Design Guidelines for Historic Districts and Historic Properties

Town of Fairfield, Connecticut

Version: November 13, 2025

Project Consultant
Chris Skelly
Skelly Preservation Services
Community Planning and Preservation
www.skellypreservationservices.com

in cooperation with the Fairfield Historic District Commission

Table of Contents

1. Introduction…… 1
Introduction to these Design Guidelines……2
The Goals of these Design Guidelines……2
The Architectural Significance of Fairfield……2
A Long History of Human Occupation……3
History of the Town of Fairfield……3
History of Historic Preservation in Fairfield…… 4
The Benefits of Local Historic Districts……4
National Register Districts, State Register Districts & Local Historic Districts…. 5
Local Historic Districts of Fairfield……5
Historic Resource Inventories and Plaques……5
Designated Historic Properties of Fairfield……6
The Value of Design Guidelines……6
Updates to these Guidelines……6
Character Defining Features……6
The Secretary of the Interior Standards……7

2. The Local Historic Districts and Historic Properties of Fairfield ……9
The Significance of the Fairfield Local Historic Districts……10
Greenfield Hill Historic District……10
Old Post Road Historic District……10
Southport Historic District…… 10
Historic Properties…… 10
Architectural Styles and Building Forms……11

3. The Design Review Process in the Local Historic Districts……15
The Historic District Commission……16
Projects Reviewed in the Local Historic Districts……16
Pre-Application Meetings……17
Applications……17
Public Hearings…… 18
The Decision-making Process…… 18
Certificates of Appropriateness……19
Repair Orders……19
Hardship Variance……20
Appeals……20
Violations and Enforcement…… 20
Rules of Procedures and Regulations……21

3. The Design Guidelines..... 23
Accessibility and Architectural Barriers..... 25
Additions.....27
Alternative Materials.....29
Art Installations.....33
Awnings.....35
Chimneys.....37
Cornices and Parapets.....39
Decks.....41
Demolition, Dismantling and Relocation.....43
Doors and Entryways.....45
Dormers.....47
Driveways and Walkways..... 49
Fences and Landscaping Walls.....51
Foundations.....55
Garages, Sheds and Other Secondary Structures.....57
Gutters and Downspouts..... 59
Landscaping..... 61
Lighting.....63
Mechanical and Electrical Equipment..... 65
New Construction.....67
New Construction Design Principles.....69
Paint and Other Coatings.....73
Playground, Sporting and Entertainment Equipment..... 75
Porches..... 77
Roofs and Related Structures..... 79
Shutters..... 81
Signs.....83
Solar Panels..... 85
Steps, Stairs and Railings..... 87
Storm and Screen Windows and Doors..... 89
Trim and Architectural Details..... 91
Walls and Siding..... 93
Windows..... 95

5. Appendices.....99
The Fairfield Historic District Ordinance..... A-1
Street List of Properties in the Local Historic Districts.....B-1
Street List of Designated Individual Historic Properties.....C-1
Local Historic District Maps..... D-1
Useful Links.....E-1

Chapter 1 Introduction

Introduction

This guidebook has been prepared for property owners, architects, contractors, developers and anyone else interested in the local historic districts and historic properties of Fairfield. The Fairfield Historic District Commission sincerely hopes that this document will be a useful reference for you, explaining the procedures in the local historic districts and how our districts can remain unique, architecturally significant places, while still very much meeting our contemporary needs. Even though many of the buildings in the Fairfield Historic Districts are well over 100 years old, they remain in active use as businesses, institutions, shops and homes. Unlike a museum, the historic buildings in local historic districts must find ways to adapt, remain dynamic and, ultimately, economically viable. By following the design guidelines outlined here, the historic buildings of Fairfield can adapt to 21st Century needs while still retaining their significant, historic character defining features.

The Goals of these Design Guidelines

The goals of these Design Guidelines are the following:

Share with property owners, contractors, architects and developers the significance of the historic resources present in the historic districts and how alterations, additions and new construction can be accommodated within the historic setting of the districts.

Preserve the significant character defining features of the buildings and other historic resources in the Fairfield Local Historic Districts while adapting to change and accommodating additional growth.

Preserve the landscape, historic streetscape pattern and overall setting of the local historic districts.

Prevent the demolition and inappropriate alteration of significant buildings and other historic resources within the districts.

The Architectural Significance of Fairfield, Connecticut

The town of Fairfield has a rich human history. Everywhere we turn, the landscape of Fairfield has stories of its past to share with us. Below ground, invisible to our eyes, are the fragments of human occupation over many, many centuries. Above ground, buildings, structures, stonewalls, monuments, burial grounds and even ruins share stories of a deep and rich history. Visit the Southport Historic District and the maritime and trade history of the town is very much on display. Walk along the Old Post Road Historic District and experience buildings that survived the burning of the town during the Revolutionary War and those that were built soon after the creation of our country. On Greenfield Hill, the distinct hilltop, rural landscape includes former agricultural lands, farmhouses, barns and other outbuildings. The buildings, agricultural fields, stone walls, meadows, rocky outcrops, ocean views and beautiful landscapes of Fairfield have stories to teach students and residents alike, from the growth of the colonies, the Revolutionary War, global trade, industry, cultural shifts, the resiliency of the town, and how we arrived as a

community into our modern-day world. As our historic buildings have remained but found new uses, they continue to add new layers to the history of Fairfield.

A Long History of Human Occupation

The town of Fairfield is located on land occupied for thousands of years by indigenous people such as the Sasqua, Pequannock, and Unquowa people. With seasonal settlements inland and on the coast, traditions, cultures and connections to the places of Fairfield and beyond were deeply established prior to European contact and settlement of the 17th Century. Consequently, the landscapes of Fairfield record a long history of use by both native peoples and European settlers. Throughout Fairfield are significant archaeological resources. Yet, whether below ground resources are present or not, the open fields, harbors, shorelines, the rivers and their banks, the meadows and the many other open spaces of Fairfield are all cultural landscapes and part of the legacy of the people that called this place home before us. Preservation of these cultural landscapes is fundamental, equal to the architectural resources we appreciate each day.

History of the Town of Fairfield

English colonists began settling within the area that would become the town of Fairfield in 1639. European diseases like smallpox had recently devastated indigenous communities present here. Further pressure by the English colonists to settle the area led to a war with the Pequot Nation, concluding in a brutal battle at Munnacommock Swamp in present-day Southport. One of the combatants in the “Swamp Fight” was an Englishman named Roger Ludlow. Immediately following the end of the Pequot War, Ludlow, a Puritan, received permission from colonial authorities to establish the town of Fairfield.

From a reliance on farming, Fairfield soon became a maritime trading community with its deep-water ports. Agricultural products, lumber and livestock from Fairfield could be shipped to larger cities such as New York or along the eastern seaboard. Additionally, the ports of Fairfield became part of global trade with products such as molasses, sugar, linseed and silk arriving from great distances. Once within the town of Fairfield, Black Rock Harbor later became part of the city of Bridgeport with the maritime village of Southport remaining part of the town of Fairfield today.

As the 18th century progressed, Fairfield became home to many wealthy residents while at the same time containing the highest percentage of enslaved people of any town in New England.

Fairfield, like other coastal Connecticut towns, became a target for the British Navy during the American Revolution. In 1779, the British entered the town and destroyed many of the buildings in Fairfield including houses, barns, shops, schools, the meeting house and the courthouse. Rebuilding occurred following the Revolutionary War and Fairfield continued to grow.

In 1848, when the New York and New Haven Railroad arrived in Fairfield, access to supplies, markets and employment increased dramatically. Manufacturing and shipping opportunities in neighboring Bridgeport grew rapidly, bringing many immigrant families to the area. While some manufacturers chose Fairfield to locate, the development of residential neighborhoods in Fairfield grew correspondingly with the easy trolley access between Fairfield and Bridgeport. The railroad also brought seasonal visitors to Fairfield from New York City. While some visitors simply enjoyed a day at the shore, wealthier visitors built summer homes and cottages here.

More changes came to Fairfield with the construction of the Connecticut Turnpike (Interstate 95) in 1958. Existing established neighborhoods were displaced for the roadbed itself while new automobile-oriented development patterns grew. Even with its losses, the town of Fairfield today has a rich and varied collection of significant historic buildings, neighborhoods and villages. Many have remained residential properties over decades or centuries while others have found entirely new uses. All have adapted to our modern world, while remaining a vital part of the town of Fairfield.

History of Historic Preservation in Fairfield

A recognition of the unique and significant heritage of Fairfield began over 100 years ago when the Fairfield Historical Society was established in 1904. Their early efforts at historic preservation focused on collections and establishing a museum of Fairfield history.

Established in 1877 to improve and beautify the village, the Sasquanaug Association of Southport later began acquiring property as a means of preservation. In 1926, the historic "Robinson Cottage" at 333 Main Street was purchased. Then, in 1966, the Association commissioned a Master Plan for Southport which ultimately led to the establishment of the Southport Historic District.

In order to better protect the notably significant areas of Fairfield, the town voted to establish a local historic district ordinance. Under this town ordinance, the Old Post Road Historic District was established in 1962. Southport and Greenfield Hill followed in 1966. In recognition of their significance, these districts were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. The Southport Historic District has since been further enlarged in 1994 and 2007. By having this local ordinance over the decades, it has meant that Fairfield, unlike many other cities and towns, still has a visible and tangible connection to its past.

The Benefits of Local Historic Districts

Fairfield's three local historic districts are also National Register Districts.

The overarching benefit of a local historic district is the protection of significant buildings from demolition and inappropriate alteration. Local historic districts can be credited with saving the unique character of many areas of Connecticut. Local historic districts have offered residents, homeowners and business owners the opportunity to protect their communities and neighborhoods from destruction. The buildings remain part of the community, perhaps continuing as a home, a business, or perhaps adapting to a new use. As such they improve the quality of life for those living there, providing stability, pride in the neighborhood, a visual connection to the past and peace of mind that the historic environment will remain. Additional benefits of local historic districts may be economic in nature, such as increased tourism or additional interest in building rehabilitation.

National Register Districts, State Register Districts and Local Historic Districts

There are three kinds of historic districts in Connecticut: National Register Districts, State Register Districts and Local Historic Districts. There are substantial differences between these designations. The National Register of Historic Places is a listing of buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts significant in our nation's history, culture, architecture or archeology and that are worthy of preservation. It is a federal designation, from the Secretary of the Interior and the National Park Service. Listing in the National Register provides formal recognition of the property's significance, potential tax incentives for owners of income-producing property, and very limited protection from federally funded, licensed, or assisted projects. More information on how federally involved projects are reviewed can be found on the website of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. In short, the National Register of Historic Places is essentially an honorary designation.

State Register Districts are part of the State Register of Historic Places, Connecticut's official listing of structures and sites that characterize the historical development of the state. Like National Register Districts, State Register Districts are essentially an honorary designation.

Connecticut General Statutes (see Appendix A) provide for the creation of a local historic district in which any exterior change visible from a public way is subject to review by a locally appointed commission. These districts are established through the local legislative process at the city or town level. The three existing local historic districts in the Town of Fairfield are Greenfield Hill, Southport, and the Old Post Road. These were established in the 1960s and were among the first such districts in the state. At the time they were created, the approval of at least 75% of the property owners within the district was required. Present statutes now require 67%.

Fairfield's three local historic districts are also listed on the National Register of Historic Places. With the review protections of the local historic district ordinance, these districts are well protected from loss. Unfortunately, most of the buildings in Fairfield are not well protected from alterations and demolitions. Through the local democratic process, the local historic district ordinance in Fairfield can always be expanded to protect additional significant, yet vulnerable, areas of Fairfield.

Local Historic Districts of the town of Fairfield

There are presently three historic districts in the Town of Fairfield: Southport, Greenfield Hill and Old Post Road, although others could be added at a future date. To determine if your house is in a district, or has been identified as an historic property, check the maps online at Fairfieldct.org/hdc or at the Building Department counter in Independence Hall.

Historic Resource Inventories and Plaques

Historic Resource Inventories (HRIs) are a method of identifying, documenting and describing historic properties. While the statewide historic resource inventory for Connecticut does include properties within the locally established historic districts of Fairfield, it is far more extensive in its coverage, with many additional properties throughout the town of Fairfield included. The important thing to remember is that the goal of historic resource inventory is documentation. Unlike a local historic district, the protection of historic resources does not occur through an HRI. Similarly, a historic plaque on a building is not an indication of protection. Historic plaques throughout the state are attached to a building to publicize a date of construction, an important

event, a historic owner or use. They have no connection to the local historic district ordinance in Fairfield.

Designated Historic Properties

State legislation currently allows noteworthy single historic properties to be reviewed by a local Historic District Commission. The process for creating such a designation parallels that of a district, requiring the establishment of a study committee by the Representative Town Meeting, comments by local planning and zoning agencies, the advisory opinion of the State Historical Commission, approval of the study report by the Representative Town Meeting, and finally, consent of the owner of the property. Designated Historic Properties can be broadly interpreted so as to include outbuildings and farmlands. The list of designated Historic Properties in Fairfield can be found in the Appendix.

The Value of Design Guidelines

Local historic district design guidelines are appreciated by the historic district commission members themselves but especially by architects, developers, contractors, business owners and homeowners. Design guidelines help get everyone onto the same page, clearly explaining the types of projects that are likely to be approved in the local historic district or not approved. Anyone applying for a Certificate of Appropriateness in the Fairfield Local Historic Districts will benefit by familiarizing themselves with these guidelines. They are here to make the application process go smoothly and quickly.

Updates to the Guidelines

These guidelines are meant to be updated. It is anticipated that the Fairfield Historic District Commission will review these guidelines regularly, clarifying sections, adding sections, responding to input and making sure they remain relevant and useful. The Historic District Commission always welcomes thoughts from property owners, business owners, architects, contractors and developers on these guidelines.

Character Defining Features

Throughout these guidelines, the term, character defining features, will be used frequently. Character defining features are those distinguishing elements of a building, structure, landscape or site that convey the significance of the property. They help identify a resource as unique and noteworthy. An original doorway, window, chimney or porch could be a character defining feature as could many other elements of a building. Each historic building in the districts has character defining features in the materials, craftmanship, forms and detail present.

The columned porch shown here is a character defining feature of the Old Post Road Historic District.

Even buildings that have experienced alterations often still have many significant character defining features. Sometimes, later additions to a building can take on significance themselves, as the architectural features continue a story about how the building has changed over time.

On buildings, character defining features help to identify architectural styles, the time of construction or a previous use. They provide a visual connection to the past. The buildings of Fairfield's historic districts have many character defining features that help to make them distinct and worthy of preservation. Within the historic districts of Fairfield, when character defining features are removed, covered or damaged, the uniqueness of the district, as a whole, is lessened. The goal of a local historic district is to provide a review process that will help to preserve the character defining features of the area.

The Secretary of the Interior Standards

The development of these guidelines began with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. These are generalized, national standards that provide a foundation for best preservation practices around the country. While there are preservation standards from the Secretary of the Interior, local historic district commissions around the country largely utilize the rehabilitation standards, not the preservation standards, in their design decision-making. This is because the rehabilitation standards provide flexibility for historic properties so that historic buildings can remain viable, adaptable parts of our communities.

According to the National Park Service, the "Standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility." These Fairfield Historic District Design Guidelines are based on the rehabilitation standards listed below.

The Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation are considered a part of these Local Historic District Design Guidelines.

<u>The Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation</u>

1. A property shall be used for its intended historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.

6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

Deteriorated features needed to be replaced on this building, but they were matched based on the opposite side of the building.

7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

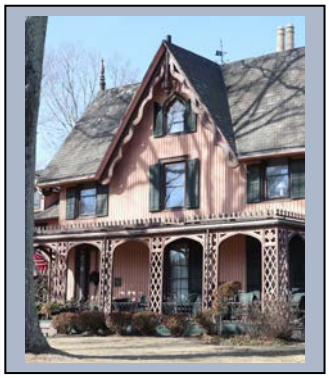
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Chapter 2

The Local Historic Districts and Historic Properties of Fairfield

Local Historic Districts

Greenfield Hill Historic District
Old Post Road Historic District
Southport Historic District



The Significance of the Fairfield Local Historic Districts and Historic Properties

The buildings and overall urban landscape of the three local historic districts of Fairfield are a remarkably intact and significant area. While some alterations are present, the architectural integrity of the districts and individual properties are notably evident. Together, the buildings and their surroundings provide a unique opportunity to experience historic buildings, historic streetscapes, neighborhoods and villages. The individually designated historic properties are distinguished examples that convey the history of Fairfield and are extraordinary in their well-preserved features.

Greenfield Hill Historic District

Greenfield Hill Historic District

The Greenfield Hill Historic District was established in 1966 as a local historic district by the town of Fairfield. Set within the northern hilly and rural section of Fairfield, this district is distinct from the Old Post Road and Southport Districts. This hilltop village once included Greenfield Academy, established here by Timothy Dwight. While no longer an agricultural area, many buildings here speak to an agrarian past.

Old Post Road Historic District

Old Post Road Historic District

The Old Post Road Historic District was established in 1962 as a local historic district by the town of Fairfield. Within the district is a rich variety of architectural styles. The district includes homes that survived the burning of Fairfield during the Revolutionary War and an impressive collection of 19th Century Greek Revival homes. Other properties, even those more recently constructed, add to a rich architectural landscape.

Southport Historic District

Southport Historic District

The Southport Historic District was established in 1966 as a local historic district by the town of Fairfield. It was expanded in 1994 and 2007. The intact buildings found on Main Street, Harbor Road as well as the many side streets easily convey the story of shipping, commerce, trade and wealth within this New England seaport.

Historic Properties

The list of individually designated historic properties at the time of publication is included within the Appendix. More information on the significance of each of these properties can be obtained from the Fairfield historic District Commission.

The maps of the local historic districts are found in the Appendix.

Architectural Styles and Building Forms

Architectural styles can be hard to define sometimes. Buildings don't always fit into one particular architectural style. Some buildings may have been originally constructed with influences from several different styles. Over the centuries, as owners may have wanted to update an older home's style and keep up with the neighbors, they may have added new architectural features, suggesting that the home was contemporary to the time. These historic alterations may now be notably significant in telling the story of the area.

It is also important to note that simpler buildings that appear not to have a definable architectural style may still be very significant. An example of this is simple worker's housing. The buildings may not have any features that suggest a style. Yet, these buildings share an incomparable story of manufacturing and maritime trades in Fairfield.

The architectural styles included below can be found within the Fairfield Historic Districts. The descriptions below do not include all architectural styles found in the town of Fairfield or throughout New England.

Post Medieval

Wood-framed residential buildings constructed in 17th Century New England derive from English building traditions of the late medieval age. These timber framed buildings may have cantilevered second floors, simple decorative hanging pendants, steeply pitched roofs, small casement windows and an asymmetrical floor plan. Many buildings that remain from this time period have received additions and updates over the centuries, with the original framed building hidden with a larger structure. As post medieval building transitioned to Georgian architecture, more symmetrical facades with a central doorway and regularly spaced, larger windows became the common building type of the 18th Century.

Georgian

Predominant throughout the European settlements of 18th Century New England is the Georgian style. Georgian domestic architecture typically features a heavy positioning on the ground, a large central chimney and a symmetrical façade. The entry is commonly located at the center with windows aligned across the façade. It is then customary to have 2 double hung windows positioned on each side of the entryway. Due to the challenge of hand-blown glass, original window frames would have had small lights, usually 9 or 12 panes per window. Only following the Revolutionary War and an interest in distinguishing American domestic architecture from English nobility did the Federal style take over.

Georgian Style

Federal

Like its Georgian predecessor, Federal style remained symmetrical in its façade, with a center entrance and balanced windows to each side. A fanlight is a very common feature of Federal architecture. Whereas the Georgian form may appear bulky, there is a lighter feeling to federal architecture, even with its boxed form. Lower roof forms, elaborate, classical detailing of the entryway, together with the fanlight, distinguish this architectural style that came to symbolize the new nation.

Federal

Greek Revival

During the early 19th Century, an interest in classical architecture, archaeological investigations taking place in Greece and a desire to highlight the new nation's democratic ideals led to the popularity of the Greek Revival Style for governmental and institutional buildings, grand residences and then to more modest single-family homes found throughout New England. Greek Revival homes are often, but not always, characterized by the gable end facing the street. With its porch, columns, prominent cornice, the Greek Revival home was meant to portray a simple Greek temple. On more modest residential Greek Revival homes, the columns are alluded to through pilasters at the corners of the building. The front entrance to the Greek Revival home typically had a rectangular transom above the door and rectangular sidelights flanking the door. While clapboards were common on residential Greek Revival homes, some were clad in flushboards, to imitate the appearance of white stone.

Greek Revival

Gothic Revival

Although not as common as Greek Revival, Gothic Revival enjoyed some prevalence during the mid-19th Century. Romanticizing the medieval time period of England, this picturesque style is characterized by steep roofs, pointed gothic windows, cross gables, and decorative bargeboard. Carpenter Gothic, a form of Gothic Revival, takes it a step further with substantial gingerbread ornamentation.

Gothic Revival

Italianate

During the mid-1800s, a picturesque architectural style, Italianate, gained in popularity. The style takes its inspiration from Italian villas. Instead of the highly symmetrical and weighty forms of the Georgian and Federal styles, Italianate architecture focused on asymmetry, ornamentation, windows and porches. With the Italianate style, windows took on unique positioning and forms. In some cases, windows are paired together or even tripled. Windows may be tall and narrow. Bay windows were common. A very typical feature on the Italianate style are the large brackets, arranged singularly or in pairs.

Italianate

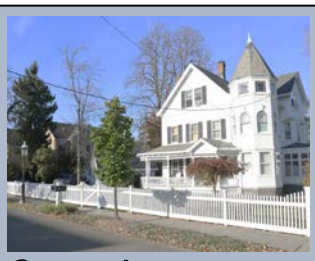
Second Empire

Derived from the current French building styles of the time, the Second Empire became a modern and fashionable style during the second half of the 19th Century. Its defining feature is the mansard roof. The roof offered additional living space in what would have been simply the attic in a conventional gabled roof. Ornamentation with Italianate brackets is also very common on Second Empire homes.

Second Empire

Queen Anne

The Queen Anne houses of the Victorian era of the late 19th Century and early 20th Century saw a substantial departure from the symmetrical and orderly house styles that preceded them. The Queen Anne style highlighted asymmetrical facades with ornate trim and various embellishments, patterns and windows. Queen Anne architecture typically features complex roof forms, irregular footprints, towers, bold paint colors, prominent porches and ornamental chimneys. Part of what made the Queen Anne architecture possible as a common building type for domestic architecture was that the architectural details were now being mass produced and easily transported by rail to growing cities.



Queen Anne

Colonial Revival

From the late 1880s to the 1950s, Colonial Revival architecture was the predominant architectural style for residential buildings throughout the growing and expanding cities and suburbs of the United States. The Philadelphia Centennial of 1876 is often credited with increasing interest in colonial architecture. Although it was inspired from colonial properties, the Colonial Revival style often greatly exaggerated certain elements, particularly door surrounds and cornice details. It was not attempting to replicate the appearance of colonial structures. As single family suburban residential neighborhoods proliferated, the Colonial Revival style remained very popular for wood framed dwellings. The style offered a simplicity that was desirable as the country moved into the new world of the 20th Century. It marked a notable departure from the whimsical and asymmetrical Queen Anne style. With its simplicity and solidity, the style was affordable but also respectable. The influence of the Colonial Revival style remains with us today as even new construction may very well be inspired by this house style from over 100 years ago.

Colonial Revival

Craftsman

The early 20th Century saw the rise of a new house style, Craftsman. Looking for simpler living, Craftsman represented a reaction to the embellishment of the Queen Anne. Yet, Craftsman homes, with their arts and crafts inspiration are not without ornamentation. Craftsman homes are characterized by their low-pitched roofs, exposed rafters and covered front porches. Quite often, on hipped roofs, a large dormer is located above the front porch to provide additional living space

on the second floor. Wide, tapered columns of the front porch support the roof. Windows may have small lights and diagonal patterns.

Cratsman

Tudor Revival

Although not as commonplace as Colonial Revival or Craftsman style in American domestic architecture, the Tudor Revival found a place during the early 20th Century in newly developing residential neighborhoods. The style takes its name from the Tudor period of England, romanticizing this late medieval building type. The exposed ornamental half-timbering with stone and brick veneer, steep roofs and cross gables typify this style.

Ranch, Split Level and Raised Ranch

Late 19th Century and early 20th Century residential neighborhoods, with their small lots and pedestrian scale, required narrow house designs, typically of two stories. As suburbanization and automobile dependency took place across the country during the mid-20th century, new subdivision designs included much larger lot sizes, with substantial street frontage. These larger residential lots accommodated wider one-story houses, including ranches, split levels and raised ranches.

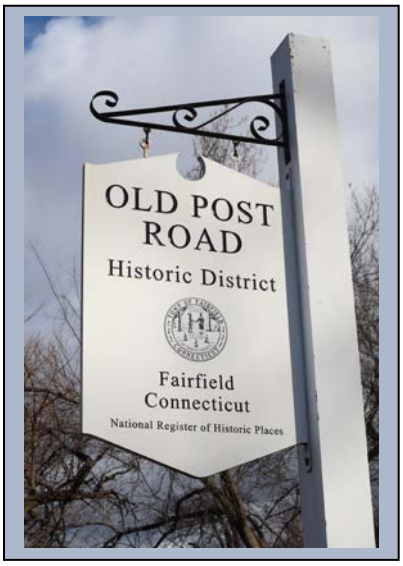
International Style

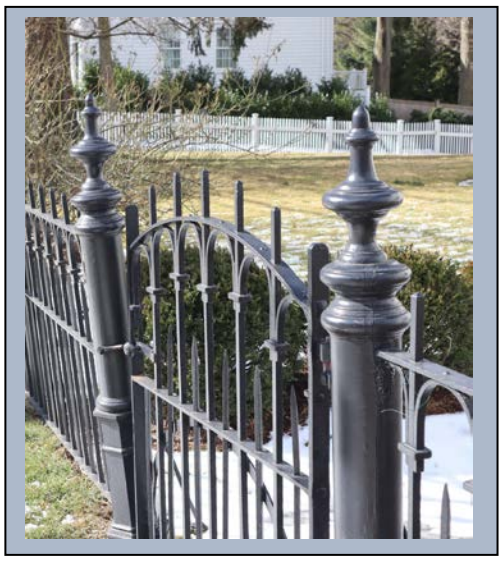
The International style, while more typically associated with high-rise buildings, can also be found occasionally in wood-framed residential architecture of the mid-20th Century. The style rejects all decorative elements and emphasizes the basic function of the structure.

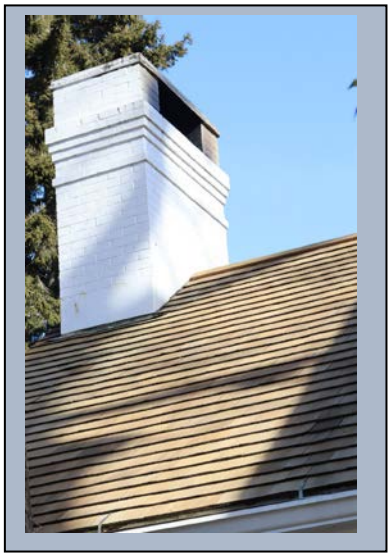
With a visit to other historic neighborhoods and downtowns in the northeast, additional architectural styles from the 19th Century will be found, such as Eastlake, Stick Style or Shingle style. Many additional styles from the 20th Century could also be found, including art deco, ranch and neocolonial.

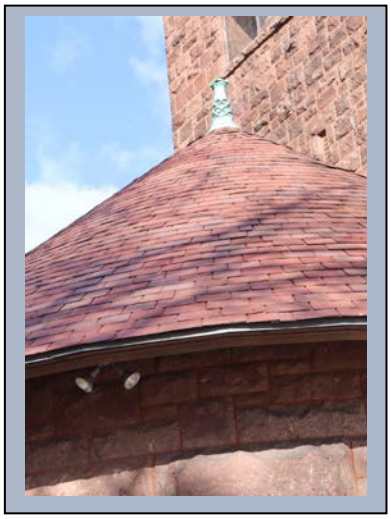
Chapter 3

The Design Review Process in the Local Historic Districts









The Historic District Commission

Fairfield Town Hall

For over 50 years, the design review process in Fairfield has been carried out by a group of volunteers appointed by the Board of Selectmen and approved by the Representative Town Meeting. The historic district commission is an official appointed board of the town. The main responsibility of the historic district commission is to review proposed changes within designated local historic districts to make sure that all changes are compatible with the significant historic resources found there.

The jurisdiction of the Historic District Commission includes any proposed demolition, new construction, or exterior alteration, visible from a public way and affecting buildings or structures that are located in local historic districts or are designated local historic properties.

Note that the local historical society, the Fairfield Museum and History Center, is a separate organization, not part of town government. The society is a non-profit membership organization with a mission to broaden the understanding and interest of the town's history.

Projects Reviewed in the Local Historic Districts of Fairfield

Physical alterations that are visible from a public way are reviewed by the historic district commission. This includes buildings, structures, fences, walls and other exterior architectural features. A review includes buildings in the districts regardless of their age. Projects, such as fences, which may not need a building permit may still need a review by the historic district commission. New construction, if visible from the public way, is also subject to review.

The "public way" means any public street, road, or right of way extending up to any portion of the property line. The "public way" also includes public railways, public parking lots, parks, trails, and waterways and open water.

<u>Examples of projects reviewed in the local historic districts</u>

The following is a list of projects that are reviewable within Fairfield Local Historic Districts. It may not be comprehensive but is meant to be used as a helpful guide. For questions, consult with the Historic District Commission.

- Construction of a new building or relocation of an existing one
- Alteration or removal of any exterior architectural features
- Additions
- Demolition, in whole or in part
- Changes in materials
- Replacement, addition or modification of windows, doors, storm windows and storm doors, shutters and skylights
- Replacement of roofing using different materials
- Pools and Spas
- Change in the pitch of roof
- Installation or replacement of permanent outdoor signs
- Installation or replacement of fences, walls, curb cuts, driveways, exterior lighting

- Other fixed structures such as utility meters, fuel tanks, air conditioners, condensers, antennae, satellite dishes and solar panels

Examples of projects that are generally not reviewed in the Fairfield local historic districts
The following are projects that are generally not reviewed in the local historic districts based on state law and local ordinance.

- Any alterations that are not visible from a public street, way or place.
- Routine maintenance that does not involve a change in materials, design or texture
- Repainting with no change of material
- Paint color
- Interior alterations
- Higher education and state-owned properties
- Reroofing with certain colors of asphalt shingles
- Identification signs on buildings
- Other projects as determined by the historic district commission

It is important to note that it is the historic district commission that will determine whether the project is reviewable by the historic district commission or not. Property owners and other applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with the Chair of the Historic District Commission prior to undertaking any project to determine whether the project is included within one of the above exemptions. If work commences on a project prior to a determination by the historic district commission on whether it is exempt, a stop work order will be issued by the town of Fairfield

Note that exterior architectural features that are not visible from the public way due to dense landscaping with trees and shrubs are still considered visible for the purposes of this ordinance. This is due to the impermanence of landscape materials and that they can be removed at any time.

Pre-Application Meetings

To facilitate the process for property owners, prospective applicants are invited to request a pre-application meeting to confer with the Commission as a body prior to submission of a formal application for a Certificate of Appropriateness. The meetings are informal in nature, intended for general information regarding what will be required at the public hearing. The commission is available to answer general questions pertaining to the potential project, clarify the Commission's authority under existing statute and ordinance as well as its rules and procedures. The commission can explain how projects are reviewed based on the formally adopted design guidelines included within this document. Intentions or opinions expressed in the pre-application meeting are not binding on either the applicant or the HDC. It is not an official hearing, but the meeting will be noticed on the Historic District Commission website, with the agenda published on the website twenty-four hours in advance. Draft meeting minutes will be posted within seven days following the meeting.

Applications

Copies of the application can be found on the town of Fairfield Historic District Commission webpage. Before filling out an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness, applicants are encouraged to review these design guidelines. If, after reviewing these guidelines, you wish to proceed, then complete the application for a certificate. In order to make sure your application is

reviewed as soon as possible, make sure that it is complete before submitting it to the historic district commission.

At a minimum, your application will need a description of the proposed project, including a scope of work, materials and photographs. Depending on the complexity of your project, plans, drawings, photographs, and specifications may be needed. A more detailed list of application requirements can be found on the commission webpage along with the application instructions.

To be included on the agenda for the next historic district commission meeting, review the deadline dates on the commission webpage. Only applications that are complete will be included on the upcoming agenda.

Public Hearings

If your application is found complete, the historic district commission will schedule your project for a public hearing. Public hearings are typically included as an agenda item during a regularly scheduled meeting of the historic district commission. Notice of the public hearing date, location and time will be provided to applicants, uploaded to the city website and published in the local newspaper. The Historic District Commission encourages all applicants to attend the public hearing. The agendas and minutes of Historic District Commission public hearings and public meetings are included on the city website.

Applicants are notified of the hearing one week in advance of the scheduled date. As required by State Statute, the Commission will publish a notice in the local newspaper prior to the hearing giving the date, time and place. You or your agent will make a presentation that includes the material provided in your application submission along with any other relevant material. Members of the public are often present and have the right to see and hear your application. You or your representative must appear at the hearing to present the application to the Commission.

A public hearing is not required for all applications. If the commission chairperson finds that the project is exempt from review, a public hearing is waived. For exempt projects, a Repair Order is completed and submitted by the applicant and then signed as received by the Historic District Commission. If a building permit is needed, a signed Repair Order will be necessary before a permit is issued. Exempt projects are expedited and acted upon as soon as possible in order for the project to begin.

The Decision-making Process

After the public hearing has closed, the historic district commission will discuss the proposed project and deliberate whether or not to approve the proposed changes. This deliberative process will utilize this document, the Design Guidelines. Chief amongst their discussion will be whether the proposed project meets these design guidelines. If the commission determines that the proposed project meets these guidelines, the granting of a Certificate of Appropriateness is approved. The applicant can then proceed to the building department for a building permit. If the commission finds the proposed project does not meet these guidelines, the granting of a Certificate of Appropriateness will be denied. However, the commission may approve the project if certain modifications are met.

The Historic District Commission must make a decision on an application within 65 days of the receipt of an application unless the applicant provides written consent to extending the decision-

making process beyond 65 days. The written consent will include a future date agreed to by the applicant.

Applications may not be withdrawn after notice of the public hearing has been published.

Applications may be approved as presented, approved with one or more stipulations or conditions, denied without prejudice, or denied. Decisions shall be in writing, with a copy sent to the applicant and to the Building Official. If the commission has insufficient information with which to make a decision, the application can be continued, or it can be denied.

Decisions to approve or deny an application require an affirmative vote of the majority of the commission members.

Certificates of Appropriateness

A Certificate of Appropriateness is an approval which acknowledges that the proposed work is in conformance with the intent and purposes of Connecticut General Statutes Section 7-147a through 7-147y and the Fairfield Historic District Commission Design Guidelines.

Certificates and Building Permits

If the commission approves your project, a Certificate of Appropriateness will be issued. With your certificate of appropriateness, you can proceed with obtaining the building permit from the building department.

Note that even if you don't need a building permit for a certain project, you may still need a certificate of appropriateness from the historic district commission. For instance, the installation or removal of a low fence may not require a building permit. However, if it is visible from a public way, it would still need a certificate of appropriateness.

Expiration of Certificates

Certificates of Appropriateness are generally valid for a period of twelve months from the date of issuance unless a different period is stated on the Certificate. If requested, the commission may agree to extend an approved Certificate of Appropriateness for an additional six months.

Revisions to Certificates of Appropriateness

After the issuance of Certificate of Appropriateness, the Commission may consider requests for revisions to approved drawings, provided that such revisions are minor in nature and in general conform with the original application and the Commission's prior ruling. In such cases, the requirements for notice and hearing may be waived, but any revision will require approval by the Commission at a duly called public meeting. If the Commission determines that any requested revisions are not minor, the applicant must file a new application for Certificate of Appropriateness. A new public hearing will be required.

Repair Orders

In some cases, the repair or replacement of exterior architectural features visible from the public way can be approved by the commission without the public hearing process and without the granting of a Certificate of Appropriateness. Repair Orders are only granted when the work is considered necessary routine maintenance, minor in nature and will not alter the exterior appearance of the property. Applicants submit a Repair Order form to the commission with a

brief description of the proposed work. Additional documentation such as a site plan indicating the location of the repair areas, drawings, photographs and product data may also be needed.

The following activities qualify as a Repair Order following a commission (or designee) determination:

- Identical replacement of existing windows and doors.
- Repair of existing windows and doors and the installation of storm doors and windows that do not change the design, scale or appearance of the existing windows.
- Maintenance and repair of existing roofing materials involving no change in the design, scale or appearance of the structure.
- Structural repairs which do not alter the exterior appearance.
- Replacement of existing clapboards, shingles or other siding with identical material.
- Maintenance and repair of existing clapboards, shingles or other siding (including masonry) involving no change in the design, scale or appearance.

The above list is not considered comprehensive. The commission may determine that additional projects qualify as a Repair Order. Before beginning a repair project, it is always recommended that property owners contact the historic district commission chairperson (or designee) to discuss whether the project would qualify as a repair order.

Hardship Variance

State statute allows the Commission to vary or modify strict adherence where, by reason of topo- graphical conditions, district borderline situations, or other unusual circumstances solely with respect to a certain parcel of land and not affecting generally the district in which it is situated, strict adherence would result in exceptional practical difficulty or undue hardship upon the owner of any specific property. Hence, State statute gives the Commission authority to waive requirements only in exceptional situations where practical difficulty or undue hardship would result from conditions, situations or circumstances solely relating to a specific parcel of land. Any such situations resulting in the Commission waiving its requirements in exceptional circumstances cannot be considered as precedent in reviewing any other applications. Any written request for such a variance detailing the basis for hardship must accompany the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Appeals

Any person or persons aggrieved by a decision of the Commission may appeal to Superior Court within 15 days of the rendered decision.

Violations and Enforcement

If work is done in the district without obtaining the relevant certificate of appropriateness or if work does not follow an issued certificate of appropriateness, the commission will contact the building department immediately to issue a stop work order.

Even if the unauthorized work is partially completed or fully completed, an application for a certificate of appropriateness needs to be submitted to the commission. The commission will review a partially or fully constructed project that did not obtain a certificate as if the project were not yet constructed. If the commission finds that the project does not meet the design guidelines, the violation must be corrected. If a violation remains, the historic district commission will

consider further legal action until the violation is corrected. As correcting a violation can be very expensive, it is advisable to always follow the requirements of the historic district ordinance.

Rules of Procedures and Regulations

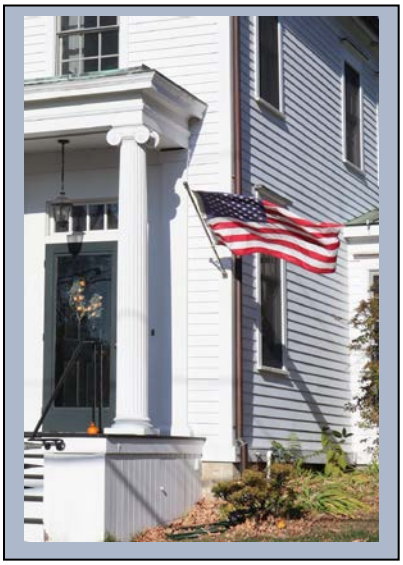
Additional information on the organization and procedure of the commission can be found in the commission publication, Rules of Procedures and Regulations. These are amended from time to time as needed.

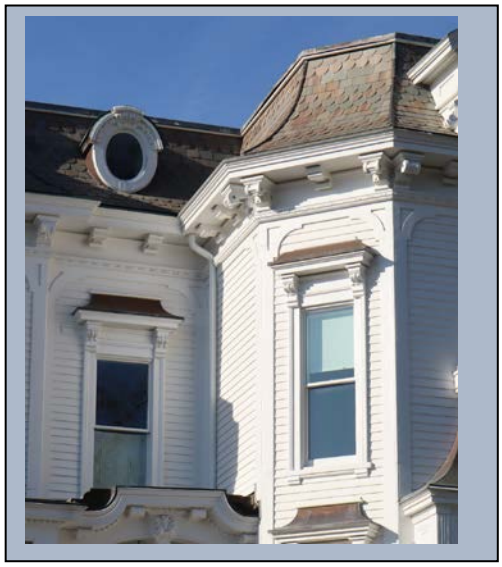
Building Codes

Applicants should refer to the Connecticut State Building Codes and all other applicable codes. The International Existing Building Code, Section 507 and Chapter 12 provides information on compliance for Historic Buildings.

Chapter 4

The Design Guidelines





Introduction

This chapter includes the design guidelines that will be used by the historic district commission to determine whether your specific project can be approved. The guidelines are organized in alphabetical order by architectural feature in order to make it easier for you to find the relevant guidelines for your project. Depending on the complexity of a project, it may involve many different features included here. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the various features that may require review.

In their decision-making process, the commission may also refer to the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation. These national guidelines, created by the National Park Service, are included in the Introduction of this document and are considered a part of these Fairfield Historic District Commission Design Guidelines.

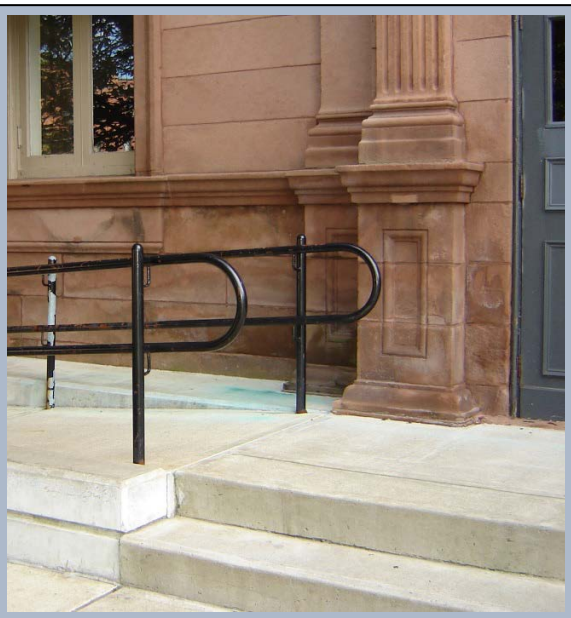
Accessibility and Architectural Barriers

Overview

Many older and historic properties were not designed to accommodate all visitors. Curbs, stairs, uneven surfaces, oversized handrails, thresholds, heavy doors and other architectural barriers can mean access is simply not possible to everyone.

Providing access to historic properties for all people means architectural barriers need to be addressed, sometimes with some alterations to the exterior of the building. Since the passage of the American with Disabilities Act in 1990, many historic buildings have been made accessible through creative and sensitive design.

While access is sometimes necessitated at a secondary entrance, the most successful designs are those that creatively provide access to the primary entrance through reversible, compatible alterations.



Architectural barriers can be addressed through creative and sensitive design.

Things to Consider

Before getting started, it is recommended that project applicants consult with knowledgeable design professionals familiar with accessibility and historic properties. Designers should be familiar with the Americans with Disabilities Act and any other applicable state or local regulations. If there is a local or statewide disability education and advocacy organization, they may have some suggestions for successful projects to consider as models.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to lessen architectural barriers to improve access, while still protecting the significant character defining features of the historic building.

Guidelines

A. Location of Accessibility Infrastructure

1. Locate accessible infrastructure so that it will not require alteration or demolition of character defining features of the building.

B. Design of Accessibility Infrastructure

1. Choose materials and finishes that are compatible with the exterior walls, finishes and surfaces.
2. Design accessible infrastructure so that its proportions, massing and scale are compatible to the building.
3. Design accessible infrastructure so that it will not dominate a main façade.
4. Design accessible infrastructure so that it can be reversible without damage to character defining features of the building.

C. Screening of Accessibility Infrastructure

1. Utilize landscaping to maintain the main façade of the building as the focal point.

Additions

Overview

Many of the buildings within the local historic districts of Fairfield have grown larger over time as additional space was needed on a home or business. These additions are often significant aspects of the buildings themselves, providing information about how a building grew and evolved over time.

Additions provide new opportunities for historic buildings to adapt to expanded uses.

Historically, additions onto historic buildings have often resulted in wings to the left or right of a façade or an ell, located at the rear of the property. Typically, these additions were smaller, or subordinate, to the main building form and often stepped back. This kept the main façade of the building as the focal point from the public way.

Today, additions may still be needed by people and businesses in the districts. There are many ways that additions can be accommodated within the districts while still making sure that significant historic properties are not irreparably harmed.

Things to Consider

If you are hiring a design professional for your addition, it is best to find a designer with a sensitivity to historic buildings and a background in historic preservation. The challenge is designing an addition that is clearly distinguished from the historic building yet remains compatible to the historic building attached to it. Before starting, a review of the character defining features found on the historic building is important. The idea is not to mimic what is seen on the historic building. Rather, the goal is to base the start of what is designed for an addition by what is already there on the historic building.

Review the new construction design principles and alternative materials sections of these guidelines for more information related to additions.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to accommodate necessary new additions onto historic buildings in ways that the historic building and surrounding area will be minimally impacted.

Guidelines

A. Design of Additions

1. Design an addition that will be compatible with the attached building, surrounding buildings, streetscape and area.

2. Differentiate the addition from the attached historic building while still maintaining compatibility.
3. Maintain similar proportions to the existing historic building including the ratio of height and width.
4. Design an addition at the rear of the building that is smaller in volume and does not rise above the main façade.
5. Design the addition so that it will remain subordinate to the historic building.
6. Setback winged additions from the front plane of the façade.
7. Design an addition that is respectful of the symmetrical or asymmetrical character of the existing historic building.

B. Siting of Additions

1. Locate the addition to rear of the building if possible.
2. Locate an addition on a side of the building if the rear is not a possibility.
3. Design an addition on a side of the building with breaks in the roofline, stepped back from the façade and with less volume.

C. Materials of Additions

1. Choose exterior surface materials such as on walls and trim that are compatible with the historic building.

D. Connecting an Addition to a Historic Building

1. Design an addition so that it will not damage or obscure the character defining features of the historic building.
2. Design an addition so that the least amount of historic material is lost or damaged.
3. Design the addition so that if it were to be removed in the future it would not damage character defining features.

The addition added to this Italianate building is setback and differentiated from the main façade, while still utilizing design aspects of the historic building.

Alternative Materials

Overview

This section of the guidelines describes the traditional architectural materials found in the district, alternative materials on the market today and recommendations for when alternative materials are suitable for use in the local historic districts. The buildings found within the Fairfield Historic Districts are often wood-framed structures with exteriors of wood cladding. The use of wood as a traditional material is an essential character defining feature to the districts. Metal can also be found in the district for fencing, gates and railings.

With most of the buildings in the districts wood-framed structures, the use of masonry in the district is largely chimneys and foundations. Most of the masonry used is brick.

On this residential building, when the wood shingles were beyond repair, like materials were used for the cladding.

The use of alternative materials on historic buildings covers much of the 20th Century. Earlier in the century, products such as simulated masonry, asbestos shingles, aluminum siding, asphalt siding shingles were marketed to homeowners. Today, products that include vinyl, fiber cement, fiberglass, polyurethane and poly ash are sold as exterior building materials. The durability of some alternative materials has been disappointing over time as they have not lasted as long in harsh weather conditions as their laboratory testing suggested. It is likely that more new alternative materials will be developed and marketed in the future.

There may be some limited locations where an alternative material may be considered, such as fiberglass gutters or other locations where moisture level remains continuously high. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the historic district commission. Deferred maintenance is not an acceptable reason for the installation of alternative materials. While there may be cases where it is necessary to use alternative materials on a historic property, for the most part, they are not acceptable for installation in a local historic district.

Things to Consider

See other guidelines found in this document that relate to individual architectural features.

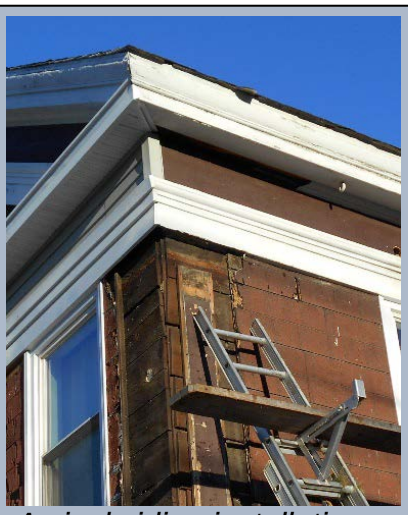
Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to utilize natural, traditional materials whenever possible while recognizing that alternative materials may be a suitable choice in certain circumstances.

Guidelines

A. Use of Alternative Materials

1. Save damaged or deteriorated historic materials through repair whenever possible.
2. Replace deteriorated historic materials with like materials when repair isn't feasible.
3. Avoid the installation of alternative or synthetic materials when possible.



A vinyl siding installation that is removing and discarding original architectural trim.

Questions to Consider Regarding Alternative Materials

Alternative Materials proposed in the districts will be evaluated by the historic district commission based on these questions.

Repair

Can the damaged historic feature be repaired? If so, it is best to prioritize repair of the historic material over replacement.

Availability

If replacement is needed, is the historic material available? If the historic material is available, then its use should be prioritized over an alternative material while considering the other factors here.

Character Defining Features

What are the character defining features of the building and the district? Will the alternative material impact an essential character defining feature of the district or the building?

Match

How close is the match of the alternative materials in color, texture, dimensions and profile? If the original material was painted, can the alternative material be painted according to manufacturer specifications?

Visibility

How visible is the proposed location of the alternative material? How obvious will the alternative materials be in this location? Is it on a primary façade or is it minimally visible from the public way? If it is on a primary façade, is it small enough to be minimally visible with an unaided eye?

Vulnerability

Have historic materials deteriorated at this location previously perhaps due to moisture or other conditions? If so, could an alternative material perform better in such a location?

Cost

Is the cost of the historic material prohibitively expensive? If so, could an alternative material mean the *total* project cost will be substantially less?

Durability

Is the alternative material more durable in wet conditions, the hot sun or temperature swings than the historic material?

Damage
Could an alternative material damage adjacent parts of the historic building through removal of historic material, by fastening on the new material or through different expansion and contraction properties between adjacent materials and the new alternative material?

Performance Record
How long has the alternative material been on the market? Where and when has this material been used?

Art Installations

Overview

Art installations include outdoor murals, sculptures, memorials, tapestries, monuments, statues as well as many other installations. Art installations can enhance our experiences of space, provide us with thought-provoking images, help us to contemplate our world in new ways, and otherwise improve our human experience.

Public art can enhance our experience of public places. However, within significant historic areas, a careful review is essential so that the historic architecture and landscapes are not visually overpowered by new installations.

Things to Consider

In a significant historic area, public art must be carefully considered so that the installations do not detract from the significant architectural and landscape forms present in the open spaces and on the streetscapes.

The role of the historic district commission does not include reviewing the content of public art. However, when art is an architectural feature, the historic district commission will review the location, materials, method of installation and compatibility to the historic area.

Public art typically has a high level of community involvement. In a local historic district, early community involvement with the historic district commission is recommended.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to accommodate art installations that have a minimal visual impact on nearby historic resources and do not harm any historic resources as part of their installation or removal.

Guidelines

A. Installing New Art Installations

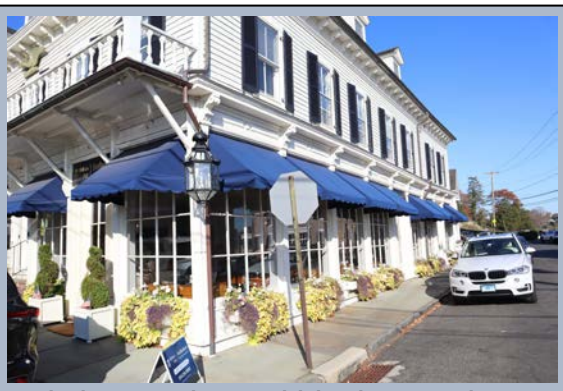
1. Locate art installations so that it will not damage any historic architectural features.
2. Locate art installations away from significant historic open spaces.
3. Avoid installing art that would include painting or coating any historic surface that was not previously painted.
4. Design art installations so that they can be easily reversible.
5. Locate art installations so that it will not overpower individual buildings, landscapes or the setting of the district.
6. Locate art installations so that it will not obscure significant historic resources.

This art installation on the façade of an historic building would not be an appropriate alteration within the historic district. Art installations are best sited in locations that do not overpower individual buildings, landscapes or the setting of the district.

Awnings

Overview

Awnings over a storefront window or door provide weather protection from sun and rain. In particular, they are used to help moderate the interior of storefronts from hot summer sun by blocking intense heat. Commercial awnings have also historically been used for business signage. More recently, retractable residential awnings sited over a deck have become popular.



Existing awnings within the Southport Historic District

Things to Consider

Commercial storefront awnings that include business advertising may need additional approval through the sign ordinance. Applicants should also consider in their planning whether the awning will be located over a public right of way, as this will need additional municipal approval. Business owner applicants should consult with the applicable municipal departments. Traditional angled or shed awnings are typically the best choice within an historic area.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to accommodate awnings on commercial buildings where they were historically used or may have been used.

Guidelines

A. Installing New Awnings on Storefronts

1. Install an awning so that it will not damage the exterior of the building.
2. Choose a storefront awning that will not overpower the façade of the building.
3. Choose a storefront awning that will be compatible with the scale of the architectural features of the storefront and building.
4. Choose a traditional angled awning and avoid domed, quarter round, mansard and similar types of awnings.
5. Choose business graphics that will not dominate the surfaces of the awning.
6. Choose awnings made from opaque, non-reflective fabric and avoid rigid awnings.

A traditional angled storefront awning with business advertising that does not dominate the awning surface.

B. Installing New Awnings on Residential Buildings

1. Locate a residential awning so that it is minimally visible from the public way.

Avoid the use of rigid awnings in the districts.

Choose a more traditional angled awning over dome awnings.

Chimneys

Overview

The many chimneys visible on the roofs and exterior walls of buildings in Fairfield's historic districts provide visual interest to the built environment. They also provide clues to the individual history of the building to which they are attached. Placement of chimneys, their size and number can offer insight into how old a house is, how it was used and how it grew over time. While the chimneys of early buildings in the district were strictly utilitarian structures used for warmth and food preparation, some chimneys of the 19th and 20th Century became far more stylized. Today, chimneys in the district may continue to be used for heating or simply ambiance. In other cases, with modern heating systems, existing chimneys may not be in use at all. Nevertheless, they are important character defining features.

A capped chimney in the Southport Historic District

Things to Consider

As an architectural feature high on a roof, it is easy to neglect routine maintenance on a chimney. Yet, all chimneys need maintenance due to the harsh weather conditions they endure. While one side of a chimney may be in the hot sun, the other side remains shaded. These temperature differentials can cause deterioration over time. With routine inspections and maintenance, chimneys will last far longer.

If the chimney needing repair is historic, the bricks may be softer than contemporary bricks. The mortar that was used on historic bricks was also softer and would not damage the brick with normal expansion and contraction. If Portland cement is used in the mortar of a repair to historic bricks, it can actually cause the bricks to crack. It is recommended that you consult with a brick mason that is familiar with historic bricks and knowledgeable on proper mortar mixes.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to maintain historic chimneys as an essential character defining feature of the districts.

Guidelines

A. Repairing Existing Chimneys

1. Preserve existing chimneys with their original form, height, design and decorative elements.
2. Repair existing chimneys by repointing with an appropriate mortar mix that matches the existing mortar profile.
3. Rebuild deteriorated chimneys utilizing the existing bricks. If not possible, utilize closely matching bricks.

4. Rebuild deteriorated chimneys with the original form, height, design and decorative elements. Avoid the use of any sealants that could trap moisture in the masonry.

B. Installing New Chimneys

1. Design new chimneys that are compatible with the existing chimneys in materials and design.
2. Locate new chimneys on side or rear elevations.

C. Installing Chimney Caps

1. Choose stone chimney caps. Avoid metal chimney caps and vent hoods on primary facades or prominent locations.

Avoid metal chimney caps and vent hoods on primary facades or prominent locations.

Cornices and Parapets

Overview

x

The cornice on a building is the horizontal overhanging trim at the top of a wall, where the wall meets the roof. A cornice can also be found just above a storefront, providing a roof-like demarcation between the ground floor commercial space and residential uses above. While a historic cornice at the roof of a building was often designed to direct rainwater away from the wall surface, cornices also have a decorative purpose by providing visual interest at the top edge of a building. Some 19th Century cornices were made of manufactured pressed metal, with stone, terra cotta, brick and wood also used as materials. A parapet is a low wall located at the top of a building. Historic parapets provide visual interest at the top of a building, but they additionally serve as a means of concealing mechanical equipment or the actual roof form with a finished look.

Things to Consider

One of the best ways to avoid major repair to a cornice or parapet is to practice routine maintenance. For brick and stone, that means addressing water damage and repointing mortar joints when necessary. For metal cornices, breaks or locations where water can infiltrate should be addressed as soon as possible to avoid additional corrosion.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to preserve the character defining features of the cornices and parapets including the shape, materials, pattern and details.

Guidelines

A. Repair of Cornices and Parapets

1. Existing cornices and parapets shall be repaired using compatible materials and match the existing pattern, dimension, and details.
2. Existing brick and stone cornices and parapets shall be repointed with mortar mixes that match the original historic mixture as much as possible and that are softer than the adjacent masonry materials.
3. Existing brick and stone cornices and parapets shall be repointed to match the mortar color, texture and profile of the original surface.
4. A cornice or parapet shall not be covered as a repair technique.

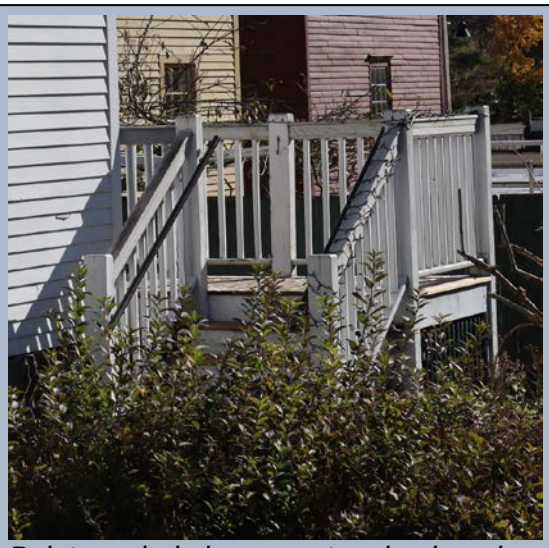
B. Replacement of Cornices and Parapets

1. If a cornice or parapet must be replaced because the level of deterioration makes repair impossible or impractical, the replacement shall match the existing in pattern, color, design, dimensions and detailing.
2. To create a seamless transition, missing sections shall continue with the same materials, pattern, design, dimensions, and detailing of intact sections.
3. If replacement is necessary, materials must match the original in appearance, texture and durability. The historic material shall be preferred. Manufactured materials, such as fiberglass, shall only be considered if found compatible in appearance, texture, and durability.
4. If replacement is necessary, building names, dates and other identifying features on the existing cornice or parapet shall be replicated on the new.

Decks

Overview

In our modern world, the backyard has become a desirable place of relaxation and social connection. While the front porch remains the place to relax and socialize with passersby, the outdoor wooden deck offers the more private version of a front porch. Within historic neighborhoods, a contemporary structure, such as a deck, can be accommodated when sited and designed properly.



Paint can help incorporate a backyard deck into its surroundings.

Things to Consider

The key characteristic of a deck is its sense of privacy. When designing a deck, consider how best to locate the structure so that it will have minimal visibility from the public way. The historic district commission may require the parts of the deck that are visible to be painted or stained. However, if using pressure treated wood, this may mean 6-12 months before the wood can be coated.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to accommodate rear decks that are minimally visible from the public way.

Guidelines

A. Installing New Decks

1. Site decks in the rear of the property in minimally visible locations.
2. Screen decks from the public way with landscaping.
3. Paint deck posts, steps and railings so that the structure will be less obtrusive.
4. Locate decks at the first-floor level. Avoid second floor decks.
5. Inset the edges of the deck back from the rear corners of the building to minimize visibility.
6. Avoid siting a deck in the front of the property.
7. Design the deck to avoid damage to the character defining features of the building.
8. Design the deck, including the deck details, with materials, scale and proportions that are compatible with the historic building.
9. Design the deck so that it can easily be removed without damage to the historic building.
10. Cover exterior railings and trim, including pressure treated wood, with paint or a similar opaque coating as soon as the moisture content of the material will allow.
11. Choose materials that are a wood product or closely replicate a wood surface.

Suitable landscaping can help to conceal a deck from the sidewalk.

Demolition, Dismantling and Relocation

Overview

As the main purpose of a local historic district is the preservation of historic resources, demolition, dismantling and relocation will only be approved in very rare circumstances. This is true for full demolitions and partial demolitions. Once a building is demolished, it is lost forever. Reconstruction, even when carefully done, does not replace a historic building. It simply creates a false sense of history.

Local historic districts are established to prevent the needless demolition of historic resources.

In some cases, around the northeast, buildings have been dismantled, piece by piece, and rebuilt elsewhere. However, the dismantling of a historic building is an irreparable loss.

Relocation is when a building is moved intact, without dismantling, and placed on a new foundation nearby. Climate change, sea level rise and saltwater intrusion into the groundwater may necessitate the relocation of a building to nearby higher ground in order to save it. In such limited circumstances, the relocation of a building will be carefully considered.

Things to Consider

If you are considering demolition because it is believed that the building cannot be rehabilitated, a contractor or architect that has experience with historic buildings should be consulted. In some cases, a consultation with a structural engineer may be necessary. An experienced professional, familiar with historic buildings and the building code as it relates to historic buildings, may recognize that the building can be rehabilitated.

Note that even very simple buildings, that are not high style, may still be very significant to the district.

While the demolition of later additions will be considered, it is important to note that later additions may have historic significance as well.

If you feel that any building or structure is a public safety hazard and needs to be removed, contact the building department.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to maintain historic buildings in their present locations by avoiding demolition, dismantling and relocation.

Guidelines

Demolishing, Dismantling and Relocating

1. Preserve historic buildings and structures.
2. Avoid demolition, dismantling and relocation.
3. Avoid relocation of an outbuilding such as a barn, carriage house or garage.
4. Avoid relocation of a historic building to accommodate new construction.
5. Relocate buildings threatened by flooding or groundwater damage as close as possible to the original location.

Dismantling a building and reconstructing it elsewhere results in a loss of the building from its historic site and its context, with much of the building discarded.

Doors and Entryways

Overview

An entryway in the Southport Historic District

The architectural features of an entryway include the door, its windows and paneling, door hardware, trim around the door, transom windows, sidelights, thresholds and other associated features. Entryways often provide clues about the age of a building, how it was used previously, grew over time and how it has adapted to new uses. The doorways of the district provide entry to commercial spaces and residential homes. They are a focal point on a façade, providing visual interest, and were designed to provide a distinct and clear place of entry.

On Georgian and Federal style homes, the paneled door was usually centrally located and given some decorative detail with its trim and small flanking windows. The fanlight transom window above a Federal period home became particularly popular. With the many architectural styles found in the districts, the doors themselves portray a period of construction over the centuries.

Doors and entryways also include garages and other outbuildings.

Things to Consider

One of the best ways to avoid major door and entryway repair projects is to practice routine maintenance. This includes inspections for damage, mildew, paint failure, water damage and rot and follow-up maintenance when issues are discovered. Gentle cleaning, repainting worn surfaces, caulking openings and reglazing windows will make a substantial difference in the longevity of your door and entryway by preventing water infiltration. Energy efficiency can be improved without compromising historic character by addressing air infiltration through caulking and weatherstripping.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to preserve the historic doors and their entryways.

Guidelines

A. Repair of Historic Doors and Entryway

1. Preserve historic doors and associated architectural features.
2. Repair existing doors and entryways using similar patterns, materials and details. Details to preserve through repair include, but are not limited to, the door, glass panes, lite patterns, door hardware and entryway trim.
3. Repair damaged doors and entryways by replacing only that portion which is damaged through repair methods such as splicing, consolidating, reinforcing and patching.

B. Replacement of Historic Doors and Entryways

1. Replace historic doors and entryways only when the level of deterioration makes repair impossible or impractical.
2. Match the replacement to the historic original in appearance, pattern, materials, color, design, durability and texture.
3. Replace deteriorated historic doors and entryways only when repair is not feasible.
4. Choose a replacement that matches the original feature including pattern, materials, color, design, configuration, installation, dimensions and detailing.
5. Avoid reducing or enlarging the size of the door opening.
6. Avoid the use of flush doors unless the period of construction for the building supports this feature.

C. Creation of New Entryways

1. Maintain the historic location of entryways.
2. Design new building entrances to be away from the main façade.

Dormers

Overview

Dormers provide additional light and interior space to upper floors. During the late 19th Century, dormers became more common on the original designs and architectural styles of the era as more space was needed within the building. Later dormers, even if installed a century later, may be significant character defining features themselves. A variety of dormer types exist such as gable, hipped, eyebrow and shed roofed.

Adding dormers to the roof of a historic building can provide additional living space through ventilation and light. However, the type and location of the dormers must be carefully considered. .

This gabled dormer and gothic window in the Southport Historic District are matched by the adjacent gable.

Things to Consider

If you are considering adding dormers to your historic building, their placement, size, proportions and form all need to be considered. In many cases, a gable roofed dormer would be an appropriate form to consider. However, each application is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. On a main façade, a shed dormer is not appropriate on most architectural styles.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to accommodate dormers so long as they meet the guidelines included here.

Guidelines

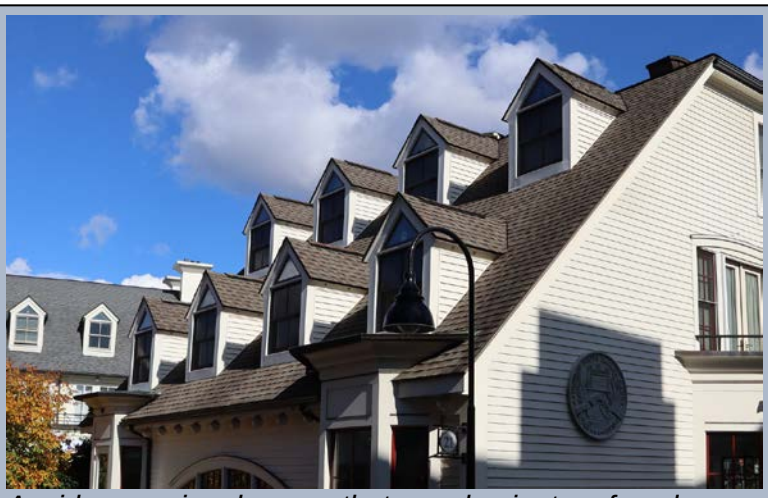
A. Repairing Existing Dormers

1. Preserve existing character defining features of dormers.
2. Repair deteriorated portions of existing historic dormers by replacing only the damaged portion.

B. Installing New Dormers

1. Design new dormers to be set back from the front wall unless the current fenestration pattern is flush to the wall.
2. Design new dormers that maintain a similar fenestration pattern to the windows below.
3. Design new dormers to have similar or smaller windows than the existing windows below.
4. Design new dormers to be lower than the existing roofline.

5. Design new dormers that are compatible with the architectural style of the building.
6. Design new dormers that are compatible in size, proportion and trim to the historic building.



Avoid excessive dormers that can dominate a façade.

Driveways and Walkways

Overview

Driveways and walkways are structures that are at grade level. Many of the properties in the districts predate the introduction of automobiles. Yet, driveways are an essential component of the contemporary use of the historic district. While necessary, new driveways and the reconstruction of existing driveways must be carefully considered so that the overall historic streetscape and setting predominates. Traditional walkways would have mostly connected building entrances directly from the sidewalk. Today, walkways may need to be installed from the driveway to the front entrance. However, such walkway patterns must be carefully designed for compatibility.

Things to Consider

If a new driveway is necessary for infill or new construction within the district, review the locations and features of nearby driveways, the existing topography, landscape, trees and other natural features of the site and how a driveway can best recede into the landscape, maintaining the visual focus on the buildings and structures of the district.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to minimize the impact of driveways and new walkways so that the historic buildings, streetscapes and settings are not diminished.

Guidelines

A. Repairing Driveways and Walkways

1. Match repair materials with the existing materials of the driveway or walkway including, where applicable, color, texture, pattern, shape, size and material.

B. Replacing Existing Driveways

1. Avoid the use of materials such as white marble chips, crushed bluestone, trap rock, concrete pavers and those with grits other than gray or brown native stone.
2. Utilize blacktop, blacktop with native stone embedded or an unpaved with native stone surface.

C. Installing New Driveways

1. Locate new driveways away from the primary elevations of buildings and in areas that are minimally visible from the public way.
2. Locate new driveways in locations that do not obstruct views of historic buildings.
3. Avoid oversized driveways that will dominate the property.

4. Minimize the paving required and utilize landscaping to soften the edges and limit visibility.
5. Utilize materials and colors that are compatible with the district.
6. Provide the minimum width necessary at the sidewalk.
7. Match the apron at the sidewalk edge to either the driveway material or the adjoining material of the sidewalk.
8. Locate off street parking areas in areas that are minimally visible from the public way. For areas with multiple off street parking spots, break up large areas of parking with planted islands.
9. Avoid the use of materials such as white marble chips, crushed bluestone, trap rock, concrete pavers and those with grits other than gray or brown native stone.
10. Utilize blacktop, blacktop with native stone embedded or an unpaved with native stone surface.

D. Installing New Walkways

1. Choose materials such as brick, pebbles, peastone or flagstone.
2. Avoid the use of concrete and other modern materials.

E. Installing Driveway and Walkway Curbing

1. Choose curbing and edging material for driveways and walkways that are two inches or less in width and thereby inconspicuous from the public way.
2. Choose materials such as wood, steel edging or bluestone on edge.

Fences and Landscaping Walls

Overview

Wooden fences, iron fences, stonewalls and retaining walls can all be found within the local historic districts of Fairfield. These structures can provide boundary demarcation, decoration, privacy and access control. They often serve both a functional and attractive addition to the districts. Many of the New England stonewalls found in the districts are significant historic resources as are the iron fences and stone retaining walls.

The uninterrruped length of this stone retaining wall in the Southport Historic District is a significant feature of this streetscape.

Things to Consider

If you are replacing or installing a wooden fence, note that fences should be low enough along the public right of way to maintain open views of the facades of historic properties. Certain fences may not need a building permit. However, as a structure, all fences are required to receive a certificate of appropriateness prior to installation. Vinyl fences, even those that attempt to imitate wood, are not well-suited to the local historic districts.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to maintain historic stone walls and iron fences of the district while allowing fences that will not detract from viewing and experiencing the historic buildings and landscapes of the district.

Guidelines

A. Repair of Fences

1. Repair existing fences whenever possible.
2. Repair damaged sections of the fence by replacing only that portion which is damaged beyond repair using like materials, colors and details.
3. Avoid any unpainted surfaces on the fence.

B. Replacement of Existing Fences

1. Replace deteriorated wooden fences with compatible materials and designs.
2. Utilize traditional fence designs, such as low picket fences, along and in the vicinity of the public right of way. Avoid latticework, stockade and other modern designs.
3. Choose traditional fence materials, such as painted wood or ironwork, along and in the vicinity of the public right of way.
4. Avoid vinyl fences, chain link, light gauge metal and similar materials in the vicinity of the public right of way. They may be considered if minimally visible from the public right of way.

C. Installation of New Fences

1. Minimize the height of new fences along and in the vicinity of the public right of way. A higher privacy fence is considered more appropriate at the backyard.
2. Utilize traditional fence designs, such as low picket fences, along and in the vicinity of the public right of way. Avoid latticework, stockade and other modern designs.
3. Choose traditional fence materials, such as painted wood or ironwork, along and in the vicinity of the public right of way.
4. Avoid vinyl fences, chain link, light gauge metal and similar materials in the vicinity of the public right of way. They may be considered if minimally visible from the public right of way.

D. Repair of Stonewalls

1. Preserve existing historic stone walls and stone retaining walls
2. Utilize existing stones that have fallen from the stone wall and rebuild such that the repair blends into the existing wall.
3. Avoid introducing any new stones, especially those that are not naturally occurring in southern New England.
4. Match any necessary new stones to similar shapes, texture and colors found in the existing wall.

E. Installation of New Stonewalls and Retaining Walls

1. Utilize traditional materials and construction techniques.
2. Utilize field stone that is naturally occurring in southern New England.
3. Avoid the use of sandstone, limestone, manufactured stone and veneered stone.
4. Construct stone walls following traditional patterns of dry-stacked stone, mortared stone and battered stone. Mortared stone should have minimal joints.

F. Installation of New Landscaping Walls Other than Stone

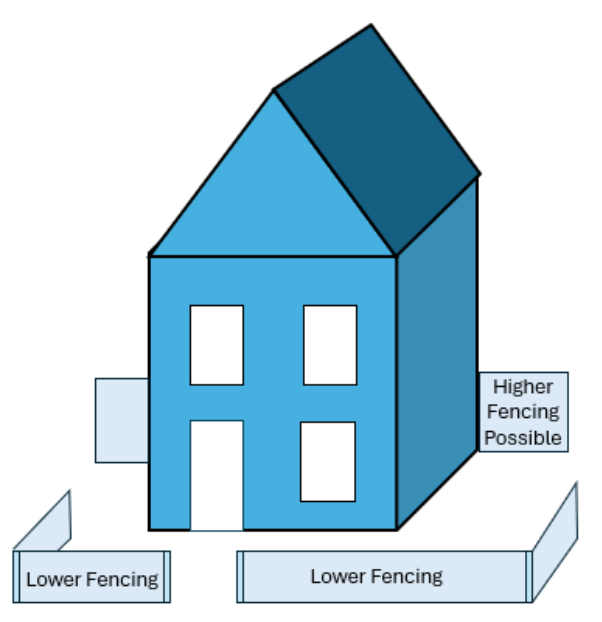
1. Avoid pressure treated timbers, railroad ties, concrete blocks, textured concrete, simulated stone and other similar nontraditional materials for retaining walls and landscape walls.

A dry stacked stone wall of tight joints that would meet these design guidelines.

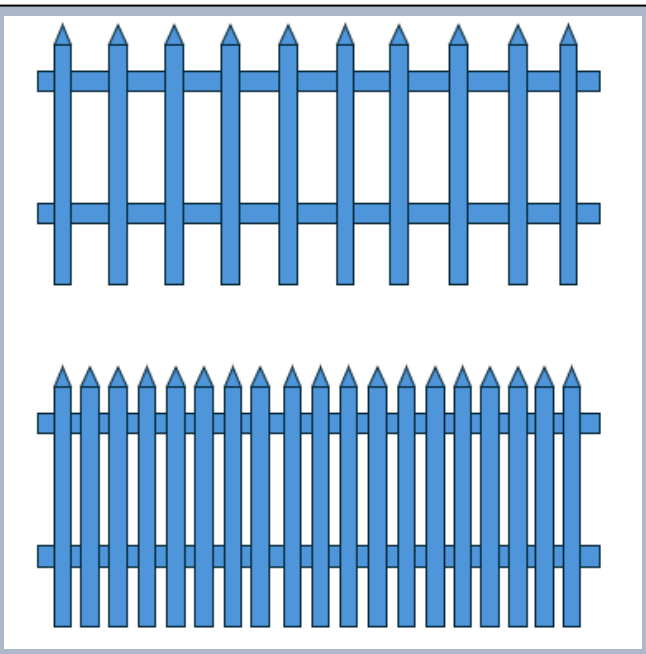
The wide mortar joints on this wall would not meet these guidelines.

The sharp edged capstone on this wall does not have a bullnose or softened edge. It would not meet the traditional construction techniques of these design guidelines.

The application of riprap as a retaining wall would not meet these design guidelines.



Install low fencing between the sidewalk and building so as not obscure the façade. Maintain low fencing along side yard setbacks. Higher privacy fencing is best limited to areas at the rear of the property.



Avoid excessive spacing of pickets and choose fencing designs that have a tigher, traditional pattern.

Foundations

Overview

Early foundations within the local historic districts consisted of local fieldstone. As time progressed, cut granite was used for foundations. During the 19th Century, new architectural styles introduced foundations that were higher and far more visible. These later foundations were sometimes made of brick. Foundations of the 20th Century transitioned to concrete block and poured concrete foundations. Early and later examples of foundations are a character defining feature of the districts.

Foundations are a character defining feature of historic buildings.

Things to Consider

While stone and masonry foundations may not need the routine maintenance of painted wood, foundations still need care, maintenance or even sometimes, major repair.

Those foundations that are constructed of brick may need some repointing of the mortar joints from time to time. It is important to note that the bricks on a historic house foundation may be softer than contemporary bricks. The mortar that was used on historic bricks was also softer. If Portland cement is used in the mortar for historic bricks, it can actually cause these historic bricks to crack. It is recommended that you consult with a brick mason that is familiar with historic bricks and knowledgeable on proper mortar mixes. Even fieldstone foundations may need a softer mortar mix.

Brick foundations were not typically painted. Unpainted brick foundations are best left uncoated. Parging a brick foundation is the process of applying a thin coating of concrete to the surface to fill in gaps, cracks and broken bricks. It is best to avoid parging, as it simply covers up ongoing moisture issues and is not a suitable treatment for historic foundations.

When bricks contain too much moisture, freezing water may cause the brick face to break off, a process known as spalling. Proper maintenance of a foundation begins with a close look at water management around the house. Gutters and downspouts need to carry rainwater well away from the foundation. The grading around a house should slope away. Foundation plantings are best kept small and separated from the foundation. These simple techniques will help to maintain a foundation.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to preserve the existing foundations and avoid alterations such as adding paint, concrete and other coatings not integral to the original foundation.

Guidelines

A. Foundation Repair

1. Preserve existing historic foundations.
2. Repoint existing brick and stone foundations, matching the width of the mortar joints.
3. Repoint existing brick foundations, matching the softness of the bricks to the proper mortar.

B. Foundation Alterations

1. Avoid parging brick and stone foundations.
2. Avoid painting brick or stone foundations that have not been previously painted.
3. Avoid removing paint from previously painted surfaces due to damage that can occur from sandblasting or other harsh techniques.

C. New Foundations

1. Design new foundations to avoid large, exposed areas of concrete. If large areas of new foundation will be visible, the foundation should be faced with brick or stone.

As this was a previously painted surface, maintenance of this brick foundation wall includes painting.

Garages, Sheds and Other Secondary Structures

Overview

An outbuilding found within the Old Post Road Historic District

A variety of secondary structures or outbuildings can be found throughout the district. These include garages, carriage houses, barns, sheds, pool houses, greenhouses and gazebos. These can be either existing, proposed or temporary structures.

Many outbuildings from the 19th and early 20th Century can still be found within the districts, either dating from the time of the main building's construction or constructed at a later date. These historic outbuildings are significant architectural resources and greatly contribute to the uniqueness of the districts. Like the other buildings in the districts, changes to outbuildings that are visible from the public way are reviewed by the historic district commission. New outbuildings are reviewed by the historic district commission as new construction.

Things to Consider

Other sections of these guidelines are applicable to outbuildings. Before beginning any project that involves an existing or new secondary structure, it is recommended that other sections of these guidelines are reviewed. This includes alterations to an existing structure to accommodate an Accessory Dwelling Unit. Note that temporary structures, such as tents and other shelters, shipping and moving containers, modular metal storage units, dumpsters and other similar temporary structures are reviewed by the historic district commission if they will remain standing for more than seven days.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to preserve historic outbuildings that contribute to the character of the districts and accommodate new outbuildings when they are compatible to the district setting.

Guidelines

A. Repair of Garages, Sheds and Secondary Structures

1. Preserve historic outbuildings such as barns, carriage houses and garages.
2. Preserve historic architectural features found on outbuildings such as wooden garage doors, windows, loft doors, door hinges as well as other features.
3. Review other sections of these guidelines for applicable features such as walls, trim, foundations, roofs, doors and windows.

B. Location of New Garages, Sheds and Secondary Structures

1. Locate new garages and other outbuildings on the side or rear of the property, in less conspicuous locations.

C. Design of New Garages, Sheds and Secondary Structures

1. Design new garages and other outbuildings to be compatible with the main building. Often, this means the outbuilding should be subordinate to or not overwhelm the main building.
2. Install new garage door openings that include paneled surfaces. Smooth garage door openings should be avoided.
3. Choose new garage door openings that utilize materials such as wood or those that closely replicate wood. Vinyl and metal garage doors are to be avoided.
4. Choose outbuildings made of traditional materials such as wood.
5. Avoid the placement of metal or vinyl outbuildings that are visible from the public way.

D. Replacement of Garage Doors on Existing Outbuildings

1. Replace garage doors that cannot be repaired with doors that are compatible in materials, design, features and texture.

E. Temporary Structures

1. Limit the placement of temporary structures to the minimal time necessary to accomplish an associated event or project.
2. Remove temporary structures as soon as possible after the completion of an event or project or whenever an event or project is not active.
3. Note that a certificate of appropriateness for a temporary structure expires after 3 months. The certificate will need to be renewed for the structure to remain on site.
4. Locate temporary structures in place more than 30 days in locations that are minimally visible from the public way.

Gutters and Downspouts

Overview

When properly maintained, gutters and downspouts provide a highly functional method of protecting historic buildings from water damage due to rainwater and melting snow. Over time, moisture is the most common reason for the deterioration of exterior surfaces on buildings. Gutters and downspouts can help direct water away from the building, avoiding direct splash back as well as water and moisture that could enter exterior surfaces through the ground.

In many cases, early buildings did not have a gutter and downspout system integral to the building design. These were often added later to limit wall damage, basement flooding and rot. Gutters and downspouts can be a significant character defining feature of some buildings, where they were integral to the design of the building, such as those from the late 19th Century that were designed in copper.

A copper downspout in the Southport Historic District.

Things to Consider

When not properly cleared of debris or repaired when broken, gutters and downspouts can hasten decay by concentrating moisture at certain locations. Proper maintenance of gutters can help prevent moisture issues impacting the soundness of the building.

While wood gutters are traditional and often preferable, it is recognized that wood gutters do not have the capacity of some more modern fabrications. Fiberglass gutters that replicate a wood gutter offer a higher capacity and are a long-lasting material that may be appropriate in some locations as a replacement for a wood gutter.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to preserve and repair those gutters and downspouts that are significant character defining features of the district and to allow new gutters and downspouts where they are necessary for protecting the historic building.

Guidelines

A. Repair of Existing Gutters and Downspouts

1. Preserve historic gutters, downspouts and related features that were an integral design to the building, such as copper gutters and downspouts.
2. Repair deteriorated portions of historic gutters, downspouts and related features by replacing only the damaged portion.

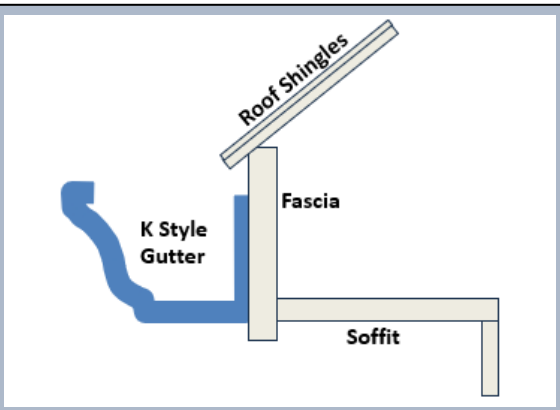
B. Replacement of Gutters and Downspouts

1. Replace historic gutters, downspouts and related features only when the level of deterioration requires replacement rather than repair.

2. Replace historic gutters, downspouts and related features with matching color, texture and other visual qualities and where possible, materials.
3. Replace deteriorated wood gutters with wood. Consider a modern fabrication, such as fiberglass gutters that replicate wood, when water capacity of the system needs to be increased.
4. Choose gutters that are made of wood or closely replicate the profile of a wood gutter.
5. Avoid the use of vinyl or plastic gutters.
6. Cover gutters and downspouts with an opaque coating that matches the adjacent trim and wall surface color.

C. Installation of New Gutters and Downspouts

1. Install new gutters and downspouts away from the main historic façade of the building where possible.
2. Install new gutters that require any straps to minimize the visibility of the straps by placing them under the roof shingles.
3. Install new gutters and downspouts so as not to damage character defining features.
4. Install new gutters and downspouts so as not to remove or cover character defining features.
5. Avoid the use of plastic or vinyl gutters and downspouts.
6. Avoid the use of K-style gutters when a flush, vertical fascia board is not present.
7. Cover gutters and downspouts with an opaque coating that matches the adjacent trim and wall surface color.



K Style Gutters need a flat fascia board for directly supporting the back of the gutter.

The water shedding off this roof is causing paint failure on the wall. While this historic building may not have had a gutter system here historically, it would make sense to consider a gutter here to prevent further water damage.

Landscaping

Overview

Although landscaping with groundcovers, trees and shrubs does not come under the jurisdiction of the historic district commission, landscape plantings have a considerable impact upon the appearance of an historic building or the streetscape as a whole. Property owners are encouraged to consider the impact of plantings on the overall district.

The open landscaping here in the Southport Historic District provides a distinctive visual experience of the historic building.

It is important to note that landscaping features, other than groundcovers, trees and shrubs, are reviewed by the historic district commission. In other words, walks, driveways, stonewalls, fences, retaining walls and other such hardscape features are reviewed by the historic district commission prior to installation. If a fence or wall is proposed, review the section of the design guidelines on Fences and Landscaping Walls.

In some cases, the historic district commission may only agree to approve new construction or mechanical equipment when it is properly screened with natural plant materials. In these cases, the project is conditional on the installation as well as long-term maintenance of the landscaping material, even when it is entirely natural vegetation.

Things to Consider

Before starting, consider the character defining feature of the landscape such as if there is a historic designed landscape present. Additionally, consider the impact of existing trees and shrubs that are obscuring character defining features or possibly even damaging them. Vines can cause long term damage to brick walls. Dense foliage can intensify moisture causing mold, mildew and even rot. The introduction of new trees, shrubs and vines should take into account these long-term impacts as well.

In evaluating visibility from a public way, the Commission shall consider the view of the building or structure as it would be without any screening created by trees, bushes, shrubs, plantings, or any other temporary visual obstructions.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to utilize landscaping as a means of highlighting historic buildings and structures through traditional landscape design techniques.

Guidelines

A. Screening as a Requirement

1. Install as required and maintain natural landscaping materials when their installation is a condition of the issuance of a certificate.

B. Maintaining Views of Historic Properties

1. Design new natural landscaping materials so that historic buildings are highlighted and remain the primary focal point.
2. Install and maintain natural landscaping materials so that views of the historic properties from the public way are maintained.

C. Artificial Landscaping Materials

1. Avoid the use of manufactured materials that attempt to simulate natural materials.
2. Exclude the installation or introduction of artificial turf, artificial stone and other manufactured materials.

Lighting

Overview

Reasons for lighting include a sense of security and safety in the darkness, particularly for pedestrians. Additionally, when it comes to historic buildings, lighting can be used to highlight certain architectural features. Overall, the lighting in an historic area has the potential to greatly enhance the nighttime experience. However, if not done properly, harsh lighting can degrade negatively impact the experience.

Reproduction fixtures and contemporary fixtures may be appropriate in the local historic districts. When properly scaled, contemporary, concealed fixtures can provide diffuse and unobtrusive light without harming the historic experience of the district.

Things to Consider

Contemporary lighting plans emphasize keeping the light emitted from fixtures solely on the intended target. Light pollution towards the sky and the impacts of excessive lighting on neighboring properties have caused a modern nighttime experience filled with unforgiving harsh light. There would have been no high intensity lighting in the period when most of the buildings and structures in the historic districts were built.

The Historic District Commission recognizes that public properties often have parking areas and large numbers of people attending gatherings in the evening hours. Spotlighting of low intensity is not discouraged when it is on public buildings and structures. However, an excessive number of lights, defined as anything greater than the minimum amount required by relevant building codes, is discouraged.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to utilize lighting to enhance the experience of the district, highlighting the historic buildings at nighttime and accommodating contemporary lighting where it is needed. The goal of the historic district commission is to provide adequate lighting for safety and security while still preserving the historic ambience of softer light and discreet fixtures.

Guidelines

A. Repair of Lighting Fixtures

1. Repair significant historic lighting fixtures.

B. Replacement of Historic Lighting Fixtures

1. Replace deteriorated historic lighting fixtures when repair is not possible. Replace with a similar fixture of similar materials and with a design appropriate to the period of the building.

C. Installation of New Lighting Fixtures at Residential and Commercial Property

1. Avoid installing lights that will detract from the historic character of the area.
2. Avoid the use of spotlights and/or other intense lighting.
3. Utilize the minimum light necessary to achieve the necessary goal.
4. Direct fixtures so that the light emitted is aimed solely at the intended target.
5. Avoid directing fixtures that will cast light onto neighboring properties.
6. Select fixtures that are discreet and unobtrusive during the daytime.
7. Avoid lighting that will intrude onto adjacent properties such as pool lighting, court, and driveway lighting. This is particularly necessary near lot lines.
8. Utilize footlights, recessed light, downward directing lights in order to minimize unnecessary light.
9. Choose lighting fixtures that are consistent with the style and period of the building.
10. Install path lighting that is 16 inches or less above the adjacent grade.

D. Installation of New Lighting Fixtures at Public Properties

1. Install spotlighting on public buildings that is low intensity and does not extend past the historic building.
2. Choose light fixtures that are inobtrusive during the daylight hours.

E. Installation of New Lighting Fixtures on Public Ways

1. Design new street lighting that is pedestrian scaled.
2. Design new street lighting that is compatible with the historic character of the district.
3. Install streetlights on pedestrian scale posts.

Modern shoebox style fixtures are not well suited for areas within local historic districts.

Additional landscaping here could help to lessen the visual intrusiveness of the lighting fixtures.

Mechanical and Electrical Equipment

Overview

Mechanical and electrical equipment provides essential modern conveniences that include comfort, energy savings, entertainment, education, communication and public safety. Equipment may include utility metering boxes, satellite dishes, mini-splits, compressors, fans, ducts and ductwork as well as piping, conduit, hangers and related assemblies. These could be adjacent to or attached to a building.

Metering boxes painted to match the house color assist in making the equipment less conspicuous.

With their energy efficiency, heat pumps are a frequent example of a sought-after mechanical system upgrade. With all modern equipment, such as heat pumps, careful thought must be given to not just the location of units, boxes and vents but the routing of piping and conduit necessary for their operation.

Installations that are fastened to character defining features can cause irreparable damage to these significant features. Begin by reviewing the character defining features within the project area and how best to avoid them. With careful planning, equipment can be integrated onto the building without damage to character defining features.

Larger equipment may include free standing structures such as cell towers, antennae and transformer boxes. With technological advances, it is likely the list of structures will continue to grow.

While all of these items may not be compatible in a historic district, seeking ways to accommodate modern equipment is necessary.

Things to Consider

It is unknown what new mechanical and electrical equipment may be available in the coming years. To address new technological advances, these guidelines are very likely to be updated from time to time or stand-alone additional guidelines may be utilized that will be separate from this document in the interim.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to accommodate modern equipment while making sure that locations are as inobtrusive as possible, do not damage character defining features and can be easily removed when the equipment is obsolete.

Guidelines

A. Location of Mechanical and Electrical Equipment

1. Locate modern and electrical equipment so that it will be as inconspicuous as possible.
2. Locate conduit and piping at the rear of a building or on the sides of a building as close to the rear as possible in an organized and tight manner, avoiding character defining features along the entire path.
3. Locate modern equipment away from primary facades, front yards and prominent locations that are visible from the public right of way.

B. Installation of Mechanical and Electrical Equipment

1. Install modern equipment so that it does not damage, cover or obscure character defining features of the building.

C. Screening of Mechanical and Electrical Equipment

1. Finish modern equipment, installed on an exterior wall, with paint that matches the color of the building.
2. Conceal the visibility of modern and mechanical equipment from the street, sidewalk and public spaces with screening such as fences or landscaping material.

When located prominently on a primary façade, modern equipment lessens the experience of an historic area.

New Construction

Overview

The addition of new construction in a local historic district can improve the vitality of the area. Additional homes or businesses provide needed housing or nearby services, all within a walkable, historic community. Particularly when there are vacant lots or gaps, new construction can fill in those holes and bring a visual harmony to the streetscape. The challenge with new construction is to design in such a way that it is well-suited to the setting of a significant historic area.

New construction within local historic districts can provide additional housing or new businesses.

Things to Consider

The historic district commission does not specify certain architectural styles or designs for new construction. If you are hiring a design professional for your new construction, it is best to find a designer with a sensitivity to historic buildings. The idea is not to mimic the nearby architectural styles. The new construction should be distinguishable from its neighboring historic properties yet at the same time compatible. The goal is to base the start of what is designed for new construction on what is already there in the surrounding streetscape.

Review other applicable design guidelines related to new construction, including the new construction design principles.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to approve compatible new construction while making sure that the historic character and setting of the local historic district is not compromised.

Guidelines

A. Design of New Construction

1. Design new construction to be compatible yet differentiated from nearby historic buildings.
2. Design garages, barns, boathouses and other outbuildings to be compatible with the main building but also subordinate to the main, historic building.

B. Location of New Construction

1. Locate new buildings and structures so as not to block views of historic buildings and structures.
2. Site new buildings and structures so that they are not visually prominent from the public way.

.

Infill construction in a local historic district can be designed such that it is a compatible addition to the district.

When not carefully designed with the historic character of the area, new construction can have a dramatic and negative impact on an entire streetscape.

New Construction Design Principles

Overview

Incorporating stand-alone new construction sensitively into a collection of significant historic resources can be challenging. Yet, there are many successful examples that can be found in historic districts nationwide. Incorporating these New Construction Design Principles within your plans for new construction will greatly increase your likelihood of a successful project.

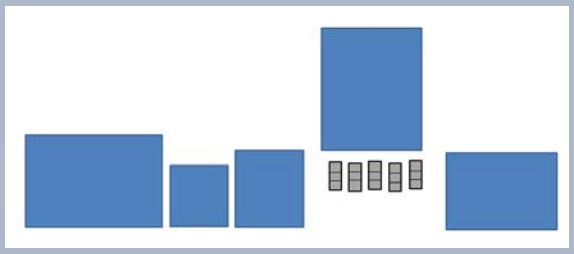
Siting

Siting is the location of the new building footprint and related construction on the property.

Site the new construction to be compatible with nearby buildings and landscapes.

Site related construction such as parking in minimally visible locations.

Maintain views of historic buildings from the public way by siting new construction in areas that do not block the historic buildings and structures.



The siting of the new construction shown here is not compatible with the historic siting pattern and would not meet the design guidelines.

Context

Context is the relation of the new construction to its greater surroundings. Context considers the age, architectural styles, character defining features and historic or traditional design principles that are found on surrounding or nearby properties.

Design new construction that will be both compatible to its surroundings as well as differentiated.

New construction would need to recognize that front porches, among other attributes, are an important character defining feature of this streetscape.

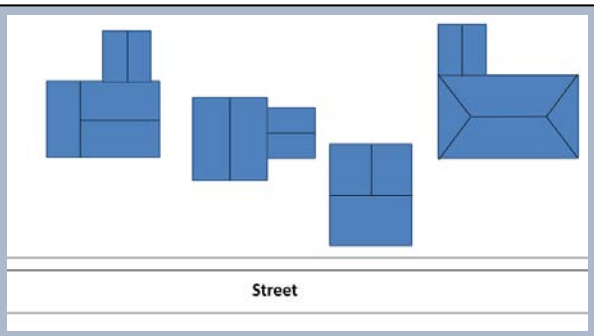
Setbacks

Setback is the distance the building is from the front or side property lines.

Site new construction to similarly align with the common front setback.

Site new construction with side yard setbacks that are similar to nearby properties.

Site new construction with setbacks that respect the setting of historic buildings, considering how best to maintain open landscapes and views of historic buildings.

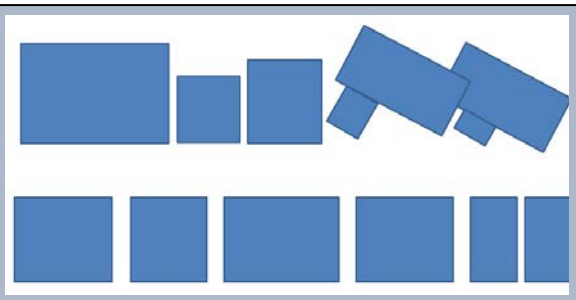


The historic setbacks may vary but the new construction shown here is not similarly setback and would not meet these guidelines.

Orientation

Orientation is the positioning of the new building in the context of the surrounding buildings.

Position the new building so that it is compatible with surrounding buildings and the streetscape.



The orientation of the new construction shown here would not meet the design guidelines.

Pedestrian Relation

Pedestrian relation is how the buildings interact with people that are walking on the public road or the sidewalk.

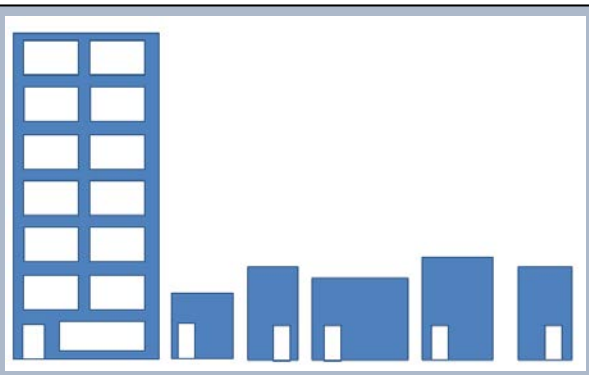
Site new construction to provide an experience that reflects the historic walkability of the district.

The historic districts of Fairfield were developed as walkable neighborhoods and that remains a key feature of the districts today.

Scale

Scale is the relationship of the new construction to surrounding buildings.

Maintain a similar scale to those of surrounding buildings.

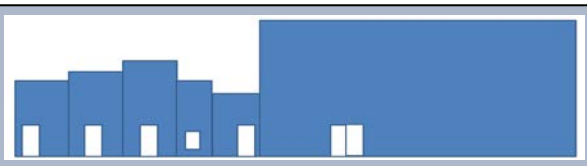


The scale of the new construction shown here is not compatible with nearby buildings and would not meet the design guidelines.

Massing

Massing is the perceived bulk, weight or volume of a new building.

Maintain a similar massing to those of surrounding buildings.



The massing of the new construction shown here is not compatible with nearby buildings and would not meet the design guidelines.

Rhythm

Rhythm is the relationship between various elements on a building and within a district that creates an overall sense of organization and harmony.

Maintain a rhythm to the various elements of the new construction.

Maintain a similar rhythm to the character defining features of the nearby buildings.

The historic roof pattern, although variable, maintains a rhythm across the streetscape. However, the new construction shown here breaks that rhythm and would not meet the design guidelines.

Shape

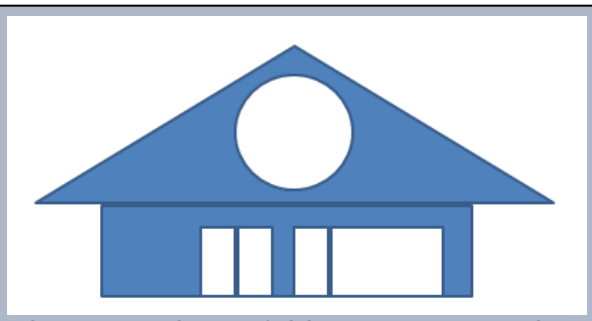
Shape is the form, contours and outline of the building.

Maintain similar shapes to the new construction that are compatible to nearby properties.

Proportion

Proportion is the relationship of the size of architectural elements on a particular building to those architectural elements that are within the district.

Maintain proportions on the new construction that are compatible to nearby properties.

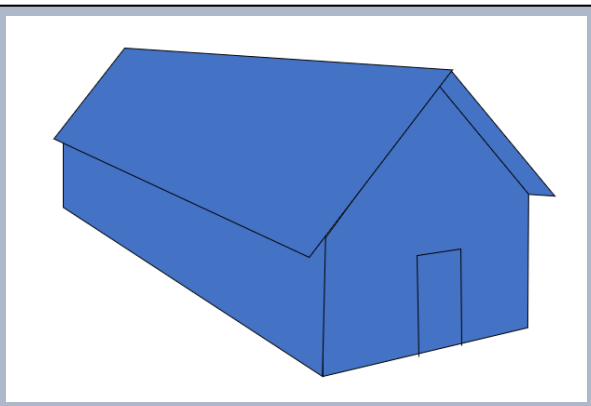


The proportions of this new construction would not meet the design guidelines.

Details

Details are the specifics of new construction, such as wall cladding and trim that include their arrangement, texture, color, size and shape.

Select architectural details that are compatible with nearby historic buildings.



New construction in a local historic district will be more compatible when traditional materials and details are applied to those surfaces visible from the public way.

Materials

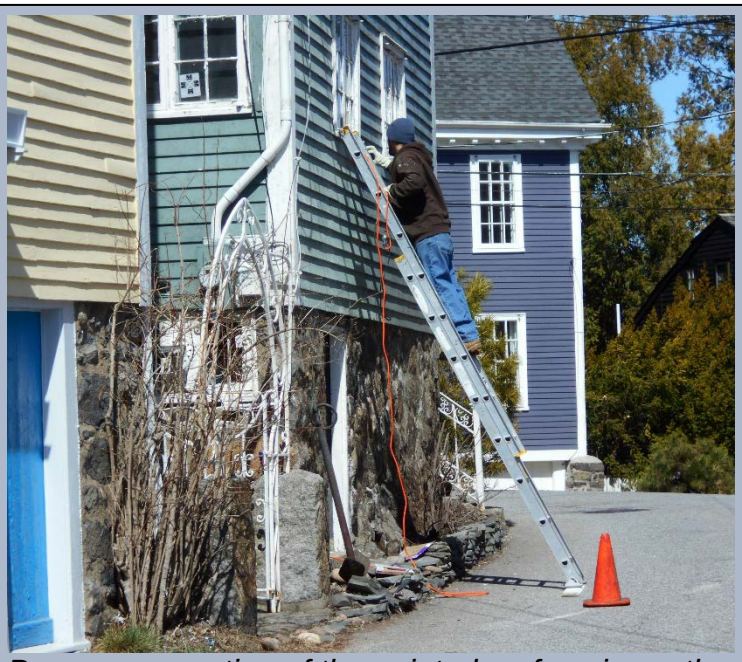
Materials are the components of the new construction such as wood, metal, stone, masonry, synthetic or composite materials.

Choose traditional materials for new construction that are found on the exteriors of nearby buildings.

Paint and Other Coatings

Overview

As it is truly temporary in nature, the choice of paint color is expressly unregulated by the Historic District Commission and no certificate of appropriateness is required.



Proper preparation of the painted surface is worth the time and effort.

The majority of buildings in the districts are clad in wood clapboards or shingles with wood trim. Historically, most wood-framed buildings were protected with paint and that remains the best option today.

The use of paint in the districts unifies the variety of architectural styles and forms and is a character defining feature of the districts. While paint color is exempt from review in the local historic districts, a change in the surface treatment would require the submittal of an application to the historic district commission. For instance, a proposal to paint an unpainted brick surface would be a change in surface treatment requiring review by the historic district commission.

Things to Consider

Before beginning any repainting project, there are many things to consider. Be sure you and your contractor are familiar with all safety practices regarding the lead paint. If repainting is needed because the existing paint is peeling, make sure you investigate any moisture issues that might be causing the paint adhesion to fail prematurely. As paint application is a labor-intensive process, make sure the surface is well prepared for proper adhesion.

For surface preparation, certain techniques can be particularly damaging. Heat guns and sandblasting are not recommended for paint removal. Even power washing is harmful as it drives water into the wall cavities, potentially leading to moisture issues.

One of the best ways to avoid repainting is to continue practicing routine maintenance in between major repainting jobs. This includes inspections for damage, mildew, ground contact and dirt. Repairing any damaged gutters or downspouts will help prevent moisture problems. Caulking cracks and openings will also help prevent water infiltration. Cleaning off mildew with a gentle washing is recommended.

There are products on the market that may apply as a liquid and have some similarities to paint but are far thicker in their application. These products can alter the appearance of the cladding and may be harmful to the historic materials.

When you consider color choices, you may want to investigate what the colors of the house were historically. A historic paint color analysis can be done by a professional consultant using a small test area on the exterior. You may choose a paint color simply based on the traditional paint colors for the architectural style of your building. For instance, 18th Century buildings were often brownish red or yellow mustard in color.

During the 19th Century, greens, blues and grays appeared. Greek Revival homes, to give the appearance of a Greek Temple, were often white with a dark trim. Queen Anne homes were polychromatic. Colonial Revival homes at the beginning of the 20th Century were typically white. Early Colonial houses were sometimes left unpainted and allowed to weather, as was also the case for early twentieth century Shingle style houses and bungalows.

Brick buildings should be re- painted if they presently are painted, however, a coat of paint should not be applied to unpainted brick in lieu of cleaning and repointing. If a brick building was historically painted it is best to leave it that way as it may mean the brick was of a lesser, more porous quality. In any case, removing paint from brick, even by the gentlest of methods, can damage the brick and should be avoided wherever possible.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to maintain the use of traditional coatings as the appropriate method of protecting wood surfaces.

Guidelines

Painting and Coating Surfaces

1. Use the gentlest means possible for surface preparation.
2. Avoid the use of any sandblasting, heat guns, torches, power washing or other similar techniques that could damage the building.
3. Avoid painting any masonry, stone or other surfaces that were historically unpainted.
4. Avoid the use of stains as a coating.
5. Avoid the use of any coatings that are not a traditional paint formulation.

Playground, Sporting and Entertainment Equipment

Overview

Playground, sporting and entertainment equipment and facilities include non-portable structures or those structures at ground level. This includes structures such as swing sets, playhouses, treehouses, swimming pools, trampolines, basketball hoops, goal posts, cages and nets. Additionally, sports courts such as tennis, pickleball, basketball, bocce, hockey are all at grade structures that are reviewed by the historic district commission. Other structures that would be included for review in this section are outdoor fireplaces and outdoor kitchens with their associated dining and entertainment structures.

Play equipment is best sited where it is minimally visible.

Things to Consider

If a swimming pool, tennis or sports court is proposed to replace a garden or open field, it should be limited in scale, visually unobtrusive from a public way, and surrounded by elements characteristic of the historic value of the property

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to accommodate playground, sporting and entertainment equipment while making sure that locations are as inobtrusive as possible.

Guidelines

Installing New Playground, Sporting and Entertainment Equipment

1. Avoid above ground swimming pools that are visible from the public way.
2. Locate in-ground swimming pools so that they are minimally visible from the public way.
3. Choose locations for playgrounds, sporting and entertainment equipment that are minimally visible from the public way. Locations away from the façade, in the rear of the property or if on the side yard, as close to the rear of the property as possible are recommended.
4. Utilize fencing and plant materials to screen equipment and blend equipment into the natural environment.
5. Avoid screening equipment with modern fence materials such as vinyl fencing.

Porches

Overview

Porches are covered entranceways that project from a building, providing shelter before entering as well as a shady location to rest. Porches include various components such as the roof, columns, posts and balustrades. Historic porches often include decorative elements as well that emphasize the entrance.

A variety of porches can be found within the Fairfield Historic districts.

The very early buildings in the districts were not built with porches originally but a porch may have been added on at a later time.

By the middle of the 19th Century, porches had become an integral part of the design on many architectural styles, sometimes even wrapping around two sides of a building. As the primary entrance to a building, porches are often a focal point, whether they are embellished with decorative features or of more modest design.

Whether the historic porch is original to the building or added later, it is considered a character defining feature.

Things to Consider

With its many architectural features exposed to the weather, basic maintenance of a historic porch is needed to address potential moisture damage. It is recommended that porches receive regular maintenance inspections for deteriorated paint, insect damage and rot. Caulking and repainting will help maintain wood trim and details. If a historic porch must be replaced, the new porch should match the original design as closely as possible. Review other sections of these guidelines for relevance to porches.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to preserve the existing porches as character defining features of the district.

Guidelines

A. Repair of Porches

1. Repair porches and their architectural features whenever possible.
2. Repair damaged sections of the porch by replacing only that portion which is damaged beyond repair using like materials, colors and details to the historic original.
3. Avoid any unpainted surfaces on the porch and associated architectural features.

B. Replacement of Porches

1. Replace porches and their architectural features only when the level of deterioration makes repair impossible or impractical.
2. Match the replacement to the historic original in appearance, pattern, materials, color, design, dimensions, durability and texture.
3. Install new porch railings, floorboards, columns, posts, balusters using traditional materials such as wood.
4. Avoid vinyl, composites or other alternative materials.
5. Avoid any unpainted surfaces on the porch and associated architectural features.

C. Alteration of Porches

1. Maintain the historic openness of a porch.
2. Avoid enclosing a porch that is visible from the public way.

D. Construction of New Porches

1. Replacement of missing historic porches should be based on physical evidence or historic photographs.
2. Design new porches on new construction that will be compatible with the attached building and other porches in the area.
3. Avoid any unpainted surfaces on the porch and associated architectural features.

In this example, enclosing the porch has resulted in the loss of architectural trim and its sense of openness.

Roofs and Related Structures

Overview

x

Besides protecting a building from the elements, a roof contributes to its character. A great variety of roof forms can be found within the districts. They are prominent character defining features, providing information about the period of construction, architectural style and changes over time. Roof materials found in the district include asphalt, cedar and slate shingles. Roofs may also have related character defining features such as dormers or chimneys.

Many of the early buildings have a simple front gable roof, meaning that the front entrance and slope of the roof are on the same elevation. During the 19th Century, the Greek Revival style often had a side gable roof. On Gothic Revival buildings, the side gable was often markedly steeply pitched. Roof forms have become more complex over time as new architectural styles were introduced.

Early roofing materials in the districts were limited to wooden shingles but some 19th Century buildings were designed with slate. During the 20th Century, asphalt shingles predominated but some notable buildings in the district still retain cedar or slate shingles.

Things to Consider

With roofs facing extreme conditions of rain, snow, ice, wind, cold and heat, a roof needs routine maintenance to protect the structure that sits underneath it. Leaves, moss and algal growth should be removed. While slate roofs are very durable and do not need to be replaced as soon as asphalt shingles, they must have routine inspection and maintenance for their flashing and fasteners. Many houses in the districts have asphalt shingles. If so, replacing asphalt shingles with asphalt shingles is exempt from review.

Historically, it was not uncommon for shallower-roofed structures in the areas that would become Fairfield's historic districts to have small, glazed cupolas and "widow's walks." Consequently, new construction involving these features may be appropriate. Small venting cupolas, however, were not a common characteristic of structures built during Fairfield's past and as such their use is discouraged on residential structures in the historic districts. Appropriately sized venting cupolas, however, were used on outbuildings and may be considered for inclusion on ancillary structures.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to preserve the existing roofs as character defining features of the district.

Guidelines

A. Roofing Materials Repairs

1. Repair slate, cedar, metal, clay and other historic roofing materials that are character defining features on visible roofs.
2. Repair existing roofs using matching patterns, materials, colors, and details.

B. Roofing Materials Replacement

1. Replace roofing material only when the level of deterioration makes repair impossible or impractical.
2. Match the replacement in appearance, pattern, materials, color, design, dimensions, durability and texture.
3. Replace existing asphalt roofing material with similar asphalt shingles.
4. Avoid the installation of metal roofs on primary facades. Metal roofs will be considered on inconspicuous roofs, such as outbuildings and secondary structures that are minimally visible from the public way.

C. Roof Additions

1. Design roof additions such that they will not remove, alter or cover character defining features.
2. Avoid rooftop additions or other alterations to the form of the roof.
3. Select roofing materials, colors, textures and patterns that are compatible with the building.

D. Roof Decks

1. Avoid the installation of roof decks that are visible from the public way.
2. Design roof decks to be minimally visible from the public way.
3. Design roof decks such that the deck, railing and associated features are set back from the wall edge to be minimally visible from the public way.
4. Install roof decks such that they do not damage existing architectural features.
5. Install roof decks to be easily reversible.

E. New Roof Materials

1. Avoid the installation of metal roofs on primary facades. Metal roofs will be considered on inconspicuous roofs, such as outbuildings and secondary structures minimally visible from the public way.

F. Cupolas and Widows Walks

1. Preserve historic cupolas and widow’s walks.
2. Avoid the use of contemporary venting cupolas on primary buildings.

G. Skylights

1. Install skylights, rooftop mechanical equipment and other objects and structures such that they are minimally visible from the public way.
2. Choose low profile skylights over bubble type to further minimize visibility.

Shutters

Overview

Original shutters served an essential purpose in protecting fragile windows from the weather. They were hinged and could be opened and closed as needed. If the shutters had louvers, the slats, when closed, were designed to direct water away from the windows. Styles included paneled and louvered. Original shutters are significant character defining features.

Operable shutters with hinges and dogs.

Things to Consider

With shutters exposed to the weather, basic inspection and maintenance is needed to address moisture damage. Repainting, as needed, will help maintain the longevity of wooden shutters.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to preserve historic shutters and install new shutters on buildings only in ways that are traditional to the building.

Guidelines

A. Repair of Historic Shutters

1. Repair existing wooden shutters whenever possible with patching and splicing.
2. Repair shutter hardware whenever possible so that the hinges and dogs remain operable.

B. Replacement of Shutters

1. Replace deteriorated wooden shutters when repair is not possible. Replace with like materials and with a design appropriate to the period of the building.
2. Avoid vinyl or other alternative materials.
3. Design replacement shutters to match the style of the original shutters.
4. Design replacement shutters to match the size of the window and face louvers such that a closed shutter would direct rainwater away from the window.
5. Design replacement shutters to remain functional.

C. Installation of New Shutters

1. Avoid the use of shutters on windows that have traditionally not had shutters.
2. Avoid shutters made from of vinyl or other substitute materials
3. Avoid the use of immovable shutters affixed to the walls.

4. Avoid shutter sizes that do not match the window opening. In other words, the height of the shutters must fit within the window frame and be wide enough so that when closed they meet in the center.
5. Avoid the use of shutters when they do not have sufficient space to lie flat against the exterior wall, unless there was historic precedent for a shutter at this location.
6. Install shutters that match the style of window. For instance, if the window is arched, the shutter is also similarly arched.

Avoid the application of metal or vinyl shutters within the local historic districts.

The size of the shutters on this window do not match the window opening.

In this example, the shutters are sized appropriately to the window opening.

Signs

Overview

With very few commercial properties in the Fairfield Local Historic Districts, the need for permanent signage is uncommon. For those businesses in the districts, signage remains an essential aspect to directing visitors and attracting customers. The role of the historic district commission does not include reviewing the content of signage. However, when signage is a part of an architectural feature, the historic district commission will review the location, design, scale, size, materials and method of installation.

Integrated signage within the Southport Historic District

Things to Consider

Signage applicants should also consider in their planning process whether a permit will be needed under the zoning ordinance for signage.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to preserve significant historic signs and accommodate new commercial, wayfinding and educational signage that is only minimally intrusive to the character of the district, does not overpower or dominate the streetscape, landscape settings or facades of individual buildings.

Guidelines

A. Repair of Historic Signs

1. Preserve significant historic signs that are character defining features of a building or the area.

B. Installation of New Signs

1. Affix signs to a building in such a way that they do not obscure any character defining features or cover substantial portions of a façade.
2. Affix signs to a building in such a way that they do not damage any character defining features.
3. On masonry walls, drill holes for affixing the sign into the mortar joints, not the brick or masonry material.
4. Affix signs to buildings in such a way that they can be removed without damaging character defining features.
5. Choose signs that are of a size and scale appropriate to the building.
6. Design signs that enrich the architectural features of the building.
7. Choose signs that are made of wood or materials that replicate wood.
8. Avoid signs that are digital, electronic, interior lit, neon or contain any moving parts.
9. Locate free standing signs in appropriate locations that complement the landscape setting.
10. Light signs with small, out of the way light fixtures.

11. Choose lettering and ornamentation that complement the historic style and architectural character of the building.

12.

The size of the signage here matches the size and scale of the storefront.

Solar Panels

Overview

Like other modern equipment, solar panels could be considered incompatible to an historic area. While they are an important part of our energy's future, they can overpower the façade of a significant historic building, depending on their placement.

With the need to locate solar panels on southern exposures, some roof installations may not be visible from the public way. If they are not visible from the public way, the installation would be exempt from historic district commission review. However, applications for solar panels on complex, primary roof forms or on primary facades will be carefully reviewed.

The solar panels located on the rear ell of this building are only minimally visible.

Things to Consider

Historic areas of the town of Fairfield are inherently sustainable places. As denser urban environments compared to low density suburbs, our historic areas house many people on smaller lots. Walkable and bikeable, many trips do not require a vehicle. With easier access to public transportation, vehicle trips can be fewer and shorter. The land use pattern of our historic neighborhoods results in a lower carbon footprint per person than lower density, suburban communities.

Our historic buildings are sustainable and environmentally friendly as well. In some cases, they have already lasted hundreds of years. Built of long-lasting materials, they have embodied energy, meaning the vast energy needed to build a new house isn't necessary.

If you are interested in making your historic building even more sustainable, consider reviewing the heating and cooling systems for efficiency, addressing air infiltration by properly sealing up holes and adding additional insulation to attic spaces. An energy audit may find ways to save energy that are inexpensive.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to find a balance for accommodating solar energy equipment, while still protecting the unique historic aspects of the districts.

Guidelines

A. Installing Roof Mounted Solar Panels

1. Install roof mounted solar panels such that they do not dominate a primary façade.
2. Install roof mounted solar panels such that they do not damage, alter or destroy character defining features.

3. Install roof mounted solar panels such that they do not obscure character defining features such as windows, chimneys or ornamental architectural details.
4. Install roof mounted solar panels away from primary facades, whenever feasible.
5. Install roof mounted solar panels on outbuildings, subordinate ells or wings, whenever feasible.

B. Installing Ground Mounted Solar Panels

1. Install ground mounted solar panels in inconspicuous locations, with minimal visibility from the public right of way.

C. Installing Solar Panel Related Components

1. Install conduit, meters, inverters, monitoring systems, hardware and all other associated components such that they do not obscure, damage, alter or destroy character defining features.

These solar panels were well-sited on a rear ell.

Steps, Stairs and Railings

Overview

x

Steps, stairs and railings provide access, safety and emergency egress from buildings. While steps, stairs and railings have been historically used in the district, additional features may need to be added to address a safety concern. For instance, in some cases, a historic railing may need to be enhanced to provide additional safety. Or a large, historic single-family home that is now a multi-family home may need an exterior set of stairs to provide an emergency exit.

Things to Consider

One of the best ways to avoid major repair projects is to practice routine maintenance. For wooden features, this means inspecting all components for water infiltration, missing pieces and rot and then repairing missing or damaged areas as soon as possible. For holes and cracks, apply caulking regularly. Wood surfaces should always have an intact layer of paint. For stone or brick steps, address water or ice damage and repoint mortar joints when necessary. For iron railings, inspect for corrosion, damage and missing paint and repair as needed.

If you are considering necessary changes to steps, stairs or railings or a large project, such as the addition of a set of exterior stairs, review the character defining features found on the existing historic building. A careful study of the uniqueness of the building will provide indications of how the project can be successfully incorporated, while still preserving the significant architectural features. It may be helpful to seek the guidance of a contractor or design professional with a sensitivity to historic buildings and a background in historic preservation.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to find ways that safety can be increased, buildings adaptively re-used and the historic character defining features of the district preserved.

Guidelines

A. Repairing Steps, Stairs or Railings

1. Repair existing steps, stairs and railings whenever possible.
2. Repair damaged sections by replacing only that portion which is damaged beyond repair using like materials, colors and details to the historic original.

B. Replacing Steps, Stairs or Railings

1. Replace steps, stairs and railings only when the level of deterioration makes repair impossible or impractical.
2. Match the replacement to the historic original in appearance, pattern, materials, color, design, durability and texture.

C. Installing New Steps, Stairs and Railings

1. Install new steps, stairs and railings so that they do not damage existing architectural features.
2. Install new steps, stairs and railings to be easily reversible.
3. Locate new exterior stairs that access upper floors in minimally visible locations, such as the rear of the building. Avoid the location of new exterior stairs on the façade of a building.
4. Design new exterior stairs that must be visible from the public way to be compatible with the architectural style of the building.
5. Cover exterior materials, such as pressure treated wood, with paint or a similar opaque coating as soon as the moisture content of the material will allow.

When the moisture content allows, coating pressure treated wood with matching paint would greatly help to incoporate this material into the historic area.

Storm and Screen Windows and Doors

Overview

In the past, all storm windows were made of wood. In New England, they were attached to the exterior of the window frame in the fall and typically removed from the exterior in the spring. Some buildings in the districts still retain removable wooden storm windows. By the mid-20th Century, aluminum frames were permanently affixed to the window trim with operable, integral storm windows and screens. While aluminum storm windows are a more recent addition to historic properties, the historic district commission recognizes the important role storm and screen windows have in energy efficiency and occupant comfort.

An example of a traditional wood storm window that is removed in the spring season..

Things to Consider

The addition of storm windows provides a highly energy efficient solution for significant single glazed wood windows on historic properties. With storm windows added, studies have shown energy-efficiency to meet modern-day double-glazed windows. Options for storm windows include exterior and interior installations. Interior storm windows require no review from the historic district commission. They are simply placed into the window opening from the interior to provide a tight seal from air infiltration. Exterior metal storms are permanently installed on the exterior of the window opening. While they change the exterior appearance of the windows, they offer an excellent energy efficient solution to keeping historic wood windows intact. Historically, exterior wood windows were placed on the windows at the beginning of the winter season with metal brackets. This meant that the storm windows could be easily removed each spring.

Storm doors on the main façade of a historic building can obscure the character defining features of the primary entrance. The careful selection of a compatible storm door is warranted.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to accommodate storm windows, especially exterior wooden storm windows and interior storm windows, as a means of preserving historic single glazed wood windows.

Guidelines

A. Installing New Storm Windows and Doors

1. Choose storm windows that are properly sized to the existing window trim.
2. Choose or paint aluminum storm windows in a color that will match the color of the windows.
3. Install wood exterior wood windows in a traditional design and pattern.

B. Repairing Wood Storm Windows

1. Repair existing wooden storm windows.

These contemporary storm windows are integrated into the window trim, providing a flush profile compared to projecting aluminum frames.

Trim and Architectural Details

Overview

The exterior trim on a building includes the corner boards, cornices, pilasters, brackets, window and door surrounds, porch details as well as many other features. With many 19th Century buildings present in the district, the use of decorative trim and architectural details is common on the building types found in the districts. Ornamentation is essentially the architectural features that developed in the 19th Century, which embellished buildings with some decorative elements. The features serve an important purpose in providing clues about the age of a building and the thoughts of the people of the time.

Things to Consider

One of the best ways to avoid trim and architectural detail repair projects is to practice routine maintenance, such as regular caulking and painting of wood surfaces, addressing water infiltration and repairing damage as soon as possible. Repainting, as needed, will help maintain the longevity of wooden trim and architectural details and thus avoid costly repair or replacement.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to preserve historic trim and ornamentation that contributes to the character of the districts.

Guidelines

A. Repair of Trim and Architectural Details

1. Repair damaged trim and architectural details by replacing only that portion which is damaged beyond repair.
2. Repair existing trim and architectural details using similar patterns, materials, colors, and details.
3. Repair damaged trim and architectural details using repair methods such as splicing, consolidating, reinforcing and patching.

A. Replacement of Trim and Architectural Details

1. Replace deteriorated trim and architectural details only when repair is impossible or impractical.
2. Replace deteriorated wooden trim and ornamentation with the original design and with like materials.
3. Replace deteriorated trim and architectural details with materials that match the original in appearance, texture, durability, pattern, color, design, dimensions and detailing.

C. Installing New Trim and Architectural Details

1. Avoid adding trim or ornamentation that is incompatible or is from a differing architectural style.
2. Replace missing trim and architectural details based on documentary or physical evidence.
3. Choose traditional materials for trim and ornamentation.
4. Avoid the use of substitute, synthetic or manufactured materials unless a traditional material is not feasible in that location.

The brackets and trim on this dormer are undergoing proper maintenance and preservation.

However, a similar dormer has lost its cornice returns and brackets, resulting in a loss of historic character.

Walls and Siding

Overview

A home in the Southport Historic District

The historic wall surfaces found in historic areas of New England are typically wood clapboards, wood shingles or wood flushboard, with brick and stone surfaces also sometimes found. When a collection of historic buildings maintains the historic wall surfaces, the preservation and significance of the area is readily apparent. This is very much true in the Fairfield Local Historic Districts, with the majority of the buildings in the districts maintaining historic wall materials.

During the late 19th Century, combinations of clapboards and decorative shingles were used on Queen Anne style homes.

Substitute siding materials of the 20th Century began with the application of stucco. Soon thereafter, asbestos shingles were applied onto some historic properties. Aluminum siding became more prevalent by the mid-20th Century and continued until vinyl siding rose in usage. Nationwide, both aluminum siding and vinyl siding have had very unfortunate consequences on historic properties, as historic materials are covered up or removed entirely.

Things to Consider

One of the best ways to avoid wall repair projects is to practice routine maintenance. This includes inspections for damage, mildew, insects, paint failure, water damage and rot and then follow up with maintenance when issues are discovered. Gentle cleaning, repainting worn surfaces, filling small openings, will make a substantial difference in the longevity of painted surfaces. Vegetation should be kept away from wall surfaces to lessen moisture and the growth of mildew. The ground surface should be kept lower than the wall and sloped away from the house. Maintaining gutters and downspouts helps prevent concentrated rainwater from scouring wall surfaces and splash back from rainwater hitting the ground and landing on the wall surface.

An additional downside of vinyl siding is that moisture and pest issues may be serious but remain hidden underneath the siding. Pre-existing substitute materials, such as vinyl siding, can remain on a building in the local historic districts indefinitely. However, it is recommended that pre-existing substitute materials be removed so that the historic character of the building is visible.

Although bricks may appear indestructible, cleaning techniques such as sandblasting can remove the baked exterior of the brick, exposing the brick to moisture and setting up a cycle of deteriorating bricks during freeze and thaw cycles. Gentle cleaning techniques on masonry surfaces will adequately clean the surface without causing damage. For masonry surfaces, such as brick, routine maintenance will help to avoid more extensive repair projects. That means repointing mortar joints when necessary, keeping flashing in good repair and avoiding water infiltration.

Goal Statement

The goal of the local historic district commission is that historic wood, stone and masonry walls will continue to provide an authentic and historic streetscape.

Guidelines

A. Repair of Walls and Siding

1. Avoid removing any historic wall materials unless absolutely necessary.
2. Repair existing wooden clapboards, shingles and exterior cladding whenever possible.
3. Repair damaged wall sections by replacing only that portion which is damaged beyond repair.
4. Match repairs to existing walls using similar patterns, profiles, textures and materials.

B. Repair of Brick or Masonry Walls

1. Repair existing brick or masonry walls whenever possible.
2. Match the mortar color, strength, texture and joint rake to the original brick or stone surface.
3. Use mortar mixes that match the original historic mixture as much as possible and that are softer than the masonry materials.
4. Exclude the use of sandblasting and other harsh cleaning and removal techniques.
5. Exclude the use of heat guns, torches, power washing or other similar techniques that could damage the building.
6. Exclude the use of chemical treatments for cleaning or removal.

C. Replacement of Walls and Siding

1. Replace deteriorated wooden clapboards and shingles only when repair is not possible or practical.
2. Match the replacement to the existing in pattern, materials, color, design, dimensions and detailing.

D. Covering Historic Walls and Siding

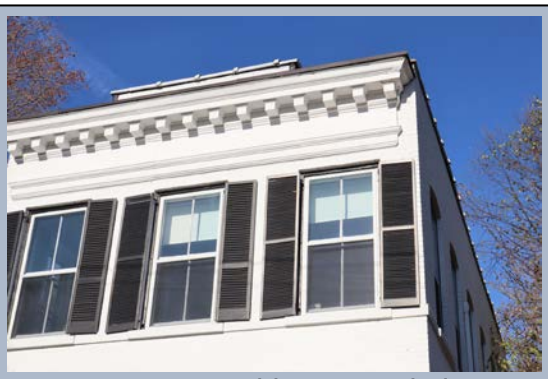
1. Exclude the application of substitute siding such as vinyl or aluminum. Alternative materials such as fiber cement board siding may be considered if only minimally visible from a public way.

E. Alteration of Walls and Siding

1. Brick or other masonry surfaces that were not previously painted shall not be painted or otherwise covered.

Windows

Overview

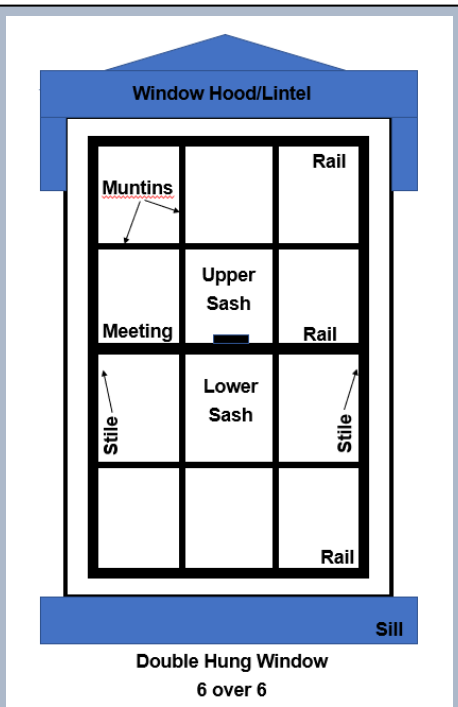


Two over Two Double Hung Windows

The composition of doors and windows across the façade of a building, its fenestration, are a principal character defining feature of historic buildings such as those in the Fairfield Historic Districts. On early buildings, windows provided a practical method of bringing daylight and fresh air to the interior of a building. The high cost of hand-blown glass meant that the windows were used sparingly and had many small panes.

By the 19th Century, large panes of glass could be produced more inexpensively, and window panes could become larger based on technological advances. Double hung windows went from 12 panes over 12 panes to 6 over 6 and then 2 over 2.

The decorative aspects of windows grew in the 19th Century with new architectural styles and an interest in asymmetrical building design. Windows became variable in size and more abundantly used across the elevations of the building, sometimes located in bands or groupings of two or three. With the popularity of the Colonial Revival style in the early 20th Century, window placements returned to more fixed locations across the façade.



Character defining features of a double hung window.

A great variety of windows can be found throughout the Fairfield local historic districts. The windows tell a story, reflecting the architectural styles and craftsmanship of the past. As prominent features on every façade, historic windows are notable character defining features of all the districts.

Most moveable windows in the local historic districts are double-hung wooden windows, with an upper and lower sash that moves up and down independently within a channel. However, a few examples of other types of windows can be found, such as casement windows that are hinged.

The unique craftsmanship of a historic wood window is apparent, even from a distance, due to the subtle ways sunlight reflects from individual panes, or the shadows cast from the muntin profiles.

Things to Consider

When beginning a project that will impact windows in the local historic districts, begin by recognizing that windows are an important character defining feature.

A Palladian window with its characteristic center arch.

Historic wood windows were constructed with slow growing, old growth timber. With far tighter growth rings, the historic wood is far more durable than contemporary wood windows, constructed of plantation grown lumber.

With proper maintenance, historic wood windows can last for centuries. Proper maintenance of wood windows includes inspection for deteriorated paint, insect damage and rot. Any place where water can enter should be addressed as soon as possible, meaning that open joints should be filled, missing putty replaced, and missing paint reapplied. A great benefit of a historic wood window is the ability to repair damage through splicing or patching. When a replacement window is damaged, the unit itself may need to be replaced.

Window restoration can address many of the common operational issues with historic windows. Weather-stripping, air sealing, rebalancing (repairing the weights and ropes in the wall pocket that assist in opening and closing the window) and removing lead paint can significantly improve performance and address health concerns. Storm windows may be added to increase energy efficiency on either the interior or exterior without review. Modern epoxy fillers and hardeners, wood splicing and patching can often repair highly deteriorated conditions. Historic wood windows may be removed temporarily and disassembled to replace broken elements.

Historic wood windows can be energy-efficient when properly maintained and weather-stripped. A properly weather-stripped historic wood window coupled with an energy efficient storm window has been shown to be just as energy efficient as a double-glazed window. Another option for increased energy-efficiency are interior storm windows.

Goal Statement

The goal of the historic district commission is to preserve historic wood windows as an essential character defining feature of the district.

Guidelines

A. Repair of Windows

1. Preserve historic windows including their frames, sashes, muntins, sills, trim, shutters and related architectural features.
2. Repair damaged historic wood windows whenever possible using techniques such as reglazing, consolidating, reinforcing, patching and splicing.
3. Repair damaged stained glass or other decorative materials whenever possible.
4. Replace only the deteriorated feature of the window.

5. Avoid replacing historic windows.
6. Repair associated window elements such as architraves, hoodmolds, lintels and sills.

B. Replacement of Historic Windows

The removal of historic wood windows with inferior replacement windows results in the loss of significant character defining features of the district. Muntins are the structural elements that separate each pane of glass. On a historic building, muntin profiles are a key character defining feature. When windows are replaced and the muntin is either missing or only placed on top of one large pane of glass, the overall façade of a historic building is irreparably altered.

Another downside of replacement windows is the cycle of replacement that is subsequently required. While historic wood windows were designed to be repaired, replacement windows have a much shorter life span and cannot typically be repaired, resulting in full replacement as the synthetic materials deteriorate or the windows no longer remain tight.

If an applicant submits an application to replace historic wood windows, evidence that the windows cannot be salvaged will be necessary. The commission may want to see photographs of the existing windows or may want an evaluation, by a competent contractor that specializes in window restoration, stating that the windows cannot be restored. The commission will likely request specifications and samples of proposed replacements. If replacement is requested, the following guidelines below will apply.

1. Replace windows only when rehabilitation is not possible.
2. Choose a replacement window that matches the original in appearance, texture, design, materials, pattern, color, design, dimensions and detailing.
3. Choose a replacement window that matches the original in durability and quality.
4. Choose replacement windows that match the historic opening size, jambs, sashes, trim, muntin pattern, muntin size, pane configuration, number of panes and type of window.
5. Maintain the proportion of glass to frame from the original windows.
6. Choose replacement windows that have true or simulated divided lights with dark internal spacer bars.
7. Avoid the use of flat applied muntin grids and removable muntin grids.
8. Avoid tinted glass.
9. Avoid vinyl, fiberglass and other non-traditional materials.

C. Replicating Missing Windows

If a historic window is missing and a window restoration plan is proposed, the historic windows could be replicated using existing features on the building or copied from nearby unaltered structures, historic photos, or pattern books.

1. Utilize existing features on the building or copied from nearby unaltered structures, historic photos, or pattern books to replicate missing historic windows.

E. Alteration of Window Openings

If converting an accessory building. such as a barn to living space, it may be necessary to alter existing window openings. In such cases, it is important to maintain the historic character of the original large door opening.

1. Maintain the original size, shape and proportion of windows and doorways.
2. Avoid standardizing the window openings if this is not the original configuration.

F. Creation of New Window Openings

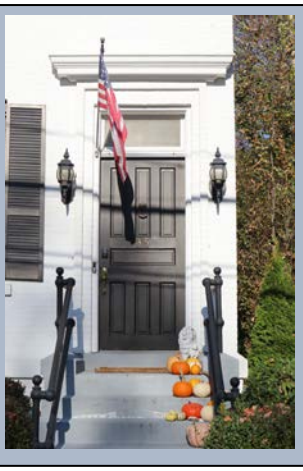
When changing interior floor plans, new window openings are sometimes sought-after based on the current building code or the desire for a brighter interior. However, new interior arrangements need to consider the impact on the exterior walls of the historic building. Efforts should be made to keep new window openings compatible with the existing exterior.

1. Place additional windows such that they are compatible with the existing fenestration.
2. Design new window openings to be compatible with the existing scale and symmetry found on the historic building.
3. Place additional windows openings on elevations other than the façade and highly visible side walls.

G. Installing Windows in New Buildings

1. Choose windows for new construction that have true divided light or simulated divided lights with dark internal spacer bars.

Chapter 5 Appendices



Appendix A
Fairfield Historic District Ordinance

The Historic Districts Ordinance was adopted by the Representative Town Meeting of the Town of Fairfield as Ch. 10 of the Code of the Town of Fairfield 1968.

The Historic Districts Ordinance can be found by visiting the town of Fairfield website.

At the time of publication of these design guidelines, the direct link to the Historic District Ordinance can be accessed at this link:

Chapter 26: Historic Districts

https://ecode360.com/8186733

Fairfield Town Hall

Appendix B
List of Street Addresses in the Historic Districts

This list of street addresses should be used only as a guide. The official maps of districts should be used for determining properties or portions thereof that are in the districts.

Greenfield Hill Historic District - Street Numbers Included in the District
Bronson Road: 2793 thru 3244 plus Cemetery, Town Green, etc.
Greenfield Hill Road: 566 thru 620
Hillside Road: 820 thru 1386
Hubbell Lane: 174
Meeting House Lane: 39 thru 105
Old Academy Road: 745 thru 1130
Verna Hill Road: 280, 317, plus 710

Old Post Road Historic District - Street Numbers Included in the District
Beach Road: 205 thru 370 plus 140
Belmont Street: 90 thru110
Old Post Road: 85 thru 1047
South Benson Road: 131, 110

Southport Historic District- Street Numbers Included in the District
Center Street: 28 thru 275 plus 400
Chester Place: 60 plus new 4 lot sub-division not yet numbered
Church Street: 1 thru 45
Harbor Road: 95 thru 1110 plus parks, parking lots, etc.
Main Street: 26 thru25 2
Old South Road: 24 thru 249
Pequot Avenue: 416 thru 860
Prospect Lane: 29
Rose Hill Road: 17 thru160
Station Street: 28 thru 65 plus 96 plus portion of Railroad Parking lot
Spruce Street: 10 thru 101 plus 115
Westway Road: 25 thru 271
Willow Street: 14 thru 221

Appendix C
List of Historic Properties

This list of street addresses for individual historic properties should be used as a guide only. The most up-to-date official list of historic properties should be used for determining historic property status.

A detailed description of each of these properties and their historic significance can be found on the webpage of the Fairfield Historic District Commission on the town of Fairfield website.

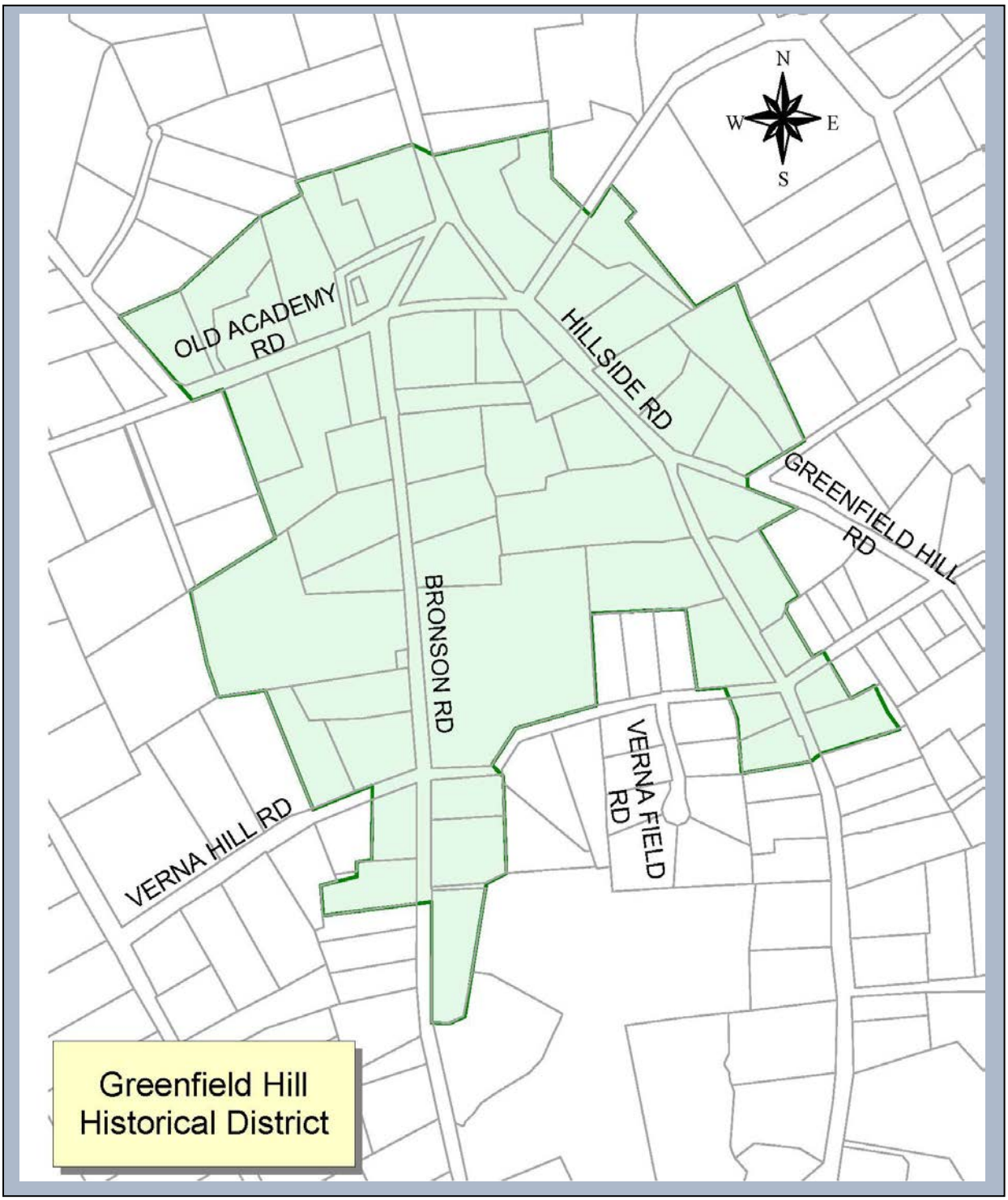
Street Name	Street No.	Historic Name
Bronson Road	1520	Ogden House
Ermine Street	12	Victor Civken House
Jennings Road	506	General Gold Selleck Silliman House
Congress Street	5210	Ann Shaw Carter House
Mill Hill Road	1135	Burr-Sherwood Cottage
Miil Plain Road	449	Jonathan Sturges House/Cottage Mill Plain Cottage
Pequot Avenue	170	Northrup Cottage
Stillson Road	515	Caroline and Walker Sherwood House
Tunxis Hill Road	554	Trinity St. Michael's Episcopal Church
Unquowa Road	230	Powder House
Warner Hill Road	375	Ira DeVer Warner Villa — "Restmore"

The Ogden House

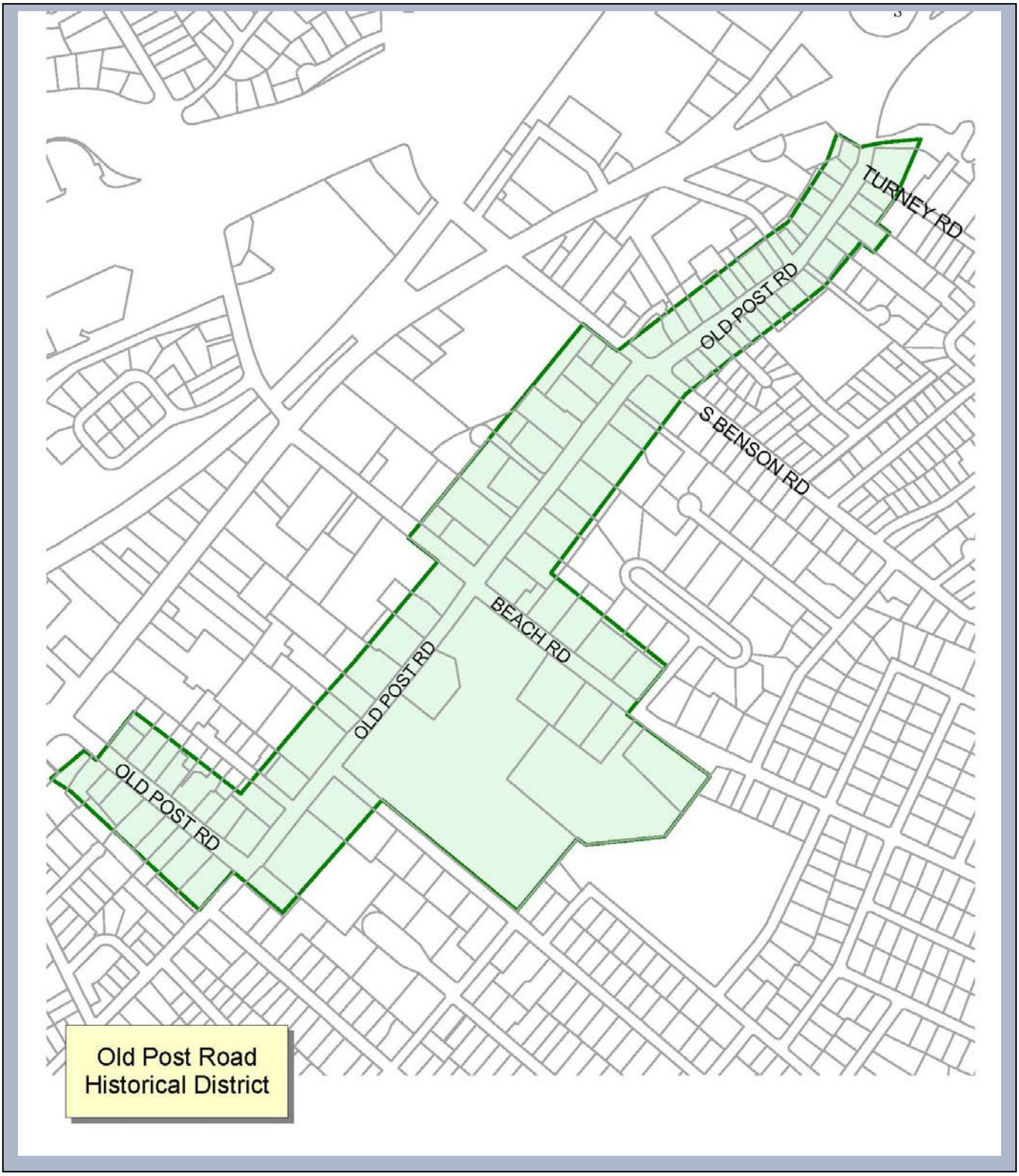
The Jonathan Sturges house

Appendix D
Local Historic District Maps

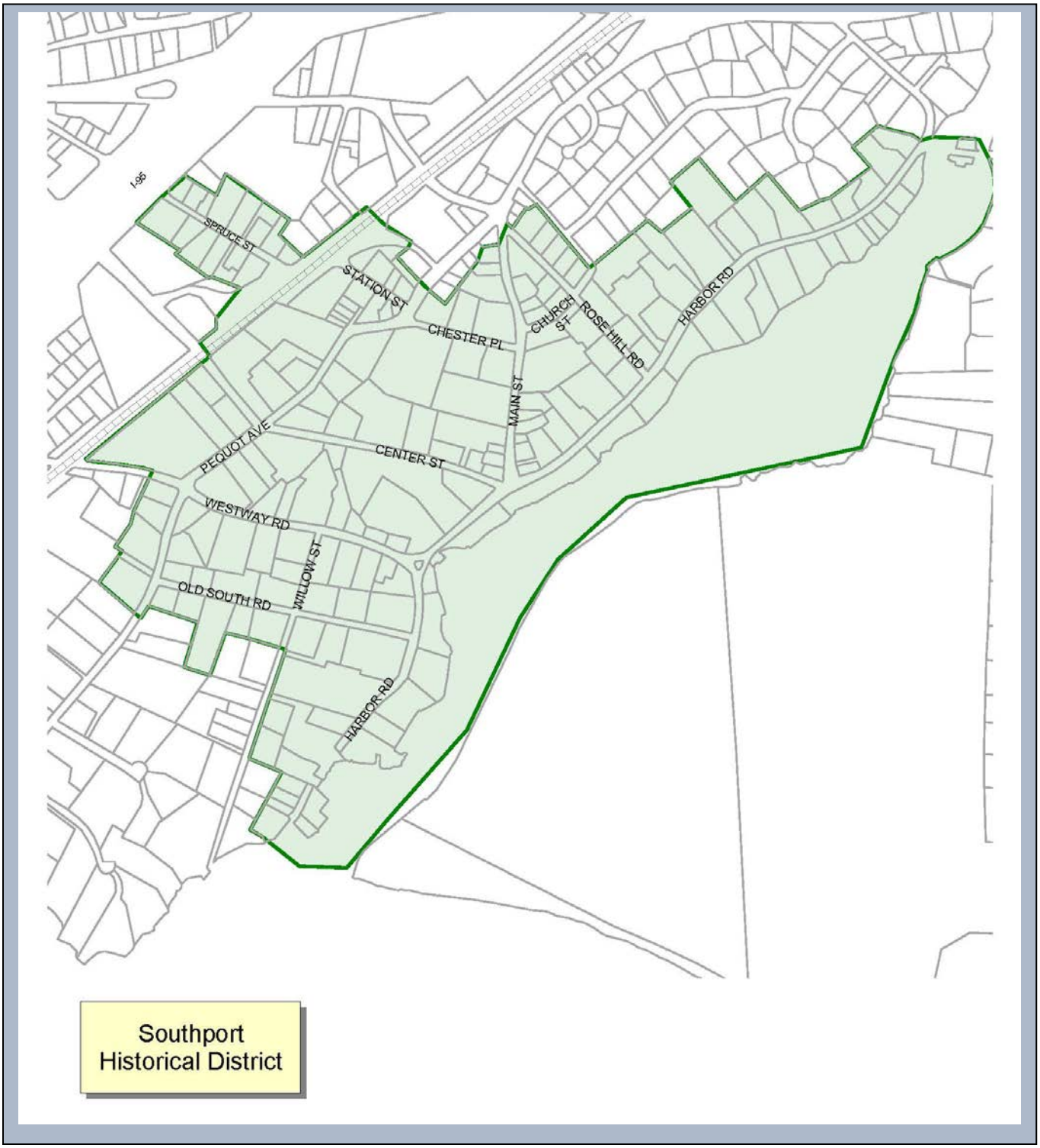
Greenfield Hill Historic District



Old Post Road Historic District



Southport Historic District



Appendix E
Useful Links

Historic Property Research

In addition to the many online resources available for researching historic properties, several local sources have useful information about the villages, landscapes and buildings found in the local historic districts.
Fairfield Museum https://www.fairfieldhistory.org/research/
Pequot Library https://www.pequotlibrary.org/learn/special-collections-research/online-collections/

Town of Fairfield Zoning Regulations

Projects in the local historic districts must follow other relevant regulations of the town of Fairfield. Links to the zoning regulations for the town of Fairfield are included here:
https://ecode360.com/47639095?highlight=zoning&searchId=1631008728798127#47639096
https://cms3.revize.com/revize/fairfield/FairfieldZoningRegulations-090625.pdf?t=202509301040180&t=202509301040180

National Park Service Preservation Briefs

The National Park Service offers information on preserving, rehabilitating, and restoring historic buildings through a series of Preservation Briefs. The list of Preservation Briefs can be found here: https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/preservation-briefs.htm

Hazard Mitigation Resources

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines on Flood Adaptation for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings can be found here:
https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/flood-adaptation-guidelines-2021.pdf

The Federal Emergency Management Agency guidance on integrating historic property and cultural resource considerations into hazard mitigation planning can be found here:
https://www.fema.gov/pdf/fima/386-6_Book.pdf