



AGENDA
BIRMINGHAM HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY – JUNE 7, 2023
BIRMINGHAM CITY HALL, 151 MARTIN ST., COMMISSION ROOM #205*
******* 7:00 PM*******

The City recommends members of the public wear a mask if they have been exposed to COVID-19 or have a respiratory illness. City staff, City Commission and all board and committee members must wear a mask if they have been exposed to COVID-19 or actively have a respiratory illness. The City continues to provide KN-95 respirators and triple layered masks for attendees.

- 1) Roll Call**
- 2) Approval of the HDC Minutes of [May 17, 2023](#)**
- 3) Courtesy Review**
- 4) Historic Design Review**
- 5) Sign Review**
- 6) Study Session**
 - A. [Historic Design Guidelines – Deliverable #4 \(Final\)](#)**
- 7) Miscellaneous Business and Communication**
 - A. Pre-Application Discussions**
 - B. Draft Agenda**
 - 1. [July 5, 2023](#)**
 - C. Staff Reports**
 - 1. [Administrative Sign Approvals](#)**
 - 2. [Administrative Approvals](#)**
 - 3. [Demolitions](#)**
 - 4. [Action List 2023](#)**
- 8) Adjournment**

*Please note that board meetings will be conducted in person once again. Members of the public can attend in person at Birmingham City Hall, 151 Martin St., OR may attend virtually at:

Link to Access Virtual Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/91282479817>

Telephone Meeting Access: 877 853 5247 US Toll-free

Meeting ID Code: 912 8247 9817

Notice: Individuals requiring accommodations, such as interpreter services for effective participation in this meeting should contact the City Clerk's Office at [\(248\) 530-1880](tel:2485301880) at least on day in advance of the public meeting.

Las personas que requieren alojamiento, tales como servicios de interpretación, la participación efectiva en esta reunión deben ponerse en contacto con la Oficina del Secretario Municipal al [\(248\) 530-1880](tel:2485301880) por lo menos el día antes de la reunión pública. (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964).

A PERSON DESIGNATED WITH THE AUTHORITY TO MAKE DECISIONS MUST BE PRESENT AT THE MEETING.

**Historic District Commission
Minutes Of May 17, 2023**

151 Martin Street, City Commission Room 205, Birmingham, MI

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Historic District Commission ("HDC") held Wednesday, May 17, 2023. VC Kolo called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1) Rollcall

Present: Board Members Gigi Debbrecht, Keith Deyer, Natalia Dukas, Dustin Kolo, Michael Willoughby; Alternate Board Member Steven Lemberg; Student Representative Ian Weinberg

Absent: Chair John Henke; Board Member Patricia Lang; Alternate Board Member Mary Jaye

Staff: Planning Director Dupuis; City Planner Blizinski, City Transcriptionist Eichenhorn

2) Approval of the HDC Minutes of April 19, 2023

05-16-23

Motion by Ms. Debbrecht

Seconded by Mr. Willoughby to approve the HDC Minutes of April 19, 2023 as submitted.

Motion carried, 6-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Dukas, Debbrecht, Kolo, Willoughby, Lemberg, Deyer

Nays: None

3) Courtesy Review

4) Historic Design Review

A. 163 W. Maple – Seven Daughters (REQUEST TO POSTPONE)

05-17-23

Motion by Ms. Deyer

Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to postpone 163 W. Maple – Seven Daughters to July 19, 2023.

Motion carried, 6-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Dukas, Debbrecht, Kolo, Willoughby, Lemberg, Deyer

Nays: None

5) Sign Review

6) Study Session

A. Historic Design Guidelines (Update)

PD Dupuis stated the next deliverable would be available June 7, 2023.

In reply to Mr. Deyer, PD Dupuis said he would invite members of the Planning Board to attend an HDC meeting to discuss the Historic Design Guidelines.

7) Miscellaneous Business and Communication

In reply to Mr. Deyer, PD Dupuis confirmed that the proprietor of Fresh Goodness has been asked to remove the temporary sign outside of the business a number of times, and would be asked again.

Mr. Deyer said he would also provide PD Dupuis with photos of signs in the City that seemed to have excess verbiage.

A. Pre-Application Discussion

1. 122 W. Maple – Billy McBride Building

PD Dupuis summarized the proposal.

HDC consensus was that PD Dupuis should proceed with administrative approval of the plans as proposed.

B. Draft Agenda

C. Staff Reports

- 1. Administrative Sign Approvals**
- 2. Administrative Approvals**
- 3. Demolitions**
- 4. Action List**

8) Adjournment

No further business being evident, the HDC motioned to adjourn at 7:19 p.m.



Nick Dupuis, Planning Director



Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist



MEMORANDUM

Planning Division

DATE: June 7, 2023

TO: Historic District Commission Members

FROM: Nicholas Dupuis, Planning Director

SUBJECT: Historic Design Guidelines – Deliverable #4 (Final)

On June 13, 2022 ([Agenda](#) – [Minutes](#)), the City Commission selected Kraemer Design Group (KDG) to create a new historic design guidelines document for use by the Historic District Commission and its constituents.

Based on the response to the City's Request for Proposal, as well as the guidelines set forth by the State Historic Preservation Office for the Certified Local Government grant funding, the following timeline was set forth by KDG, and can be expected to be closely followed throughout the project:

Task	Due Date	Comments
Deliverable #1: KDG delivers outline of Guidelines and one completed section to the City	September 2022	-
Comments on outline/draft due back to KDG	September 2022	30-day review period
Deliverable 2: KDG delivers first draft of Guidelines (75% completion) to the City	December 2022	-
Comments on draft due back to KDG	January 2023	45-day review period.
Deliverable 3: Second draft of Guidelines to 90% completion	March 2023	-
Comments on draft due back to KDG	April 2023	30-day review period
Deliverable 4: Final Design Guidelines	June 2023	-
Public Engagement Meeting	June 2023	In person or virtual meeting
Debriefing Meeting with the City and SHPO	June 2023	If needed
Contract end date	June 2023	-

On September 7, 2022 ([Agenda](#) – [Minutes](#)), the Historic District Commission (HDC) reviewed Deliverable #1 provided feedback to the consultants on the outline/contents of the design guidelines document, as well as feedback on a sample section that had been completed. In addition, the SHPO was also provided a copy of Deliverable #1 to review and provide comments.

On January 4, 2023 ([Agenda](#) – [Minutes](#)), the HDC reviewed Deliverable #2, which consisted of an introduction and 6 separate sections in various stages of completeness (75% draft). The HDC provided several items of feedback relating to captions, the types of information proposed, and provided a consensus that they felt as though the consultant team was on the right track.

On March 15, 2023 ([Agenda](#) – [Minutes](#)), the HDC spent a considerable amount of time reviewing Deliverable #3 with the consultant, which was a 90% draft. The feedback at that point was mostly detail-oriented, as the HDC was generally pleased with the format, content, and design of the Guidelines.

At this time, the consultant has delivered the final installment of the Historic Design Guidelines, which includes the executive summary. It appears as though the feedback given by the HDC was all considered, and that the document is complete. In addition, the document appears to meet all of the criteria needed to receive the reimbursement grant from the Certified Local Government program that the City was awarded in 2021.

Suggested Motion Language

Motion to recommend APPROVAL to the City Commission the completed Birmingham Historic District Design Guidelines.



Historic District Design Guidelines

**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

**City of Birmingham Historic
District Commission**

Gigi Debbrecht

Keith W. Deyer

Natalia Dukas

John Henke III

Mary E. Jaye

Dustin Kolo

Patricia Lang

Steven Lemberg

Michael Willoughby

**Birmingham City
Commission**

Therese Longe, Mayor

Elain McLain, Mayor Pro-Tem

Clinton Baller

Pierre Boutros

Brad Host

Andrew Haig

Katie Schafer

Credits

The activity that is the subject of this project has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, through the Michigan Strategic Fund, State Historic Preservation Office. However, the contents and opinions herein do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior or the Michigan Strategic Fund, State Historic Preservation Office nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products herein constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior or the Michigan Strategic Fund, State Historic Preservation Office.

This program receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, or age in its federally assisted programs. Michigan law prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, marital status, or disability. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Chief, Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, NW, MS-2740, Washington, DC 20240.

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Introduction



The Birmingham Theatre in the Central Business Historic District. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Birmingham has a local historic district ordinance which declares that historic preservation is a public purpose. In order to encourage and foster historic preservation in the City of Birmingham the design guidelines presented here aim to help local stakeholders make informed design decisions that are consistent with historic preservation principles. Design guidelines are a preservation and development management tool that are used to help retain historic materials and historic character in a designated historic district.

All exterior work performed on buildings, sites, structures, and objects inside a local historic district is subject to review and approval by the Birmingham Historic District Commission (HDC). This includes both historic and non-historic resources located within the bounds of designated historic districts. When performing work in a local historic district, the applicant will need to obtain a certificate of appropriateness before work begins to ensure that work complies with the design guidelines. To help guide residents, business owners, the commission, and others, this document provides guidelines for recommended, acceptable, and non-recommended treatments of exterior features.

For quick reference to Birmingham's Historic District Design Guidelines: [view the Historic District Design Guidelines Executive Summary.](#)

Throughout these guidelines a few acronyms will be consistently used:

HDC = Historic District Commission

COA = Certificate of Appropriateness

The terms below, defined in the City of Birmingham's Historic District Ordinance will be used repeatedly throughout the guidelines:

Resource = One or more publicly or privately owned historic or non-historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, features, or open spaces located within a historic district (Sec. 127-3)

Work = Construction, addition, alteration, repair, moving, excavation, or demolition (Sec. 127-3)

Local historic districts can be comprised of a single property, or they may span a larger area and include many properties and buildings within the boundaries of the district. Birmingham has both single property historic districts and larger, multi-property historic districts. A historic district is defined as a section of a community that contains historic resources (buildings, sites, structures, or objects) considered valuable for historical or architectural reasons and deemed worthy of protection. A district with multiple resources often gains its historical and/or architectural significance from the interrelationship between the individual properties that work together to create a visual sense of its history.

Introduction

Buildings and other historic resources change and evolve with use over time, but these design guidelines attempt to balance historic preservation goals with character-appropriate maintenance and work strategies. These design guidelines have been drafted and implemented with three main objectives in mind:

Consistency: To provide a consistent source document to guide future work in Birmingham's local historic districts. If every homeowner, business owner, developer, and Commission member are designing and reviewing projects based upon the same standards, there will be consistency of expectation and application.

Flexibility: The guidelines are meant to provide flexible options by listing "recommended" treatments, "acceptable" treatments, and "not recommended" treatments. By providing a sliding scale the aim is to provide flexibility while still indicating the most preferable and least preferable options.

Education: These guidelines explain both recommended methods for work on a historic property and explains why some methods are not recommended.

Design guidelines do not dictate solutions, but rather, they convey general policies about the design of proposed work to existing buildings and properties. They define a range of appropriate responses to a variety of differing conditions and design issues. Rather than providing prescriptive solutions, these design guidelines offer general approaches for identifying significant features and maintaining, repairing, and treating historically significant features and materials. Every project will have nuances and different opportunities and constraints, however, the approaches and guidelines given in this document will allow for renovations, upgrades, and modernizations while still maintaining historic character and materials.



This photograph from c.1885 shows the southwest and northwest corners of Old Woodward and Maple. Photo courtesy of the Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.



The intersection of Southfield Road (at left) and Maple Road (at right), c. 1885. Photo courtesy of the Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.

Background

In 1966 Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act as a way of promoting the retention of our nation's architectural heritage. In the 1970s, the National Park Service developed the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for assessing the treatment of historic buildings. The loss of nationally important buildings like Pennsylvania Station in New York, combined with the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act spurred nationwide interest in preservation as the country grappled with other significant architectural losses experienced during urban renewal.

Michigan's local historic district enabling legislation, Public Act 169, was passed in 1970 in partial response to these events. [Public Act 169 of 1970](#) (Michigan's Local Historic District Act) authorizes local governments to create local historic district ordinances in order to effectuate preservation at the local level and requires that, when reviewing plans, local commissions must follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Standards). Commissions may also develop guidelines that provide locally specific information and guidance to supplement the "Standards". The "Standards" are used nationwide and provide ten touchstones upon which most modern preservation programs are built. All municipalities in Michigan that have a Local Historic District Ordinance and a Local Historic District Commission must follow these Standards.

Historic District Commissions must use the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#) when reviewing projects. Local guidelines like these provide additional information so that proposed work meets the Standards and can be approved the first time it comes before the commission, helping to keep projects on track.

What is the purpose of Historic Preservation in the City of Birmingham?

- Safeguard the heritage of the city by preserving the areas which reflect elements of its cultural, social, spiritual, economic, political, and engineering or architectural history
- Stabilize and improve property values in such areas
- Foster civic beauty and community pride
- Strengthen the local economy
- Promote the use of historic districts for the education, pleasure, and welfare of the citizens of the city, state, and country

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.

Many studies have found that creating local historic districts increases property values — a [2016 study](#) conducted by the Michigan Historic Preservation Network found that homes located in local historic districts added 12.6% to the property value as compared to similar, non-designated properties. Local historic districts furnish insight into our past and are a rallying point for promoting features that make Birmingham a desirable place to live: walkability, high quality materials, mature landscaping and streetscapes, and a cohesive feel to the community. Birmingham's historic districts are an essential part of the character of the City. Birmingham's charming downtown, historic homes, and mature trees and landscaping are just a few reasons people love to live in and visit Birmingham. Recognizing and preserving these features is an important part of the overall stewardship of this vibrant and historic community.

The results of public outreach efforts in Birmingham identified several areas of concern for local residents. Perhaps the primary concern was that infill construction included the removal of existing, historic housing and the construction of new housing that was out of scale to the surrounding neighborhood. For instance, a small, single-story Bungalow may be demolished and replaced with a large and imposing two-story house. The professional practice of Historic Preservation as a whole attempts to address problems like these by the creation of historic districts to preserve neighborhood landscapes and to create design guidelines — like those found in this report — as a foundation for the preservation of historic resources like those found in Birmingham.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation provide direction in making appropriate choices in planning the repairs, alterations, and additions that may be part of a rehabilitation project. The National Park Service also publishes Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings which describe specific treatments that do and do not meet the Standards.

1. A property shall be used for its 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.

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.

The overarching goal of the rehabilitation standards and guidelines is to protect and maintain historic building materials and character-defining features while giving latitude to replace extensively deteriorated, damaged, or missing features using either the same or compatible substitute materials.



A 1929 aerial photograph of downtown Birmingham, looking west. Courtesy of Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/treatment-guidelines-2017-part1-preservation-rehabilitation.pdf>

Additional Considerations in Public Act 169 of 1970

In addition to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, both Public Act 169 and the City of Birmingham's Local Historic District ordinance outline a few additional criteria the Historic District Commission must consider when reviewing applications. These include:

- (a) The historic or architectural value and significance of the resource and its relationship to the historic value of the surrounding area.
- (b) The relationship of any architectural features of the resource to the rest of the resource and to the surrounding area.
- (c) The general compatibility of the design, arrangement, texture, and materials proposed to be used.
- (d) Other factors, such as aesthetic value, that the commission finds relevant.
- (e) Whether the applicant has certified in the application that the property where work will be undertaken has, or will have before the proposed project completion date, a fire alarm system or a smoke alarm complying with the requirements of the Stille-DeRossett-Hale single state construction code act, 1972 PA 230, MCL 125.1501 to 125.1531.

These additional considerations, combined with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and these guidelines, provide the basic framework for reviewing work proposed in a local historic district in Birmingham.



Shown here in the mid-1950s, the corner of Old Woodward and Maple is located at the center of the Central Business Historic District. Photo courtesy of the Walter Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.



The Grand Trunk Western Railroad Depot is a historic district located on the east side of Birmingham. Shown here in the 1920s. Photo courtesy of the Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.



The Municipal Building (City Hall) is an important resource in the center of the Shain Park Historic District. Undated. Photo courtesy of the Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.

Basic Preservation Principles

Historic materials and character defining features are essential to establishing the visual characteristics of a local historic district. Historic features like windows, siding, roofing material, and massing/scale of a building directly impact the visual qualities of a historic neighborhood. For these reasons, the design guidelines presented here address typical features that affect the historic integrity and character of a resource. One basic, underlying principle of historic preservation is to preserve historic materials and features whenever possible. If historic materials become so deteriorated that they must be replaced, then the replacement must be compatible with the historic character of the resource and district. That is the guiding ethos of this document and each section presented here will go into further detail on how to accomplish these goals.

These design guidelines are intended to be an easy-to-use reference for homeowners, business owners, realtors, architects/designers, builders, City staff, and Historic District Commission members in planning and executing historically appropriate work on properties located in designated local historic districts.

A word of caution: Some buildings in designated local districts might not look like they comply with the guidance in this document. This work may have predated the existence of the Historic District Commission or been affected by other factors. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that the existence of perceived historically inappropriate work in the City's historic districts does not serve as precedence for approval of historically incompatible work by the commission. Each project must be reviewed individually on its own merits.



Historic Pewabic tile on the Shain Townhouses in the Central Business Historic District. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

What is Historic?



Historic landscape elements are character defining features in historic districts, such as this stepped waterfall in the Mill Pond Historic District. Shown here in 1957. Photo courtesy of the Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.

Determining what resources are 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.

A historic resource is a publicly or privately owned building, structure, site, object, feature, or open space that is significant in the history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and/or culture of the city, state, or United States.

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.

It is also important to recognize that later additions can acquire significance in their own right even if the later addition is more modern in style. For instance, a commercial structure built in 1895 may have had a Streamline Modern

storefront added in 1942 — even though the storefront is stylistically different than the rest of the building, the storefront itself may have acquired significance for being a particularly good example of the style. Historic surveys can help a community recognize these nuances and better plan for the preservation of their buildings.

Finally, when determining what is historic it is important to keep in mind that large collections of intact resources, even if they are not high style architecture, can, together, become significance based upon the cohesion of the collection. For instance, Eco City is a neighborhood in Birmingham containing a collection of modest bungalows built in the early 1900s. Birmingham also has large neighborhoods of 1940s-era Minimal Traditional style homes on the eastern side of the city. These resources may not have high style details or monumental scale but, taken together, they tell an important piece of American history of the post-WWII development of the suburbs. These common resources gain significance based upon the cohesiveness of the neighborhood, the landscape, and the quintessential architectural features even if those features are simple stylistic elements.

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.

Note that these guidelines do not cover every potential material or design choice. They are guidelines that attempt to be both specific enough to provide good guidance to existing designated buildings while being general enough to be applicable to properties that may be designated in the future. The final decision on whether to approve an application for a permit COA in a local historic district rests with the Birmingham HDC.



Craftsman Style House, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Who Uses the Design Guidelines

There are many different parties, with differing needs and expectations, who may find value in these design guidelines. These guidelines could be merely informative for some parties whereas other parties, such as the HDC, will use these guidelines to define recommended and not recommended work while reviewing permit applications for certificates of appropriateness.

Property Owners: Those who own property located in a local historic district may use the design guidelines to plan for the maintenance and renovations of their buildings and property.

General Public: Anyone in Birmingham and beyond who wishes to obtain more information about historic districts, processes for obtaining approval for proposed work, and how best to maintain and renovate historic buildings may use these guidelines.

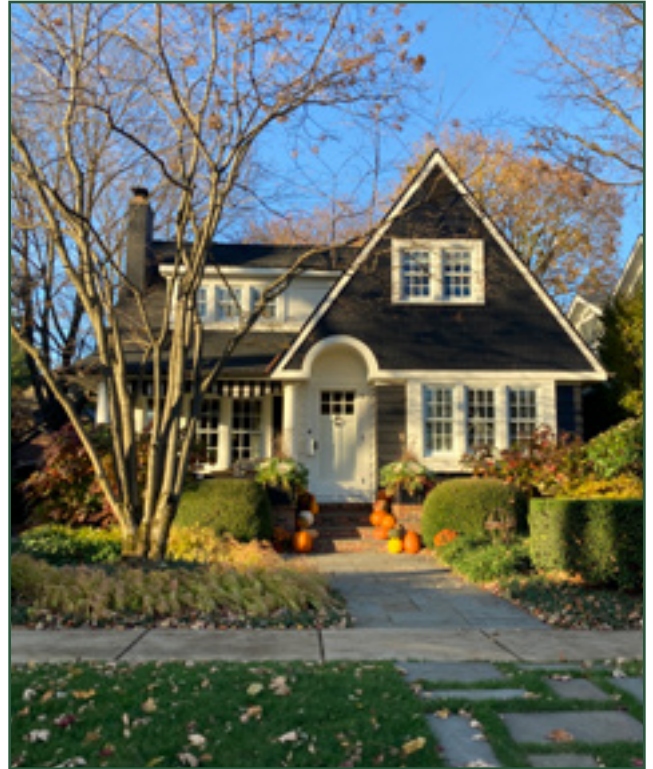
City Planning and Building Department Staff: Staff in the City of Birmingham's Planning and Building Departments will use these guidelines when advising building owners and other city residents. Staff will also use these guidelines when advising the Historic District Commission.

Historic District Commission: The HDC will use these guidelines when reviewing projects brought before the Commission for a permit for a certificate of appropriateness. Compliance with the design guidelines will be a primary consideration when issuing a Certificate of Appropriateness.

City Commission: The City Commission manages the historic district study committee and provides final approval for the historic district design guidelines.

Developers and Architects: Developers and architects will use these guidelines to prepare projects and plans that conform with the recommendations. This will help ensure the projects moves smoothly through the HDC process.

Realtors: Realtors will use the guidelines to assess which properties are located within Birmingham's historic districts



Tudor Revival Style House, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Craftsman Style House, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

The Historic District Commission

The function and duty of the Historic District Commission (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. The HDC is also authorized to recommend amendments to the City Code relating to the control and development of lands within local historic districts.

To fulfill their duty, the HDC interprets the [Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation](#) and the additional considerations described in Michigan's [Local Historic Districts Act of 1970](#). These standards and considerations are outlined in the "Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation" and the "Additional Considerations in Michigan's Local Historic Districts Act of 1970" sections of these guidelines.

What does the HDC Review?

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.

Per the City of Birmingham's Historic District Ordinance:

- Resource means one or more publicly or privately owned historic or non-historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, features, or open spaces located within a historic district (Sec. 127-3)
- Work means construction, addition, alteration, repair, moving, excavation, or demolition (Sec. 127-3)

Examples of proposed work on resources reviewed by the HDC:

- Removal of mature trees within the boundary of a resources
- Construction of a second-story addition to a garage
- Installation of new siding
- Installation of a new roof
- Removal of shutters on a house
- Proposed exterior work on a house within a proposed historic district

What does the HDC not Review?

Birmingham's HDC does not review certain items regarding resources within historic districts such as ordinary maintenance and minor classes of work, which are defined below.

- **Ordinary Maintenance.** As defined by Birmingham's Historic District Ordinance, ordinary maintenance means keeping a resource unimpaired and in good condition through ongoing minor intervention, undertaken from time to time, in its exterior condition. Ordinary maintenance does not change the external appearance of the resource except through the elimination of the usual and expected effects of weathering. Ordinary maintenance does not constitute work for the purposes of Chapter 127 of the Historic District Ordinance.
- **Delegation of Minor Classes of Work.** Public Act 169 of 1970 gives the commission the authority to delegate the issuance of certificates of appropriateness for specified minor classes of work to city staff (the planning division).

Examples of ordinary maintenance that are not reviewed by the HDC:

- Repairing and repainting a small portion of exterior wood cladding that has deteriorated
- Repairing a broken windowpane
- Repairing a rotted wood windowsill
- Repairing a broken door

Public School Buildings owned by the Birmingham School Board. Public K-12 school buildings owned by the Birmingham School Board are not subject to HDC. Work planned on buildings owned by the school district and used for instructional or non-instructional school purposes are not subject to HDC review.

The Historic District Commission also oversees [Birmingham's Historic Marker Program](#), which was established in 2000. Multiple plaques have been placed on historic buildings throughout the city, highlighting aspects of Birmingham's history.

The 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 [Standards](#) and the design guidelines) and does not adversely affect resources within historic districts.

How to Obtain a COA

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 Historic District Commission. 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.

The HDC Review process is detailed on the next page

The HDC review process can result in one of three outcomes:

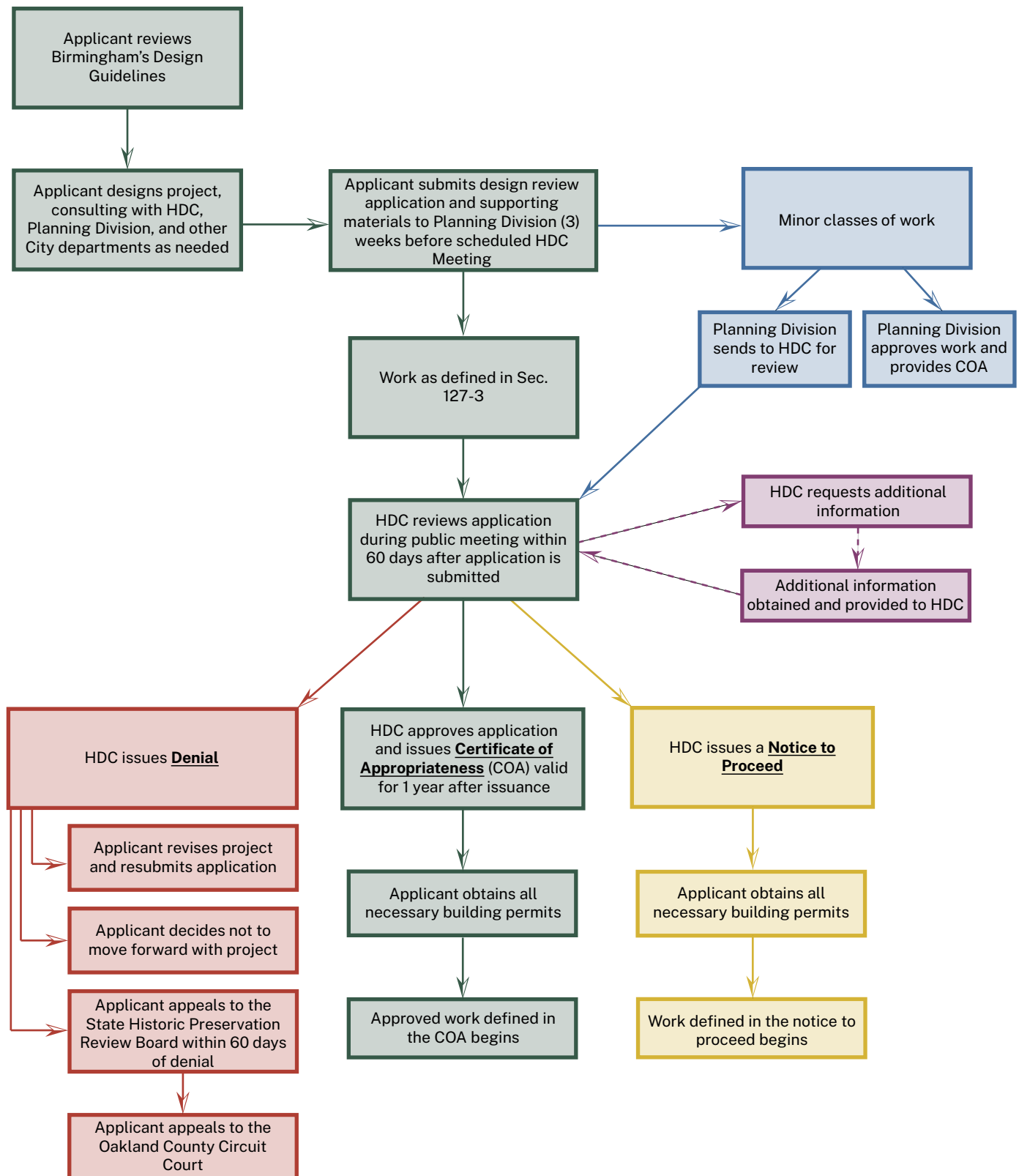
- **Issuance of a COA** by the HDC, to the Building Official
- **Issuance of a Notice to Proceed** by the HDC, to the Building Official. A Notice to Proceed is the written permission to issue a permit for work that is inappropriate and that adversely affects a resource, pursuant to a finding under Section 399.205(6) of [Public Act 169 of 1970](#), as amended. There are only certain conditions under which a Notice to Proceed can be issued as defined by Public Act 169. See appendix for the list of circumstances in which a Notice to Proceed can be issued.
- **Denial of the permit application** by the HDC. Denial is the written rejection of a permit application for work that is inappropriate and that adversely affects a resource. If a project is denied, the applicant can revise it so that it meets the Standards and the design guidelines and then reapply to the HDC.

Minor Classes of Work

Depending on the type of work proposed, a COA may be issued through an administrative review by the Planning Division staff and thus may not need to go before the HDC. The HDC has provided staff with written instructions and guidelines to conduct review of these minor classes of work. Note that if the Planning Division determines the proposed work does not meet the minor classes of work requirements or the Standards or guidelines, the application will be forwarded to the HDC for review. Below are examples of the type of work that may be eligible for administrative approval by the Planning Division.

- Lighting
- Landscaping
- Roofing material
- Dumpster enclosures
- Fences
- Screen walls

Contact the Planning Division for more information about what exterior work can be administratively approved by Planning Division staff.



Tax Credits for Preservation

There are two types of historic preservation tax credits available: the federal historic preservation tax credit and the Michigan state historic preservation tax credit. Each program has specific criteria and is open to certain categories of properties. More information about these programs and applicability to designated properties is provided below.

Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit

The federal government offers a lucrative 20% tax credit for the rehabilitation of qualified historic buildings. The building must be individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or a contributing building within a nationally designated historic district. Buildings in local historic districts do not qualify for the credit. There are some additional requirements as well. The building must be income producing, however, which means owner-occupied buildings are not eligible for the federal historic tax credit. That being said, residential rental properties would qualify. The rehabilitation must be “substantial” meaning the qualified rehabilitation expenditures (QRE) exceed the building’s adjusted basis. The adjusted basis is generally defined as the purchase price, minus

the value of the land, plus the value of any capital improvements made since the building acquisition, minus any depreciation already claimed. The State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service review each portion of the application to ensure the project complies with the [Secretary of the Interior’s Standards](#).

Michigan State Historic Preservation Tax Credit

The State of Michigan passed Public Act 343 of 2020 which is a program that helps support place-based projects while promoting the preservation of Michigan’s historic places. The credit is a 25% dollar-for-dollar reduction available as either Michigan Personal Income Tax Credits or Michigan Business Income Tax Credits or a combination thereof. Properties must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places or the State Register of Historic Sites or be in a local historic district. Properties may be individually designated or identified as a contributing resource to an established district. Residents of Birmingham who have a building located in a local historic district can take advantage of this lucrative tax credit program by applying during the annual application window. Contact the State Historic Preservation Office for more information about how to apply for this program.

Local vs. National Designation

Most financial incentives for preservation are only available to properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places – either individually or as a part of a district. To understand if your property may qualify for tax credits for preservation it is important to know if you are located in a locally or nationally designated district.

Local Historic District: A district created and administrated by a local historic district commission, in Michigan enabled by [Public Act 169 of 1970](#)

National Register Historic District: A district listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and administrated by the National Park Service

At the time of this publication there are no National Register Historic Districts in Birmingham, although there are multiple properties individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Federal Historic Tax Credit Program: Explore more information about the program at the National Park Service’s Technical Preservation Office website: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/index.htm>

Michigan State Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program: Explore more information about this program at: <https://www.miplace.org/historic-preservation/programs-and-services/historic-preservation-tax-credits/>

PART 1:
Historic Resources
in Birmingham

Historic Resources in Birmingham

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Historic Districts

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 are subject to review by the Historic District Commission these other areas with a high concentration of historic resources may be areas in which to conduct future historic resource surveys to identify potential historic districts.

The historic districts described below are those that are presently designated as local historic districts by the City of Birmingham.



535 W. Merrill St, Daisy Benedict House Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Birmingham Grand Trunk Western Railroad Depot Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Birmingham Theatre Building, Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Central Business Historic District

Birmingham's Central Business Historic District is composed of several commercial buildings near the intersection of Maple Road and Old Woodward Avenue. Dating from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the buildings form the backbone of the commercial district. Exemplifying commercial building forms from these eras, most buildings are one or two stories with recessed entrances, large expanses of windows and glass, and constructed of masonry.



Central Business Historic District Examples



Ford Building, Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



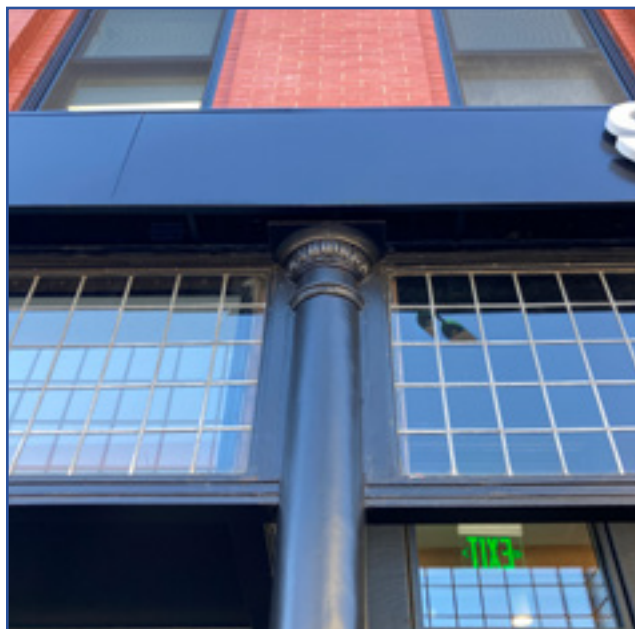
Buildings on the north side of Maple Street, Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Parks Building, Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



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



Storefront details on the Ertz and Nixon Building, Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Shain Park Historic District

Birmingham's municipal and public buildings surround Shain Park and are part of the Shain Park Historic District. Developed in the early-twentieth century, the park and municipal buildings illustrate the Tudor Revival and Colonial Revival styles that were popular during this time. Typical Tudor Revival architectural features in the district include English Bond brickwork, stone accents, and large, slate tile roofs. The Community House illustrates Colonial Revival details such as classical-inspired entrances and decorative cornices with modillions.



Shain Park Historic District Examples



Shain Park, Shain Park Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



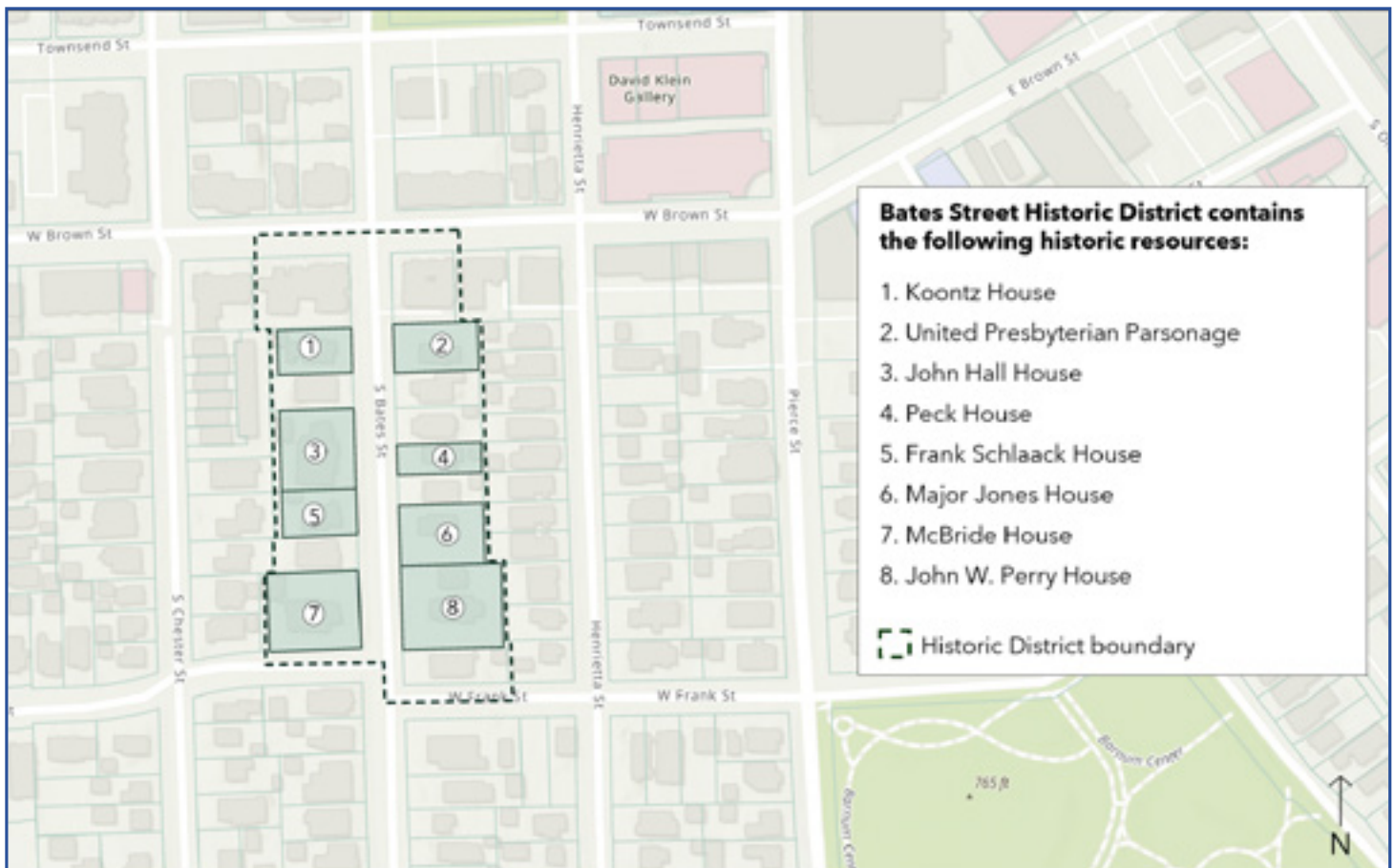
City Hall, Shain Park Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



City Hall, Shain Park Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Bates Street Historic District

The Bates Street Historic District contains houses on Bates between Brown Street and Frank Street. Homes within the district date to the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries and display Queen Anne and Folk Victorian styles. Queen Anne style homes within the district have steeply pitched hipped or gable roofs with lower cross gables, porch spindle work and multiple exterior textures from the use of wood weatherboard and variously shaped wood shingles. In the Bates Street Historic District, the footprints of Folk Victorian homes were smaller compared to neighboring Queen Anne homes and decoration on Folk Victorian homes is more subdued. Common decorations in the district include applied gabled pediments above windows, small brackets, and bargeboard.



Bates Street Historic District Examples



John Hall House, Bates Street Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Houses along Bates Street, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



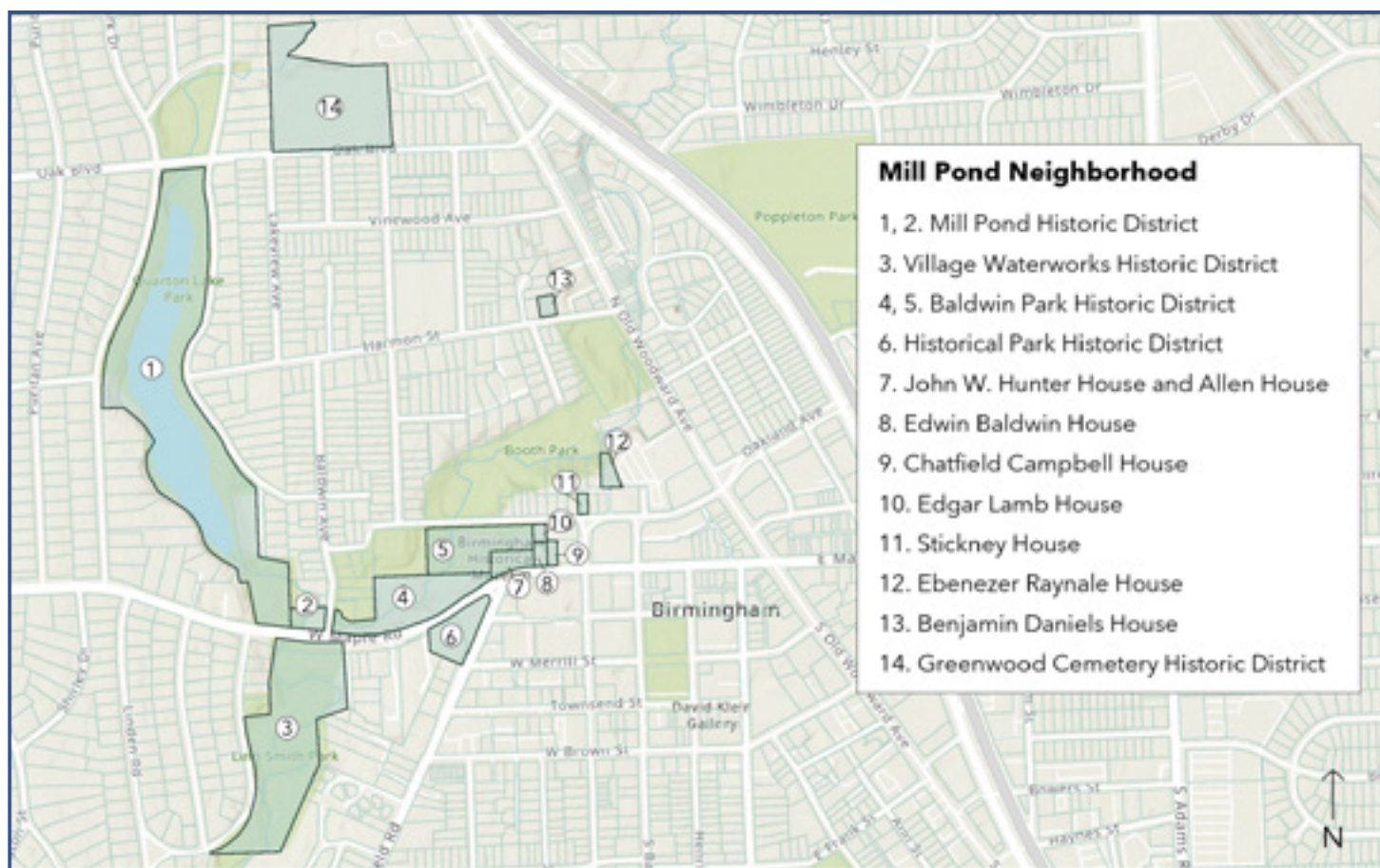
Frank Schlaack House, Bates Street Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



United Presbyterian Parsonage, Bates Street Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Mill Pond Neighborhood

The Mill Pond Neighborhood contains several adjacent and dispersed properties. Historic resources are largely found near the intersection of West Maple and Southfield roads, but Greenwood Cemetery and the Benjamin Daniels House are north of this intersection. This neighborhood contains green space and public parks such as Baldwin Park, Quarton Lake Park, and Linn Smith Park. Some of the oldest homes in Birmingham are located here as well, including the Hunter House built in the early 1800s.



Mill Pond Neighborhood Examples



The Allen House, Mill Pond Neighborhood, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



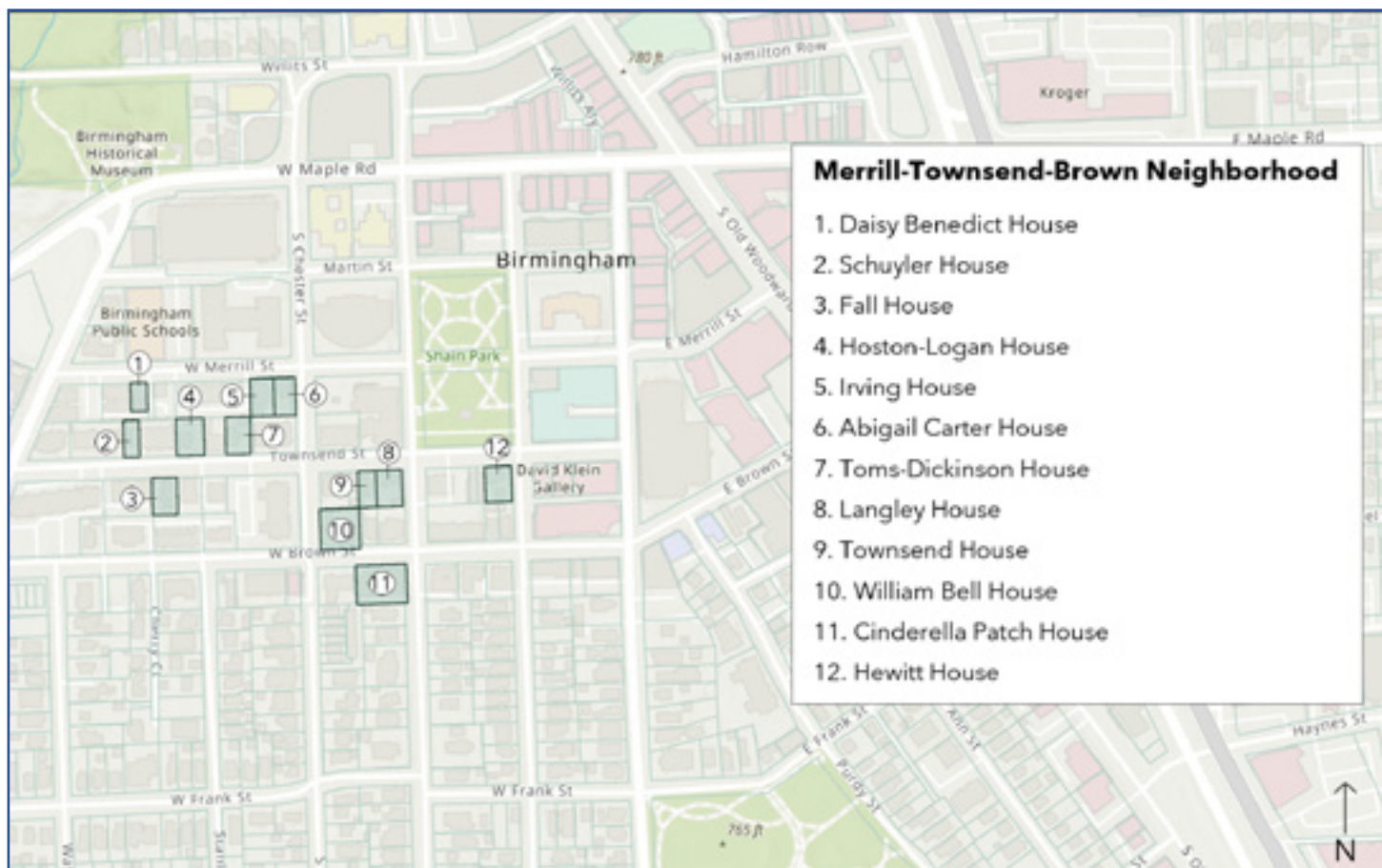
Green space within the neighborhood, Mill Pond Neighborhood, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Green space within the neighborhood, Mill Pond Neighborhood, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Merrill-Townsend-Brown Neighborhood

Several historic homes, each within a distinct historic district, make up the Merrill-Townsend-Brown Neighborhood. The homes date from the late-nineteenth century, exhibiting various architectural styles such as Italianate and Folk Victorian and illustrating common Midwest house forms like the Upright and Wing. Subtle architectural features throughout the neighborhood include the use of multiple exterior cladding elements and restrained wood trim.



Merrill-Townsend-Brown Neighborhood Examples



Cinderella Patch House, Merrill-Townsend-Brown Neighborhood, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Irving House, Merrill-Townsend-Brown Neighborhood, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Hoston-Logan House, Merrill-Townsend-Brown Neighborhood, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Langley House, Merrill-Townsend-Brown Neighborhood, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Other Local Historic Districts

Several of Birmingham's historic districts are located west of Woodward, outside of the central commercial corridor and center of the city. These districts include individual homes and sites, illustrating a wide range of architectural styles from the mid-nineteenth century up to the early-twentieth century. One example is the Eli Wooster House, dating to the mid-nineteenth century, which is an Upright and Double Wing house in the Greek Revival style. Several Victorian period farmhouses are designated, and are identifiable by their spindle work, large porches, and decorative wood trim.



Other Local Historic Districts Examples



Birmingham Grand Trunk Western Railroad Depot Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Richard Erwin House, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Hood House, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Historic Architectural Styles in Birmingham

There are a variety of architectural styles found in Birmingham. Many of the following descriptions are based upon Virginia McAlester's seminal guidebook *A Field Guide to American Houses*. This book is an excellent source for further information about residential architectural styles and their typical features.

Folk, before 1850-1930

Greek Revival, 1825-1860

Italianate, 1840-1885

Victorian Period, 1860-1900

Folk Victorian, ca.1870-1910

Queen Anne, 1880-1910

Colonial Revival, 1880-1955

Dutch Colonial Revival, 1880-1955

Tudor Revival, 1890-1940

Prairie, 1900-1920

Craftsman, 1900-1930

Art Deco and Streamline Moderne, 1920-1940

Minimal Traditional, ca.1935-1950

Ranch, ca.1935-1975



Example of Folk, before 1850-1930, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Example of Greek Revival, 1825-1860, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Example of Folk Victorian, ca.1870-1910, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Folk, before 1850-1930

Folk style is one of the earliest and longest-lasting architecture styles and has multiple subtypes including Native American, Pre-Railroad, and National. Unlike other architectural styles which were the product of changing taste and fashion, Folk houses exhibit little architectural decoration and are often simple, unornamented dwellings built with little regard to popular fashions or taste. Folk architecture often uses locally sourced materials, particularly in the Native American and Pre-Railroad subtypes where sourcing materials from a distance was often not feasible due to lack of transportation.

Native American Folk architecture typically constituted of wood frame or earthwork construction and is the earliest Folk structures seen in the United States. European colonists began constructing their variation of Folk architecture upon settling in the Americas in the 17th century until a nationwide railroad system was in place at the end of the 19th century. Pre-Railroad Folk houses typically consisted of hand-hewn timber frame houses, log houses, local stone, or earthwork masonry buildings depending on local material availability.

As a nationwide railroad network developed in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Folk National houses proliferated as material required for balloon framing and wood clapboard became easily transported nationally and mass-produced. Folk National houses typically assume folk forms such the I-house, Upright and Wing, and Gable Fronter, but are constructed of mass-produced, light wood framing rather than hand-hewn, heavy timber framing. Folk National houses lack ornament and are often clad in wood siding. Many houses in Birmingham are Folk Victorian, informed both by Folk forms and details from the Victorian period.



A Gable Fronter from the early-twentieth century with very minimal decoration. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



A one-and-a-half-story Folk house reminiscent of the I-house from the mid-nineteenth century. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The original portion of this house is an Upright and Wing. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Greek Revival, 1825-1860

The Greek Revival style was popular throughout the U.S. during the mid-nineteenth century as an ode to the ancient Greeks and the birth of democracy. Characterized by a shallow side or front gable roof, a prominent entablature, cornice returns, and wood clapboard painted white, the style was once prevalent throughout southeast Michigan, including Birmingham. High style examples may incorporate classical columns, pilasters, pedimented windows, and elaborately detailed entryways. Historic windows are double-hung wood sashes with 6 lites per sash. Decoration is often limited or excluded from vernacular examples, but the prominent entablature and cornice returns are found on many examples.

Italianate, 1840-1885

The Italianate style was most popular during the 1840s through the mid-1880s with characteristic features of low-pitched roofs, widely overhanging eaves often supported by decorative brackets, and decorative window hoods. Windows are often tall and narrow, with each sash containing 1 or 2 large panes of glass. Elaborate Italianate houses may feature a cupola or tower. Italianate houses are most commonly two or three stories with one story variations rarely seen.



The Daniels House is an example of the Greek Revival style with its prominent entablature, 6-over-6 windows, and shallow gable roof. The ogee arches near the center of the building would have once been open, accessing a loggia. The Upright and Wing form is characteristic of Folk architecture in southeastern Michigan. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The prominent entablature and cornice returns on the gable end of the Greek Revival Hunter House. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The John W. Perry House in the Bates Street Historic District is an Italianate style house with over hanging eaves, brackets, and tall, narrow windows. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The Schuyler House in the Merrill-Townsend-Brown Neighborhood is an Italianate style house with over hanging eaves, brackets, and tall, narrow windows. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Victorian Period, 1860-1900

The Victorian period ushered in a series of architectural styles all popularized between 1860 and 1900 during the reign of the United Kingdom's Queen Victoria. These styles include: Second Empire, Stick, Queen Anne, Shingle, Richardsonian Romanesque, and Folk Victorian. There are a few Queen Anne style houses in Birmingham and a fair number of Folk Victorian style houses.

Folk Victorian, ca.1870-1910

Folk Victorian is closely related to the Folk National style and has characteristics of both Folk and Victorian styles. These houses are less elaborate than the Queen Anne style. Folk Victorian style houses have Folk National forms but often have decorative details associated with the Victorian period including spindle work, frieze work, decorative wood trim, and other decorative features such as elaborated window cornices.

Queen Anne, ca. 1880-1910

Houses in the Queen Anne style typically have a steeply pitched cross gabled or hipped roof with lower cross gables. Of all the Victorian Period subtypes, this style tends to have the most decorative detail such as Palladian windows, windows with colored glass, decorative brickwork, multiple shingle patterns, and spindle work. This style is often irregular in form with angled walls, projecting bays, towers and turrets.



The cross-gable form was incredibly popular for Folk Victorian houses throughout Michigan and the Midwest. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The hipped roof with lower cross gables, mixture of wood shingles and weatherboard, large porch, bay window, and irregular shape are characteristic of the Queen Anne style. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Victorian Period, 1860-1900

Folk Victorian, ca.1870-1910



The presence of frieze work, gable decoration, tall and narrow rectangular windows, and decorative window cornices indicate the Folk Victorian style. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Porch frieze work and gable decoration. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Folk Victorian with minimal decoration. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Bargeboard decorating the gable end. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Victorian Period, 1860-1900

Queen Anne, 1880-1910



Multiple roof shapes are characteristic of the Queen Anne style. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The Richard Erwin House, a large Queen Anne example. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Colonial Revival, 1880-1955

Colonial Revival was inspired by the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial event celebrating the centennial of America's independence. A resurgence of interest occurred in the 1930s with the restoration of Williamsburg, Virginia. This revival style represented a romanticized look back to the colonial period and a renewed patriotism in the nation. The Colonial Revival style is often applied to buildings with rectangular footprints with hipped or side gabled roofs. The entryways are often centered on the façade, accentuated with a portico, pilasters, a broken triangular or segmental pediment, fanlights, or sidelights. Windows are often paired, and each sash usually holds 6, 8, 9, or 12 panes; shutters are common. Some elaborate Colonial Revival buildings also feature denticulated cornices. Red brick veneer is a common exterior cladding, but wood cladding may be present instead.



Birmingham's Community House exemplifies the Colonial Revival style with its classically inspired portico and entrance, denticulated cornice, 8-over-8 windows, and incorporation of large bay windows not usually found in original colonial buildings. Portions of this building are contemporary additions constructed in the Colonial Revival style to match the historic core building. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



A Colonial Revival example clad in brick veneer. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



A modest Colonial Revival house with an elaborated entrance, non-functioning shutters, simple square footprint, and side gable roof. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The cantilevered second story, shutters, classical entrance, and side gable roof indicate the Colonial Revival style. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The paired, 6-over-6 windows, shutters, portico, symmetrical façade, and side gable roof are indicative of the style. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Dutch Colonial Revival, 1880-1955

Dutch Colonial is considered a subtype of the Colonial style. The Dutch Colonial style was prevalent from around 1625 to circa 1840 and was most often found in areas of Dutch settlement along the Hudson River in the northeast United States. Dutch Colonial Revival, similar to Colonial Revival, was popularized at the tail end of the nineteenth century into the early- to mid- twentieth century during a renewed interest in early English and Dutch colonial houses. Gabled roofs with flared eaves and gambrel roof forms, often with a large, shed dormer, are characteristic of the Dutch Colonial Revival style. Wood cladding and stone often clad the exterior.



A large gambrel roof with a shed roof dormer. The facades of Dutch Colonial Revival houses are often symmetrical. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Another example of a Dutch Colonial Revival house with a gambrel roof and shed roof dormer. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The gambrel roof with flared eaves paired with a large, shed roof dormer are characteristic of the Dutch Colonial Revival style. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Tudor Revival, 1890-1940

Tudor Revival architecture was at its peak popularity from 1900 through the 1940s. The exteriors of Tudor Revival houses are often clad in dark red brick veneer. Multiple brick veneer patterns, decorative brickwork, stone accents, and false half-timbering are used to decorate the exterior. A steeply pitched side or front gable roof shelters the house and a prominent front-facing gable may be present. Doorways may be rounded, and windows are likely multi-paned leaded glass panels in wood frames or steel casement windows. Chimneys tend to be prominently placed and topped with decorative chimney pots.



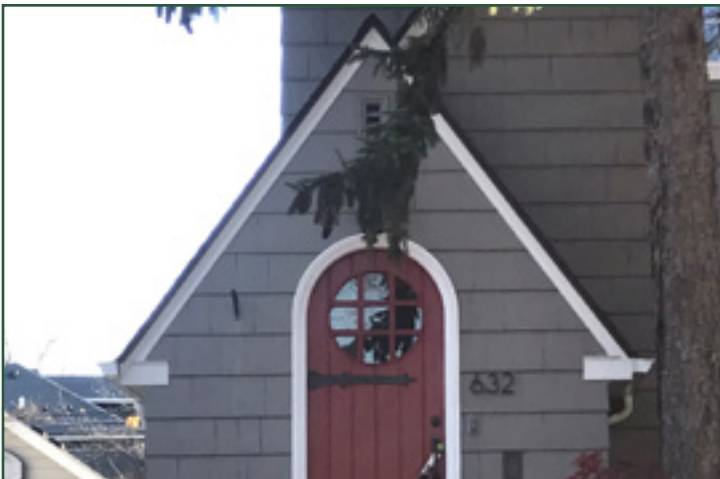
Tudor Revival house with a prominent, front-facing gable and decorative half-timbering. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The use of multiple exterior cladding materials, prominent gables, and decorative chimney pots illustrate the Tudor Revival style. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Detailed view of decorative half-timbering. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Round arched doors with vertical wood cladding and strap hinges, placed within small gables, are characteristic of the style. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



A stucco exterior clads this Tudor Revival with a large, front-facing gable and brick accents around window and door openings. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Prairie, 1900-1920

The Prairie style is a form of early Modernism popularized by architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The style was at its peak popularity from 1900 to 1920. Prairie style houses often have hipped roofs with widely overhanging eaves. Further, they tend to have wide, open porches supported by rectangular columns. Prairie style is similar to Craftsman style in its use of rectangular columns, wide overhanging eaves, and windows with divided lites often in a 3-over-1 pattern. Houses in the American Foursquare form often exhibit features inspired by the Prairie style.



American Foursquare in the Prairie style. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The Prairie style, with the characteristic hipped roof, hipped roof dormers, widely overhanging eaves, and large porch, is often applied to the American Foursquare form. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Closeup image of the hipped roof, hipped roof dormers, widely overhanging eaves, and 3-over-1 windows. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Craftsman, 1900-1930

The Craftsman style is one of multiple Early Modern architectural styles popularized from around 1900 to 1930. Craftsman houses typically have low, gabled roofs and feature exposed rafter tails or decorative false beams or brackets under the gables. The Craftsman style is typically seen on one-and-a-half story bungalow houses but is also applied to two-story houses on occasion. Bungalow type Craftsman houses often have low pitch shed roof dormers or gable roof dormers with exposed rafter tails centered on the primary façade. Craftsman style houses often have deep covered porches supported by battered piers or columns. Windows and doors are similar to those found on Prairie style buildings, and the windows tend to have divided lites in 6-over-1 or 3-over-1 configurations. The Craftsman style is particularly popular in Metro Detroit and Birmingham is no exception. There are many Craftsman style Bungalows in Birmingham.



Battered wood piers, a large full-width porch, 3-over-1 windows, and protruding roof beams are some of the Craftsman details applied to this large Foursquare form. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



A large Craftsman Bungalow with a front gable dormer, full-width porch with brick piers topped with battered wood piers, and extended eaves with rafter tails and knee brackets. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Exposed, extended eaves with visible rafters are characteristics of the Craftsman style. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



This Craftsman style house has knee brackets, a large porch with massive brick piers, a gabled roof, and 3-over-1 windows. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



A Craftsman Bungalow with a gabled porch with battered wood piers resting on brick piers, rafter tails, and decorative windows in the gable end. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Art Deco and Streamline Moderne, 1920-1940

Art Deco and Streamline Moderne were popularized circa 1920 to 1940 and were typically used on commercial and public buildings. Art Deco buildings emphasize the horizontal with flat walls and roofs with stylized geometric motifs often used on the cornice, parapet, and around openings. The geometric patterns are often chevrons and zigzags. Streamline Moderne buildings are characterized by their streamlined, minimal appearance, smooth wall surface, asymmetrical façade, curved corners, and horizontal emphasis.



Closeup view of the geometric motifs on an Art Deco building. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The curved corners with curved glass and stark façade are indicative of Streamline Moderne. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Small Art Deco building with geometric motifs paired with a smooth wall surface. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Modern and Contemporary, ca.1925-1970

Modern and Contemporary architecture are characterized by an emphasis on form and a lack of ornament. While there is debate about the precise start and end dates of the Modern Movement, in America its peak popularity spanned from about 1925 to 1970. Many Modern style buildings use innovative materials such as cast concrete, aluminum curtainwall systems, and fiberglass spandrel panels. This style should not be confused with 21st-Century Modern which is a style common to residences constructed in the early 2000s exhibiting geometric forms and unifying materials.



Modern buildings often incorporate new materials, with the building above incorporating expanses of glass and pebbled spandrels into the design. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



View of textured panels. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Verticality is emphasized by the narrow windows and solid spandrels organized in columns on the side elevation. The use of molded, textured panels on the façade is also characteristic of Modern buildings. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Minimal Traditional, ca.1935-1955

The Minimal Traditional style originated in the midst of the Great Depression as low cost housing. The popularity of the style continued for defense worker housing during World War II and in the post-war era to alleviate housing shortages as millions of Americans sought homeownership to satisfy the “American Dream.” The Minimal Traditional style was most popular between 1935 and 1955 and its qualities and characteristics are largely shaped by guidelines released by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) during that time. The Minimal Traditional house has a small footprint and is often one-story. The house is often side gabled and occasionally has a front-facing gable detail on the façade. These houses have minimal to no architectural detail but commonly exhibit basic elements of the Colonial Revival style and were typically built by developers as tract housing. Due to Birmingham’s development patterns, the majority of Minimal Traditional style houses are on the east side of the city, east of Woodward Avenue.



Small houses with minimal decoration and side gable roofs are indicative of the Minimal Traditional style. Brick and stone veneer and siding are incorporated into the exterior cladding on this example. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Streetscape of Minimal Traditional housing east of Woodward. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



These examples illustrate the small front-facing gable often found on Minimal Traditional houses. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Ranch, ca.1935-1975

The Ranch style was founded in California c. 1932 by architect Cliff May. Like the Minimal Traditional style, it emerged in the midst of the Great Depression but remained popular much longer, throughout the 1970s. The Ranch style is characterized by its one-story, linear form often with side gable or cross gable roofs. Ranch style houses often have moderate eave overhangs and may feature large, fixed picture windows or windows designed for maximizing cross ventilation such as jalousie, awning, or hopper windows. Ranch style houses often have multiple cladding materials such as clapboard or shingle siding, brick, and stone. Wide chimneys were a common feature of late period Ranches. In the 1940s and 1950s, the house was often connected to a garage via a breezeway while in later versions, garages were incorporated into the core block of the house. Due to Birmingham's development patterns, the majority of Ranch style houses are on the east side of the city, east of Woodward Avenue.



Small Ranch style houses. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



This small, Ranch style house has a side gable roof, large picture window, and cladding includes brick veneer and siding. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



A low, Ranch style house with brick veneer and siding, a large picture window, and a front-facing gable. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Streetscape of mid-twentieth century Ranch style houses. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

PART 2:

Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial Resources

Treatment of Historic Commercial Building Elements

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Storefronts

The storefront is the most important part of a commercial building. Serving as the face of the business, the expansive areas of glass, architectural decoration, and signage characterize the storefront and draws customers to the establishment. Large expanses of glass providing views of the interior and product displays are characteristic features of commercial architecture. The majority of Birmingham's historic commercial buildings fall into national typologies characteristic of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Characteristic features include heights ranging from one to four stories, the presence of commercial space on the ground floor and private or office space on the upper floors, and a recessed entrance.

Recommended

- Identifying, retaining, and preserving all historic storefront elements including such items as recessed entrances, the ratio of glass to building surface, the arrangement of the entrance and windows, architectural decoration related to the storefront, and any historic exterior flooring or exterior ceiling materials within the storefront
- Inspecting and addressing routine maintenance issues related to the storefront
- Retaining expanses of glass and display windows on a commercial building's façade
- If historic transom windows are located beneath modern cladding material, removal of the cladding material and repair and preservation of the transom windows is advised
- Repairing storefront materials by patching, splicing, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing
- Only replacing storefront components that are beyond repair
- Replacing components with the same materials, or materials as close as possible to the historic in terms of color, dimension, texture, and finish

Acceptable

- Replacement of historic storefront materials with functionally and visually appropriate materials if repair is not possible or the historic materials cannot be procured. The replacement materials should match the historic storefront in dimension, profile, type, arrangement, and glazing pattern

Not Recommended

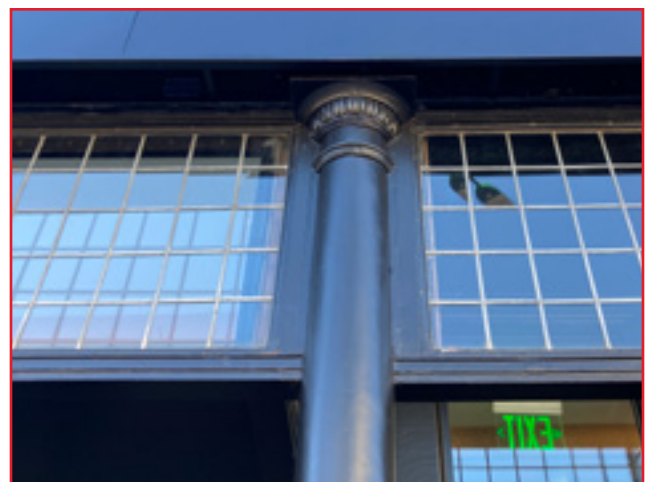
- Removal of historic storefront features
- Replacement of historic materials with unsuitable modern materials if the historic features could be repaired or replaced in-kind
- Altering the arrangement of the entrance and windows on the façade of the building
- Glazing with a tint or reflective coating
- Infilling space previously occupied by windows
- Removing historic exterior flooring, such as tile, or historic exterior ceiling materials within the storefront



A typical historic storefront in the Central Business Historic District, with recessed entrances and large glass windows, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



A mid-century storefront in the Central Business Historic District likely replaced an earlier storefront design. The new storefront utilizes large expanses of glass and a recessed entrance. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Divided lite transoms are a typical historic feature in the Central Business District. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Storefronts



Typical storefront in the Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Typical storefront in the Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Typical storefront in the Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Typical storefront in the Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Windows

Windows are integral features of historic commercial buildings. They allow light to enter the interior, provide ventilation, and allow businesses to draw customers into their establishment. For commercial buildings that are multiple stories, the upper stories usually employ rectangular or arched windows.

Recommended

- Identifying, retaining, and preserving windows and their functional and decorative features. This includes features such as frames, transoms, sashes, glass, glazing patterns, trim, and pediments.
- Preserving the ratio of glass to building surface
- Preserve the placement and size of windows on the façade and other elevations
- Inspecting windows yearly for maintenance needs. Inspect the condition of paint, wood, glazing compound, hardware, sills, and other window components
- Performing routine yearly maintenance on windows
- Identifying and resolving the root cause of premature window deterioration. For instance, a wood or steel window may be excessively deteriorated not because of faults in its materials, but because the window header does not have a drip line which would route water away from the window
- Repairing historic windows by patching, splicing, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing. Wood that appears to be deteriorated can often be repaired rather than replacing the entire window
- Only replacing window components that are beyond repair
- Replacing window components with the same materials, or materials as close as possible to the historic materials

Acceptable

- Replacement of historic windows with functionally and visually appropriate replacement windows if the historic window units are deteriorated beyond repair
 - 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
 - Replacement of historic windows with unsuitable modern windows
 - Installing replacement windows that alter window size, orientation, arrangement, types, profiles, and glazing patterns
 - Glazing with a tint or reflective coating
 - Infilling space previously occupied by windows



The replacement of historic windows with modern, fixed-sash windows is not recommended as it alters historic, character defining features of the building. Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Maintaining and repairing historic windows is recommended. Where possible, the diamond pane leaded glass windows have been preserved. Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



If historic windows are deteriorated beyond repair and cannot be replaced in-kind, modern replacement windows that mimic the originals are acceptable. Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Doors

Doors work in tandem with the storefront to invite customers into commercial spaces and often contain information about the establishment. Ornately decorated doors are generally reserved for the façade, whereas utilitarian doors are relegated to side and rear elevations. As with commercial windows, commercial doors often contain large expanses of glass which is a character defining feature and should be retained.

Recommended

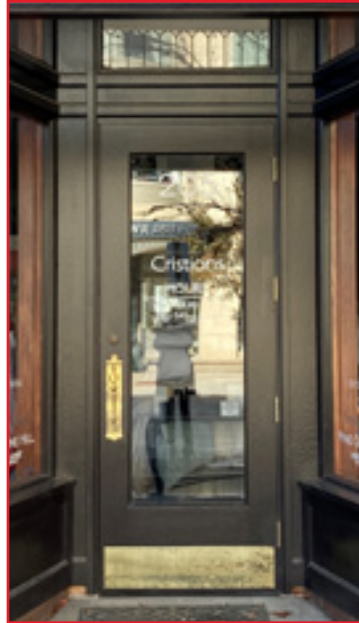
- Identifying, retaining, and preserving historic doors and all their associated components such as screen doors, hardware, trim, transoms, sidelights, fanlights, and door surrounds
- Repairing historic doors by patching, splicing, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing. Wood doors that appear to be deteriorated may be repaired rather than replaced
- Only replacing doors and their components that are beyond repair
- 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 door
- If an historic door is missing or the historic door was previously removed, installing a new door sensitive to historically appropriate materials, designs, profiles, and styles

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
- Removing or enclosing transom lights, fanlights, or sidelights
- Removing or altering a historic door surround
- Altering the shape or location of the door opening
- Adding a new door to the façade or a visible location on a side elevation



Maintenance, repair, and preservation of a historic door. Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Although it is recommended that historic doors be maintained and repaired, if this cannot be done, replacement with a modern door that is complementary to the design and era of the building is acceptable. Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The replacement door above is not complementary to the historic building's style, and is therefore not recommended. Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Exterior Wall Materials

General Recommendations on Exterior Wall Materials

- Retaining and preserving historic wall materials
- If historic wall material is severely deteriorated beyond repair, installing new wall material to match the historic material in dimension, texture, color, and profile is recommended
- If portions of severely deteriorated wall 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
- Are only used as secondary materials, new construction, or if historic wall materials are too deteriorated to repair or patch with in-kind materials
- When mixing existing historic wall materials and new modern materials, it is recommended that the historic wall materials reads as dominant while the modern wall material exists on secondary building features and secondary elevations
- It is not recommended that low durability replacement materials be installed at ground level where they may be in contact with road salt, water, and foliage. For example, avoid installing new stucco or exterior insulation and finish system (EIFS) at the ground level where they will prematurely weather

Additional guidelines for the most common exterior wall materials on commercial structures are detailed below.



Wood and brick wall materials in the Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Masonry in the Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Exterior Wall Materials

Wood

Wood is a common exterior material used in Birmingham's historic commercial resources. Often used as a form of ornament, wood exterior cladding materials contribute greatly to the integrity and character of historic buildings. Guidelines on proper treatment of historic wood cladding are as follows:

Recommended

- Identifying, retaining, and preserving wood features that are important to the overall historic character of the resource
- Maintaining and repairing existing wood features to retain the character of the building
- Cleaning wood features with a gentle, water-based cleanser on an as-needed basis
- Painting or staining existing wood features to protect the wood surface from UV and water damage
- Removing damaged, peeling, or deteriorated paint to the next sound layer by hand scraping or hand sanding and then repainting
- Repairing wood features by using the same material to patch, consolidate, splice, and reinforce the existing historic material
- Repairing damaged or deteriorated wood features and selectively replacing where necessary by splicing in new replacement portions
- Replacement wood elements are minimally used only when the existing wood is too deteriorated to repair
- When replacement wood is installed to replace deteriorated wood, the replacement pieces are painted or stained to match the adjacent pieces
- Replacing missing elements or damaged pieces to match the existing size, shape, width, profile, orientation, and installation method of the existing feature

Acceptable

- If replacing historic wood exterior features, inspecting the existing historic cladding prior to covering or removal to determine the cause of any existing damage. Eliminate the source of the damage prior to installing new synthetic cladding
- When maintenance, repair, or in-kind replacement of historic wood features is not feasible, using modern materials may be considered. It is recommended that the new feature be installed in a manner where historic material is not damaged.
 - If covering would damage the historic material, that would become a "not recommended" treatment
- Installing replacement elements so as not to obscure existing character-defining trim details around windows, at edges of elevations, and around doors

Not Recommended

- Cleaning wood features with abrasive methods such as high-PSI pressure washing, or media (sand, silicates, etc.) blasting is prohibited
- Stripping paint from wood siding which was historically painted or leaving it as a 'natural' finish
- Unnecessarily replacing historic features with modern materials which contributes to a loss of historic fabric and negatively impacts the integrity of a historic resource. If the existing wood features is damaged beyond repair and must be removed, then replacement of the historic material may be considered
- Covering architectural details such as trim, window and door hoods, or ornamental shingles with replacement elements



Exterior wood wall features in Birmingham's commercial district is largely limited to decorative details. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Maintenance and repair of original wood exterior details is key. The wood in the image above requires some repair from water damage and repainting. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Exterior wood maintained with adequate painting. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Exterior Wall Materials

Masonry

Masonry encompasses a variety of materials ranging from brick to terracotta, clay, ceramic tile, granite, stone, stone veneer, stucco, cement, and cement block. It also includes the mortar used to attach the masonry units to each other. Masonry is used in a variety of ways on commercial buildings, most commonly used as foundation and structural material, exterior cladding material, and decorative details. Masonry is often a character defining feature of commercial buildings and the preservation and maintenance of such masonry is critical for preserving the integrity of the structure.

Recommended

- Identifying, retaining, and preserving historic masonry, mortar, and stucco
- Protecting and maintaining decorative masonry such as brick, stonework, terracotta, clay tiles
- Only cleaning masonry to halt further deterioration or to remove stubborn stains and graffiti
- Cleaning masonry using the gentlest means possible, ideally a water-based cleanser
- Repointing mortar that is missing or deteriorated or if sufficient mortar is missing to cause water infiltration into the wall system
- Repointing using a new mortar which matches the existing mortar compressive strength, composition, color, texture, joint size, joint profile, and method of application
- Replacing missing or deteriorated masonry units to match the existing in dimension, material, color, texture, finish, and profile. The replacement units match the historic installation method and course type

Acceptable

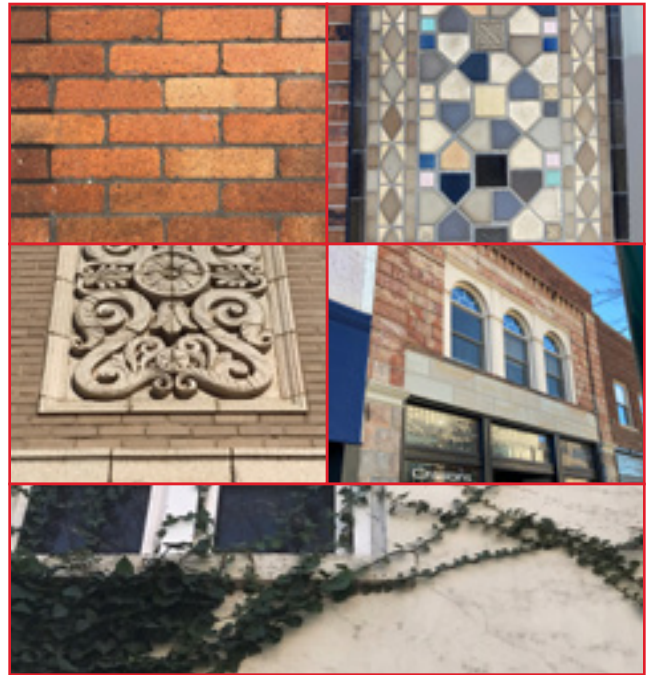
- Removing paint from masonry with a gentle water-based or chemical-based detergent so long as the detergent does not damage the masonry. Always test removal methods on a small, inconspicuous area of the exterior
- Applying maintenance coats of paint to already painted masonry

Acceptable (cont.)

- Replacing decorative masonry features which are missing or damaged beyond repair using accurate historic documentation of the historic feature, or if documentation is not available by using a new design which is compatible with the existing historic structure
- Replacing masonry features which are missing or damaged beyond repair, with modern materials that mimic the color, texture, and finish of the historic material if the historic material is no longer available

Not Recommended

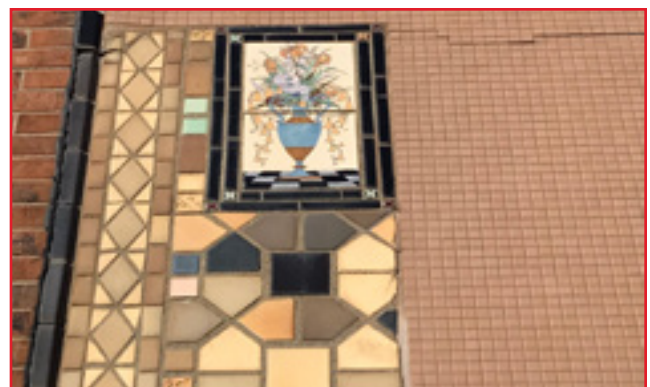
- Using abrasive cleaning methods such as high-PSI pressure washers or media blast cleaning systems is prohibited. These methods damage masonry materials, such as the face of brick and terracotta glaze, and contribute to spalling and future water infiltration
- Painting unpainted masonry. This can damage the existing material and lead to water being trapped in the masonry units which accelerates spalling and deterioration
- Installing new decorative masonry features which appear falsely historic such as decorative sills, brackets, gargoyles, or lions
- Applying stucco or parge to masonry not historically covered in these materials



Masonry materials include, from left to right, brick, tile, terracotta, stone, and stucco. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The maintenance and repair of historic brick and mortar is recommended. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The replacement of the historic Flint Faience tile (shown on left) with modern tile (shown on right) is not recommended. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Exterior Wall Materials

Metal

Metal may be incorporated into historic commercial buildings through the use of metal cornices, columns, window hoods, and trim. These features contribute greatly to the historic character of the building, and it is recommended they be maintained, repaired, and preserved.

Recommended

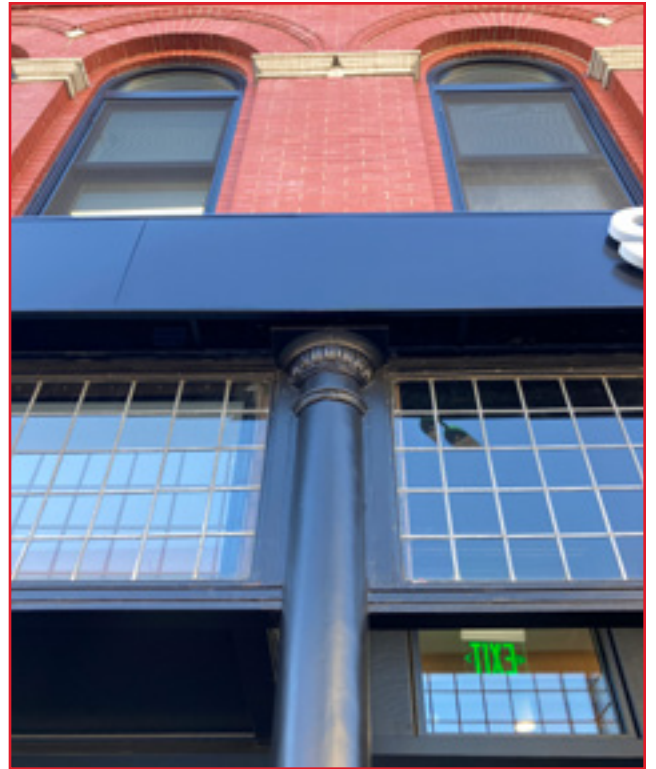
- Identifying, retaining, and preserving metal features through regular maintenance, such as preventing and treating rust and corrosion
- Clean metal features only as needed and using the gentlest means possible
- Only patching or replacing features that have deteriorated beyond the point of repair

Acceptable

- If replacement of damaged features using in-kind materials is not feasible, replacement materials match the historic materials in terms of design, finish, and dimensions. Metals can interact with other metals and cause staining and corrosion. Replacement metals should not negatively interact with remaining historic metal features.

Not Recommended

- Using incompatible materials such as asphalt or tar to patch deteriorated metal features
- Cleaning metal features with abrasive methods such as media blasting



The metal elements of this storefront have been adequately maintained. Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Metal trim is a common exterior cladding material. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Roof Elements

Roof elements are often highly visible, character defining features of historic commercial buildings. Roof elements include the roof itself, dormers, gutters, chimneys, and other roof features. All of these features may be historically significant. Therefore, the maintenance, repair, and preservation of these features is important.

Recommended

- Identifying, retaining, and preserving the historic roof and any roof elements in terms of materials, texture, decoration, form, and dimensions. Materials and methods used for repair match the historic materials and methods used
- Additional roof drainage such as downspouts, gutters, and scuppers are not visible from primary facades
- Only replacing historic materials that are beyond repair and replacing historic materials with in-kind materials. If replacement of the historic material is not technically feasible, the replacement material is matched as closely as possible to the historic material in terms of color, texture, dimensions, and design
- Performing annual maintenance on all roofs, especially flat roofs which are susceptible to water intrusion

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
- Addition of new rooftop features such as a penthouse or modern rooftop equipment that are sensitive to the historic character of the building in terms of scale materials

Not Recommended

- Alteration of roof form or pitch
- Replacement of historic materials with modern materials in lieu of repairing or replacing in-kind
- Removal or addition of prominent roof elements that are incompatible with the building's design



Commercial buildings typically have flat roofs that are obscured by masonry parapets, shielding the roof from view. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



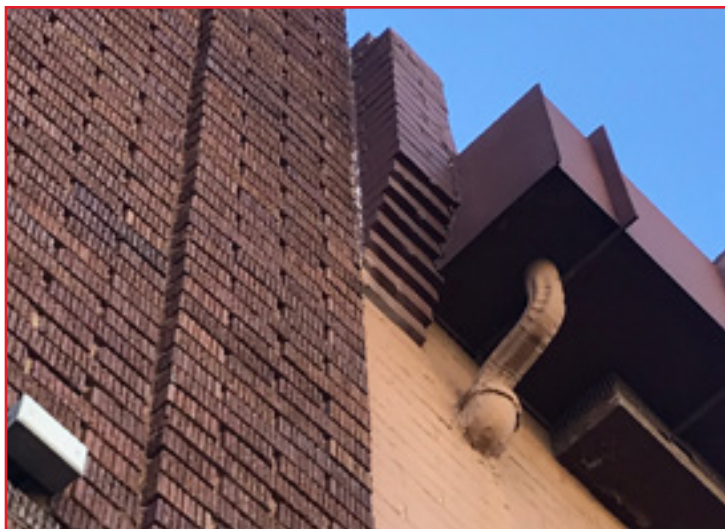
Slate roof in the Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Slate roofing in the commercial districts, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Clay tile roof in the Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Note the historic gutter system, discretely placed on the facade of this building in Birmingham's Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2020

Rooftop Mechanical Equipment and Penthouses

Installation of modern rooftop mechanical equipment and penthouses is often a necessity in modern life. Modern equipment can be sensitively incorporated into historic buildings through positioning of equipment and penthouses in ways that minimize their visual impact from adjacent buildings and the public right-of-way. Historic rooftop equipment and penthouses may be present and contribute to the character of the historic building and district and should therefore be preserved.

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

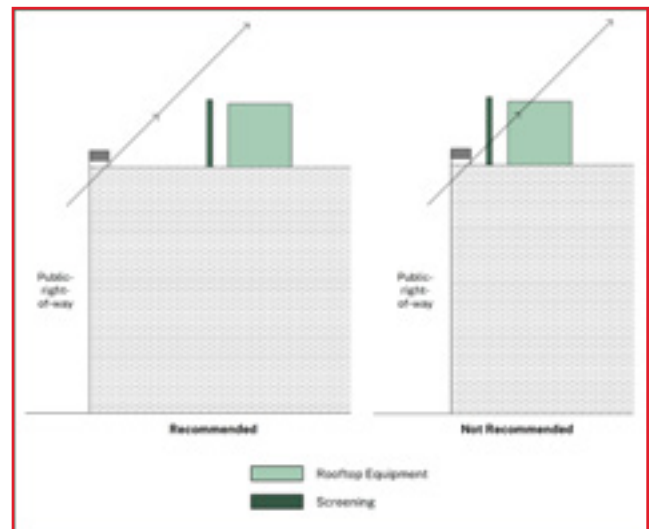
- Positioning rooftop equipment, penthouses, and screening in a manner that is minimally visible from adjacent buildings and the public-right-of-way

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



Rooftop mechanical equipment and penthouses that are present on these buildings within Birmingham's Commercial Historic District are positioned such that they are not visible from the public-right-of-way. Positioning rooftop mechanical equipment and penthouses in this manner is recommended. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



It is recommended that rooftop equipment and screening be situated so that it is not visible from the public right-of-way or adjacent buildings. It is not recommended that rooftop equipment and screening be visible

Awnings and Canopies

On historic commercial buildings, awnings and canopies shield window and door openings from the sun, shelter customers and products from inclement weather, and provide advertising space. Retractable canvas awnings were a common feature of historic storefronts. Awnings are useful for introducing color to a commercial building façade and softening the transition between upper and lower portions of the façade. Typical historic storefront awnings are triangular when viewed from the side and often contain a short vertical valence on the bottom.

Special attention should be given to the sizing and positioning of new awnings to reflect the traditional storefront rhythm seen in the surrounding historic district.

Recommended

- Identifying, retaining, and preserving identifying, retaining, and preserving historic awnings and associated components. Maintenance and repairs are done in a manner that preserves sound materials
- Replacing an awning that is damaged beyond repair with in-kind materials and design
- Removing non-historic awnings that obscure character defining features

Acceptable

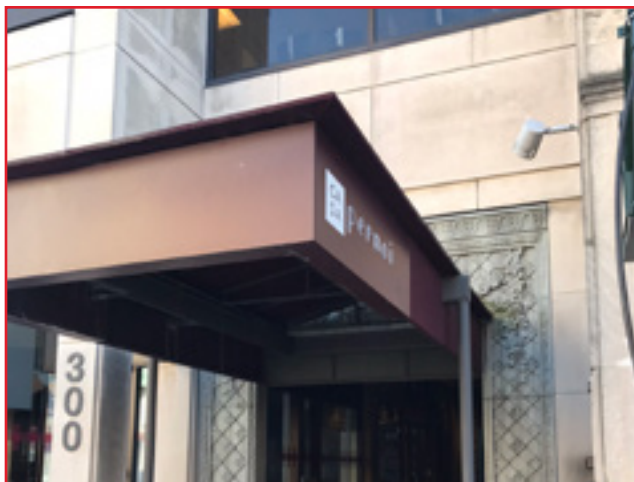
- If repairing or replacing an awning in-kind is not feasible, selecting a replacement awning that is historically compatible with the historic in terms of shape, material, color, texture, and design
- Installing awnings on a building that did not historically have awnings, so long as the new awnings are historically appropriate in terms of shape, color, material, and design, do

not damage or obscure historic materials, and are compatible with nearby historic buildings.

- Installing awnings on a building which no longer has its historic awnings using historic photographs or drawings to guide the design of the new awnings
- Installing new awnings which match the width of a storefront bay and is in keeping with the rhythm of the existing historic façade

Not Recommended

- Removing historic awnings that could be retained through repair or continued use
- Altering the shape of historic awnings
- Replacing historic awnings with new awnings of a different shape, material, texture, or design
- Installing awnings or canopies that obscure historic features and are under- or over-sized for the openings they shelter.
- Installing translucent, backlit awnings



This canopy obscures the historic, character defining details of the entrance. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Historic awnings were generally triangularly shaped and extended outward at the base to shelter the façade. An awning may not have existed on this building historically, but this type of modern awning is acceptable. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

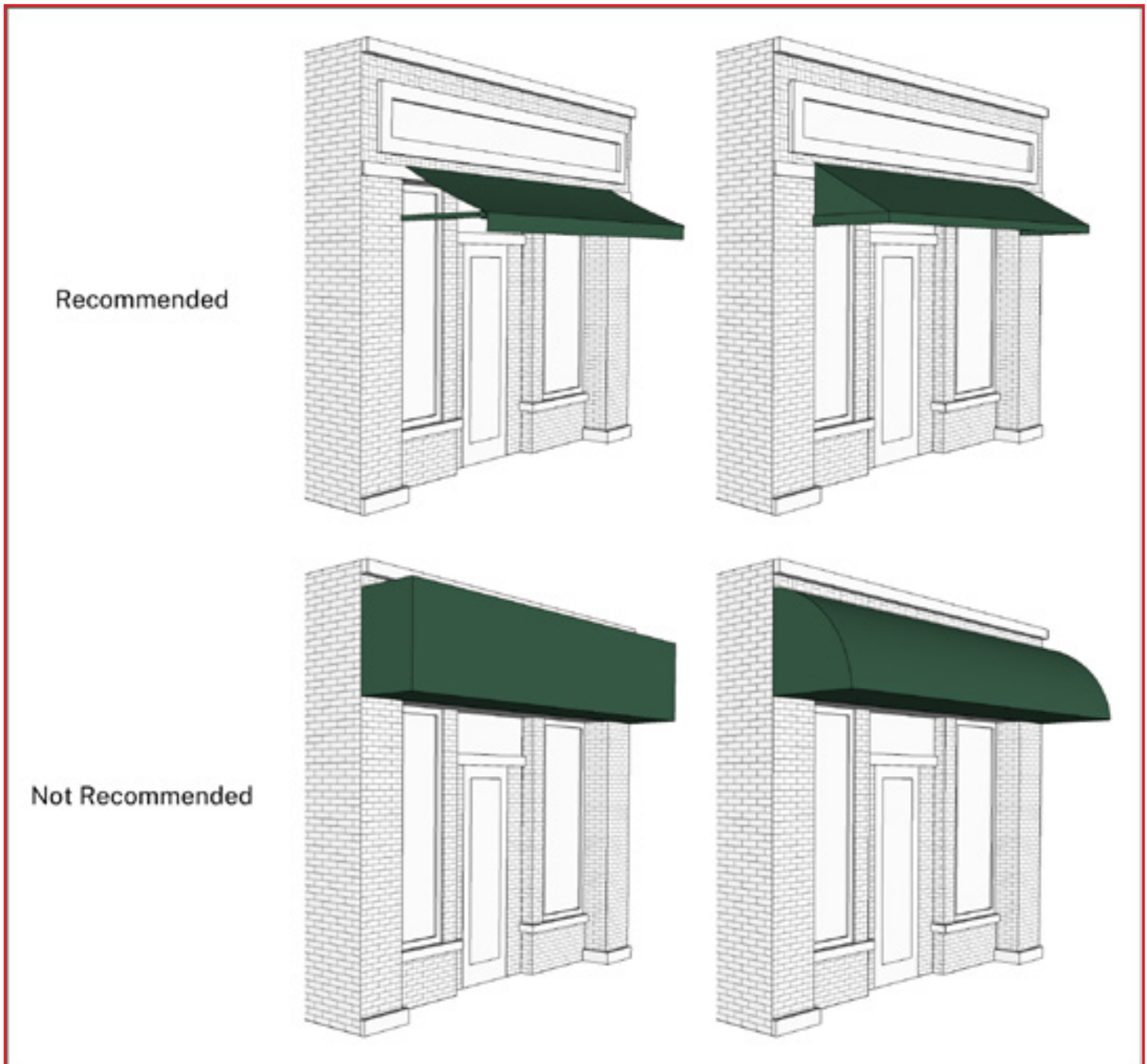


The modern awning here is an inverted version of the historic awning and is not recommended for use on historic buildings. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Canopies of unique design are acceptable on historic commercial buildings as long as they respect the scale and size of nearby canopies and do not harm historic materials or obscure historic building details. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Awnings and Canopies



Triangular awnings are recommended for historic commercial districts, as these types of awnings were historically used in commercial districts. Boxed, waterfall, and bubble awnings and backlighting are not recommended as these are not historically accurate.

Signage

Signage is a key element of historic commercial districts and may include different types of signage such as hanging signs, blade signs, fixed signs, and window signs. Historic signs were incorporated into the design of commercial buildings — they did not obscure decorative features or components of the storefront. Historically, ground floor businesses utilized exterior signage that was affixed to the façade, whereas businesses on upper stories used window signs. New signage must conform to signage standards described in Birmingham’s current sign ordinance.

Recommended

- Identifying, retaining, and preserving historic commercial signage whether it is affixed to the exterior or painted on windows
- Only replacing historic signage elements that are damaged beyond repair and selecting in-kind replacement materials
- 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
- New signage or signage-related work, such as installation or repair, does not damage or obscure historic materials on the exterior of the building
- Signage is anchored through mortar joints and not masonry faces to the extent feasible
- Incorporating signage that is easily removed without damage to surrounding historic materials

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
- Damaging historic materials when repairing, maintaining, or installing signage



Typical fixed signage in the commercial districts, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The retention of historic hanging signs on the Shain Townhouses is recommended, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Placing signage above a designated signage band obscures the historic brick and is not recommended, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Signage



Placement of signage in the signage band above storefront windows is recommended. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



It is recommended that historic signage be retained. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Signage that does not detract from historic features is recommended. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Typical signage in the commercial districts, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The use of small, unobtrusive yet visible blade signs is recommended. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



A small plaque sign along with signage on the canopy coordinates with historic signage in the Central Business District. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Lighting

Historic commercial lighting often highlights the establishment's signage and entrance while providing lighting to help keep outdoor areas safe. Lighting refers to features such as hanging and wall mounted lights, pole lights, lighting along pathways, and any other exterior lights on the historic property. Important elements of lighting include the lighting fixture's scale, design, brightness, and direction of the light.

Recommended

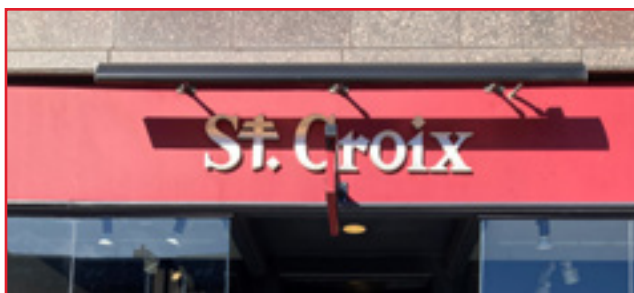
- Identifying, retaining, and preserving historic commercial lighting such that the historic lighting elements and the historic materials of the building are retained
- Refurbishing, without damage or replacement, of historic lighting to meet modern code requirements
- If historic lighting has deteriorated beyond repair and must be replaced, the replacement lighting is an in-kind replacement
- Use warm temperature incandescent or LED lighting. If colored or cool temperature lighting is contemplated this should be studied to ensure it is compatible with the historic district

Acceptable

- New exterior lighting is located where lighting traditionally existed, to highlight the storefront, entrances, and signage.
- Incorporating architectural lighting aligned with architectural features
- Installation of new exterior lighting does not damage historic materials

Not Recommended

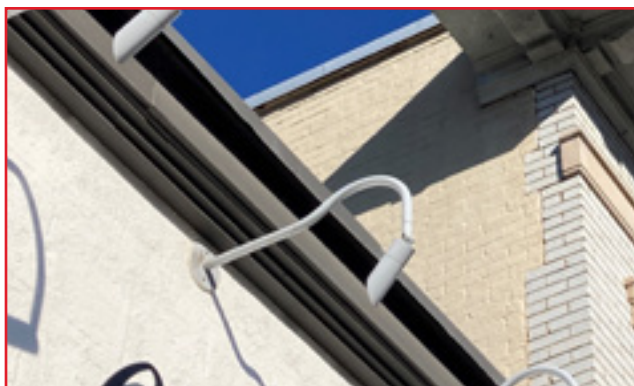
- Removing historic lighting features
- Replacing historic lighting features that may be repaired or replaced in-kind
- Damaging or obscuring character defining features to repair, replace, or introduce new lighting
- Installing flood lighting on the façade or side elevations
- Installing moving, flashing, or rope lighting



Typical lighting in Birmingham's Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The preservation of exterior theatre lighting displays is recommended, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Exterior lighting in the Central Business Historic District, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Historically appropriate lighting is shown at the left. At right shows where previous light fixtures were attached to the exterior. It is not recommended that historic material, such as the brick, be damaged when installing lighting. Lighting should be affixed at the mortar joints, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Sidewalk Cafes and Patios

Sidewalk cafes and patios provide space for people to gather and enjoy outdoor space in the commercial historic district. The incorporation of a sidewalk café or patio must comply with any applicable Birmingham ordinances.

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
- Cafes or patios do not overwhelm the historic building's facade
- 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
- Any fencing or landscaping related to the patio or sidewalk café follows the guidelines in Part 6: Design Guidelines for Landscapes and Open Spaces
- Cafes or patios are constructed of finished materials

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



Patios such as this with a historically sensitive awning, use of finished materials, and appropriate scale are recommended, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Sidewalk cafe and patio that is set away from the building like this one does not damage or obscure character defining features and is recommended. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Cafe patio construction that is fastened/mounted to the building is not recommended. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Evaluating Changes over Time

Buildings are not stagnant objects – they inevitably change over time. A building may be of an age where changes which occurred to the building are now historic in their own right and have gained significance over time. For example, say the owner of a 1900s commercial storefront installed a Modern style canopy on the building in 1950. The Modern style canopy, while not original to the building, could be considered historic and thus any changes to the canopy would also warrant HDC review. When evaluating a building to determine its key historic and significant characteristics, it is best practice to also contemplate the changes to the building that have occurred over time.

Things to Think About

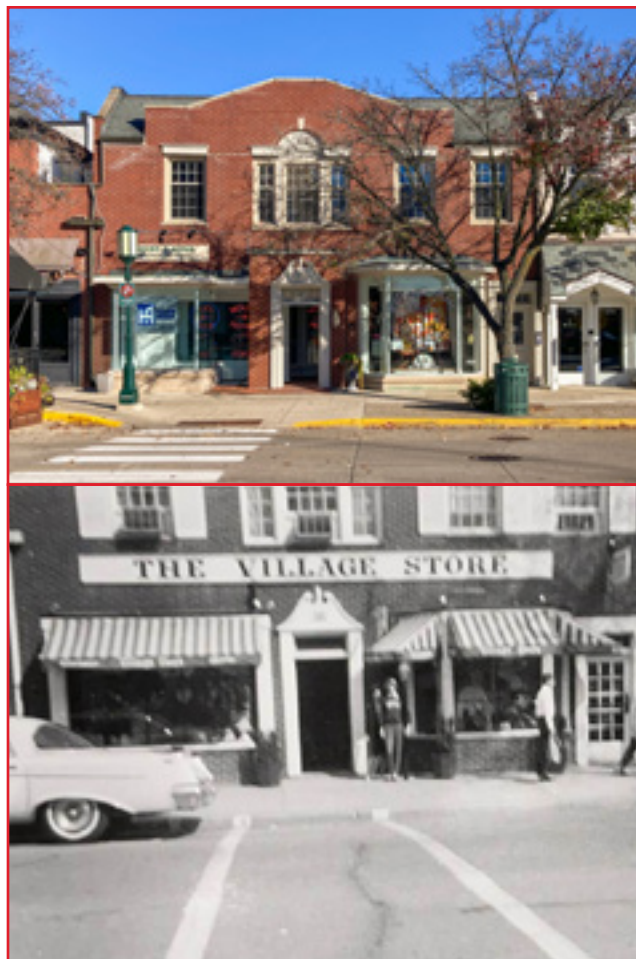
- Has an alteration acquired historic significance in its own right?
- Was the person (property owner, architect, designer, etc.) who made the alteration significant?
- Does the alteration reflect an important theme or event in Birmingham's history?

Recommended

- Considering the full history of a building, including changes over time, when contemplating work to a historic building
- Retaining, repairing, and maintaining non-original features which are now considered historic due to age or significance

Not Recommended

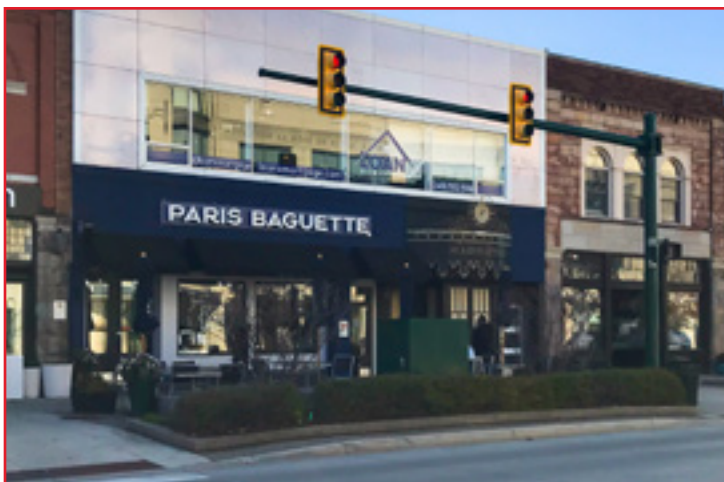
- Removing architectural features which are historic but do not date to the original building construction date such as canopies or façade material changes
- Only contemplating original building features and characteristics when planning work to a building in a historic district



Considering the full history of a building, including changes over time is recommended. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Buildings not considered historic when the district was initially designated may have gained significance over time. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Storefronts modified in the early or mid-twentieth century may have gained significance even if they are not original to the building. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Maintenance

Adequate and timely maintenance of historic commercial properties is key to ensuring the preservation of historic materials and features. Moreover, adequately maintaining a building helps avoid overwhelming and costly repairs, as small issues are resolved before they snowball into issues that appear unmanageable.

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, checking for issues such as cracks, peeling paint, or cracked roof shingles or tiles. These features are not only character defining, but also protect the internal structure from the elements
- Repairing and maintaining materials and features according to the maintenance schedule and needs as identified through the building’s assessment

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.



Close inspection, repeatedly completed, is key for a preventative maintenance plan. This storefront is missing modillions, likely a result of deferred maintenance, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Peeling exterior paint and missing wood trim are indicative of needed maintenance, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Recommended Inspection Timetable			
Building Element	Frequency		
	6 months	Yearly	12-60 months
Storefront elements		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Windows and doors		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Sidings, stucco, and other claddings		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Masonry and mortar joints			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Painted masonry		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Painted wood elements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Roof coverings and roof features		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Gutters and downspouts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Flashings		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Awnings and canopies		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Signage and lighting		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Sidewalk cafes and patios		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

The inspection timetable above is for reference only. The [National Park Service's Preservation Brief #47](#) provides additional information on the maintenance of historic buildings.

Additions

Additions to historic commercial buildings allow building owners the ability to adapt their structure to provide additional interior space. An addition can be an expansion to an existing building footprint or additional stories added atop an existing building. Additions can be compatible and complementary to historic resources when the new addition respects the scale, design, materials, and form of the attached historic building and the historic district as a whole. Conversely, the opposite can occur with new additions that subsume the historic structure or utilize a design and materials that do not complement surrounding historic buildings resulting in a loss of historic character. Therefore, the design, scale, massing, placement, and materials proposed for additions will be carefully considered. An addition should not overpower the original building. For example, a proposed 6-story addition atop a historic 3-story building would overpower the original building and likely would not match the scale or massing of the surrounding context.

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
- Ensuring that historic materials or character defining features are preserved, protected, and not obscured by new construction
- Additions are reversible in that they can be removed at a later date with minimal damage or loss to the building's historic fabric
- Roof forms and pitch are consistent with the existing building

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
- Construction of a rooftop addition, such as a rooftop patio, is setback from the face of the primary façade and is constructed of materials which are complementary to the historic building
- 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
- Disregarding historic materials and elements of design present in the historic structure when designing an addition
- Removing, damaging, or obscuring historic materials or design elements as a result of constructing an addition

Not Recommended



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



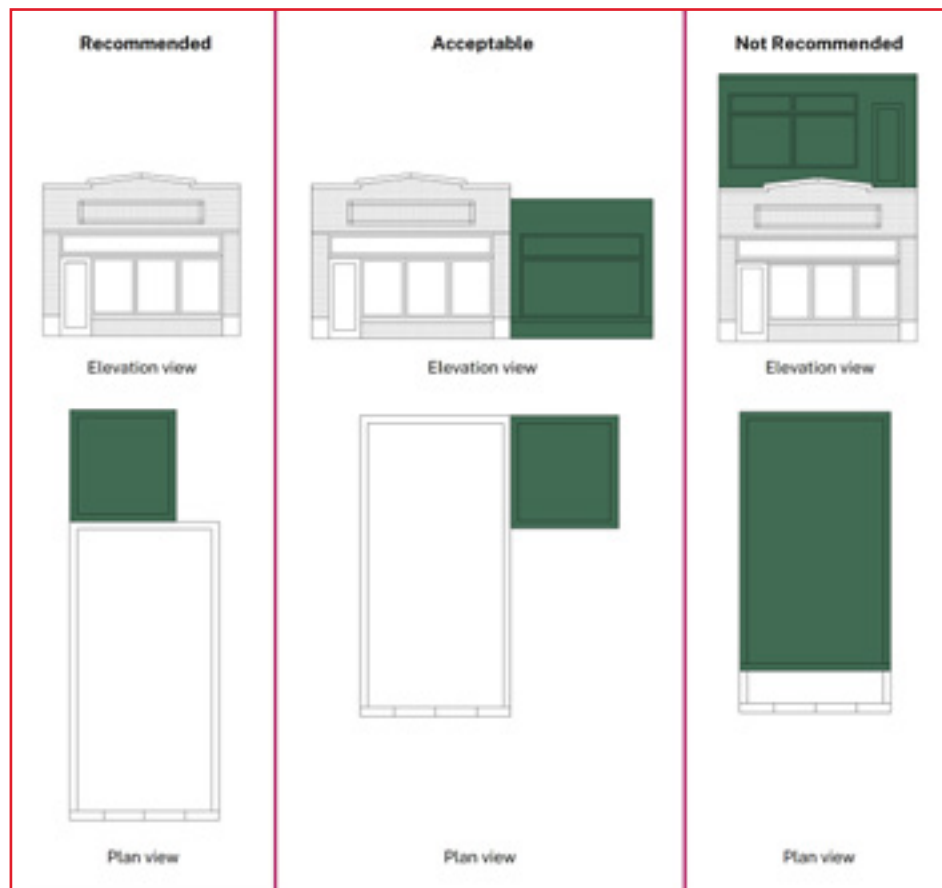
Large and prominent additions that are visible on the primary facades are not recommended, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Review of Definitions:

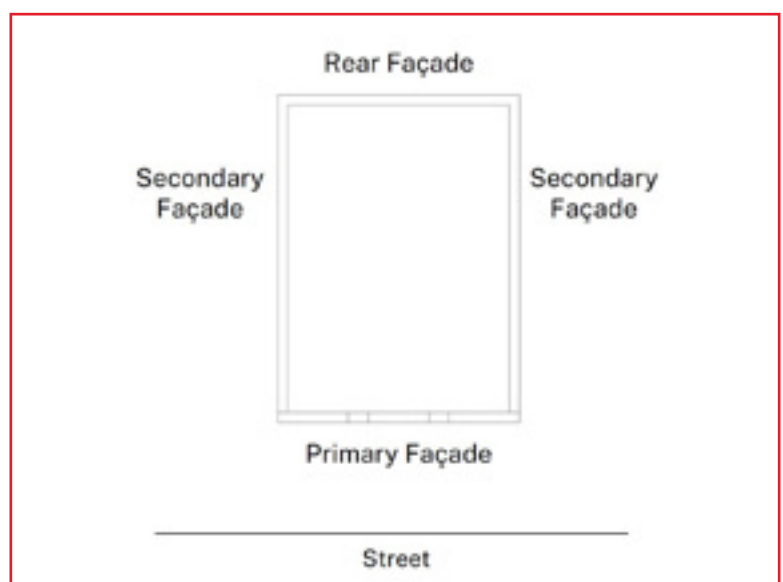
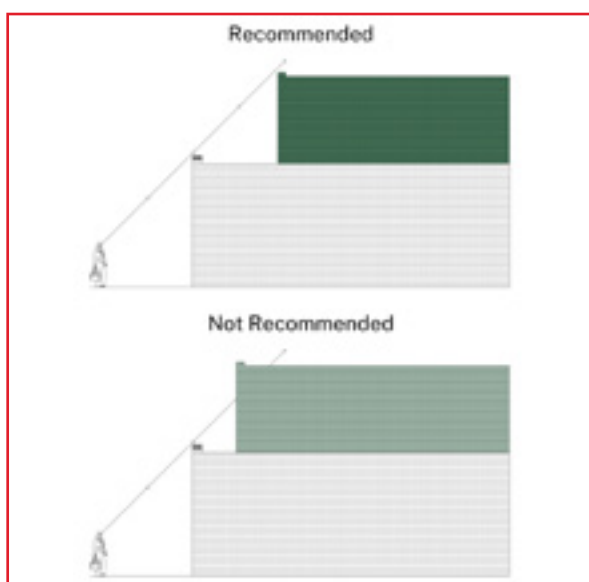
Primary Façade means the exterior façade of a structure which contains the principal pedestrian entrance and is often oriented towards a street. Primary facades often feature architectural features and details not found on secondary facades as it is the 'face' of the building. Care should be taken when planning additions so as to not negatively impact the character of the primary façade, which is often the most recognizable aspect of a historic building from the exterior

Secondary Façade means an exterior façade which often lacks the ornamentation and detail found on the primary façade and usually does not contain the principal pedestrian entrance. Typically, a secondary facade is a side or rear façade that does not face a public thoroughfare.

Additions



Additions located at the rear of a commercial building are recommended, small scale additions to the side elevations are acceptable, and additions that are highly visible and subsume the historic commercial building are not recommended.



Something to keep in mind regarding commercial rooftop additions is a pedestrian's line of sight from the sidewalk. It is recommended that rooftop additions and the installation of any mechanical equipment not be visible from the right-of-way.

PART 3: **Design Guidelines for Historic Residential Resources**

Treatment of Historic Residential Building Elements

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Windows

Windows are an incredibly important component of historic houses. They are prominent, character defining features that provide light and ventilation to the interior of a home while forming a visual connection between the interior and exterior. Key window features include:

- **Materials:** Includes materials such as wood or steel sashes, glass, or lead, zinc, and solder in leaded glass windows
- **Window Type:** Double-hung, single-hung, casement, awning, fixed, awning, hopper, jalousie, or slider
- **Window Components:** Interrelated components such as sashes, muntins, number and arrangement of lites (glazing pattern), glazing compound, sills, and trim
- **Profiles:** Width and profile depths of sashes and muntins

Recommended

- Identifying, retaining, 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
- Inspecting windows yearly for maintenance needs. Inspect the condition of paint, wood, glazing compound, hardware, sills, and other window components and perform maintenance as needed
- Identifying and resolving the root cause of premature window deterioration. For instance, a wood or steel window may be excessively deteriorated not because of faults in its materials, but because the window header does not have a drip edge which would route water away from the window
- Repairing historic windows by patching, splicing, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing. Wood that appears to be deteriorated can often be repaired rather than replacing the entire window
- Only replacing window components that are beyond repair
- Replacing window components with the same materials, or materials as close as possible to the historic materials

Acceptable

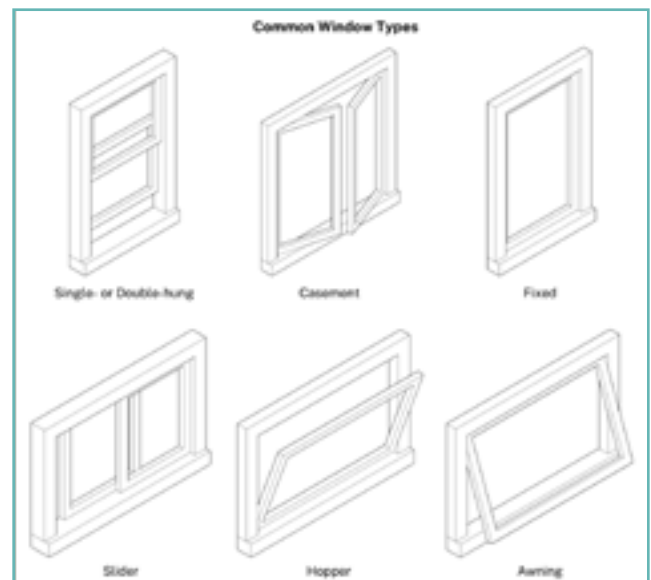
- Replacement of historic windows with functionally and visually appropriate windows if the historic windows are too deteriorated to repair or if in-kind materials cannot be sourced
- Replacement windows matching the historic windows in material, dimension, profile, type, arrangement on the exterior, and glazing pattern. For instance, a replacement for a Craftsman style 3-over-1 window (with three rectangular panes of glass in the upper sash and a single pane of glass in the lower sash) ideally matches this pattern
- If simulated divided lite replacement windows are to be used, the muntins are applied to the exterior of the glass panes and match the profile of the historic muntins as closely as possible

Not Recommended

- Replacement of historic windows that could be repaired or replaced in-kind with unsuitable modern windows
- Installing replacement windows that alter window types, sizes, orientation, profiles, materials, and glazing patterns. For example, replacing a 6-over-6 double-hung window with a single, fixed pane window unit
- Removing and infilling historic windows

For example, the width and profile depth of a wood window sash and muntins create a defined pattern and distinctive shadow lines across exterior elevations. Most modern windows, such as vinyl windows, have much narrower sashes with little to no profile depth, resulting in minimal shadow lines and minimal definition. Likewise, muntins placed on the interior, in between glass panes, or flat exterior muntins provide no definition or profile and contribute little to the historic window pattern. Thus, most modern window materials, designs and features are not recommended for use in historic houses.

If historic windows are deteriorated beyond repair and replacement is necessary, replacement windows should be compatible with the style and period of the resource. Ensuring that replacement windows match the materials, type, components, and profiles of the historic windows is integral to successful window replacement.



Common Window Types



The maintenance, repair, and preservation of historic wood windows is recommended. Tall, narrow windows are character defining features of Victorian Period houses. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Windows

A note about replacing historic windows —

Older windows can sometimes come with issues: sticking sashes, broken panes, and finicky cranks are all typical. But these are things that can be easily fixed, and they are worthwhile repairs to make. Simply put, historic windows are made of materials that are far superior to those available today. Historic wood windows were made with old growth lumber which is far denser and more rot resistant than modern woods used today. Historic windows are made from individual parts and thus can be repaired when one piece breaks. In contrast, modern vinyl window units are virtually impossible to repair because they are manufactured as one complete unit. When a part fails, when the insulated glass seal breaks, or when the vinyl warps, the entire unit must be replaced.

Setting aside the repair issues the energy savings gained by inserting new windows is far less than the cost of those new units. For example, after spending about \$12,000 dollars on properly installed, high-quality replacement windows, a typical household might save about \$50 a month on heating or cooling bills. However, if a house in Michigan is actively heated or cooled for an average of six months a year, that savings amounts to only \$300 a year. At this rate, it would take 40 years to even begin to recoup in energy savings the amount spent on the new windows. By following some other no-cost and low-cost ways to improve a building's energy efficiency, that \$50 a month can easily be saved without an outlay of thousands of dollars. Going green is about more than just energy efficiency. There is embodied energy (i.e., energy required to extract raw materials, transport them, make them, ship them, and install them) inherent in historic windows and tearing them out and replacing them with new units involves a double cost in terms of embodied energy: the energy already expended on the historic units and the energy required to create and install the new units.

Improving Energy Efficiency of Older Windows:

- Caulk around the window opening on the exterior
- Caulk around the window trim on the inside
- Add weather stripping to the window sash
- Install interior storms, exterior storms, or thermal panels

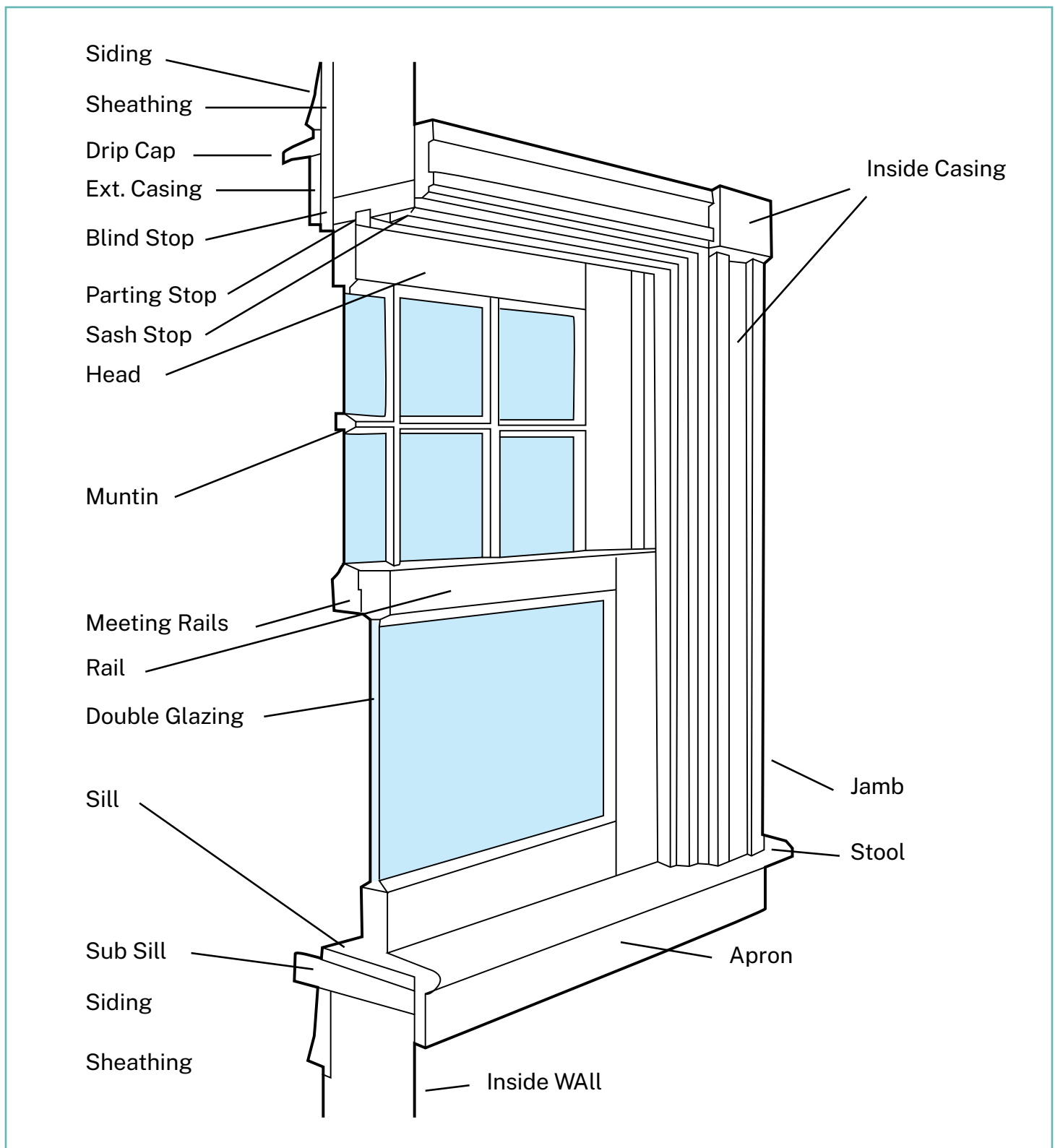


If circumstances require that modern window replacements are used, it is recommended that replacement windows match the historic windows as closely as possible. The replacement windows shown above would not be recommended as they are fixed sash windows without muntins, which do not match the historic 3-over-1 windows that were originally present. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The replacement of historic windows with a modern, vinyl bay window with no muntins is not recommended as it does not match the historic window. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Windows



Typical components of a historic window

Windows

Storm Windows

The installation of storm windows is one cost-effective method for protecting historic windows and increasing their energy efficiency. Storm windows can be installed on the interior or exterior, are reversible, and allow historic windows to be retained. The materials of storm windows may not match the historic window materials. For example, a historic wood window may be protected by an aluminum storm window. However, it is recommended that the color of the storm windows match the color of the historic windows.

Recommended

- Matching divisions in the storm window to the sash lines and meeting rail of the historic windows
- Matching the color of the storm windows to the color of the window frame
- Sizing exterior storm windows to tightly fit into the historic window openings
- Using only clear glass
- If possible, inset the storm windows from the plane of the elevation as much as is practical

Acceptable

- Installing a single pane storm window (with no divisions) for a historic window with sash lines and meeting rails

Not Recommended

- Not matching the color of the storm windows to the color of the historic windows. For example, installing and not painting an aluminum storm window is not recommended
- Installing storm windows with divisions that do not align with the sash lines and meeting rails of the historic windows
- Installing inaccurately sized storm windows
- Removing trim or other features to install a storm window



The storm windows above are not recommended as their color does not match the window sashes. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Storm windows such as these are recommended as they match the color of the historic window, and the division line matches the sash line of the historic window. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Doors

Doors are often accentuated on a house's façade and may be surrounded by eye-catching decoration. Functionally, doors provide access to the interior of the house and provide another means for ventilation, in addition to windows. The prominent placement of doors and their important functionality make them key features to preserve on historic houses.

Recommended

- Identifying, retaining, 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
- Only replacing doors and their components that are beyond repair
- 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 door
- If a historic door is missing or the historic door was previously removed, installing a new door sensitive to historically appropriate materials, designs, profiles, and styles

Acceptable

- Installing a new door using a substitute material that matches the historic door in design, size, profile, and shape
- Installing a screen door where there was none historically, so long as the historic door remains highly visible through the screen

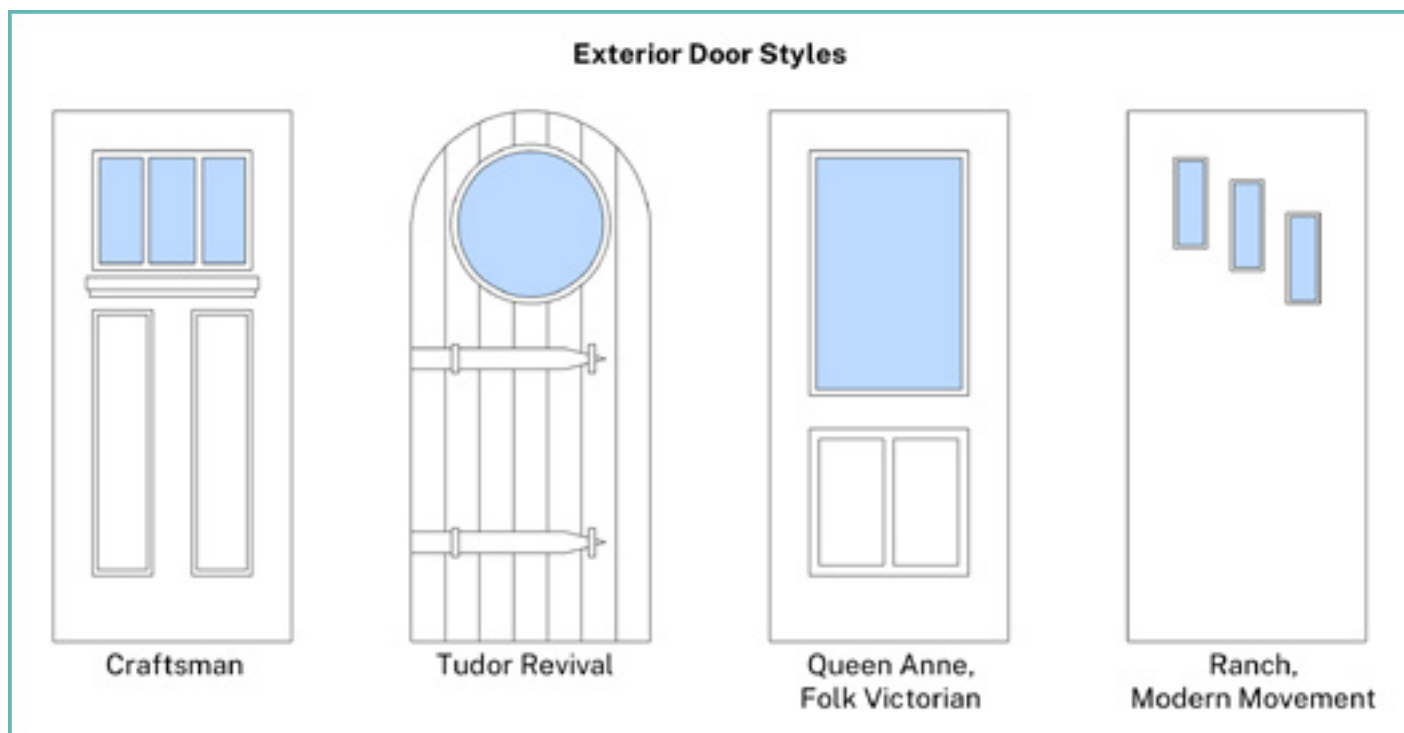
Not Recommended

- Replacing a functioning or repairable historic door with a door of modern materials and incompatible design
- Overly decorative replacement doors can be misleading and create a false sense of history
- Installing a replacement door that does not match the historic door in design, such as paneling, number of lites, or color
- Removing or enclosing transom lights, fanlights, or sidelights
- Removing or altering a historic door surround
- Altering the shape or size of the door opening
- Adding a new door to the primary façade or a visible location on a side elevation

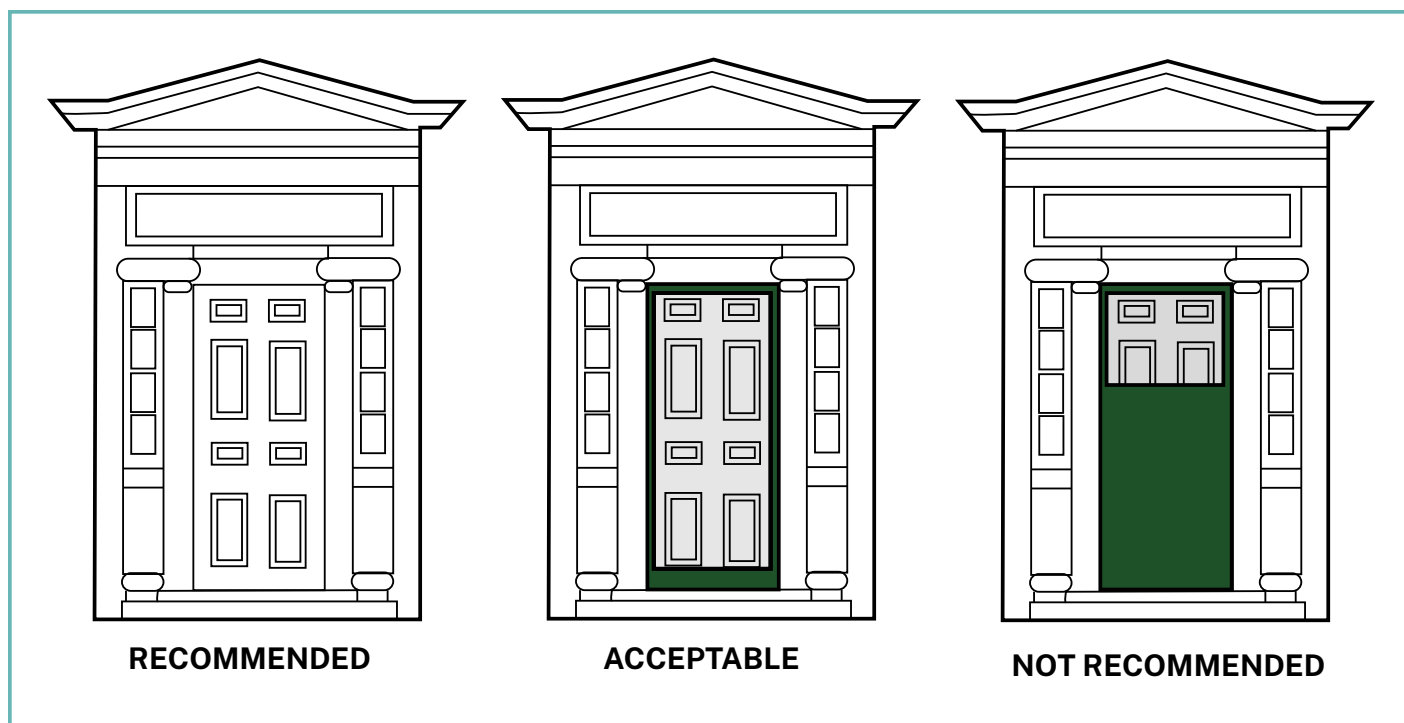


Maintenance and repair of historic doors is recommended. The historic doors above show that exterior doors can be preserved and contribute to the historic character of the house, City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Doors



Exterior door styles on historic residences contribute to the historic character of resources.



Screen doors are acceptable as long as they maintain visibility of the historic door beyond.

Exterior Wall Materials

General Recommendations on Residential Exterior Wall Materials

- Retaining and preserving historic cladding materials
- If historic wall material is severely deteriorated beyond repair, installing new wall material to match the historic material in dimension, texture, color, and profile is recommended
- If portions of severely deteriorated wall material 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
- Alternative or modern wall materials (i.e., aluminum, fiber cement board (Hardie Board), vinyl) are only used as secondary materials, for new construction, or if historic wall materials are too deteriorated to repair or patch with in-kind materials and in-kind materials are infeasible.
- When mixing existing historic wall material and new modern materials, it is recommended that the historic material reads as dominant while the modern material exists on secondary building features and secondary elevations
- It is not recommended that low durability replacement materials be installed at ground level where they may be in contact with road salt, water, and foliage. For example, avoid installing new stucco or exterior insulation and finish system (EIFS) at the ground level where they will prematurely weather



Use of brick veneer and stone veneer on a small Ranch house. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Although this modern replacement siding has a different finish than historic wood siding, the texture and dimensions make it a viable replacement for wood cladding too deteriorated to repair or preserve. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Painting helps maintain exterior wood cladding. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Exterior Wall Materials

Wood

Wood is the one of the most commonly used exterior wall materials with wood siding and wood shingles being two of the most common types of wood wall material. Wood exterior materials contribute greatly to the integrity and character of historic buildings. Guidelines on proper treatment of historic wood cladding are as follows:

Recommended

- Identifying, maintaining, and preserving wood features that are important to the overall historic character of the house
- Cleaning wood features with a gentle, water-based cleanser on an as-needed basis
- Painting or staining existing wood features to protect the wood surface from UV and water damage
- Removing damaged, peeling, or deteriorated paint to the next sound layer by hand scraping or hand sanding and then repainting
- Repairing wood siding, shingles, and trim by using the same material to patch, consolidate, splice, and reinforce the existing historic material
- Repairing damaged or deteriorated wood features and selectively replacing where necessary by splicing in new replacement portions
- Replacing wood elements only when the existing wood is too deteriorated to repair
- When replacement wood is installed to replace deteriorated wood, the replacement pieces are painted or stained to match the adjacent pieces
- Replacing missing elements or damaged pieces to match the existing size, shape, width, profile, orientation, and installation method of the existing siding

Acceptable

- If replacing historic wood features, inspecting the existing historic features prior to covering or removal to determine the cause of any existing damage. Eliminate the source of the damage prior to installing new synthetic features
- When maintenance, repair, or in-kind replacement of the existing historic wood features is not feasible, use of a modern cladding material may be considered. It is recommended the new material be installed atop the existing wood material rather than removing the wood material before installation of the new material. The installation method is done in a manner where, in the future, the modern material could be removed, and the historic wood siding underneath could be restored
- Installing replacement wall material so as not to obscure existing character-defining trim details around windows, at edges of elevations, and around doors

Not Recommended

- Cleaning wood cladding with abrasive methods such as high-PSI pressure washing or media blasting
- Stripping paint from wood siding which was historically painted or leaving it as a 'natural' finish
- Covering architectural details such as trim, window and door hoods, or ornamental shingles with replacement siding
- Unnecessarily replacing historic siding or trim with modern materials which contributes to a loss of historic fabric and negatively impacts the integrity of a historic resource. If the existing cladding material is damaged beyond repair and must be removed, then replacement of the historic material may be considered



Narrow, historic wood siding and historic wood shingles. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Historic wood siding and decorative exterior details. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



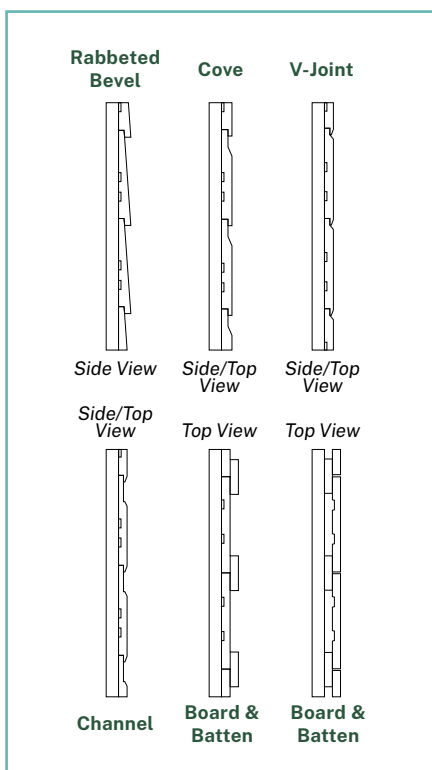
Historic wood siding and trim details create visual interest. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Exterior Wall Materials

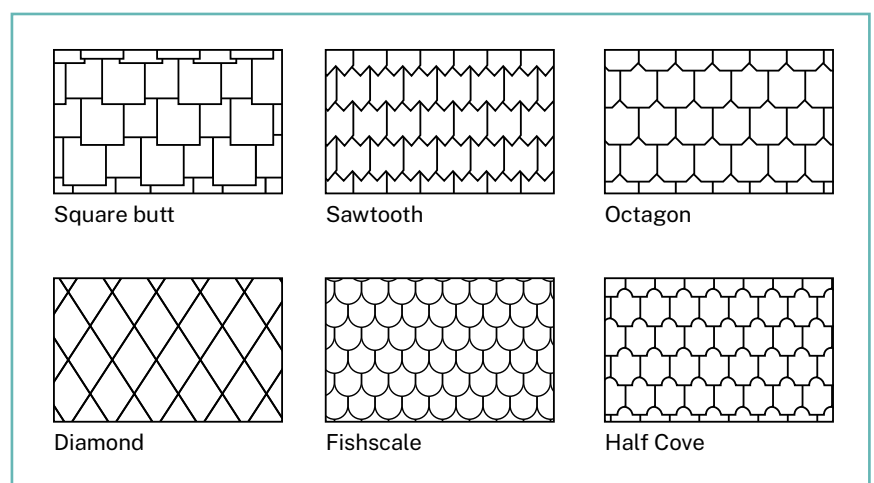
Wood



Installation of modern siding often obscures or results in the removal of character defining details.



Common Siding Profiles



Common Shingle Types

Exterior Wall Materials

Masonry

Masonry includes materials such as brick, stone, cement block, stucco, clay, ceramic tile, and terra-cotta. It also includes the mortar used to attach the masonry units to each other. Masonry is used in a variety of ways on residential buildings, most commonly used as the foundation and structural for residences, exterior cladding material, porches, and decorative details. Masonry is often a character defining feature of a historic residence and the preservation and maintenance of such masonry is critical for preserving the integrity of the structure.

Recommended

- Identifying, maintaining, and preserving historic masonry, mortar, and stucco, and decorative brick and stonework
- Only cleaning masonry to halt further deterioration or to remove stubborn stains and graffiti
- Cleaning masonry using the gentlest means possible, ideally a water-based cleanser and soft brush
- Repointing mortar that is missing or deteriorated or if sufficient mortar is missing to cause water infiltration into the wall system
- Repointing using a new mortar which matches the existing mortar compressive strength, composition, color, texture, joint size, joint profile, and method of application
- Replacing masonry units to match the existing in dimension, material, and profile
- Replacing damaged or deteriorated masonry to match the existing material including matching the existing installation method and course type

SPECIAL TIP: Mortar

- Historic mortars are often softer than modern day mortars. Mortars for repointing must be softer and more permeable than the masonry units and no harder or more impermeable than the historic mortar to prevent further damage to the wall assembly

Acceptable

- Removing paint from historically unpainted masonry with a gentle water-based or chemical-based detergent so long as the detergent does not damage the masonry. Always test removal methods on a small, inconspicuous area of the exterior
- Applying maintenance coats of paint to already painted masonry
- Replacing decorative masonry features which are missing or damaged beyond repair using accurate historic documentation of the historic feature, or, if historic documentation is not available, using a new design which is compatible with the existing historic structure

Not Recommended

- Using abrasive cleaning methods such as high-PSI pressure washers or media blast cleaning systems. These methods damage masonry materials, such as the face of brick, and contribute to spalling and future water infiltration
- Painting unpainted masonry. This can damage the existing material and lead to water being trapped in the masonry units which accelerates spalling and deterioration
- Applying stucco or parge to masonry not historically covered in these materials
- Installing vinyl siding atop water damaged masonry. This disguises the root problem and can lead to complete failure of the masonry
- Installing new decorative masonry features which appear falsely historic such as decorative sills, brackets, gargoyles, or lions



Patching historic brick with modern brick of a different color or texture on a highly visible elevation is not recommended. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Sandblasting and other abrasive cleaning methods will severely damage historic masonry as seen here at left. The hard exterior shell of the brick, known as the fire skin, has been destroyed. This brick will begin taking on water and will deteriorate quickly. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Brick and stone are common exterior wall materials in Birmingham. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Roofing, Gutters, Dormers, Chimneys

The roof, dormers, and chimney are highly visible, character defining features that contribute to the historic integrity of a house making their repair, maintenance, and preservation important. The roof and gutter system also provide a crucial defense against premature deterioration of materials on a home's exterior by shielding the house from the elements and moving water away from the house.

Recommended

- Identifying, retaining, 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
- If rebuilding a chimney is necessary, salvaging as much historic material as possible for use in the rebuilt chimney and rebuilding with in-kind materials
- Only replacing historic materials that are beyond repair and replacing historic materials with in-kind materials. If replacement of the historic material is not technically feasible, the replacement material is matched as closely as possible to the historic material in terms of color, texture, dimensions, and design

Acceptable

- Some historic roofing materials such as slate, wood shake, and clay tiles can be prohibitively expensive. 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
- Should a chimney no longer be in use, a chimney cap may be considered if it does not damage historic materials or detract from the chimney's design

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
- Removal or addition of prominent dormers, chimneys, or other roof elements such as towers or turrets that are incompatible with the house's design
- Using mortar for chimney repairs that does not match the historic mortar in color, hardness, or joint profile
- Not salvaging reusable historic materials when rebuilding a chimney
- Rebuilding a chimney with historically inappropriate materials and/or designs



Installation of a standing seam metal roof is not recommended on historic houses where a metal roof did not exist historically. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The maintenance, repair, and preservation of wood shingle roofs is recommended. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Hipped roof dormers are character defining elements of Craftsman style and Prairie style houses. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Porches, Decks, Patios, Balconies

Porches, decks, patios, and balconies are character defining features of historic houses and are therefore historically significant. Porches are located on the façade or street-facing elevation, whereas decks and patios are located at the rear of a house. Components of these features include flooring, railings, roofing, posts, beams, columns, skirts, and trim which may be constructed of wood, concrete block, brick, stone, or a combination of the aforementioned materials. Beyond aesthetics, they also serve as buffer space between the interior and exterior of a house, provide an outdoor shelter from weather and sun, and serve as a gathering and socializing space. In historic districts, the rhythmic streetscape created by the presence of porches, decks, patios, or balconies contributes to the historic character of the district. Some porches were enclosed in the early to mid-twentieth century and the enclosure has become historic in its own right. While enclosing historic porches is typically not recommended, in these circumstances the enclosure can be either retained or removed.

Recommended

- Identifying, retaining, 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
- Selectively replacing where necessary by splicing in new replacement materials. Replacement materials are minimally used only when the existing material is too deteriorated to repair
- Replacing missing elements or damaged pieces to match the material, existing size, shape, width, profile, orientation, and installation method of the existing materials
- Installing rear decks that are self-supporting so that historic materials are not damaged
- Retaining or removing porch enclosures which are historic in their own right

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
- Enclosing a porch, deck, patio, or balcony on a secondary elevation with screens or historically appropriate windows without damage to existing historic materials or obscuring character defining features
- Incorporation of safety features, such as handrails, in an unobtrusive manner that does not detract from character defining features



Large or small sheltered porches are characteristic of Craftsman, Queen Anne, Folk Victorian, and Folk styles and should therefore be preserved. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

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
- Removing a historic brick-faced concrete block porch and replacing it with a wood porch
- Enclosure of a historic porch, deck, patio, or balcony on a primary façade
- Enclosure of a porch, deck, patio, or balcony on a secondary elevation with non-transparent materials such as vinyl or aluminum siding
- Construction of a porch, deck, patio, or balcony that is out of line with the house's design, style, scale, or the historic district's design, style, and rhythmic streetscape

Porches, Decks, Patios, Balconies



It is not recommended that porches be enclosed, especially on the façade or highly visible elevations. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



It is not recommended that porches be enclosed, especially on the façade or highly visible elevations. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



It is recommended that historic rooftop balconies be preserved. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Replacement of the original porch columns is acceptable if the original columns are deteriorated beyond repair; however, it is recommended that replacement columns match the originals in terms of dimensions and detail. In the example above, the replacement columns are too slender for the porch. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Lighting

Historic residential lighting refers to features such as porch lights (both hanging and wall mounted), pole lights, lighting along pathways, and any other exterior lights on the historic property. Important elements of lighting include the lighting fixture's scale and design and the brightness of the light.

Recommended

- Identifying, retaining, 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
- If historic lighting has deteriorated beyond repair and must be replaced, the replacement lighting is an in-kind replacement

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
- Introducing exterior lighting on the property where none existed before so long as it is historically appropriate, complementing the style and rhythm of the historic district

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
- Installing flood lighting on the façade or side elevations



The use of exterior lighting as shown on this page is recommended. The design of the fixtures complements the style of each house, the size of each fixture is appropriate, and the lights are not overly bright. City of Birmingham, photos by KDG, 2022.



City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Awnings

Awnings shield window and door openings from the sun, especially on south-facing elevations or areas where there is little to no tree cover. In historic residences, canvas awnings are typically made of tightly woven canvas or corrugated aluminum. Awnings may be the same color as the exterior cladding or may provide contrast. Edges of awnings may also be scalloped or accentuated by various colors.

Awnings on houses which date back to the late 1800s and early 1900s likely used canvas awnings if any were present while houses dating to the mid-century (1940s and later) often used aluminum awnings. New awnings should use period appropriate materials.

Recommended

- Identifying, retaining, 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 and closely matches the historic material in terms of color, texture, design, and dimension
- Installing awnings on a house which historically had awnings but no longer does. Historic photographs or drawings should be utilized to match the historic configuration of the awnings. When

historic documentation does not exist, the new awnings should be simple in color, texture, and design so as not to distract from the historic features of the house

- Installing new awnings which fit within the existing window opening so as to preserve the rhythm of openings on the façade, are compatible in scale and form to the historic house, and use period appropriate materials

Not Recommended

- Adding awnings to window or doors that were not present historically
- Removing historic awnings
- Replacing historic awnings with historically inappropriate awnings
- Installing awnings that damage surrounding historic materials
- Installing awning supports through masonry units instead of mortar joints. Drilling into masonry can damage and deteriorate the building.

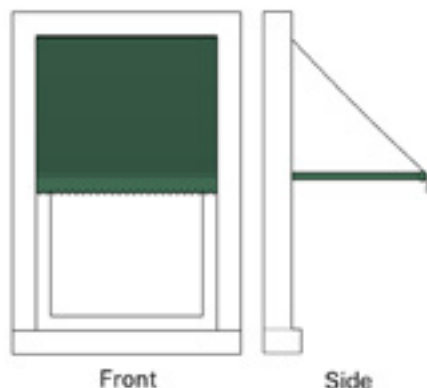


Historic residential awnings are illustrated in the above image. Triangular, striped fabric awnings with scalloped edges were commonly used on residences. Image is used courtesy of the Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Historic Awning Shapes and Materials

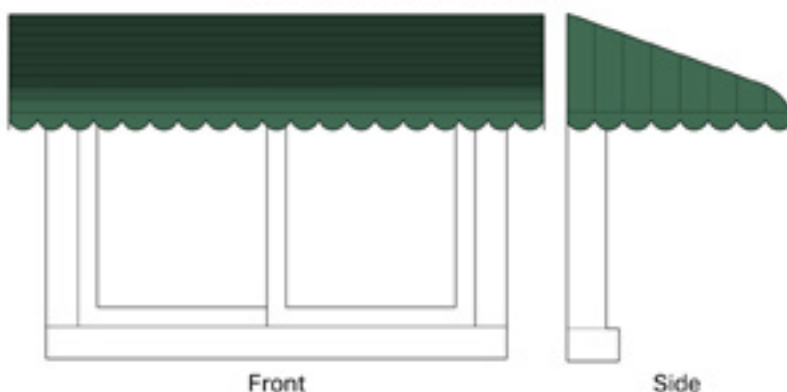
Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Centuries

Materials: Canvas



Mid- to Late-Twentieth Century

Materials: Aluminum, Fiberglass



Solar Panels

Installation of solar panels provide property owners with a means to harness renewable solar energy for their house's consumption. Solar panel installation is encouraged so long as the installation of solar panels or shingles does not destroy, damage, or obscure character defining features.

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
- Panels or shingles will be located in such an area that they are inconspicuous and obscured from public view, such as rear-facing roof slopes. When solar panels are being installed on side elevations, install near the rear of the elevation so as to be minimally visible from the right-of-way

Acceptable

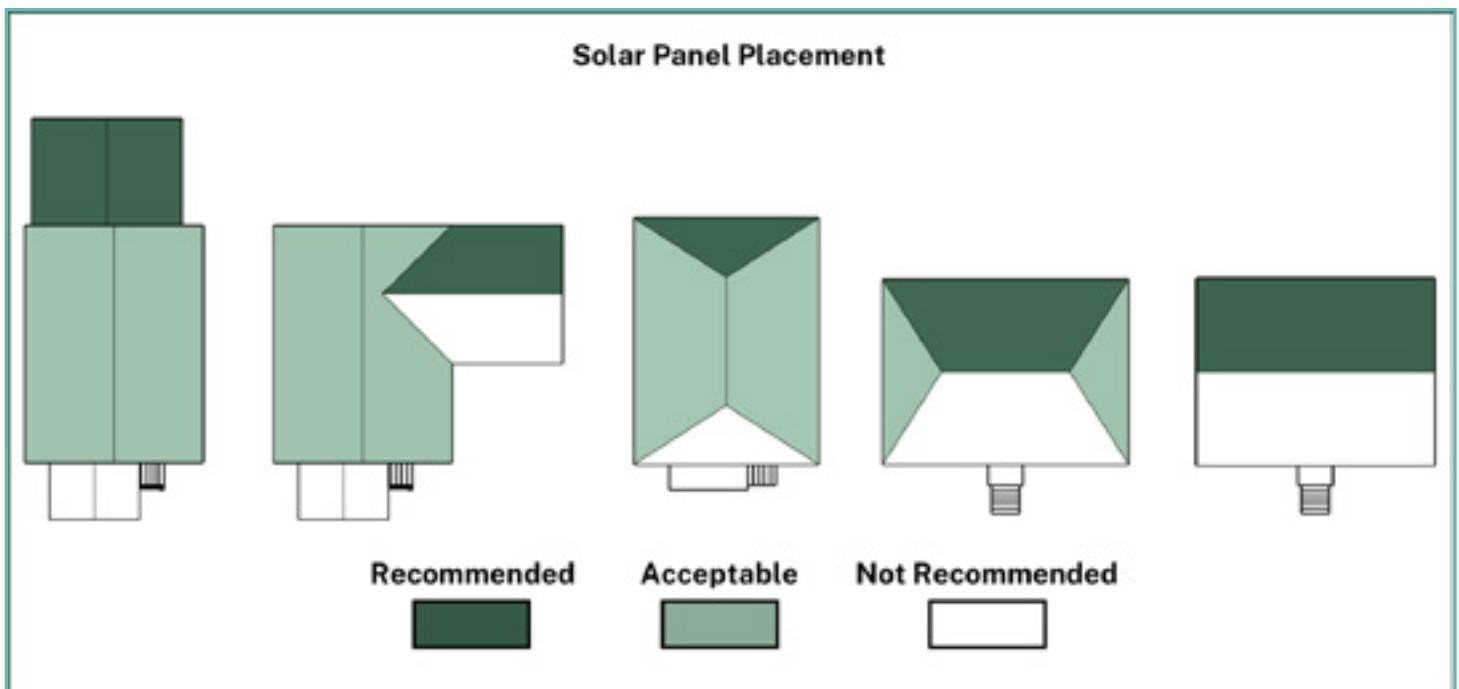
- Installation of solar panels on non-historic accessory buildings such as a modern garage or modern addition, as long as they are not conspicuously placed and highly visible from the public right-of-way

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



Solar panels placed in an acceptable location on the secondary plane of a side gabled roof, Google Image, 2022.



Accessory Structures

Accessory structures to historic properties include garages, sheds, and other miscellaneous outbuildings. These structures can be constructed of varying materials, but most are likely constructed of and clad in wood. While these structures are generally located at the rear of a property, their scale, style, and materials still contribute to the historic character of a property and historic district.

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
- Replacing missing elements or damaged pieces to match the existing size, shape, width, profile, orientation, and installation method of the existing material

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, but modern materials may be used as long as they are compatible with historic materials in terms of color, texture, design, and scale

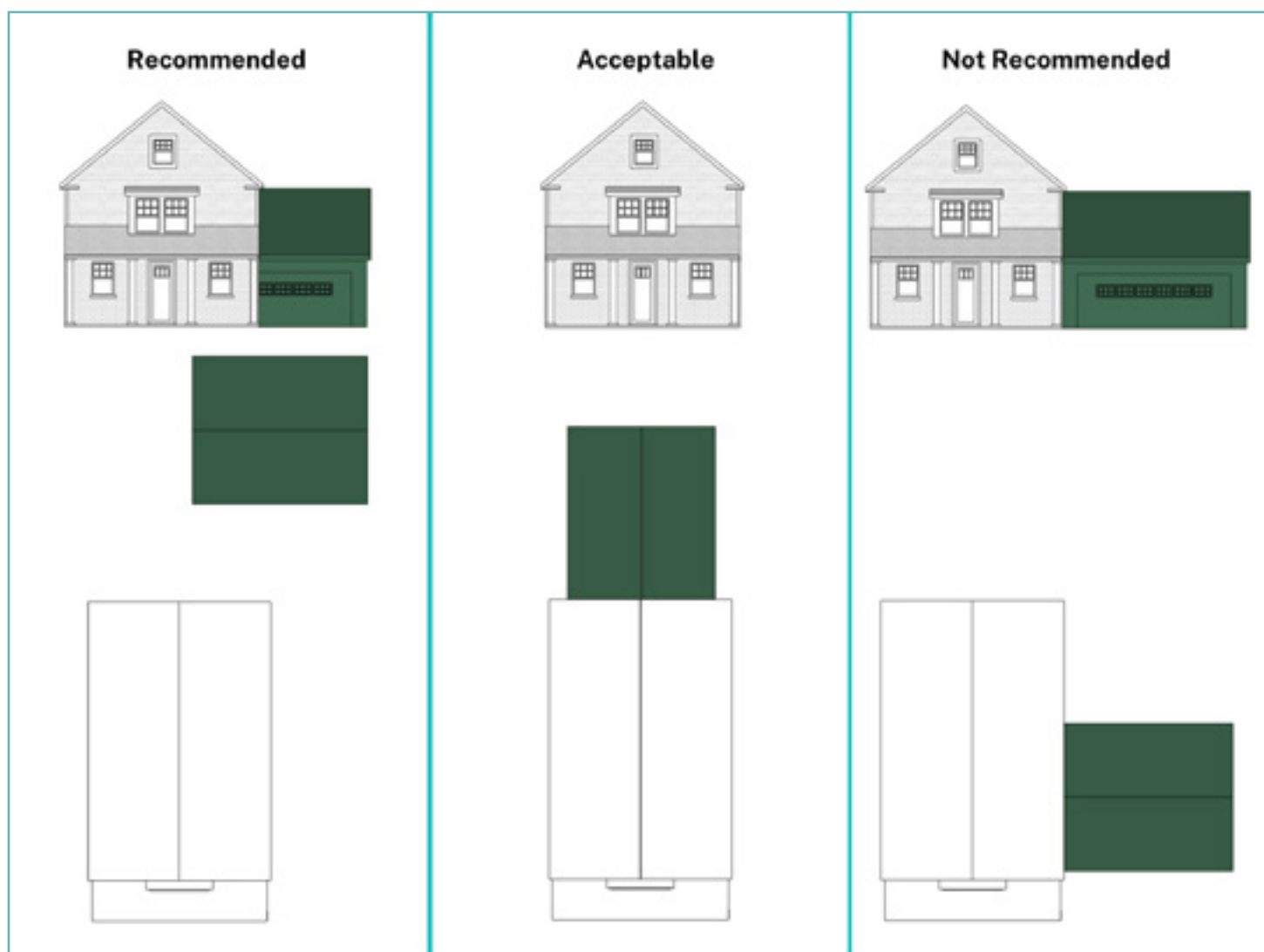
Not Recommended

- 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)
- Constructing a new accessory structure that is not compatible with historic precedent of placement. For example, if a carriage house was historically located to the east of the house, constructing a new accessory structure to the west of the house is not recommended
- Demolishing historic accessory structures
- Replacing historic materials that could have been repaired or salvaged with modern materials



It is recommended that accessory structures such as garages be secondary to the historic house and complementary in terms of scale, design, and color scheme. In the images above the garages are located at the rear of the property, behind the historic house. City of Birmingham, photos by KDG, 2022.

Accessory Structures



The recommended garage placement is at the rear of the property, where it is secondary to the house and may be visible from the street, as this placement follows historic norms of garage placement from the early-twentieth century. It is acceptable to attach the garage to the rear of the historic house. It is not recommended that the garage be placed near the front of the house in a highly visible location as the garage then detracts from the primacy of the historic house.

Evaluating Changes over Time

Buildings are not stagnant objects – they inevitably change over time. A building may be of an age where changes which occurred to the building are now historic in their own right and have gained significance over time. For example, say the owner of a 1920s Craftsman style bungalow enclosed the front porch in the 1940s. The enclosed porch, while not original to the building, could be considered historic. When evaluating a building to determine its key historic and significant characteristics, it is best practice to also contemplate the changes to the building that have occurred over time.

Things to Think About

- Has an alteration acquired historic significance in its own right?
- Was the person (property owner, architect, designer, etc.) who made the alteration significant?
- Does the alteration reflect an important theme or event in Birmingham's history?

Recommended

- Considering the full history of a house, including changes over time, when contemplating work to a historic house
- Retaining, repairing, and maintaining non-original features which are now considered historic due to age or significance

Not Recommended

- Removing architectural features which are historic but do not date to the original house construction date such as enclosed porches, landscape features, additions, or awnings
- Only contemplating original building features and characteristics when planning work to a house in a historic district



The screened and glazed porch of this Tudor Revival style house may have originally been open. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Enclosing porches for additional living space is particularly common on modest dwellings.



The enclosure of the historic, ogee arch loggia on this Greek Revival house occurred long ago and may now be considered part of the historic character of the house.

Maintenance

Adequate and timely maintenance of historic residential properties is key to ensuring the preservation of historic materials and features. Moreover, adequately maintaining a building helps avoid overwhelming and costly repairs, as small issues are resolved before they snowball into issues that appear unmanageable. Allowing a building fall into disrepair due to lack of maintenance can result in a loss of historic features and could prompt demolition by neglect which could result in fines.

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, checking for issues such as cracks, peeling paint, or cracked roof shingles or tiles. These features are not only character defining, but also protect the internal structure from the elements
- Repairing and maintaining materials and features according to the maintenance schedule and needs as identified through the building’s assessment

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



Maintaining the paint of exterior wood materials is a key component of historic house maintenance. Here, the exterior wood cladding, wood window trim wood windows, and storm windows require basic maintenance to continue functioning properly. City of Birmingham, photos by KDG, 2022.



Exterior elements of this house are well maintained and by regular painting and basic maintenance. City of Birmingham, photos by KDG, 2022.

Recommended Inspection Timetable			
Building Element	Frequency		
	6 months	Yearly	12-60 months
Windows and doors		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Roof coverings		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Sidings, stucco, and other claddings		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Masonry and mortar joints			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Painted wood elements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Painted masonry		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Roof coverings and roof features		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Gutters and downspouts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Flashings		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Chimneys - inspection from ground	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Chimneys - close inspection			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Porches, decks, patios, balconies		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Lighting and awnings		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Solar panels	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Accessory structures		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

The inspection timetable above is for reference only. [The National Park Service's Preservation Brief #47](#) provides additional information on the maintenance of historic buildings.

Additions

Additions to historic residences allow homeowners the ability to adapt their home to provide additional interior space. They can be compatible and complementary to historic resources when the new addition respects the scale, design, materials, and form of the attached historic house and the historic district as a whole. Conversely, the opposite can occur with new additions that subsume the historic structure or utilize a design and materials that do not complement surrounding historic houses, resulting in a loss of historic character. Therefore, the design, scale, massing, placement, and materials proposed for additions will be carefully considered.

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
- Additions incorporate materials or design elements from the historic portion of the house but do not strive to copy historic designs or attempt to appear “historic”
- Modern additions read as secondary to the historic structure in terms of size, scale, design, materials, and detailing

Acceptable

- Constructing additions that minimally impact historic materials and design elements
- Constructing an addition on a side elevation or the roof 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
- Constructing an addition that appears falsely historic by mimicking or replicating the historic portion of the house
- Building an addition on the façade of a house, or an inappropriately sized or designed addition highly visible from another street-facing elevation
- Disregarding historic materials and elements of design present in the historic structure when designing an addition



The addition of a large, shed roof dormer on the rear elevation is a recommended method for incorporating an addition into a historic resource. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

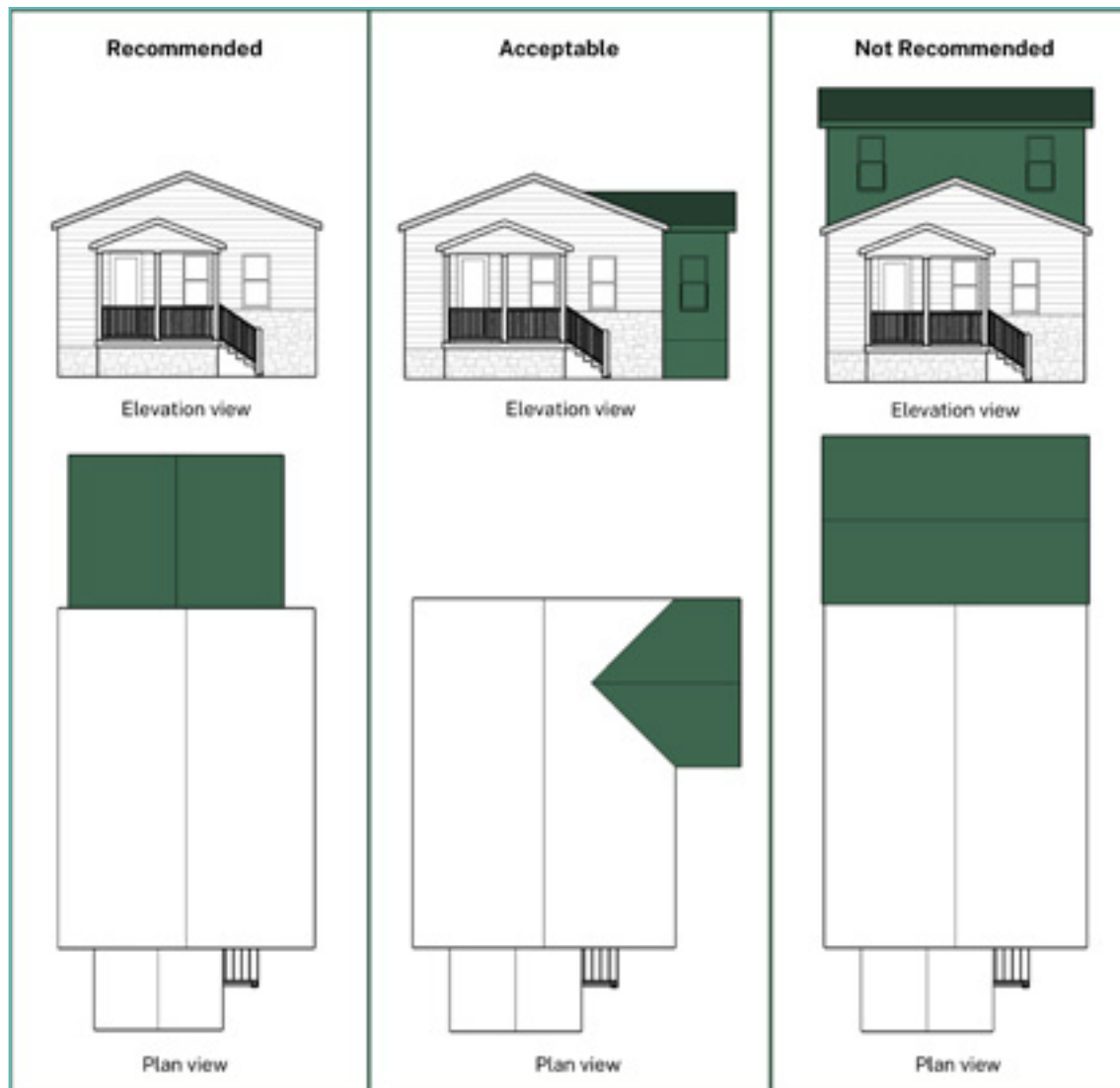


This second-story addition would not be recommended as it is highly visible. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Incorporating an addition onto the side elevation of a historic ensure the addition remains secondary to the house is acceptable. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

Additions



Additions located at the rear of a house are recommended, small scale additions to the side elevations of a house are acceptable, and additions that are highly visible and subsume the historic house are not recommended.



The right-half of the house pictured here is an addition that overwhelms and subsumes the historic residence. Additions that make the historic portion of the house appear secondary are not recommended. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.

PART 4:
**Applying Design
Guidelines to
Non-Historic Resources
within Historic Districts**

Part 4: Applying Design Guidelines to Non-Historic Resources within Historic Districts

In order to fulfill the Historic District Commission's (HDC) duty to preserve the historic character in historic districts, the HDC has the authority to review proposed work to non-historic resources within local historic districts so that the historic character of the district is preserved.

Owners of both historic and non-historic resources located in a designated historic district are obligated to uphold ordinary maintenance standards on the exterior. Ordinary maintenance does not change the external appearance of the resource except through the elimination of the usual and expected effects of weathering. The completion of ordinary maintenance does not interfere with the historic character of historic districts.

The HDC does have authority to review proposed work on all resources within a district, as work has the potential to detract from or contribute to the historic character of the overall district. The same [Standards](#) and 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 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.

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

Non-historic resources are resources deemed non-contributing to a historic district. Resources may be non-historic because they are less than 50 years old, do not conform to the district's period of significance, or have been altered resulting in a loss of historic character.



Birmingham's HDC has the authority to review new 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.

Overlay Districts

Overlay districts are used to apply an additional layer of standards to all areas within a defined overlay district boundary, regardless of the underlying base zoning district. In the context of historic preservation, overlay districts can be developed with the main goal of preserving the historic character of a specific area. Overlay districts with this goal may limit the height, number of stories, or areas of new development or additions to historic buildings in certain areas. The City of Birmingham currently has two overlay districts: the Downtown Birmingham Overlay District and the Triangle Overlay District. More information regarding these existing overlay districts may be found in the City's Zoning Ordinance.

PART 5: **Design Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts**

Part 5: Design Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts

All new construction in historic districts should be compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the property and the neighborhood. Taking cues from the historic resources in the district is a good way to ensure sensitive new construction in each district. Height and scale are two of the issues most cited by Birmingham residents as areas of concern surrounding new construction.

New construction should avoid the following:

1. **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.
2. **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 would be out-of-scale in a neighborhood of small cottages.
3. **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.

Before designing an infill building in a local historic district, developers contemplating a new construction project should take a series of steps to align their new development with the existing neighborhood.

1. Understand the historic neighborhood, including historic development patterns and typical architectural characteristics (including ornamentation and fenestration)
2. Study the site and the surrounding buildings, especially the height and scale
3. Review these design guidelines

The Secretary's Standards state that new construction should be compatible with historic resources yet easily distinguishable, so as not to appear falsely historic. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has published guidelines entitled, "Regulating New Construction in Historic Districts," for evaluating new construction in historic districts.

New construction infill should be FRESH!

F – Footprint and Foundation. The footprint and foundation of the new structure should be similar to the ones surrounding the new structure.

R – Roof Shape. The new roof should match existing roofs in pitch, complexity, and orientation.

E – Envelope. If you shrink-wrapped a building and removed everything but the shrink-wrap, that is the envelope. The new structure should match the existing ones in projections, height, bulk, relationships between height and width, etc.

S – Skin. What is the envelope clad in? What is the surface material and what are its characteristics? New structures should be clad in a visually and physically similar material.

H – Holes. Where are the doors, windows, attic vents, etc? How are they divided and segmented? Is it an asymmetrical arrangement or is it more symmetrical?

Courtesy of the National Trust for Historic Preservation

Façade Composition and Building Massing

Part of what makes both residential and commercial historic districts unique and cohesive is the complementary building massing, setbacks, and façade composition of buildings within the district. Buildings that deviate from the norms of the surrounding district often appear out of place and may obstruct historic, character defining elements of the district. The [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#) and the [Secretary's Standards](#) provide guidance for infill and new construction in historic districts, stating that infill and new construction conform to the norms set by surrounding historic resources in terms of massing, setback, and facade composition. These elements are important to preserve the historic character of the district.

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 the ratio of the building's footprint to lot size similar to historic resources in the historic district

Not Recommended

- Constructing new buildings that are outside the range sizes of surrounding historic resources
- Designing new buildings with massing and scale that is not compatible with the historic district or obscures historic buildings

The [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#) recommends that the massing and scale of new construction fall within the range of massing and scale of surrounding historic resources.



The scale and massing of this newer, non-historic building significantly differs in size from the surrounding Central Business District Historic District as it is both taller than any of the historic structures and much larger. The historic buildings in the Central Business District are primarily comprised of two and three story buildings. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



Construction of the new home at right would not be recommended in a historic district containing modestly scaled homes, as shown at left. The scale of the new construction overwhelms neighboring homes. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



The facades of historic residential buildings, including the arrangement of doors and windows, lend character to residential historic districts. It is recommended that new construction complement the existing rhythmic pattern of the facades of existing houses. It is not recommended that the façade of new construction include overly large windows, windowless expanses, or an arrangement of exterior doors and windows that disrupts the existing streetscape.

Façade Composition and Building Massing



It is recommended that new construction in historic commercial districts take cues from existing historic buildings concerning massing, by ensuring that roof types and shapes of new construction are similar to existing buildings. It is not recommended that new construction employ shapes and roof types that do not complement neighboring buildings.



It is recommended that new construction in historic commercial districts respect the scale of existing buildings. Most of the historic commercial buildings in Birmingham's Central Business Historic District are 1 to 3 stories tall; therefore, new construction should stay within this height range. It is not recommended that new construction be at such a scale that neighboring buildings are overwhelmed.

New Construction in Historic Residential Districts

New construction in historic residential settings can either enhance a historic district by respecting the scale, design, materials, and style of existing housing, or it can greatly detract from the historic atmosphere of a district. The goal of historic preservation is not to arrest new development or new construction, but rather guide it in a manner that preserves existing historic resources and enhances historic 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 historic resources
- 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. For example, placing the garage in a prominent location on the façade of a new residence in an early-twentieth century neighborhood is not recommended.



It is recommended that new construction in residential settings take cues from existing housing. In this example, the new construction shown in green is complementary in scale, shape, massing, and setback from the street compared to the existing house in the center.



It is recommended that new construction in historic residential districts take cues from existing historic residences concerning scale and massing. It is recommended that roof types of new construction are similar to existing housing, and that the scale of new construction does not overwhelm neighboring houses. It is not recommended that new construction be of such a scale that it overwhelms existing houses or that its massing alters the historic streetscape.



New residential construction, shown in green, is not recommended. The scale of the new construction overwhelms the existing housing and is not complementary in terms of massing, shape, or setback from the street. This type of new construction negatively impacts the character of historic neighborhoods.

New Construction in Historic Commercial Districts

New construction in historic commercial settings can either enhance a historic district by respecting the scale, design, materials, and style of existing buildings, or it can greatly detract from the historic atmosphere of a district. The goal of historic preservation is not to arrest new development or new construction, but rather guide it in a manner that preserves existing historic resources and enhances historic districts.

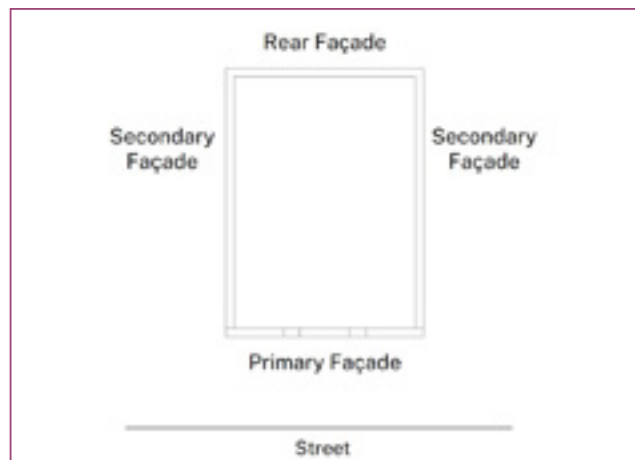
Additionally, it is not recommended that new construction involve the demolition of a historic commercial structure or the infill of a historically open space. It should also not cause damage to or obscure existing historic structures around the new building.

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



The portion of the exterior of a building facing the street is known as the primary façade. The primary façade is often the most elaborately decorated portion of a building. Secondary façades and the rear façade are often less decorated and more utilitarian in design and embellishment.



New construction in historic commercial districts should be complementary in size, scale, and façade composition to existing commercial buildings. Construction of buildings that are out of scale in terms of height to surrounding buildings is not recommended, whereas new construction that is comparable in terms of height is recommended.



The facades of historic commercial buildings are usually characterized by their expanses of windows and presence of storefronts. It is recommended that new construction complement these historic norms with the inclusion of windows and storefronts that complement the rhythmic pattern of the existing buildings. It is not recommended that the façade of new construction include large, windowless expanses, exterior doors without a surrounding storefront, or a façade composition that disrupts the existing streetscape.

New Construction in Historic Commercial Districts

Parking Structures

Parking structures and parking areas may be necessary features that lend support to the commercial establishments within a historic district. However, incorporation of these features into, or near, historic districts should not result in the removal or obstruction of historic resources.

Recommended

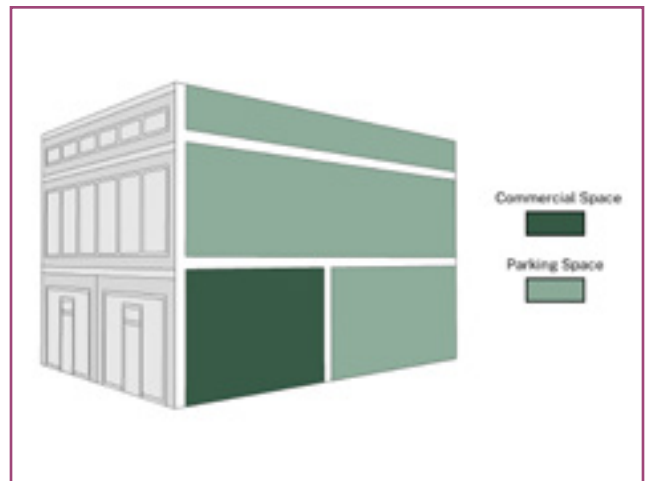
- Designing and constructing parking structures that respect the existing scale, forms, setbacks, style, materials, and streetscape rhythm of existing historic resources
- Maintaining the rhythm of the streetscape, notably the presence of commercial space along the sidewalk, when incorporating a new parking structure into to a historic district
- 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 historic buildings, the sidewalk, and the street
- Only constructing parking areas in spaces not occupied by historic structures or historically open space
- Incorporating a parking garage in an unobtrusive location that does not detract from the historic character of the district.

Not Recommended

- Demolishing historic structures or infilling historically open space to construct surface parking or a parking structure
- Constructing a parking structure that is not compatible with surrounding buildings in terms of scale, form, setback, style, and streetscape rhythm
- Not incorporating street level commercial space into a new parking structure



The Pierce Street Garage, a Brutalist style parking structure, would not be recommended in a historic district since it does not incorporate street level commercial space. City of Birmingham, photo by KDG, 2022.



It is recommended that new parking structures in historic commercial districts provide commercial space at street level to maintain the historic streetscape.

PART 6:
**Design Guidelines for
Landscapes and Open
Space**

Part 6: Design Guidelines for Landscapes and Open Space

Site and landscape features contribute to the historic character of properties in historic districts. When looking at a historic landscape consider the following features: topography, vegetation, spatial organization and land patterns, circulation patterns, water features, and structures, furnishings and objects. Historic landscape features include fences, vegetation, stone walls, and mature trees and hedges. Work performed in historic districts should respect the character of the landscape and site features.

Man-made landscape features such as fencing or walls are used as a barrier to define boundaries, screen off, or enclose portions of a property. Historic fencing and walls should be retained, preserved, and repaired.

Mature trees, the contour of a landscape, or significant viewsheds and vistas are memorable parts of historic neighborhoods and streets. Natural and man-made landscapes are often character defining features of historic districts and should be preserved and maintained. The introduction of new site features should respect the existing landscape and the existing historic features so as to complement the existing landscape patterns and character of the historic district.

For more information on historic landscapes see the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes](#).

Recommended

- Complying with Birmingham's Tree Preservation Ordinance and Birmingham's fencing guidelines in the City's Zoning Ordinance
- Retaining and maintaining historic site features and landscapes such as fences, trees, hedges, stone walls, and open spaces
- Repairing and maintaining historic fencing, walls, and other historic built site features
- Locating new fences on the setback line and on the lot line
- Retaining relationships between buildings, landscape features, and open spaces

- 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
- Consider permeable surfaces or hardscaping with permeable qualities for patios and drives to improve runoff capabilities of the site

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
- Installing fencing of material that is incompatible with the character of the historic district, such as chain link fencing in the front yard

- Introducing new plant material that is out of character, scale, pattern, or vista with the surrounding historic district
- Introducing new landscaping which destroys site patterns or vistas or conceals character-defining features of the building or site



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.

PART 7:
**Emerging Issues in
Historic Preservation**

New and Alternative Materials

Restoration and repair of historic and existing materials is always recommended but is not always possible. Occasionally, in-kind material can no longer be sourced, artisan craftspeople are not locally available, or a feature is deteriorated beyond repair. **Only after all repair or restoration alternatives are explored should substitute materials be considered.** Substitute materials should match the historic material as best as possible in size, texture, color and profile. The following sections outline new and alternative materials which may be contemplated for work on historic buildings and explains the benefits and disadvantages of each.

As this outline is not exhaustive and new materials are continuously developed, consider the following when contemplating the use of new and alternative materials:

- The reversibility of the new material's installation
- Ensure installation of the new material does not damage historic materials or features
- The ability of the new material to match the historic material in terms of texture, color, size, and profile.

Cladding and Architectural Elements

• **Vinyl Siding:** Vinyl siding is an abundant and amply used material. Vinyl siding often lacks the texture found on historic wood siding and thus not a suitable replacement material when wood siding is found to be deteriorated beyond repair. Synthetic siding such as vinyl has a much shorter potential life span than wood siding and can introduce additional maintenance concerns to a historic building. Vinyl is prone to cracking when impacted, deteriorates with exposure to extreme temperature, and has a high co-efficient of expansion and contraction.

• **Cast Stone:** Cast stone is a cement, lime, and aggregate mixture which is dry-tamped into a mold to produce a dense stone-like unit. Cast stone is often a suitable substitute material when new in-kind stone cannot be sourced. Cast stone expands and contracts similarly to stone and adequately replicates stone texture when good molds are used. Work on historic buildings which use cast stone should consider if the cast stone will require additional anchorage due to its weight and consider that cast stone may be more absorbent than natural stone

• **Cementitious Siding:** Cementitious siding is a popular alternative material for exterior siding and shingles to replace historic wood siding and for new construction. Cementitious siding is often marketed as a sustainable cladding alternative although its use of cement indicates the production process is water intensive. Smooth-surfaced cementitious siding is able to achieve the dimension, profile, and reveal of historic wood siding making it a suitable choice when in-kind wood siding is not obtainable.

• **Glass Fiber Reinforced Plastic (GFRP):** Fiberglass, and glass fiber reinforced plastic and polymer products, are typically produced as a thin rigid laminate shell formed by pouring a polyester or epoxy resin gel-coat into a mold. The resulting GFRP cast product is usually then attached to a distinct structural frame and anchored to the building. GFRP is a suitable product to replicate ornate and carved building

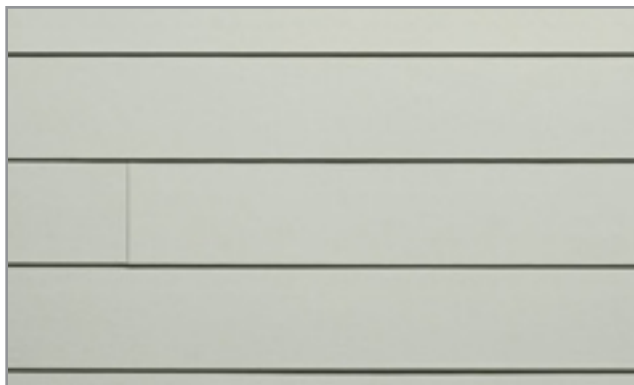
elements which are missing or deteriorated beyond repair. Its lightweight nature, the ability to apply integral color, and its non-corrosive nature makes it easy to install and maintain. When historic architectural elements like cornices or column capitals are deemed too deteriorated to repair and GFRP replacements are considered, the anchorage system and the high co-efficient of expansion and contraction in the material should be contemplated.

Porch and Deck Flooring

• **Composite Decking:** Composite decking is a popular alternative to exterior wood flooring and decking applications. Composite decking boards are the combination of two or more materials – typically wood fibers and a form of plastic. High density polyethylene (HDPE) or polyvinyl chloride (PVC) are mixed with wood fiber and chemical additives to create a strong and durable wood alternative. Composite decking is often resistant to fading and wear and tear of traditional wood decking although can be costly and has high rates of expansion and contraction to be considered during installation. Wood is preferred to composite decking but composite decking can be considered on applications that are on secondary or tertiary facades or minimally visible from the public right-of-way, for example a deck in the back yard.



Selecting historically appropriate colors, dimensions, and textures can make the use of composite decking a viable alternative if repair or replacement of a historic wood porch or patio is not possible. Photo courtesy of Buck the Builder.



Cementitious siding that matches historic wood siding in terms of texture, color, and dimensions can be used as an alternative when the repair or replacement of historic wood siding is not possible.

New and Alternative Materials

Roofing

- **Metal Roofing:** Metal roofs are a popular roofing material both on new construction and as replacement roofs on historic houses. Metal roofing is distinct in appearance from historic roofing materials such as cedar, slate, or asphalt and as such often is not able to match the color, profile, and texture of a historic roof. The distinct appearance of a metal roof means it is often not a suitable choice on historic buildings. Additionally, new construction in historic districts which introduce metal roofing distract from the cohesive architectural character of a historic district.

- **Synthetic Slate Roof Shingles:** Slate is a common historic roofing material which is long-lasting and durable although does occasionally need to be repaired or replaced during a building's lifespan. When original slate roofing cannot be repaired and in-kind replacement is not feasible, synthetic slate roof shingles are a suitable substitution material. Synthetic slate roofs have a much lower cost than slate although should only be proposed after best efforts have been made to restore the historic slate material or to source actual slate.

- **Solar Roofs and Shingles:** Solar roofs are an excellent way to harness green energy. Design guidelines for solar roof placement is found elsewhere in this document. Several solar system manufacturers often solar shingle products which are better able to mimic the look of a historic shingled roof. Solar shingles are sized to look like traditional shingled roofing products. Similarly sized metal panels can be used where solar cells can't perform for a more consistent appearance on each roof slope. Solar shingles and tiles should be considered in lieu of traditional solar panels when work is contemplated to introduce sustainable measures into a historic building.

Windows

- **Vinyl Windows:** Historic windows are a defining architectural characteristic of historic buildings. Replacement vinyl windows typically cannot match the color, texture, and trim profiles of historic wood windows. Similarly, simulated divided lites do not have the same profile or depth of mullions on historic windows. For this reason, vinyl windows are not recommended to replace historic windows.

- **Aluminum Clad Windows:** Historic windows should always be evaluated to determine if repair or in-kind replacement is possible. If for some reason this is not feasible, one potential solution is aluminum clad windows. Aluminum clad windows consist of wooden or vinyl frames with a protective aluminum shell on the outside. The aluminum cladding can often be made to mimic the profile and depth of historic wood window frames and comes in a variety of colors – which are enamel baked on. Aluminum clad windows are a suitable solution to achieve appropriate color and profile on replacement windows when repair or new wood windows cannot be sourced.

- **Vacuum Insulated Glass (VIG):** Most historic windows are single panes of glass and lack the thermal efficiency in modern windows. Vacuum insulated glass (VIG) is a solution to increase the thermal performance of a historic window while retaining the existing single pane window frame. VIG is an insulated glass with a vacuum layer between two panes of glass to minimize the thickness of the double pane. The vacuum layer reduces the thickness to the point where a VIG unit can fit in a historic windowpane designed for single pane glass. VIG glass is an excellent product to increase efficiency while maintaining historic windows.

- **Fiberglass Windows:** Fiberglass windows are a potential replacement solution for historic windows which have been determined to not be repairable and replacement in-kind is not an option. Fiberglass windows tend to be more expensive than vinyl windows but less expensive than aluminum clad windows. Fiberglass windows are durable and sturdier than vinyl windows and are considered low maintenance. One drawback to fiberglass windows is that most manufacturers cannot produce the custom or unique shapes and profiles meaning that true historic replica windows can be difficult to achieve with this product. Aluminum clad windows can be a preferred alternative to achieve a price replica of the profiles and look of the original windows.



If repair or replacement of historic windows is not feasible, aluminum clad windows provide a potential solution that are capable of achieving the profile, depth, and colors of historic windows. Photo courtesy of AVI Windows and Doors.

Facadectomy

Facadism or facadectomy is the act of retaining the façade of a building while demolishing and reconstructing a new internal structure behind the original front facing elevation. The facadectomy is often a proposed concept to maintain what is perceived to be the most significant aspects of a historic building, the front elevation, while allowing for complete design freedom behind. Facadism is not an appropriate method of historic preservation as it strips buildings of their contents and context – it retains the ‘thing’ without retaining the actual experience of it. It is not recommended to use the method of facadectomy on a historic building, instead whole building preservation is strongly encouraged where possible.

Preservation of the Everyday

Historic preservation has evolved beyond only recognizing high style architecture or the buildings designed and occupied by the wealthy. Buildings lived in and built by ordinary people living ordinary lives are just as exceptional and worthy of preservation as they tell the story of the development of a place and the people who lived there. Everyday architecture, from small bungalows to humble commercial buildings, can use these design guidelines to ensure their preservation.

Historic Districts and Increasing Density

It is a unique design challenge to increase housing density in historic residential districts. Accessible dwelling units, including small housing units above garages or as newly constructed units in back yards, are a popular solution to increasing housing density. When accessible dwelling units are proposed, they should abide by these design guidelines particularly the recommendations for new construction in historic districts and for accessory structures in residential historic districts. These guidelines should adequately guide the introduction of housing density in historic districts when and if it is ever proposed.

Modern Architecture

Modern style architecture building from around 1950 through the 1970s is now coming of age to be considered historic. When contemplating work to a Modern style building, regardless of if it is in a historic district or not, the design guidelines are an excellent resource to guide proposed work. Additionally, Modern style additions or architectural features to historic buildings should be considered and should be retained, repaired, and preserved when work is proposed.

PART 8: **Definitions and Resources**

Appendix A: Definitions

Historic District Ordinance Definitions

Alteration means work that changes the detail of a resource but does not change its basic size or shape.

Certificate of appropriateness means the written approval of a permit application for work that is appropriate and does not adversely affect a resource.

Commission means the historic district commission of the city.

Committee means a historic district study committee appointed by the city commission pursuant to Section 127-4.

Demolition means the razing or destruction, whether entirely or in part, of a resource and includes, but is not limited to, demolition by neglect.

Demolition by neglect means neglect in maintaining, repairing, or securing a resource that results in deterioration of an exterior feature of the resource or the loss of structural integrity of the resource.

Denial means the written rejection of a permit application for work that is inappropriate and that adversely affects a resource.

Eco City means the area in Birmingham generally bound by: the intersection of 14 Mile Road and Woodward Avenue west to Grant Street; north on Grant Street to Lincoln Street; east on Lincoln Street to Adams Road; north on Adams Road to Holland Street; east on Holland Street to Torry Street; and south on Torry Street to Emmons Avenue. Eco City is also known as the Leinbach-Humphrey Woodward Avenue Subdivision and contains a collection of bungalows developed by Leinbach-Humphries Company in the early 1900s.

Fire alarm system means a system designed to detect and annunciate the presence of fire or by-products of fire. Fire alarm system includes smoke alarms.

Historic district means an area or group of areas, not necessarily having contiguous boundaries, that contains one resource or a group of resources that are related by history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and/or culture.

Historic preservation means the identification, evaluation, establishment, and protection of resources significant in history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and/or culture.

Historic resource means a publicly or privately owned building, structure, site, object, feature, or open space that is significant in the history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and/or culture of the city, state, or the United States.

Notice to proceed means the written permission to issue a permit for work that is inappropriate and that adversely affects a resource, pursuant to a finding under Section 399.205(6) of [Public Act 169 of 1970](#), as amended.

Open space means undeveloped land, a naturally landscaped area, or a formal or man-made landscaped area that provides a connective link or buffer between other resources.

Ordinary maintenance means keeping a resource unimpaired and in good condition through ongoing minor intervention, undertaken from time to time, in its exterior condition. Ordinary maintenance does not change the external appearance of the resource except through the elimination of the usual and expected effects of weathering. Ordinary maintenance does not constitute work for the purposes of this Chapter 127.

Proposed historic district means an area or group of areas, not necessarily having contiguous boundaries, that have delineated boundaries and that is under review by a committee or a standing committee for the purpose of making a recommendation as to whether it should be established as a historic district or added to an established historic district.

Repair means to restore a decayed or damaged resource to good or sound condition by any process. A repair that changes the external appearance of a resource constitutes work for the purposes of this chapter.

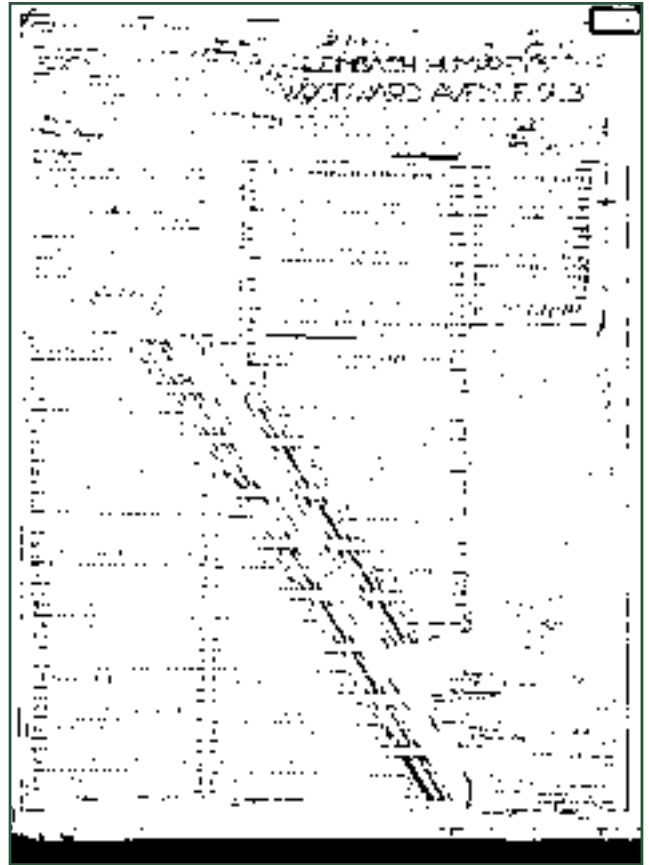
Resource means one or more publicly or privately owned historic or non-historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, features, or open spaces located within a historic district.

Appendix A: Definitions

Smoke alarm means a single-station or multiple-station alarm responsive to smoke and not connected to a system. As used in this subsection, "single-station alarm" means an assembly incorporating a detector, the control equipment, and the alarm sounding device into a single unit, operated from a power supply either in the unit or obtained at the point of installation. "Multiple-station alarm" means two or more single-station alarms that are capable of interconnection such that actuation of one alarm causes all integrated separate audible alarms to operate.

Wallace Frost is the Birmingham architect (1892-1962) who worked with Albert Kahn and designed 44 houses in or near Birmingham. In 1992, the Birmingham Historic District Commission published a report titled "Wallace Frost: His Architecture in Birmingham, Michigan" which includes an exhaustive list of Frost designed houses in Birmingham.

Work means construction, addition, alteration, repair, moving, excavation, or demolition.



The Leinbach-Humphrey's Woodward Avenue Subdivision plat from 1921, containing Birmingham's Eco City. Office of Land Surveys and Remonumentation, Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs.

Appendix A: Definitions

Common Architectural Terms

Bargeboard: A sometimes richly ornamented board placed on the verge (incline) of a gable to conceal the ends of rafters. Also known as vergeboard.

Board and Batten: A siding consisting of vertical boards and thin strips, or battens; the battens are used to conceal the gaps between the siding boards.

Brackets: Ornamental supports, usually of wood or pressed metal, which appear at the cornice line of a building. They may be incised into a scrolled pattern or be more simply molded and are commonly found on Italianate style buildings, but often appear with other styles as well.

Casement: A window sash that opens on hinges fixed to its vertical edge.

Chimneys: A structure containing one or more flues through which smoke and fumes from fireplaces, furnaces, or boilers escape to the outside. A chimney also provides a draft for fireplaces.

Clapboard: Siding consisting of boards that are thicker on one edge than the other the bottom (thick) edge of one board overlaps the top (thin) edge of the board below.

Column: A pillar, usually circular in plan.

Coping: The protective uppermost course of a wall or parapet projects beyond the wall surface to throw off rain. Also known as a cap.

Corbel: A projecting block, sometimes carved or molded, that acts as a means of support for floor and roof beams as well as other structural members.

Cornice: A cornice is the finished edge of the roof where it meets the exterior wall, of varying sizes, sometime plain, but often decorative and marked by brackets, dentils, modillions, or some other decorative feature.

Cresting: Roof cresting is a lacy decorative fencing made of wrought iron, rimming the edge or peak of a roof.

Cupola: A cupola is a decorative, small, projecting tower at the top of the roof of a building, often square, round, or octagonal in shape.

Decorative Half-timbering: A method of surface decoration that imitates true half-timber construction. Half-timbering was common in sixteenth and seventeenth century England, in which the spaces between the vertical structural timbers were filled with brickwork or plaster.

Dormer: A window projecting from the slope of a roof; usually provided with its own roof.

Drip Cap: A usually small horizontal drip located above a door or window casing; designed to shed water, causing it to drip beyond the outside of the frame.

Eaves: The portion of the roof which overhangs the exterior walls, sometimes with exposed rafters.

Eyelid Dormer: A half-elliptical decorative window placed in the roof surface, resembling the shape of an eye.

Façade: The face of a building, usually referring to the front.

Fanlight: A semi-circular (fan shaped) window placed atop a door, commonly seen in Federal and Colonial Revival style buildings.

Fascia Board: A flat board used to cover the ends of roof rafters.

Fenestration Pattern: The arrangement of windows and other exterior openings on a building.

Finial: An ornament that caps a gable, hip, pinnacle, or other architectural feature.

Fixed Sash: A fixed frame window (or part of a window) that does not open.

Frieze: Any plain decorative band, or board, on the top of a wall immediately below the cornice; sometimes decorated with brackets, dentils, or modillions. Porch cornices may likewise be decorated with friezes of spindle work.

Gable: The triangular end of an exterior wall in a building with a ridged roof.

Gable Roof: A sloping (ridged) roof that terminates at one or both ends in a gable.

Gambrel Roof: A roof having a double slope on two sides of a building.

Hip Roof: A roof formed by four pitched roof surfaces.

Lintel: The horizontal structural member that supports a load over an opening; usually made of wood, stone, or steel; may be exposed or obscured by wall covering.

Lites: Glass windowpanes

Masonry: A type of construction using stone, brick, tile, or concrete block using mortar.

Appendix A: Definitions

Molding (Trim): A decorative raised surface along the edge of an architectural feature such as a window, column, door, or wall.

Mortar: A mixture of sand, water, lime, and cement used to lay bricks, stone, tile, or concrete block.

Mullion: A vertical bar between coupled windows.

Muntins: The wooden divisions between panes of glass on windows.

Ogee Arch: A center pointed arch with reverse curve sides.

Palladian Window: A three-part, round-arched window, named for the 15th century Italian architect Andreas Palladino, also known as a Venetian Window and common in the Georgian and Colonial Revival styles.

Parapet: A parapet is a low stone or brick wall at the top of a building.

Pediment: A triangular space created by a front facing gable roof.

Pewabic Pottery: Ceramics designed and produced by Pewabic Pottery, a Detroit based pottery founded in 1903. Pewabic pottery has gained local architectural significance and its tiles are often incorporated into commercial facades or fireplace surrounds in metro Detroit locales.

Pilaster: A narrowly protruding column attached to a wall, giving the illusion of a free-standing column.

Pointed Arch: An arch with a strong center point, usually seen in Gothic Revival style buildings.

Porch: A covered space outside the main walls of a building.

Portico: A small entrance porch.

Quoins: Decorative rectangles or squares of stone, brick, wood, or concrete, placed at the corners of buildings to add architectural interest.

Rafters: The wooden structural support beams for a roof, sometimes visible on the exterior for certain building types and styles.

Roof: Roofs can be steep, flat, or gently sloped and take many forms such as gable, gambrel, hipped, stepped gable, shed, pent or Mansard. The roof type is an important key to identifying the style of a building.

Round Arch: A semicircular arch over a window or door.

Segmental Arch: A slightly rounded arch over a window or door.

Sash: The framework into which the glass panes of a window are set.

Sill: The flat horizontal bottom piece of a window or door on the exterior. It is often wood, but sometimes of stone.

Stoop: The uncovered wide step leading into the front or main door of a building.

Stories: The number of stories a building reflects its height by counting the stacked floors. If a building has dormer windows inset into the roof, that top section of the building is called a 1/2 story.

Stucco: A coating of plaster applied over exterior walls.

Terra Cotta: A fine-grained fired clay product used on the exterior of buildings; may be glazed or unglazed, molded or carved.

Transom Light: A flat, glass panel above a door, usually multi-paned.

Trim (Molding): A decorative raised surface along the edge of an architectural feature such as a window, column, door, or wall.

Tudor Arch: A flattened arch with a center point above a door or window, commonly seen in Tudor Revival style buildings.

Weatherboard: An exterior horizontal wooden board applied with the lower edge overlapping the board below used to form exterior walls (wider and less shaped than a clapboard, although used for the same purpose).

Appendix B: Links to Resources

The links below connect to helpful resources regarding the maintenance, repair, and preservation of materials, buildings, and sites.

Historic Preservation in Birmingham

A section of the City of Birmingham's website is dedicated to historic preservation.

https://www.bhamgov.org/about_birmingham/city_departments/planning_department/historic_preservation/index.php

Michigan State Historic Preservation Office

Michigan's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) maintains a website with preservation resources.

<https://www.mipace.org/historic-preservation/>

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation provide direction in making appropriate choices in planning the repairs, alterations, and additions that may be part of a rehabilitation project. The National Park Service also publishes Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings which describe specific treatments that do and do not meet the Standards.

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/secretary-standards-treatment-historic-properties.htm>

Grimmer, Anne E. *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings*. Revised edition. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2007.

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/secretary-standards-treatment-historic-properties.htm>

Public Act 169 of 1970

Public Act 169 is also known as the Local Historic Districts Act. Passed in 1970, this act is the foundation for the creation and management of historic districts in Michigan

<https://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-169-of-1970.pdf>

National Register of Historic Places Bulletins

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) publishes guidelines and bulletins used for the evaluation of

numerous historic resources, from buildings and subdivisions to cultural landscapes.

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/publications.htm>

NRHP guidelines of particular interest for the Birmingham community include:

Historic Landscapes

Keller, Timothy J., and Genevieve P. Keller. *How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes*. National Register Bulletin. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service.

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB18-Complete.pdf>

Historic Residential Suburbs

Ames, David L., and Linda Flint McClelland. *Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places*. National Register Bulletin. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2002.

Part 1: https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB46_Suburbs_part1_508.pdf

Part 2: https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB46_Suburbs_part2_508.pdf

Researching Historic Properties

O'Donnell, Eleanor. *Researching a Historic Property*. National Register Bulletin. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1998.

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB39-Complete.pdf>

Technical Preservation Services Publications

The National Park Service provides a webpage with links to technical resources regarding the preservation of buildings and sites.

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/tps-publications.htm>

National Park Service Preservation Briefs

The National Park Service (NPS) has published several informational briefs on maintaining, repairing, and preserving historic buildings. The briefs are part of the NPS technical preservation services and are intended to inform owners of historic buildings on recommended methods for the preservation of historic character and materials.

Appendix B: Links to Resources

Preservation Briefs of interest to the Birmingham community include:

General

Preservation Brief #17: Architectural Character – Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving Their Character

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-17-architectural-character.pdf>

Preservation Brief #35: Understanding Old Buildings – The Process of Architectural Investigation

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-35-architectural-investigation.pdf>

Roofing

Preservation Brief #4: Roofing for Historic Buildings

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-04-roofing.pdf>

Preservation Brief #19: The Repair and Replacement of Historic Wooden Shingle Roofs

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-19-wood-shingle-roofs.pdf>

Preservation Brief #29: The Repair, Replacement, and Maintenance of Historic Slate Roofs

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-29-slate-roofs.pdf>

Preservation Brief #30: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Clay Tile Roofs

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-30-clay-tile-roofs.pdf>

Exterior

Preservation Brief #47: Maintaining the Exteriors of Small and Medium Size Historic Buildings

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-47-exterior-small-medium-buildings.pdf>

Preservation Brief #10: Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-10-paint-problems-exterior-woodwork.pdf>

Preservation Brief #45: Preservation of Historic Wooden Porches

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-45-wood-porches.pdf>

Preservation Brief #8: Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-08-aluminum-vinyl-siding.pdf>

Preservation Brief #2: Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-02-repointing.pdf>

Preservation Brief #7: The Preservation of Historic Glazed Architectural Terra-Cotta

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-07-terra-cotta.pdf>

Preservation Brief #15: Preservation of Historic Concrete

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-15-concrete.pdf>

Preservation Brief #22: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-22-stucco.pdf>

Preservation Brief #42: The Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Historic Cast Stone

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-42-cast-stone.pdf>

Preservation Brief #27: The Maintenance and Repair of Architectural Cast Iron

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-27-cast-iron.pdf>

Preservation Brief #16: The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-16-substitute-materials.pdf>

Preservation Brief #38: Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-38-graffiti.pdf>

Windows

Preservation Brief #9: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-09-wood-windows.pdf>

Appendix B: Links to Resources

Preservation Brief #13: The Repair and Thermal Upgrading of Historic Steel Windows

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-13-steel-windows.pdf>

Preservation Brief #33: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stained and Leaded Glass

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-33-stained-leaded-glass.pdf>

Cleaning and Maintenance

Preservation Brief #6: Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-06-abrasive-cleaning.pdf>

Preservation Brief #39: Holding the Line: Controlling Unwanted Moisture in Historic Buildings

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-39-controlling-moisture.pdf>

Commercial

Preservation Brief #11: Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-11-storefronts.pdf>

Preservation Brief #25: The Preservation of Historic Signs

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-25-signs.pdf>

Preservation Brief #44: The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings – Repair, Replacement, and New Design

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-44-awnings.pdf>

Interior

Preservation Brief #18: Rehabilitating Interiors in Historic Buildings – Identifying and Preserving Character-defining Elements

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-18-interiors.pdf>

Preservation Brief #21: Repairing Historic Flat Plaster – Walls and Ceilings

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-21-flat-plaster.pdf>

Preservation Brief #23: Preserving Historic Ornamental

Plaster

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-23-ornamental-plaster.pdf>

Preservation Brief #40: Preserving Historic Ceramic Tile Floors

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-40-ceramic-tile-floors.pdf>

Preservation Brief #49: Historic Decorative Metal Ceilings and Walls: Use, Repair, and Replacement

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-49-metal-ceilings-walls.pdf>

Other

Preservation Brief #3: Improving Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-03-energy-efficiency.pdf>

Preservation Brief #24: Heating, Ventilating, and Cooling Historic Buildings – Problems and Recommended Approaches

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-24-heating-cooling.pdf>

Preservation Brief #14: New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings – Preservation Concerns

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-14-exterior-additions.pdf>

Preservation Brief #32: Making Historic Properties Accessible

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-32-accessibility.pdf>

Preservation Brief #36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes – Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-36-cultural-landscapes.pdf>



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 a historic building might be the longtime home of an influential writer or activist, or it could be 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.

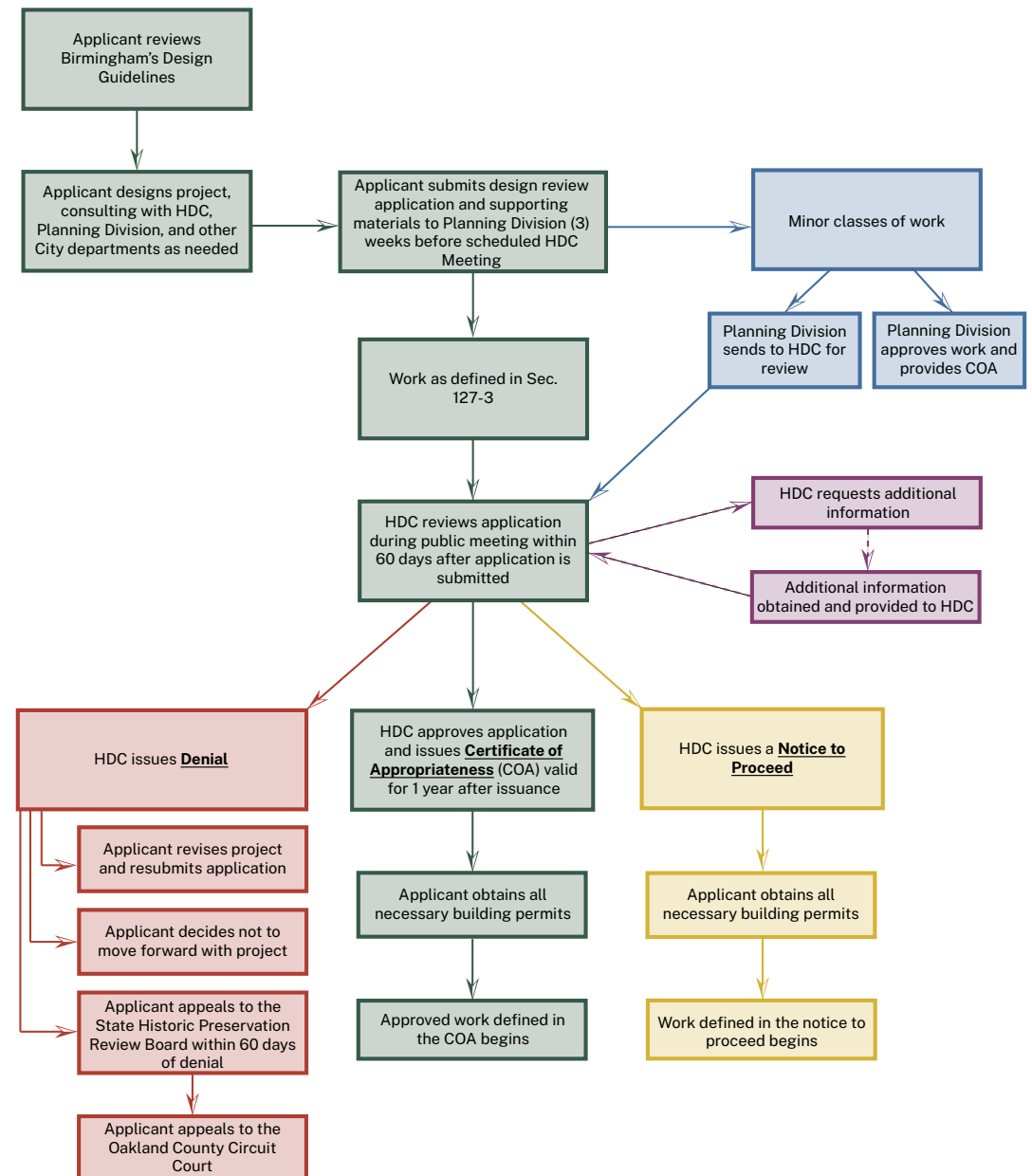
Before planning a project, [see the full Birmingham Historic District Design Guidelines document for additional details.](#)



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

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Birmingham City Commission

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Clinton Baller

Pierre Boutros

Brad Host

Andrew Haig

Katie Schafer



AGENDA
BIRMINGHAM HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY – JULY 5, 2023
BIRMINGHAM CITY HALL, 151 MARTIN STREET, COMMISSION ROOM 205, BIRMINGHAM, MI*
******* 7:00 PM*******

The City recommends members of the public wear a mask if they have been exposed to COVID-19 or have a respiratory illness. City staff, City Commission and all board and committee members must wear a mask if they have been exposed to COVID-19 or actively have a respiratory illness. The City continues to provide KN-95 respirators and triple layered masks for attendees.

- 1) Roll Call**
- 2) Approval of the HDC Minutes of [June 7, 2023](#)**
- 3) Courtesy Review**
- 4) Historic Design Review**
 - A. [138 W. Maple – Blakeslee Building](#)**
- 5) Sign Review**
- 6) Study Session**
- 7) Miscellaneous Business and Communication**
 - A. Pre-Application Discussions**
 - B. Draft Agenda**
 - 1. [July 19, 2023](#)**
 - C. Staff Reports**
 - 1. [Administrative Sign Approvals](#)**
 - 2. [Administrative Approvals](#)**
 - 3. [Demolitions](#)**
 - 4. [Action List 2023](#)**
- 8) Adjournment**

*Please note that board meetings will be conducted in person once again. Members of the public can attend in person at Birmingham City Hall, 151 Martin St., or may attend virtually at:

Link to Access Virtual Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/91282479817>

Telephone Meeting Access: 877 853 5247 US Toll-free

Meeting ID Code: 912 8247 9817

Notice: Individuals requiring accommodations, such as interpreter services for effective participation in this meeting should contact the City Clerk's Office at [\(248\) 530-1880](tel:2485301880) at least on day in advance of the public meeting.

Las personas que requieren alojamiento, tales como servicios de interpretación, la participación efectiva en esta reunión deben ponerse en contacto con la Oficina del Secretario Municipal al [\(248\) 530-1880](tel:2485301880) por lo menos el día antes de la reunión pública. (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964).

A PERSON DESIGNATED WITH THE AUTHORITY TO MAKE DECISIONS MUST BE PRESENT AT THE MEETING.

Historic District Commission Action List –2023

Historic District Commission	Quarter Goals	In Progress	Complete
Historic Design Guidelines Project	1 st (January-March)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schedule Training Sessions for HDC and Community	1 st (January-March)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historic Plaque for Community House, Parks & Wooster, & Ford Building	2 nd (April-June)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bates St. Historic District Signage	2 nd (April-June)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop Resources for the Michigan Historic Preservation Tax Credit	3 rd (July-September)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
First Draft – Historic Preservation Master Plan	4 th (October-December)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>