



BIRMINGHAM

A WALKABLE CITY

Historic District Design Guidelines Executive Summary

Why Preserve?

Local historic districts are the most powerful tool local governments have to protect the character and history of an area against irrevocable loss. Protection and promotion of the city's architectural, cultural, and historic assets are two of the most important functions of a local historic district. Designating resources by creating local historic districts provides the City's Historic District Commission the chance to review exterior work, which helps promote retention of the community's irreplaceable character and vibrancy. This process of review also helps promote these local districts and inform citizens about the value of these places by educating homeowners about appropriate materials and designs for the exterior of these historic buildings.

What is Historic?

Determining what is historic in a community is generally accomplished by conducting architectural surveys. These surveys analyze each resource in a given area (or resources connected to a specific theme such as religious architecture) and help city planners and preservationists establish local priorities. Surveying is important as it involves documenting a property's historic character and identifying important associations that may be present. This kind of survey work is crucial to ensure historic resources are not overlooked as smaller, less elaborate resources can have as much significance as high style architecture if connected to people and events important to local, state, or national history. Examples of important historic places could be the longtime home of an influential writer or activist or a whole neighborhood of intact mid-twentieth century houses that are significant as a collection of buildings because of their association with the rise of planned subdivisions in suburban communities.

PRESERVATION PRINCIPLES

Identify



Maintain



Preserve



Applicability of the Design Guidelines

These design guidelines are meant to be applied within the boundaries of the City of Birmingham's designated local historic districts. The design guidelines apply to all properties located within the designated districts including both historic and non-historic resources. These guidelines are also intended to be flexible enough to 'look forward' and anticipate new, additional historic districts the City may designate over time.

The Historic District Commission (HDC)

The function and duty of the HDC is to advise the City Commission with respect to the proper development of the city with primary emphasis upon the city's established local historic districts. **Birmingham's HDC reviews proposed work within local historic districts on the exterior of a resource and its site. This includes both historic and non-historic resources within the boundaries of historic districts** (Sec. 127-10). Moreover, the HDC may review proposed work on resources within proposed historic districts. Birmingham's HDC does not review certain items within historic districts such as ordinary maintenance and minor classes of work that can be administratively approved by the planning division.

Before planning a project, [see the full Birmingham Historic District Design Guidelines document for additional details.](#)



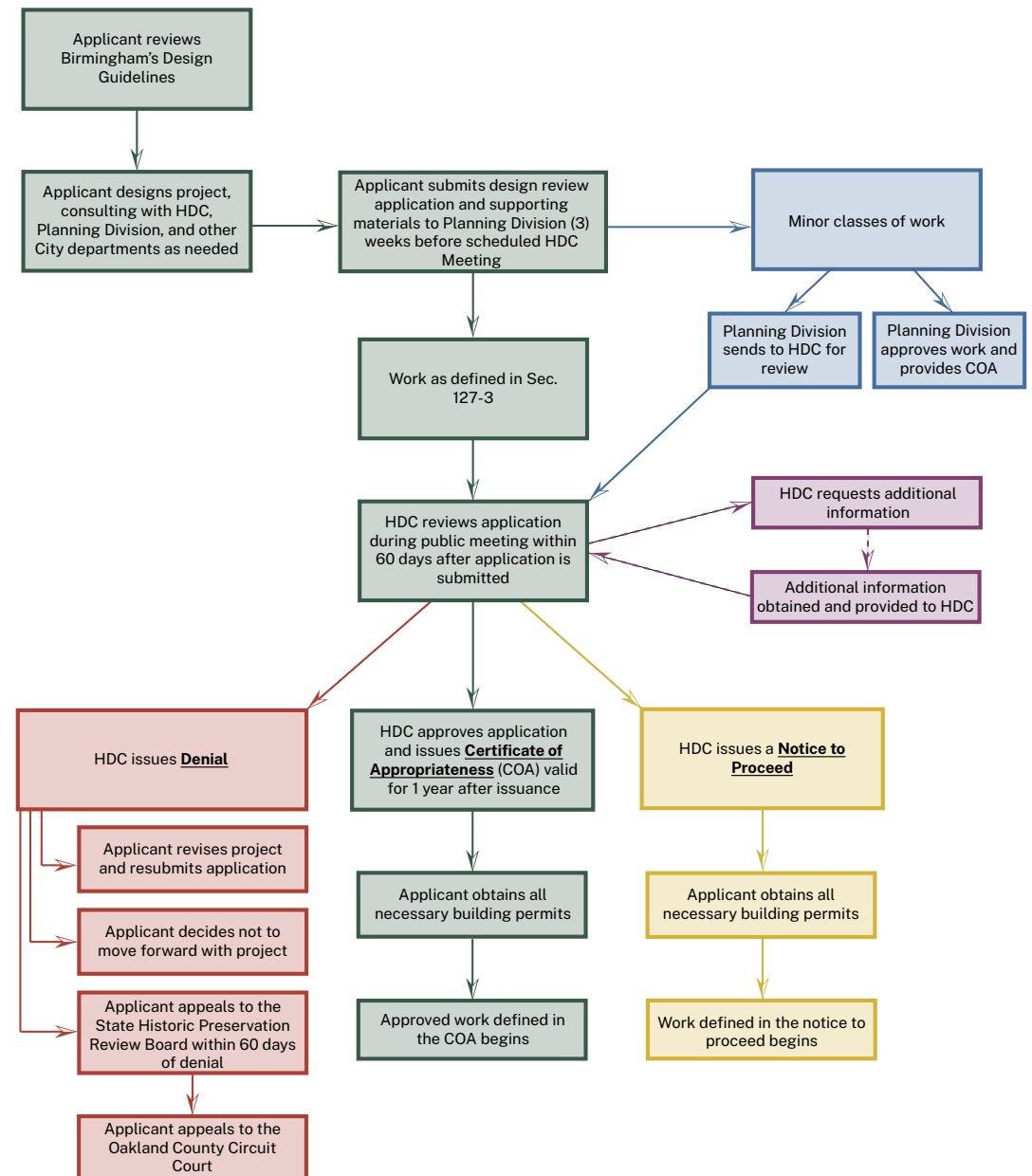
Historic Flint Faience tile on a building within Birmingham's Central Business Historic District, photo by KDG, 2022.

HDC Review Process

A certificate of appropriateness (COA) is a written permit approval that is issued by the Historic District Commission for work that is appropriate (i.e., meets the Secretary of Interior Standards (Standards) and the Birmingham Historic District Design Guidelines) and does not adversely affect resources within historic districts. If your property is located in a local historic district, regardless of whether it is a historic or non-historic resource, you must obtain a COA before beginning exterior work on your property. A building permit cannot be issued until you have received a COA from the HDC for the proposed work. In addition, a performance bond must be posted, and a copy provided to the Building Official before a permit application will be presented to the HDC. If work is performed without a COA or a performance bond, completed non-compliant work may need to be retroactively removed or altered in order to obtain a COA.

Historic Resources in Birmingham

The City of Birmingham has designated several local historic districts throughout the city that largely center around the commercial business district. Many districts are individual properties, while others are entire streets or neighborhoods. In addition to formally designated districts, there are swaths of early- and mid-twentieth century neighborhoods that are not designated but nonetheless contribute to Birmingham's history. Although only exterior work in designated districts is subject to review by the Historic District Commission, homeowners in these other areas of the City may benefit from these guidelines if they seek to preserve the historic character of their home.



Local Historic Districts

Birmingham has the following local historic districts, some of which are contiguous and others which are non-contiguous but are clustered into neighborhoods.

Central Business District: A contiguous district centered in the downtown commercial area. There are 28 contributing properties in this district.

Shain Park Historic District: A contiguous district centered around Shain Park. There are 5 contributing properties in this district.

Bates Street Historic District: A contiguous district centered around Bates Street between W. Brown and W. Frank Streets. There are 8 contributing properties in this district.

Mill Pond Neighborhood: A non-contiguous district of several properties clustered around the Mill Pond neighborhood. There are 14 contributing properties in this district.

Merrill-Townsend-Brown Neighborhood: A non-contiguous district of several properties clustered south and west of Shain Park. There are 12 contributing properties in this district.

Other, Discontinuous Historic Districts: There are an additional 15 contributing properties spread throughout the rest of the city.

For maps that illustrate each contributing and non-contributing property, please see the full [Birmingham Historic District Design Guidelines](#).



Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial Resources

Storefronts

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving all historic storefront elements including recessed entrances, glass and display windows and transoms, among others. Only replacing storefront components that have deteriorated beyond repair.

Acceptable: Replacing historic storefront materials with functionally and visually appropriate materials if repair is not possible or historic materials cannot be procured.

Not Recommended: Removal of historic features. Altering the arrangement of entrance and windows on the façade.

Windows

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving windows and their functional and decorative features. This includes features such as frames, transoms, sashes, glass, glazing patterns, trim, and pediments.

Acceptable: Replacement of historic windows with functionally and visually appropriate replacement units if historic windows are deteriorated beyond repair.

Not Recommended: Replacement of historic windows that could be repaired. Replacement of historic windows with unsuitable modern windows. Installing replacement windows that alter window size, orientation, arrangement, types, profiles, and glazing patterns.

Doors

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving historic doors and all their associated components such as screen doors, hardware, trim, transoms, sidelights, fanlights, and door surrounds.

Acceptable: Installing a new door using a substitute material that matches the historic door in design, size, profile, and shape.

Not Recommended: Replacing a functioning or repairable historic door with a door of modern materials and incompatible design. Installing a replacement door that does not match the historic in design, such as paneling, number of lites, or color. Altering the shape/location of door.

Exterior Wall Materials (Wood, Masonry, Metal)

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining and preserving historic wall materials. If wall material is deteriorated beyond repair, installing new material to match the historic material. Alternative or modern materials are only used as secondary materials, on new construction, or if historic materials are too deteriorated to repair or patch with in-kind materials.

Acceptable: When maintenance, repair, or in-kind replacement of the existing historic wall material is not feasible, using a modern wall material may be considered. It is recommended that the new material be installed atop the existing wall material rather than removing the historic material, and that the installation method is done in a manner where, in the future, the modern cladding material could be removed, and the historic material underneath could be restored.

Not Recommended: Cleaning cladding with abrasive methods such as high-PSI pressure washing, or media (sand, silicates, etc.) blasting is prohibited. Unnecessarily replacing historic wall material or trim with modern materials which contributes to a loss of historic fabric and negatively impacts the integrity of a historic resource. Applying stucco or parge to masonry not historically covered in these materials.



Preservation of historic storefront elements such as the recessed entry and leaded glass transoms is recommended. Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Historic exterior wall materials are often embellished with decoration and lends character to historic commercial areas. Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial Resources

Roofing

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving the historic roof and any roof elements such as dormers, gutters, and chimneys in terms of materials, texture, decoration, form, and dimensions. Materials and methods used for repair match the historic materials and methods used.

Acceptable: Replacement of materials which are deteriorated beyond repair or can no longer be obtained for in-kind replacement with substitute materials that mimic the historic materials in dimension, color, design, texture, and appearance

Not Recommended: Alteration of roof form or pitch. Replacement of historic materials with modern materials in lieu of repairing or replacing in-kind.

Rooftop Equipment and Penthouses

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving historic, character-defining penthouses and rooftop equipment. Incorporating new rooftop equipment, penthouses, and screening that are sensitive to the historic character of the building in terms of scale, materials, color, and design and do not damage historic materials. Positioning rooftop equipment in a manner that is not visible from adjacent buildings and the public right-of-way. Screening rooftop equipment per Article 4, Section 4.54 of Birmingham's Zoning Ordinance.

Acceptable: Positioning rooftop equipment, penthouses, and screening in a manner that is minimally visible from adjacent buildings and the public-right-of-way

Not Recommended: Positioning rooftop equipment, penthouses, and screening in a manner that is highly visible from adjacent buildings and the public-right-of-way. Incorporating new rooftop equipment, penthouses, and screening that are insensitive to the historic character of the building in terms of scale, materials, and design and cause damage to historic materials. Removing historic rooftop penthouses and equipment

Awnings and Canopies

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving historic awnings. Maintenance and repairs that preserve sound

materials. Replacing an awning damaged beyond repair with in-kind materials and design.

Acceptable: If repairing or replacing an awning in-kind is not feasible, selecting a replacement awning that is historically compatible with the historic in terms of shape, material, color, texture, and design.

Not Recommended: Removing historic awnings that could be retained through repair or continued use. Altering the shape of historic awnings.

Lighting

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving historic commercial lighting such that the historic lighting elements and the historic materials of the building are retained. Refurbishing, without damage or replacement, of historic lighting to meet modern code requirements. Use warm temperature incandescent or LED lighting.

Acceptable: Installing exterior lighting where none existed before so long as it is inconspicuous or complementary to the style of the building and surrounding district. and is located where lighting traditionally existed. Incorporating architectural lighting aligned with architectural features. Installation of new exterior lighting does not damage historic materials.

Not Recommended: Removing historic lighting features. Replacing historic lighting features that may be repaired or replaced in-kind. Damaging or obscuring character defining features to repair, replace, or introduce new lighting.

Signage

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving historic commercial signage. When new signage is required for commercial businesses new to the historic district, the shape, scale, and type of the new signage complements any existing, historic signage and the historic signage of nearby establishments.

Acceptable: Replacing historic signage that is damaged beyond repair using modern materials so long as the new design complements other existing signage on the building and signage on nearby commercial buildings.

Not Recommended: Installing obtrusive signage that detracts from the character defining features of the building and district. Installing signage that obscures historic details.



Buildings on the east side of Pierce Street, Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Buildings on the north side of Maple Street, Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial Resources

Sidewalk Cafes and Patios

Recommended: Inclusion of a sidewalk café or patio in front of or behind a historic commercial building that does not damage any historic materials or obscure character defining features. The design of sidewalk features complements the style and design of the building. Sidewalk café and patio construction is freestanding and not mounted or mechanically fastened to façade.

Acceptable: Seasonal, temporary, or demountable patio furniture, awnings, or umbrellas that obscure historic building features

Not Recommended: Incorporation of a sidewalk café or patio that results in the damage or obstruction of historic materials and/or character defining features. Incorporation of sidewalk café or patio features that utilize materials that are unfinished or incompatible with the historic district.

Maintenance

Recommended: Developing and adhering to a maintenance schedule that involves the inspection of all historic materials and features for signs of damage or deterioration. A yearly assessment is ideal, as identifying issues early is critical in preserving historic materials and reducing the cost of repairs. Inspecting the building's envelope is key, such as assessing windows, the roof, gutters, and exterior cladding.

Acceptable: To distribute the financial impact of historic building maintenance, developing a phased maintenance schedule that still involves inspection and assessment of historic materials and their timely repair.

Not Recommended: Deferring maintenance on historic materials and features, resulting in their degradation or demolition by neglect. Repairing or maintaining historic materials in such a way that the historic materials or features are damaged, removed, or obscured.

Additions

Recommended: If an addition to a historic commercial building is desired, the addition is located at the rear of the building (not on a primary façade). Additions incorporate materials or design elements from the historic portion of the building but do not strive to copy historic designs or attempt to appear falsely "historic." Modern additions read as secondary to the historic structure in terms of size, scale, design, materials, and detailing.

Acceptable: Construction of an addition on a side or secondary elevation which is setback from the primary façade or street and is minimally visible from the public right-of-way.

Not Recommended: Constructing a modern addition that makes the historic portions of the building appear secondary in terms of size, scale, materials, and detailing. Building an addition on the primary façade of a commercial building, or an inappropriately sized or designed addition on another street-facing elevation.



Regular maintenance such as painting exterior wood elements is a key component of historic building preservation. Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Sidewalk patio construction should be freestanding and not mounted or mechanically fastened to the façade, as shown here. Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Design Guidelines for Historic Residential Resources

Windows

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving windows and their functional and decorative features. This includes features such as frames, sashes, glass, glazing patterns, trim, and pediments. Preserving the placement and size of windows on the façade and other elevations. Performing routine yearly maintenance and repairing historic windows by patching, splicing, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing.

Acceptable: Replacement of historic windows with functionally and visually appropriate windows if the historic windows are too deteriorated to repair or if in-kind materials cannot be sourced. Replacement windows matching the historic windows in material, dimension, profile, type, arrangement on the exterior, and glazing pattern.

Not Recommended: Replacement of historic windows that could be repaired or replaced in-kind with unsuitable modern windows. Removing and infilling historic windows.

Doors

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving historic doors and all their associated components such as screen doors, hardware, trim, transoms, sidelights, fanlights, and door surrounds. Repairing historic doors by patching, splicing, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing. Wood doors that appear to be deteriorated may be repaired rather than replaced. If a historic door must be replaced, installing a door constructed of the same materials, using the same design and profile, and of the same size as the historic

Acceptable: Installing a new door using a substitute material that matches the historic door in design, size, profile, and shape. door.

Not Recommended: Replacement of historic doors that could be repaired or replaced in-kind with an unsuitable modern replacement. Removing and infilling of historic door openings.

Exterior Cladding (Wood, Masonry)

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving historic cladding materials. If historic cladding material is severely deteriorated beyond repair, installing new cladding material to match the historic material in dimension, texture, color, and profile is recommended. If portions of severely deteriorated cladding must be replaced, it is recommended that replacement occurs only where necessary and splice new, matching material with existing material rather than replacing in full.

Acceptable: When maintenance, repair, or in-kind replacement of the existing historic cladding material is not feasible, use of a modern cladding material may be considered. It is recommended the new material be installed atop the existing cladding rather than removing the historic cladding before installation of the new material.

Not Recommended: Using abrasive cleaning methods such as high-PSI pressure washers or media blast cleaning systems. Painting unpainted masonry. Unnecessarily replacing historic siding or trim with modern materials.

Roofing, Gutters, Dormers, Chimneys

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving the historic roof, dormers, gutters, and chimney in terms of materials, texture, decoration, form, and dimensions. Materials and methods used for repair match the historic materials and methods used. Downspouts are aligned with architectural features or along edges of the facades to not distract from the historic character of the façade. Other roof elements such as cupolas, towers, and cresting are maintained and repaired using in-kind materials.

Acceptable: Some historic roofing materials such as slate, wood shake, and clay tiles can be difficult to source. Replacement of these deteriorated historic roofing materials with substitute materials may be considered if they are historically compatible by closely matching the historic materials in dimension, color, design, texture, and appearance. Addition of new dormers or a gutter system that are sensitive to the historic character of the house in terms of scale, materials, and design. Dormer additions or the installation of gutters that do not detract from character defining features of the house.

Not Recommended: Alteration of roof form and/or additions of inappropriately sized and arranged dormers. Replacement of historic materials or gutter systems with incompatible replacement materials or materials which never existed on the house and that detract from the historic character of the house.



Preserving historic windows and maintaining historic exterior cladding preserves historic character in residential areas. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The prominent dormer and wood shingle roof are character defining features and should be preserved. Bates Street Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Design Guidelines for Historic Residential Resources

Porches, Decks, Patios, Balconies

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving historic porches, decks, patios, and balconies. For features constructed of wood, painting or staining existing wood to protect the wood surface from UV and water damage. Cleaning features with a gentle, water-based cleanser on an as-needed basis. Repairing historic materials by using the same material to patch, consolidate, splice, and reinforce the existing historic material.

Acceptable: When maintenance, repair, or in-kind replacement of the existing historic material is not feasible, using a modern material may be considered if the modern material closely matches the historic material in terms of design, color, texture, and dimension. Installation on a secondary façade of a porch, deck, patio, or balcony where none existed historically if the new feature is compatible with the house's design, scale, and style. Further, installation and construction does not damage or obscure historic materials or character defining features.

Not Recommended: Power-washing or media-blasting porch, deck, patio, or balcony features. Removing or replacing historic materials that could be repaired or salvaged. Removal of a historic porch, deck, patio, or balcony.

Lighting

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving historic lighting on the house and on the property such that the historic lighting elements and the historic materials of the house are retained. Refurbishing, without damage or replacement, of historic lighting to meet modern code requirements.

Acceptable: Installing exterior lighting on the house where none existed before so long as it is inconspicuous or complementary to the style of the house.

Not Recommended: Removing historic lighting features. Replacing historic lighting features that may be repaired or replaced in-kind.

Awnings

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving historic window and door awnings. If replacement of historic awnings is necessary, the replacement awning matches the color, texture, design, and dimension of the historic awning.

Acceptable: If the same material cannot be obtained to replace historic awnings, a substitute material or design may be used that is historically compatible with the house's design.

Not Recommended: Removing historic awnings. Replacing historic awnings with historically inappropriate awnings. Installing awnings that damage surrounding historic materials.

Solar Panels

Recommended: Installation of solar panels in areas that do not detract from, damage, or conceal a house's historic, character defining features or the collective design of a historic district

Acceptable: Installation of solar panels on non-historic accessory buildings such as a modern garage or modern addition, as long as they are not conspicuously placed and highly visible from the public right-of-way.

Not Recommended: Installing solar panels in conspicuous places that detract from the character defining features of a historic house or a historic district. Removing, damaging, or covering up historic features and materials to install solar panels.



Porches were common components of historic residences and should be preserved. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Modest, mid-twentieth century homes are worthy of preservation and should not be overlooked. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Design Guidelines for Historic Residential Resources

Accessory Structures

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving historic accessory structures. Cleaning materials with a gentle, water-based cleanser on an as-needed basis. Repairing damaged materials with in-kind materials using the historic method or accepted preservation methods such as patching, consolidating, splicing, and reinforcing material. Selectively replacing material with in-kind material only when the existing material is too deteriorated to repair.

Acceptable: If the construction of a new accessory structure is desired, the new structure is secondary to the historic house and compatible in terms of scale, design, and materials. New accessory structures are sited in a historically accurate way, such as garages being located at the rear of the property. The use of historically appropriate materials for the construction of new accessory structures is prioritized.

Not Recommended: Constructing a new accessory structure that attaches to the historic house and becomes a focal point from the public right-of-way. Constructing a new accessory structure that is not compatible with the scale of the primary resource (the house).

Maintenance

Recommended: Developing and adhering to a maintenance schedule that involves the inspection of all historic materials and features for signs of damage or deterioration. A yearly assessment is ideal, as identifying issues early is critical in preserving historic materials and reducing the cost of repairs. Inspecting the building's envelope is key, such as assessing windows, the roof, gutters, and exterior cladding

Acceptable: To distribute the financial impact of historic building maintenance, developing a phased maintenance schedule that still involves inspection and assessment of historic materials and their timely repair.

Not Recommended: Deferring maintenance on historic materials and features, resulting in their degradation or demolition by neglect. Repairing or maintaining historic materials in such a way that the historic materials or features are damaged, removed, or obscured.

Additions

Recommended: Ensuring that historic materials or character defining features are preserved, protected, and not obscured by new construction. If an addition to a historic house is desired, the addition is located at the rear of the house so that visibility from the public right-of-way is minimized. Roof forms and pitch are consistent with the existing house.

Acceptable: Constructing additions that minimally impact historic materials and design elements. Constructing an addition on a side elevation that reads as secondary to the historic house.

Not Recommended: Removing, damaging, or obscuring historic materials or design elements as a result of constructing an addition. Constructing a modern addition that makes the historic portions of the house appear secondary in terms of size, scale, materials, and detailing. Building an addition on the façade of a house, or an inappropriately sized or designed addition highly visible from another street-facing elevation.



This exterior elements of this Folk Victorian home are well maintained. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The placement of this addition to the left of the historic home is acceptable as it does not overwhelm this historic portion of the home and is placed near the rear. Bates Street Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Applying the Guidelines to Non-Historic Resources within Historic Districts

The HDC has authority to review proposed work on all resources within a historic district, as work has the potential to detract from or contribute to the historic character of the district. The [Secretary of Interior Standards](#) and [Birmingham's Historic District Design Guidelines](#) apply to both non-historic and historic resources. However, the HDC may be concerned with different elements of a project for non-historic resources. For example, when there is little or no historic material, such as in new construction or heavily altered buildings, the most applicable guidelines will likely be those that relate to size, scale, and massing rather than discrete material changes. When reviewing proposed work on non-historic resources within a historic district, the HDC considers the following elements to ensure work in historic districts does not adversely affect the use, appearance, or value of adjacent historic properties:

- Site layout
- Orientation and location of all buildings
- Relationships of adjacent buildings and open space
- Ensure the total design is compatible with the intent of the urban design plan
- Ensure the overall feeling of the historic district as a cohesive unit is maintained



Birmingham's HDC has the authority to review modern construction in locally designated historic districts. The images above are of new construction in the Bates Street Historic District. City of Birmingham, photos by KDG, 2022.

Design Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts

New construction should avoid the following:

Exact Replication. New infill construction should not be ‘falsely historic’ or contribute to a false sense of history. Instead, the new construction should blend into the existing streetscape while being distinguishable as modern.

Overly Differentiating from the Old. While new construction should be distinguishable from its surrounding historic neighbor buildings, a compatible design will still blend with the scale, massing, and proportions of the existing neighborhood.

Out-of-Scale. The height, footprint, and massing of the existing neighborhood should be studied, and new infill construction should be compatible with the predominant scale and massing of neighboring buildings. For example, a large suburban-style house may be out-of-scale in a neighborhood of small cottages.

Façade Composition and Massing:

Recommended: Designing and constructing new buildings that complement the façade composition and massing of surrounding buildings. Designing and constructing new buildings with similar setbacks and site arrangements to fit in with the surrounding properties in the historic district. Maintaining ratio of building’s footprint to lot size.

Not Recommended: Constructing new buildings that significantly differ in size from surrounding buildings. Designing new buildings with massing and scale that is not complementary to the historic district or obscures historic buildings.

New Construction in Historic Residential Districts:

Recommended: Designing and constructing new residential structures or accessory structures that respect the existing scale, forms, setbacks, style, materials, and streetscape rhythm of existing historic resources. Utilizing exterior materials that are visually compatible with the surrounding house in terms. Respecting the historic arrangement of site elements such as the location of and spacing between the house, accessory structures, and open space.

Not Recommended: Demolishing historic houses in order to build larger houses that do not fit the scale, massing, form, or setback of existing historic resources. Constructing new houses that are not compatible with existing housing in terms of scale, form, setback, style, materials, and streetscape rhythm. Altering the arrangement of the house, accessory structures, and open space in a manner that is not compatible with the historic district.

New Construction in Historic Commercial Districts:

Recommended: Designing and constructing new commercial structures or accessory structures that respect the existing scale, forms, setbacks, style, materials, and streetscape rhythm of existing historic resources. Utilizing exterior materials that are visually compatible with the surrounding buildings in terms of finish, color, texture, and design. Respecting the historic arrangement of site elements such as the location and spacing of the historic buildings, the sidewalk, and the street.

Not Recommended: Constructing new commercial buildings that are not compatible to existing buildings in terms of scale, form, setback, materials, and streetscape rhythm. For example, a new building constructed without a street level entry would impermissibly change the relationship to the sidewalk and street in a manner that is not compatible with the historic district. Damaging surrounding historic structures through the construction of a new building.



Large and prominent additions that are visible on the primary facades are not recommended, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The Pierce Street Garage is a Brutalist style parking structure that, while not located in a historic district, is directly adjacent to the Shain Park Historic District. While the scale of the garage is compatible with the district, it does not incorporate street level commercial space which is a recommendation for newly built parking garages. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Design Guidelines for Landscape and Open Spaces in Historic Districts

Recommended: Identifying, maintaining, and preserving historic site features and landscapes such as fences, trees, hedges, stone walls, and open spaces. Repairing and maintaining historic fencing, walls, and other historic features. Locating new fences on the setback line and on the lot line. Retaining other historic site features such as stone curbs, decorative paving, designed grades and natural landforms, or hitching posts. Using hedges in place of fencing and placing vegetation along fencing.

Not Recommended: Removing mature trees, hedges, walls, fencing, and other historic landscaping. Constructing new landscape or site features that are out of scale with the surrounding character of the historic district. Introducing large amounts of hardscape (such as concrete pavement) which diminishes or removes historic landscape features and the ratio of building to yard or landscape. Installing fencing in the front yard over 3' tall and over 6' tall in the back yard.



Mature landscaping and tree cover are an important part of a historic district. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Maintaining and retaining site features like this stone wall contribute to the character of the neighborhood. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Acknowledgements

City of Birmingham Planning Department

Nicholas Dupuis, Planning Director

State Historic Preservation Office

S. Alan Higgins

Amy Arnold

Kraemer Design Group, LLC

Cassandra Talley

Lillian Candela

Katie Cook

Kyle Berryman

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