

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES
Adopted August 9, 2001
Amended January 10, 2002

General Guidelines:

1. These guidelines shall apply only to the exterior portions of buildings that are either facing a street or are visible from the public right-of-way, as for instance along an alley. There will be no intent in these guidelines to monitor interior arrangements, design, or decor.
2. A primary concern of the guidelines is good maintenance of properties. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to be counterproductive to maintaining a building according to the City's codes.
3. General tenets of historic preservation and rehabilitation are at the center of these guidelines. Changes to historic buildings within the district will be considered with consistent emphasis on appropriate applications of the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation as set forth in these guidelines.
4. For ordinary maintenance not involving changes in materials, style or other exterior applications, the applicant may petition the Historic Preservation Commission for an expedited review procedure as described in the Ordinance.
5. Only in cases of demonstrable and irreversible damage to original materials will its covering or replacement be considered.
6. Proposed uses of real estate owned by a religious organization (organized and operating in the District at the time of the adoption of these guidelines) shall be considered as a special exception to the residential historic district guidelines. (01/10/02)

Design Standards for Review:

The following standards shall generally apply to all residential historic structures or structures in residential historic districts unless exceptions receive prior approval by the Historic Preservation Commission.

A. Roofs

A roof is one of the most dominant features of a building. Original or historic roof forms, as well as the original pitch of the roof should be maintained. Materials should be appropriate to the form and pitch. Change of roof colors shall be approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. New dormers shall be placed on rear facades rather than the main facade, and shall generally have roof forms similar to the overall house roof design.

Appropriate Materials:

slate	wood shingle
tile	cement fiber shingle
metal	asphalt or fiberglass shingle

Inappropriate Materials:

corrugated fiberglass
asphalt roll roofing
built-up (on sloped roofs)

B. Windows

The type, size and dividing lights of windows, and their location and configuration(rhythm) on the building help establish the historic character of a building. Original window openings and original woodwork and glazing should be retained. New windows should be identical to the existing where an original requires replacement. The size and placement of new windows for additions or alterations should be compatible with the general character of the building.

Appropriate Materials:

wood sash windows
(double or single hung)
casement
clad wood windows

Inappropriate Materials:

metal
snap-in or artificial muntins

C. Storm Windows

Use of storm windows is permitted. These should be as unobtrusive as possible and may be single pane or match the sash pattern of the window.

Appropriate Materials:

wood
metal (baked finish)

Inappropriate Materials:

mill finish aluminum

D. Doorways

Often one of the most important decorative features of a house, doorways reflect the age and style of a building. Original doors and openings should be retained along with any moldings, transoms or sidelights. Replacements should respect the age and style of the house. Doors with leaded or art glass should be avoided when no documentation exists for their use.

Appropriate Materials:

wood or metal panel
wood with glass lights
wood with glass sidelights and/
or transom

Inappropriate Materials:

wood or metal flush type

E. Porches

The porch is an important regional characteristic of Alabama architecture. Historic porches should be maintained and repaired to reflect the period. Deteriorated frame porch elements shall be repaired where needed. If replacement is necessary, it shall be with matching wood pieces, or other matching materials. Enclosing a porch is discouraged. If approved, materials shall not cover or obscure original elements such as balusters and columns. Framing for the enclosure shall be of wood; and metal or aluminum frames shall not be used.

F. Exterior Materials

The exterior material of a building helps define its style, quality and historic period. The original siding should be retained and repaired. Replacement of exterior finishes, when required, must match the original in profile, dimension and material. Particular care must be taken with masonry: bricks and mortar should match the original in color, finish (strike) and thickness. The finish and scoring of new stucco work should match the original.

Appropriate Materials:

stucco
stone
brick
wood

Inappropriate Materials:

asbestos shingle
metal siding
vinyl siding
imitation brick or stone
concrete block
plywood or Masonite

G. Fences, Walls & Gates

Fencing visible from the street should compliment the building and not detract from it. Design, scale, placement and materials should be considered along with their relationship to the Historic District. Landscaping, as part of fencing, is strongly encouraged. The height of fences in Historic Districts is generally limited to six feet. Fences are limited to the side and rear of the yard. There shall not be any fence placed across the front yard.

Appropriate Materials:

wood picket
wood slat
lattice
iron
brick
stone
stucco

Inappropriate Materials:

chain-link
stockade
post and rail
concrete block
Masonite
vinyl
plywood or asbestos panels

H. Piers and Foundations

Foundation screening should be recessed from the front of the foundation piers. Lattice, if used, should be hung below the skirt board or siding and framed with trim. Lattice secured to the face of the building is unacceptable. Solid infill should be recessed and screened.

Appropriate Materials:

stucco
brick
lattice
wood (vertical boards)

Inappropriate Materials:

metal
plywood panels
asbestos panels
plastic or vinyl sheeting
unfinished concrete block
imitation brick or stone
plywood

I. Signage

Certain commercial businesses may be located in former residential buildings within the historic district. The appearance, size, position, method of attachment, texture of materials, color, and design of such signs shall be in keeping with the collective characteristics of the structure. Signs within a historic residential district will be limited as follows:

-Business signs shall be limited to one (1) sign only for each street frontage per premises and shall not be over five (5) feet in height.

-Maximum area of any sign associated with a historic residential use shall be two (2) square feet; maximum area of any sign associated with a historic commercial use shall be twelve (12) square feet.

-No sign that flashes, blinks, revolves, or is put in motion by the atmosphere shall be permitted. Back-lit signs are not allowed. No visible bulbs, neon tubing, luminous paints, or plastics will be permitted as a part of any sign.

-Buildings and signs within the historic district may be illuminated by remote light sources, provided that these light sources are shielded to protect adjacent properties.

-Portable signs and banners are prohibited; except for special events where they may be displayed for no more than ten (10) days for the event.

-Signs will not be attached directly to buildings so that they obscure, cover or disfigure architectural features and details. Signs shall not obscure the view to or from a historic site or building.

J. Chimneys and Dormers

Every effort should be made to preserve features which give a roof historic character. Preserve or replace where necessary, but do not remove architectural features such as dormer windows, cupolas, or chimneys. While it is not desirable to introduce new roof features, such as dormers, where none existed before, any proposed addition will be reviewed on a case by case basis by the Historic Preservation Commission.

K. Landscaping.

No tree 8" dbh (diameter at breast height) or greater, measured at 48 inches above the grade, shall be removed unless it is dying, dead, diseased, or posing a safety hazard. Any approval to remove trees for these reasons will be given by the City Horticulturist, in consultation with the Historic Preservation Staff, after inspecting the trees and finding that removal is warranted. For new construction or site improvement, every effort should be made to preserve mature trees. Any approval to remove trees for reasons of new construction or site improvement will be given by the Historic Preservation Commission during their regular monthly meeting after reviewing new construction or site improvement plans and determining that removal is warranted.

L. New Construction

Proposals for new construction need not duplicate specific styles or historic periods. Compatibility and harmony with adjacent buildings can be achieved through the appropriate use of scale, architectural elements, materials, details and roof shapes. Site compatibility through the use of landscaping and setback helps to achieve this desired harmony.

These six characteristics are enumerated in some detail in the paragraphs which follow. They may be used in conjunction with the Residential Design Standards above to evaluate the appropriateness of each proposal.

(1.) SCALE: New buildings should be in scale with existing buildings. They should not appear to be appreciably taller, shorter, wider, narrower or bulkier than the average buildings adjacent to it and those in the Historical District. Also, the scale or size of elements should reflect those of existing buildings, to include size of windows, doors, railings, masonry units, siding, balconies and dormers if used.

(2.) MATERIALS: Predominant materials used on the buildings in the Historic Districts are wood siding, stucco and brick. Materials which are considered inappropriate are plywood, Masonite, plastic, asbestos, and imitation brick or stone. Materials used in new construction should compliment surrounding historic structures.

(3.) DETAILS: The details on new buildings should be compatible and in scale with those which are used in the area. When used, cornices, lintels, arches, balustrades, chimneys, blinds and column styles which are sympathetic with adjacent existing details will have a unifying effect and will be considered favorably. Duplication is not necessary and is to be avoided.

(4.) ELEMENTS: Where they exist or predominate in a particular area, porches, balconies, cupolas, chimneys, dormers and other elements can help unify a new structure with the neighborhood when used in proper scale. They need not seek to imitate historic styles. Likewise, the use of compatible fences, walls, and paving used in a traditional manner is encouraged.

(5.) ROOFS: Roof shapes and materials for new buildings should reflect the shape, scale, and style of existing buildings of the Historic District. Such a large and visible element of the building should harmonize with that of its neighbors.

(6.) GROUNDS: Site planning should respect the precedents set by other buildings in the block. Setback should be similar, and landscaping which enhances the style of the District will be considered favorably.