are either classically inspired, display the ornate sawn and carved details of Victorian styles, or are carved out of the volume of the house as in bungalows.
- *Porticoes* are entrance porches found on Federal and Colonial Revival houses and are identified by their columns and classical details such as pediments, dentils, and cornices.
- *Wraparound Porches* are front porches that continue across the front and around the side of the house. They are found on some Victorian-era houses.
- *Bungalow Porches* are located under the extension of the house roof. They often have squat, tapered, square posts.
- *Secondary Porches* are side or rear porches and can be one or two stories in height. Many have been closed in to form new spaces like pantries or sun rooms.

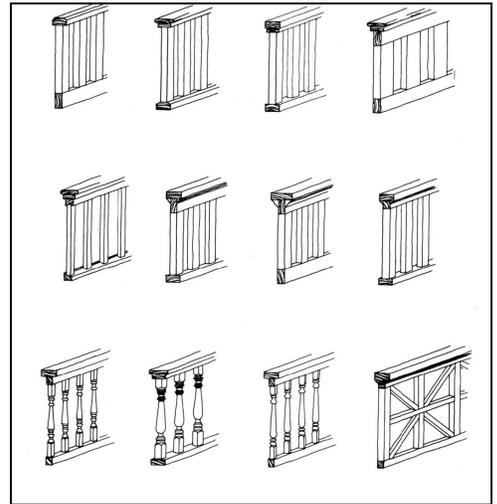


### J.2 Guidelines for Residential Porches

- Inspect masonry, wood, and metal of porches and entrances for signs of rust, peeling paint, wood or mortar deterioration, and improper drainage. Correct any of these conditions. Repair damaged elements, matching the detail of the existing original material.
- Do not strip entrances and porches of historic material and details.
- Do not remove or radically change entrances and porches which serve to define the building's overall historic character.



- Do not add a new entrance or porch to a primary elevation where one has never existed.
- Avoid: adding “Colonial” decorative elements, such as broken pediments, columns, and pilasters, installing decorative iron supports, and replacing wood steps with concrete steps.
- Do not enclose porches on primary elevations and avoid enclosing porches on secondary elevations in a manner that radically changes the historic appearance. Give more importance to front or side porches than to utilitarian back porches.
- Replace an entire porch only if it is too deteriorated to repair or is completely missing. The new porch should match the original as closely as possible.



- Maintain and rehabilitate original porch flooring where original materials have not deteriorated substantially. If replacement is required, match the existing flooring material or a synthetic substitute, method of application, and color (paint or stain).

- In public buildings, provide barrier-free access through removable or portable ramps rather than altering features of the historic building.

- A signed statement, with exhibits, from a licensed structural engineer or general contractor stating the condition of the existing porch, ability to be repaired, need for replacement, proposed corrective measures, and options to replacement is required as supporting documentation for any application for a Certificate of Appropriateness.



## K. Outbuildings

Outbuildings such as storage sheds, detached garages, playhouses and other buildings on the same site as an historic residence should be designed or maintained to be compatible and complimentary with the historic residence.

### K.1 Guidelines for New Outbuildings

- Where an outbuilding is also an historic landmark, every effort should be made to preserve it in terms of its design, materials, details and finishes.
- Colors should match those of the principal dwelling on that property.
- Designs for new outbuildings shall base their roof designs on the roof design of the principal dwelling on the property and be compatible with the surrounding historic architecture.
- Windows and doors proposed for new outbuildings shall relate to the style, proportions and spacing of existing windows on the principal dwelling on the property.

- Garage doors should be single garage doors, eight (8) feet wide. If the garage design requires more than one garage space, then each garage space should have an individual door.
- Trim details for new outbuildings shall be similar to the trim details used on the principal dwelling on that property.
- Foundation materials should match the foundation materials of the principal dwelling on that property.
- Roofing materials should complement the existing materials used on the principal dwelling and relate to the roof materials of adjacent historic buildings. Architectural grade asphalt shingles and synthetic slates can be used in addition to historic roofing materials used on the principal dwelling.

