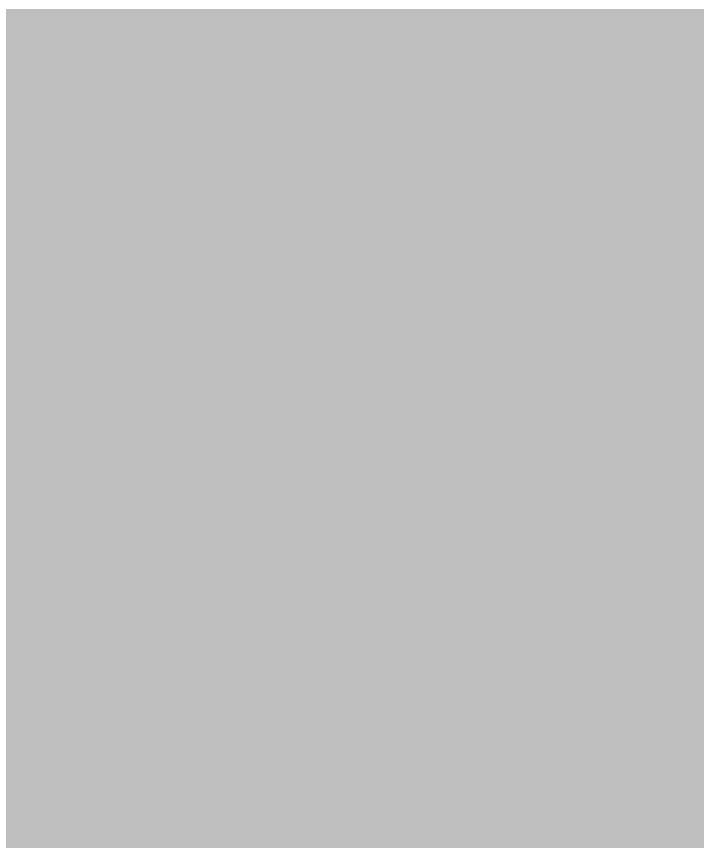




MEXICAN WAR STREETS HISTORIC DISTRICT

DESIGN GUIDELINES

June 26, 2025



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CHAPTER 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MEXICAN WAR STREETS HISTORIC DISTRICT

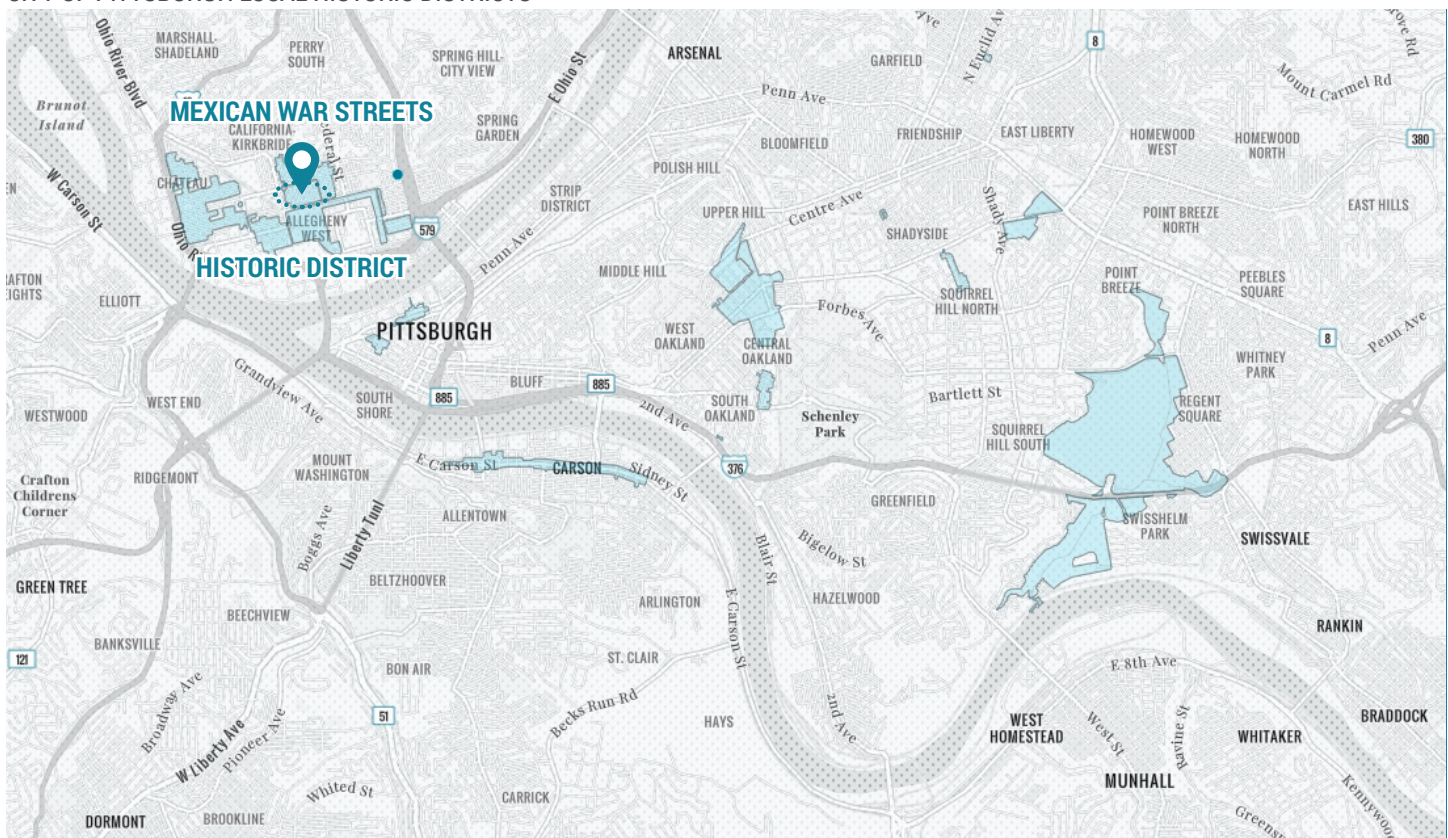
1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Mexican War Streets Historic District is one of over a dozen historic districts throughout the City of Pittsburgh designated under City of Pittsburgh Code of Ordinances, Title 11: Historic Preservation. Each historic district has a unique identity and characteristics.

Exterior work within historic districts is reviewed by City of Pittsburgh zoning and historic preservation staff and, depending on the overall scope, a project may be reviewed by the Historic Review Commission.

To learn more about the background and overview of historic districts; to understand the latest procedures for the City's review process for exterior work within the districts; and for a glossary of terms, please review [“City of Pittsburgh Historic Districts General Design Guidelines.”](#)

CITY OF PITTSBURGH LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS



TIMELINE FOR MEXICAN WAR STREETS HISTORIC DISTRICT

1870 - Build start

1930 - Built out

1975 - NRHP Designation

Several of the frame houses predate 1880s in the Mexican War Streets Historic district as well as the Historic District Expansion.

The Mexican War Streets Neighborhood largely built out by about 1930. This 1925 Hopkin map shows the neighborhood. Densely packed, meticulously crafted Greek Revival, Italianate, Second Empire, and late-Victorian brick and wood row houses.

The 27-acre district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 with 119 buildings deemed to contribute to the historic character of the district.



2026 - Historic District Design Guidelines update

The Mexican War Streets Expansion Historic District is officially listed, adding roughly 450 later-victorian structures to the master plan to preserve the architectural character of the Central Northside.

1.2 ABOUT THE MEXICAN WAR STREETS HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Mexican War Streets Historic District is a compact area of intact Victorian-era buildings and streetscapes located in the Central Northside neighborhood of the City of Pittsburgh, north of the Allegheny River. The neighborhood used to be part of the independent City of Allegheny before its annexation to Pittsburgh in 1907. General William Robinson, Jr., the first Mayor of Allegheny, laid out the district's plan in 1847 on land known as the Buena Vista Tract and named many of the streets for generals and battles of the Mexican-American War of 1846-1847.

Construction of housing began the same year, with a subsequent building boom in the 1860s, and continued through the early twentieth century. Therefore, architectural styles from throughout this period are represented, including Greek Revival, Italianate, Second Empire, Richardsonian Romanesque Revival, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival. Within this diversity of design, the district displays strong consistency of scale, with most buildings ranging from two to three bays (window widths) wide and two to three stories tall. Along West North Avenue, facing Allegheny Commons Park, the district is punctuated by a few taller, four-story buildings and one-story churches.

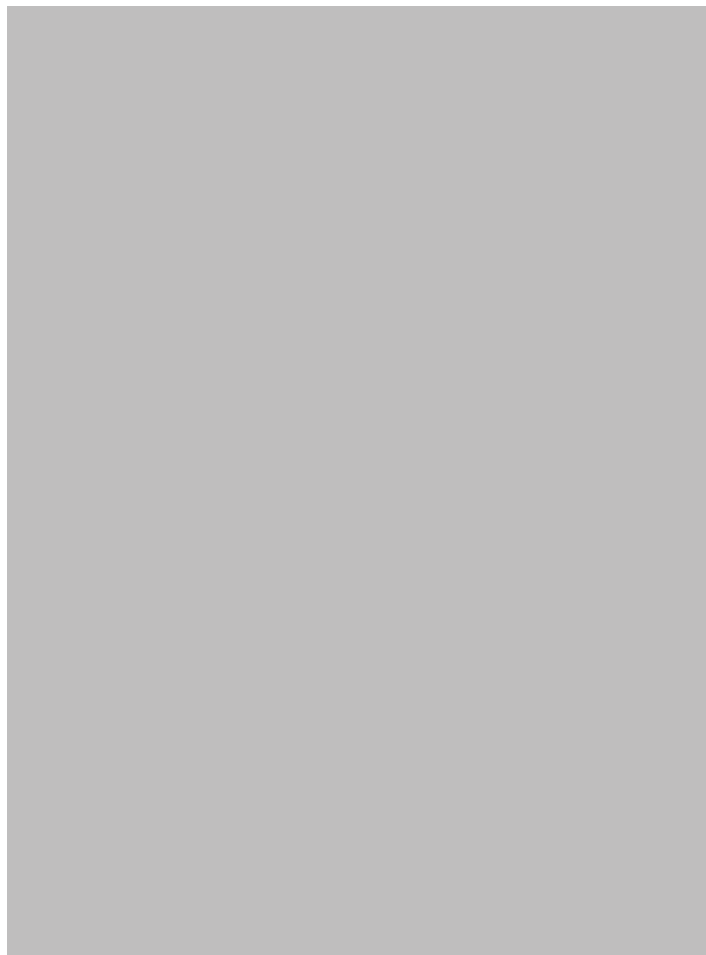
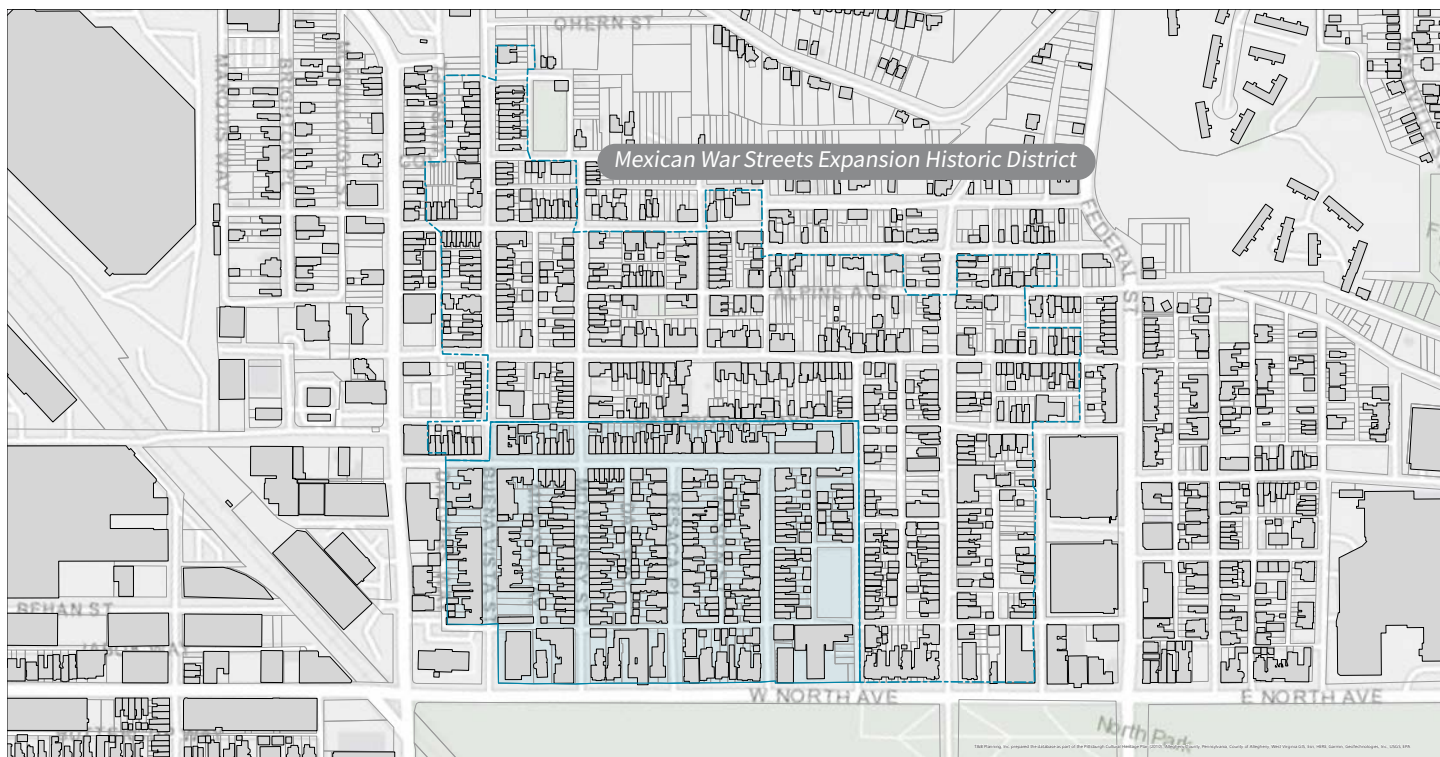


Photo: representative facade

MAP OF MEXICAN WAR STREETS HISTORIC DISTRICT



Buildings in the Mexican War Streets Historic District are predominantly residential with scattered commercial storefronts, reflecting a typical nineteenth-century neighborhood pattern. The district includes cultural and architectural landmarks such as the Allegheny YMCA (Robert Maurice Trimble, 1926), the former Boggs mansion at 604 West North Avenue (Longfellow, Alden, & Harlow, 1888), and the former Orphan's Asylum—later the Allegheny Widows' Home—complex along North Taylor Avenue, Sherman Street, and Sampsonia Way at the northeastern corner of the district. First constructed in 1838, the Widows' Home's earliest elements predate the platting of the Mexican War Streets and were designed by John Chislett, Pittsburgh's first important architect. With additions from the 1870s, this was an early and important example of benevolent housing.

In 1972, the City of Pittsburgh designated the Mexican War Streets Historic District as its first local historic district. In 1975, the district was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register district was expanded in 2008 and 2012, and City designated the Mexican War Streets Expansion Historic District under its local ordinance in 2020. The two local districts are contiguous and share much of their history.

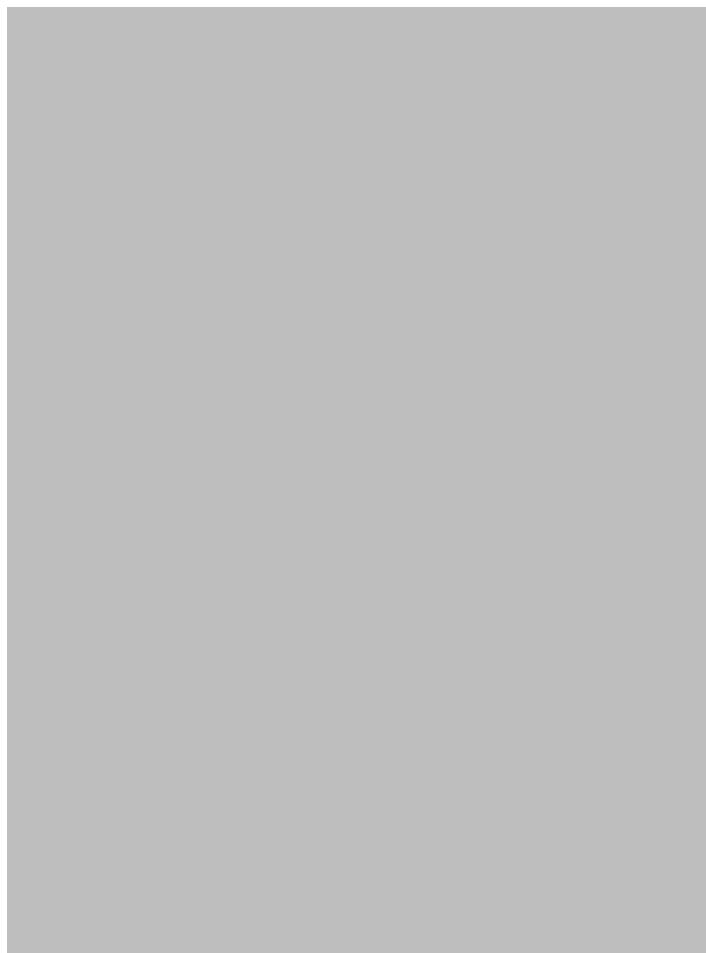


Photo: Historic structure/facade



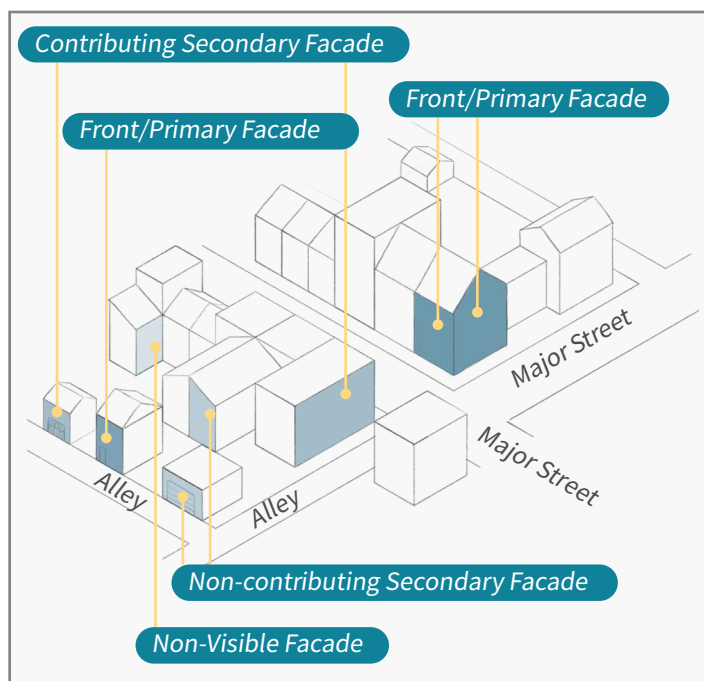
1.3 HIERARCHY OF FACADES

Buildings have multiple faces, some of which are visible from the public street and some of which are not. These Design Guidelines primarily focus on alterations, additions, and new construction that can be seen from the street or sidewalk, as those changes to the historic district have the most impact on the historic district's character.

In order of importance, the following definitions describe the various façades that are found on a building:

- A **front/primary façade** is the building face most visible from and facing a public street. It contains the main entrance to the building and typically has the most character-defining architectural features. New construction and exterior alterations will be reviewed closely by the HRC. Primary façades include sides of corner buildings that do not contain the main entrance but are visible from a major public street.
- **Contributing secondary façades** are those that are visible from the public street but are not on the front of the building. This can include the sides of detached buildings, provided that those side walls are visible from the public street, and the street-facing facade of contributing accessory structures such as carriage houses and historic-era garages. As with front façades, contributing secondary façades often contain character-defining architectural features, new construction and exterior alterations will be reviewed closely by the HRC.
- **Noncontributing secondary façades** are those that are in the rear of a building, visible only from an alley, or on the side of the building, only partially visible from a public right-of-way.
- A **non-visible façade** is one that cannot be seen from the public right-of-way. New construction, exterior alterations, and alternative materials are reviewed administratively..

HIERARCHY OF FACADES



1.4 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MEXICAN WAR STREETS HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Mexican War Streets Historic District is located in a dense urban setting characteristic of its development during an era when most people walked to work, school, and religious services, and to procure goods and services within close proximity to their homes. The predominant building type in the district is the attached dwelling. Scattered storefronts often had shopkeepers' apartments above. Architectural styles from throughout the Victorian period contribute a variety of ornamental features and details to the visual character and texture of the district's streetscapes.

Buildings within the district exhibit consistent size, scale, and proportion. Most are two, two-and-a-half, or three-story dwellings. Throughout the district, there are clusters of contiguous attached buildings constructed in the same style with nearly identical detailing, such as 515-525 and 603-609 North Taylor Avenue and 1215-1229 Buena Vista Street. These rows of two to five buildings from the same architectural moment create small areas of cohesive rhythm set into the overall diversity of architectural expressions along the streetscapes.

Most buildings are built with their facades to the sidewalk and have a stepped entry to a styled or decorative first floor entry door. The type (single or double leaf) and design of doors varies with building style and period of construction. Detailing at window surrounds also varies by building style, but typically features expressive sills and lintels that may be flat, curved, or arched, and constructed of stone, brick, or wood.

Building Type: The Mexican War Streets includes mostly attached single-family and multi-family residential buildings with accessory structures, such as garages. Although dwellings dominate the district, some mixed-use buildings that include ground floor commercial storefronts are found, as well as buildings purpose-built for religious, cultural, and social institutions.

Building Placement: The majority of the buildings in the Mexican War Street Historic District are located along a single plane, built up to the lot line, with zero setback. There are a few exceptions throughout the district that are set back behind shallow front yards, including many of the the residences along West North Avenue that face Allegheny Commons Park.



Building types in relation to the streetscape.



Example of typical Historic District facades.



Example of Historic District building composition.

DRAFT

Most properties extend to narrow alleys that run through the middle of almost every block in the district. In some cases, the rear of the property includes an open yard, often fenced along the alley. Many other residential properties include an accessory structure, like a former carriage house or garage, located near the rear of the lot facing the alley. Some garages have attic stories and/or accessory dwellings above a first floor dedicated to vehicle storage. There are also a few cases where lots are divided mid-block, such that one house faces the street and another at the rear has a primary facade fronting the alley.

Building Form: Building massing and volume are generally dictated by the Mexican War Streets' regular, rectangular lot size and shape and consistent with building use and architectural style. Given the rapid development of this area, most residences are homogeneous in scale and proportion. All are low-rise, two to three stories, and are either attached rowhouses or closely-built detached houses. Most are two to three bays wide and have low-pitched gabled roofs. A smaller number built in the decades during and just after the Civil War have mansard roofs. Dormers are a common feature on both roof types. The roofline typically includes shallow overhanging eaves with wooden brackets or a corbeled brick cornice.

Because most primary facades stand at the lot line, front porches are not common in the district, but are present on some houses facing and near Allegheny Commons Park. Porches, where they exist, are key character-defining architectural features.

Façade Composition: The composition of residential buildings includes a main entry door located on the ground floor and either centered or off-centered with the rest of the façade elements. Window openings are typically aligned vertically on the first and upper levels. Dormer projections at the third floor level typically include smaller windows that are either aligned with or centered between the primary façade windows below.

The typical window has a double-hung configuration, usually tall and narrow with either a flat or arched top. The number and configuration of panes of original windows is a major character-defining feature. Depending on the architectural style, the windows and doors either have rectangular lintels flush with the surrounding façade, or projecting hoods that may be decoratively carved or detailed.

Mixed-use buildings are generally similar to their residential counterparts on the upper levels, but include a storefront with large display windows and a flush or recessed doorway on the first floor. These commercial ground floors are less likely than the district's dwellings to include a raised entrance with a stoop.

Building Materials: The district's primary building materials are those that were readily available when its buildings were constructed: brick from local brickyards, stone from nearby quarries, and wood.



Example of Historic District building placement.



Example of Historic District building form.



Windows with flush lintels



Windows with projecting hoods

Stone, usually sandstone, is the typical foundation material for buildings in the Mexican War Streets Historic District. Stone was also preferred façade material for the Romanesque Revival Style and can be seen as the primary façade material on a number of buildings within the district.

Brick is the primary material of the facades of buildings in the Mexican War Streets Historic District, frequently trimmed with wood at windows, doors, surrounds, and cornices. Standard brick masonry was generally laid in a common running bond pattern, with some instances of decorative brick units, patterns, and bonds.

The predominant historic brick color was red, but sometimes tan or buff brick was used, especially for styles that emphasized lighter colors, such as Colonial Revival. Some of the brick buildings in the neighborhood have been painted, but this is not a historical treatment and often causes damage to the underlying masonry.

The district also includes some wood frame residences with clapboard siding, trim, and dormers. The ability of wood to be sawn, routed, and tooled into a great variety of shapes and profiles made it the most popular choice for the decorative brackets, spindles, and moldings that are a character-defining feature of Victorian-era architectural styles. Historically, wood was always painted to protect it from the elements.

Slate was historically the district's predominant roof material due its durability. A standard rectangular slate was the most common, but there are many instances, especially on mansard roofs, where builders created decorative patterns using different shaped slates, some of which can still be seen. Many slate roofs have since been replaced with asphalt shingle which has not replicated the texture, form, and/or pattern of the original slate.

Metal was a much less common building material, mostly limited to low slope and porch roof applications, flashings, gutters, and railings.



Example of Historic District building materials.



Example of typical alley view

1.5 MAJOR ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

There are eight major architectural styles in the Mexican War Streets Historic District.

GREEK REVIVAL (1825-1860)

The Greek Revival Style emerged in the early decades of the American republic out of sympathy and support for the Greek War of Independence (1821-1830). Americans developed an interest in Greek culture and history that extended to architectural forms inspired by ancient Greek temples. Variations of Greek Revival include a more simplified, vernacular version, seen in some of the district's earliest buildings, such as the 1838 Chislett-designed portion of the former Allegheny Widows' Home.

KEY DEFINING FEATURES OF THE GREEK REVIVAL STYLE



gable roof, gable end to street

frieze band below roof cornice

molded pediment in gable end or return

full-height columns or pilasters

double-hung, multi-paned windows

side and/or top lites at main entrance

ITALIANATE (1850-1885)

The Italianate Style offered a romantic, picturesque interpretation of the medieval villas found in the Italian countryside. Its characteristic boxy massing and lack of ground-floor projecting forms, such as porticos, made the style easily adaptable to the urban row building. The availability of new building materials after the Civil War allowed for varied and robust ornamentation.

KEY DEFINING FEATURES OF THE ITALIANATE STYLE

low pitched roofline

projecting bracketed cornice

decorative window hoods or drip molds

tall and narrow windows

segmental and/or round arched window heads

SECOND EMPIRE (1860-1900)

The Second Empire Style is named after the reign of Napoleon III, “France’s Second Empire,” which saw Paris rebuilt from a medieval to a modern city. Its defining roof form, the mansard, was named for French architect Francois Mansart and, with dormers, creates a fully usable attic space. The Second Empire was a popular building style in the United States in the 1860s-1870s. On a row building, it can often look like a mansard roof atop a house with typically Italianate detailing, and mansard roofs were sometimes added to older houses in this way.

**KEY DEFINING FEATURES OF THE SECOND EMPIRE STYLE**

*cast iron decorative
cresting*

cornice

*arched or segmented-
arched window openings*

*two-over-two vertically
proportioned windows*

ROMANESQUE REVIVAL (1870-1900)

Romanesque Revival buildings feature heavy masonry construction; richly-textured, asymmetrical facades; and rounded forms derived from the medieval Romanesque architecture of France and Spain. In the United States, the style was popularized by Henry Hobson Richardson, who made it his signature in Boston the 1870s and designed the Allegheny County Courthouse and Jail in downtown Pittsburgh in the 1880s. The Romanesque Revival is sometimes called “Richardsonian” after him. Often associated with banks and institutional buildings, the Romanesque Revival was also fashionable for residential construction in the 1880s and 1890s.

KEY DEFINING FEATURES OF THE ROMANESQUE REVIVAL STYLE

hip roofed dormer

tower with conical roof

round arch

stone banding

QUEEN ANNE (1880-1910)

The Queen Anne Style is an eclectic recombination of forms and motifs drawn from a range of sources, including ancient Classical, medieval English, and Flemish architecture, first created and popularized by architect Richard Norman Shaw in England. Almost exclusively used in residential design, it emphasized domestic comfort and exuberant ornamentation with great variety, and even contrast, of forms, textures, and materials.

**KEY DEFINING FEATURES OF THE QUEEN ANNE STYLE**

roof cresting

multi-gabled roof

rectangular 1/1 sash windows

beveled glass and wood paneled door

COLONIAL REVIVAL (1880-1960)

Inspired the United States centennial celebration of 1876, the Colonial Revival Style borrowed forms, materials, and motifs from early American architecture, which in turn had borrowed from ancient Greek and Roman prototypes. Colonial Revival buildings display a return to symmetry, formality, and classically-inspired detailing after the eclectic free expression of the late Victorian period. The restoration of Colonial Williamsburg beginning in the 1930s helped keep this style popular through the mid-twentieth century, and variations are still in use today.

KEY DEFINING FEATURES OF THE COLONIAL REVIVAL STYLE

*adorned cornice,
eave dentils*

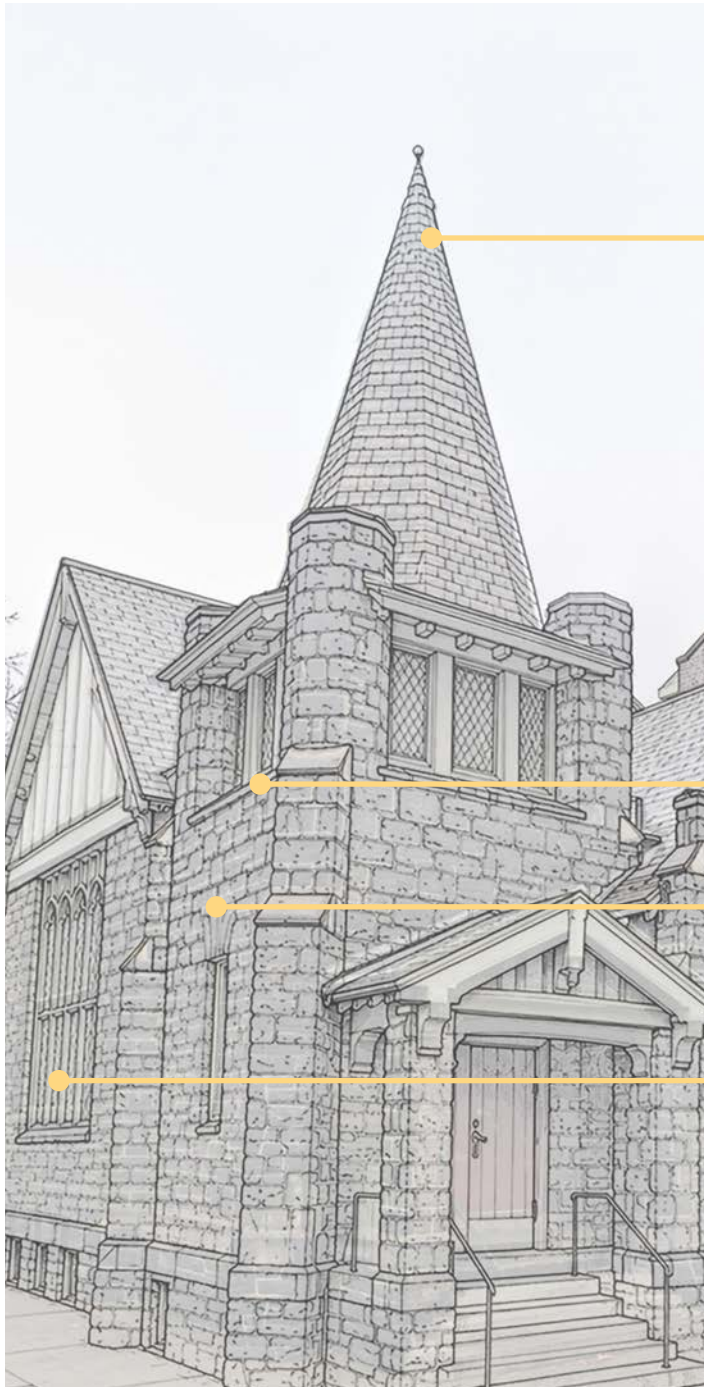
*brick, pre-cast
concrete or trim
lintels.*

*dentils and tuscan
columns*

*wooden windows
with multi-pane
glazing*

TUDOR/JACOBEOAN REVIVAL (1890-1940)

The Tudor Revival and its subtype, the Jacobean Revival, were popular residential styles derived from English Renaissance buildings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Tudor Revival's signature steep gables and faux half-timbering are almost exclusively associated with detached homes, while the Jacobean Revival, characterized by brick walls, stone trim, and round arches, is also frequently seen in institutional, educational, and even commercial buildings, for example, the Allegheny YMCA.

KEY DEFINING FEATURES OF THE TUDOR/JACOBEOAN REVIVAL STYLE

steeply pitched roof

over-hanging gables

patterned stonework

narrow multi-paned windows

CRAFTSMAN (1905-1935)

In the early twentieth century, artisans such as furniture maker Gustav Stickley promoted hand-craftsmanship in response to the industrial mechanization of many processes. At the same time, industrialization created modern conveniences that helped with domestic work and created a market for small, simple homes. High-style houses in the Craftsman Style were built of local materials by local craftspeople, while the cozy Arts and Crafts aesthetic melded with the mass-production of building plans and parts to produce everyday buildings influenced by the Craftsman movement. Details often overlapped with contemporaneous Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival styles

KEY DEFINING FEATURES OF THE CRAFTSMAN STYLE

low-pitched gabled roof

double-hung windows

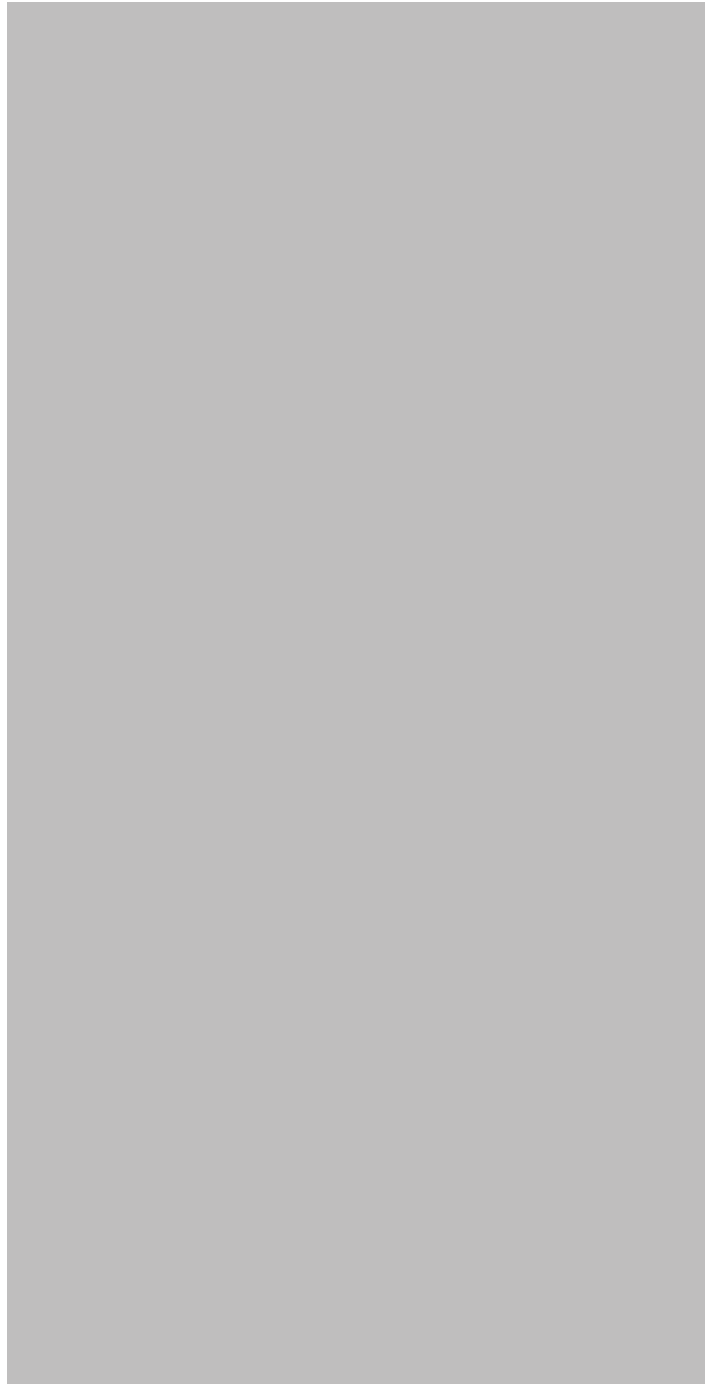
exposed wooden details (braces, rafter, tail beams)

prominent front porch

tapered or square columns with stone or brick bases

OTHER VERNACULAR, MIXED, AND UNSTYLED BUILDINGS

“Vernacular” is not a style of architecture, but refers to local adaptations of popular architectural fashions, often by builders, using available materials and/or millwork. Vernacular buildings may exhibit simplified characteristics of a recognizable style, a mixture of styles, or no apparent style at all. In fact, many buildings do not have a “pure” style, but either were originally built with a mix of stylistic influences, or acquired elements of different styles through renovations over the course of the historic period. These stylistic variations are historic in their own right and should be preserved as a record of a building’s history.



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CHAPTER 2

GUIDELINES FOR EXISTING BUILDINGS

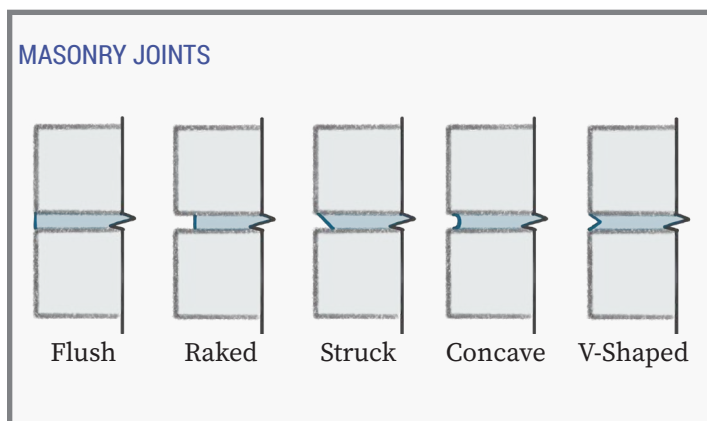
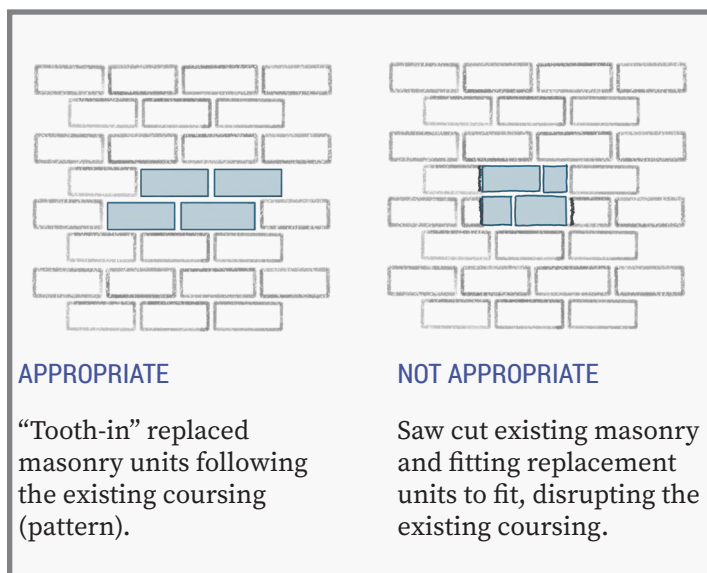
2.1 EXTERIOR WALLS & MATERIALS

Masonry, both brick and stone, is the key building material in the Mexican War Streets Historic District, complemented by functional and decorative wood elements such as doors, windows, cornices, and trim. These natural, durable exterior materials not only contribute to the historic architectural character of the district, but also play a crucial role in each building's structural envelope. Maintaining and repairing these historic materials is preferred to replacement or cladding with new materials.

- 2.1.1 Historic masonry** should be stabilized and repaired rather than replaced whenever possible.
- 2.1.2 Masonry** is a finish material and should not be removed or covered with artificial or synthetic materials.
- 2.1.3 Stone or brick** also should not be painted or treated with water-repellent coatings. These coatings can trap moisture and cause deterioration of masonry walls.
- 2.1.4 Repainting** may take place if the masonry was painted historically.
- 2.1.5 Historically-appropriate colors** are preferred for masonry repainting. Reach out to City Planning staff for consultation when selecting a color scheme for a building.
- 2.1.6 Treatment** of historic masonry with a water-repellent coating may be considered in special cases where the masonry was damaged by past inappropriate abrasives or chemicals, which have removed the outer surface of the masonry and allowed moisture to infiltrate the building envelope.
- 2.1.7 Cleaning historic masonry** should be done by the gentlest means appropriate to the type of soil, stain, or matter to be removed. Abrasive cleaners are not appropriate because they are damaging to historic masonry.
- 2.1.8 Masonry repairs** and reporting should be done by a qualified person who is familiar with historic masonry and mortar mixes.
- 2.1.9 When repointing masonry walls,** match existing mortar in color, texture, strength, joint width, and joint profile.
- 2.1.10 Portland cement mortar** is too high in strength for historic masonry and likely to cause damage during freeze-thaw cycles. A typical compatible mortar is Type N or S, using a combination of Portland cement, lime, and sand.

MAINTENANCE TIP

Protect masonry, metal, and structural elements such as wood members from corrosion and rot by keeping gutters and downspouts clear, roofing in good repair, and wood free from insect infestation. Provide proper drainage to ensure that water does not erode foundation walls, pool on surfaces, or drain toward the building.



Example of deterioration to masonry caused by inappropriate strength mortar repair.



Example of inappropriate use of paint on masonry substrates, as well as inappropriate color choice.

- 2.1.11 Patching** of brick walls should be done by “tooth-in” bricks to maintain the original coursing pattern.
- 2.1.12 Cracked, spalled, or deeply eroded stone** should be repaired using a Dutchman technique, in which only the damaged section of stone is carefully cut out and replaced with a new or salvaged stone block to match adjacent material as closely as possible.
- 2.1.13 Historic metals** should be painted if they were originally painted or if a coating is necessary for protection from corrosion. Otherwise, metals should be left unpainted. Patina, such as that found on historic copper or bronze, should not be removed.
- 2.1.14** Use **non-corrosive cleaning methods** to clean soft metals such as lead, tinplate, and copper, and use the least abrasive cleaning methods to clean hard metals such as cast iron, wrought iron, and steel.
- 2.1.15 Historic wood** siding and other building elements were milled from old-growth wood that is superior in durability to modern lumber products. Maintain historic wood on building exteriors in the same profile and configuration that exists.
- 2.1.16 Repair deteriorated or damaged wood** elements using methods that strengthen original materials through consolidation using epoxies and putties to restore solidity, fill cracks and holes, and rebuild damaged or missing sections of molding.
- 2.1.17 Historic wood repair** may include limited replacement of extremely damaged or deteriorated members. Use replacement wood to match the species, size, profile, and appearance of the original siding or trim.
- 2.1.18** If there are **extensively deteriorated or missing areas** of wood siding or trim that make localized repairs or replacement infeasible, full replacement may be appropriate. New materials should replicate the original as closely as possible in material, composition, size, profile, and appearance. Substitute materials, such as engineered wood, fiber cement, or synthetic cladding may be considered if they can adequately match the visual appearance, physical properties, and durability of the historic materials. Synthetic “wood grain” finishes typically look less like historic painted wood than smooth factory finishes.
- 2.1.19** Installation of **new cladding** over original or historic building features is inappropriate.

BRICK MASONRY REPLACEMENT

Historic brick tends to be “softer” than modern brick. It has a lower strength, or psi, due to technological limitations when the brick was fabricated. When replacement of brick is necessary, take into consideration the color, texture, and strength of the existing brick. This will ensure aesthetic and material integrity of the structure overall.



Original wood siding and trims should be maintained.

WOOD ELEMENT CLEANING

Maintenance of wood siding and elements promotes a long life for the materials. Cleaning may be performed with a pH neutral, biodegradable detergent and soft brush. Avoid using chemicals for cleaning.

MASONRY CLEANING

Masonry may be cleaned to remove environmental staining or biogrowth, such as moss, algae, or lichen. Biogrowth can introduce soluble salts into the masonry units and hide surface issues. When cleaning, use a biodegradable, pH neutral detergent, low-pressure wand (100 psi or less, white or black tip) and soft nylon brush. Avoid using chemicals or sandblasting for masonry cleaning. City Planning staff can provide more guidance on appropriate product types to use.

FURTHER READING

For more information on the maintenance, treatment, and repair of historic masonry, mortars, and exterior wood, refer to [National Park Service, Technical Preservation Brief 1: Assessing Cleaning and Water-Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings](#); [Preservation Brief 2: Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings](#); [Preservation Brief 6: Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Masonry Buildings](#); [Preservation Brief 10: Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork](#); [Preservation Brief 16: The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors](#); and [Preservation Brief 47: Maintaining the Exterior of Small and Medium Size Historic Buildings](#), for more information.

2.2 ROOFS

The roof (geometry and material) of a building is an important architectural feature that is both character-defining and functional. Dormers, chimneys, metal flashing, roof-edge drainage systems, and trim are associated features that also contribute to the building's character. Make every effort to retain these elements in good condition.

- 2.2.1 Repair and restore** original roofing whenever possible. Before replacing historic roof materials such as slate or terra cotta, evaluate whether repair or localized areas of in-kind replacement of shingles or tiles is feasible.
- 2.2.2** If **full replacement of a historic roof** is necessary due to severe deterioration or damage, use in-kind replacement materials that match the original material, appearance, color, pattern, shape, and dimensions.
- 2.2.3** If **in-kind replacement** of the historic roof is not feasible, select a substitute roofing material that resembles the original as closely as possible in appearance, color, pattern, shape, and dimensions. Feasibility of replacement and appropriateness of substitute material shall be determined in consultation with the HRC, its staff, and at least one roofing professional familiar with historic roofing.
- 2.2.4 Substitute roofing materials**, which are materially different from original roofing materials, may be appropriate if they resemble the appearance of the original material and do not detract from the architectural character of the building. Architectural and three-tab asphalt shingles as a replacement for slate and terra cotta tile are not appropriate. Corrugated metal roofs are generally not appropriate for buildings in the Mexican War Streets Historic District.



Historic slate roofing



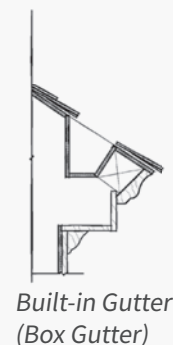
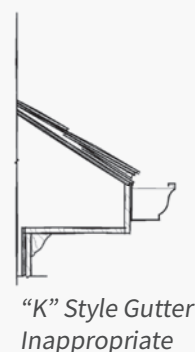
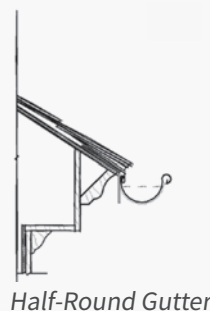
historic cornice at a flat roof.

ALTERNATE MATERIALS

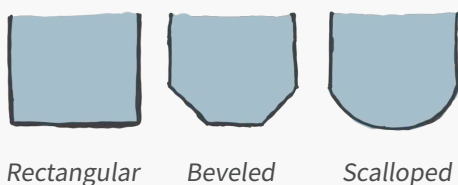
Alternate materials for slate may include synthetic slate shingles or asphalt shingles designed to look like slate. These materials should mimic the same shape, profile (or thickness), and color as the original slate.

- 2.2.5** When replacing a **previous replacement for the original roofing**, it may be possible to select new roofing that more closely resembles the original by referring to historic photographs for documentation of the original roof material and style. If such documentation is not available for an historic building, use materials that resemble the original roofing materials on nearby historic buildings of a similar age and style. These materials will likely be slate or terra cotta tile. Asphalt shingles that match the color of nearby roofs on historic buildings may be considered if historic materials are not feasible.
- 2.2.6** Original sheet **metal roofing** should not be covered with membrane roofing or asphalt shingles.
- 2.2.7** Avoid altering **dormer shape or roof pitch**. Avoid removing historic dormers.
- 2.2.8** Avoid shortening or removing **chimneys**. If chimneys are no longer in use, they should be capped and retained.
- 2.2.9** **Maintain** built-in (box) gutters and/or repair them in-kind.
- 2.2.10** **Typical gutter materials** include aluminum, copper, and other metals. Plastic and vinyl are not appropriate materials for gutters on historic buildings.
- 2.2.11** **Paint drainage elements** to blend in with the building exterior, unless they are a material such as copper, which is meant to be left unpainted.

TYPES OF GUTTERS

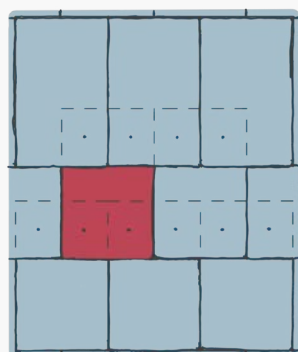


SLATE SHINGLES



"Exposure" refers to the visible area of a shingle, shown in red.

Exposure should be maintained in any roof maintenance or replacement work.



historic built-in gutters and metal downspouts

FURTHER READING

For more information on the maintenance, repair, and replacement of historic roofing, refer to [National Park Service, Preservation Brief 4: Roofing for Historic Buildings](#); [Preservation Brief 29: The Repair, Replacement, and Maintenance of Slate Roofs](#); [Preservation Brief 30: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Clay Tile Roofs](#); [Preservation Brief 16: The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors](#); [Preservation Brief 47: Maintaining the Exterior of Small and Medium Size Historic Buildings](#), for more information.

2.3 DOORS

Doors are focal points of a facade, and doorways are stylistic compositions including the frame/surround, proportion and number of leaves (single or double), number and arrangement of panels, presence and location of lites (windows), sidelites, and transom. The composition, proportion, shape, and detail of an historic doorway are significant architectural features that contribute to the historic character of the building.

- 2.3.1 Retain historic doors and doorway features.** An experienced carpenter can repair historic wood doors and doorway features and bring historic doors back into plumb with their frames.
- 2.3.2 Historic doors and doorways** should not be replaced with modern styles or materials. If a historic door is too damaged or deteriorated to repair, replace it in kind to match the original in location, material, size, design, profile, and operation.
- 2.3.3 Wood replacement doors** are highly preferable to synthetic materials or metal. Stock doors rarely replicate historic designs or fit the height and width of historic doorway openings.
- 2.3.4** The size and shape of the **replacement doors** must be such that the new door fits into the historic opening without the need for infill or removal of historic material.
- 2.3.5 Panels** are a character-defining feature of historic wooden doors. Panels on a replacement door should be authentic, i.e. set into the door's rails and stiles, not outlined with trim tacked on to a flush surface.
- 2.3.6** Consider **replacement of previously-installed non-historic doors** on primary facades with new or salvaged doors that are more historically appropriate. Historic photographs of the building may document its original door(s) for reference. If such documentation is not available, look to original doors on nearby historic buildings of a similar age and style.
- 2.3.7 Maintain original** sidelites and transoms to preserve the solid-to-void ratio of the entrance system.
- 2.3.8 Avoid** creating new door openings on the primary façade.
- 2.3.9 Storm and screen doors** should complement the historic door. They should not excessively cover or detract from the historic entry door.

MAINTENANCE TIP

Maintain existing historic doors and door frames. If localized repairs can be made, such repairs are preferable to replacing the door or frame.



Appropriate replacement door (on right) is in keeping with the character of historic doors.



Historic doorway

COATINGS

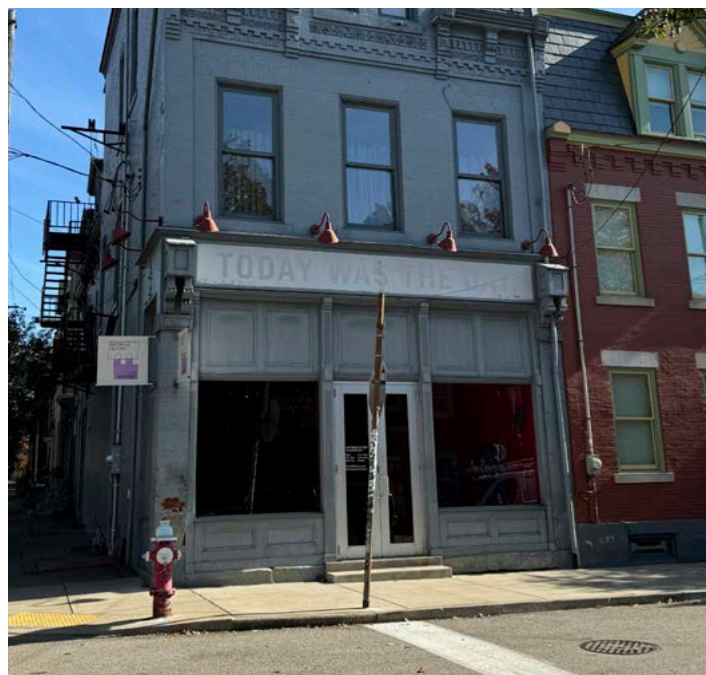
Coatings are protective and aesthetic measures to protect the architectural materials. If possible, use oil/alkyd based paint on exterior wood doors. For stains, use a linseed or spar varnish instead of a polyurethane coating. These clear coats are protective yet breathable and do not require a total overhaul like polyurethanes.

Common coatings for metals include zinc-based paint. Linseed oil paint is also excellent as a protective coating. Powder coating is a very durable modern coating system applied at the factory, not on-site.

2.4 STOREFRONTS

Ground floor commercial storefronts historically provided amenities within the primarily residential Mexican War Streets Historic District, as they still do today. Because they are mostly glass, storefronts typically have fewer stylistic features than the building's upper stories, while their compositions of large display windows, transoms, signboards, framing, entrances, and architectural details are essential to the character of the historic building as a whole.

- 2.4.1 Stabilize, repair, and rehabilitate** historic storefronts as the first course of action.
- 2.4.2 If extensively-deteriorated, severely-damaged, or poorly-functioning** storefront elements must be replaced, new storefront elements should match the originals as closely as possible in material, design, proportion, profile, and finish. Mill-finish aluminum is not an appropriate framing material for storefronts on buildings from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- 2.4.3** Where storefronts were previously **altered or replaced** after the historic period, inappropriate features may be removed and a new storefront may be designed and installed that is in keeping with the original configuration, proportions, and detail of the original (if documented in historic photographs) or of nearby historic storefronts of similar scale and architectural era.
- 2.4.4 Original recessed entries** should be retained in their original location rather than moved.
- 2.4.5** Where **steps to historic storefront entrances** create an accessibility barrier, refer to Section 3.3 below and consult with City Planning staff on an appropriate design solution.
- 2.4.6 New storefronts** should not be installed on primary facades where they did not exist historically.



Historic storefront with wood panels, detailing, and signboard.



Historic storefront that utilizes the historic signboard for business identification.

MAINTENANCE TIP

Preserve existing historic storefronts by repairing damaged elements and keeping wood elements painted.

2.5 WINDOWS

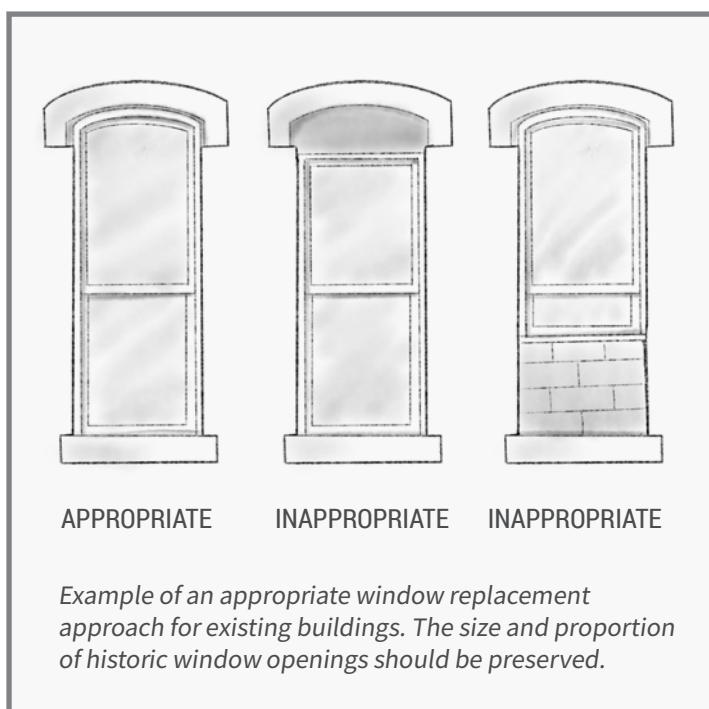
Windows are among the most important character-defining features of historic buildings. Their original size, shape, arrangement, style, material, and surrounding treatment are all highly expressive of a building's architectural style. Windows are a key component of facade design, and improper replacement windows can severely detract from the historic character of the building and historic district. Make every effort to retain and repair historic windows to the greatest extent possible.

Windows

- 2.5.1 Historic wood windows** are made from old-growth wood that is tighter in grain and superior in durability to modern lumber products. Their inherent quality can never be replaced. Repair and restore original windows and associated components as the first course of action.
- 2.5.2 Historic wood windows** consist of a system of component parts that can be disassembled, individually repaired and/or replaced, reglazed, reassembled, resealed, and reinstalled. While windows are out for repair, window pockets in walls can be insulated for better thermal performance, and original pulley weight-and-chain operation systems can be repaired. These methods of piecemeal repair and improvement of original windows should be fully explored with an experienced carpenter or window restoration professional before proposing replacement of entire window units. Unlike historic wood windows, new window units cannot have their function extended through repair and must be fully replaced when they fail.
- 2.5.3 Rehabilitate deteriorated or damaged** wood window components using methods that strengthen original materials through consolidation using epoxies and putties to restore solidity, fill cracks and holes, and rebuild damaged or missing sections of surrounds, sash frames, and/or muntins.
- 2.5.4** If the primary goal is to **replace** single-pane with double-pane insulated glazing, first explore whether it is possible to retrofit the existing wood sash to accept double glazing. Storm windows (exterior or interior) are also a historically-appropriate way to improve insulation. Exterior storms should be undivided or have primary divisions that correspond to those of the original window.

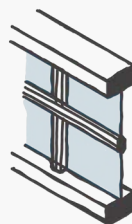
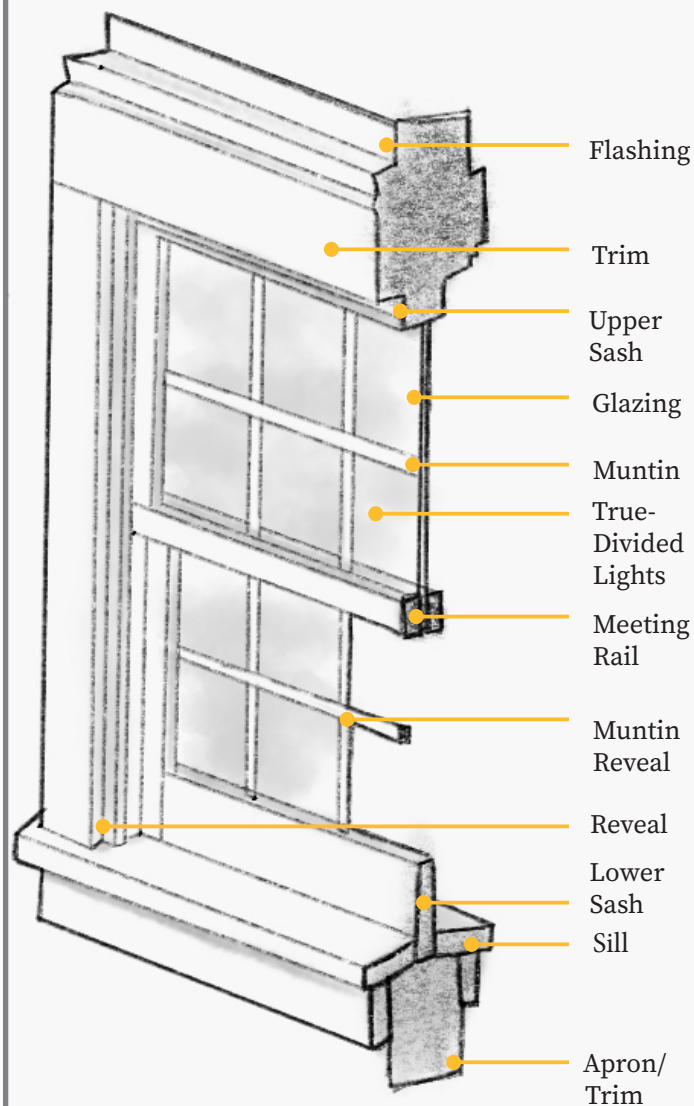


Retain original windows when possible.



- 2.5.5** Replace historic windows only if **rehabilitation** is not possible due to extensive deterioration and loss of function that cannot be repaired. Feasibility of rehabilitation and appropriateness of replacement windows should be determined in consultation with the HRC, its staff, and at least one window professional familiar with historic materials.
- 2.5.6** When **replacing historic windows**, install new window sash only and repair or leave intact historic frames, brickmolds, and sub-sills whenever possible.
- 2.5.7** **Replacement windows** should be carefully selected to match the original historic window as closely as possible in material, shape, design, style, dimensions, and proportions.
- 2.5.8** **In-kind material** replacements are strongly preferred.
- 2.5.9** **Substitute materials** such as aluminum-clad windows may be appropriate replacements for severely damaged or deteriorated wood windows because they can replicate the profiles and proportions of the original sash and, if necessary, surround. Composite wood or fiberglass windows may also be appropriate if they match the visual qualities of the historic windows. Vinyl windows are not appropriate due to their inability to match historic dimensions and profiles and their poor durability and performance.
- 2.5.10** The size and shape of the **replacement windows** must be such that the new window fits into the historic openings without the need for infill or removal of historic material.

ANATOMY OF A TYPICAL WINDOW



APPROPRIATE



INAPPROPRIATE

Maintaining window sightlines includes matching the thickness of window sashes, frames, and muntins. Simulated divided lites can maintain the original sightline. Grilles-between-the-Glass are not appropriate.

Retain original windows when possible.

- 2.5.11 The operation** (e.g. double-hung or casement) and configuration (e.g. one-over-one, two-over-two, etc.) of replacement windows should also match the originals. Where different windows existed historically on the same facade, these differences must also be observed in their replacements. Historic divided-lite sash must be replaced with true divided lites or dimensional muntins rather than a grid of simulated divided lites between glass.
- 2.5.12** Even a **window replacement** project should seek to retain select character-defining windows, such as those with stained, leaded, or curved glass, or individual windows with uniquely decorative shapes or muntin designs.
- 2.5.13** Consider **replacement of previously-replaced, non-historic windows** with those that are more historically appropriate. Historic photographs of the building may document its original windows for reference. If such documentation is not available, look to original windows on nearby historic buildings of the same architectural style and period of construction.
- 2.5.14 Storm windows and awnings** are appropriate as improvements for energy efficiency if they do not damage repairable original windows and frames or restrict or reduce original sight lines. Exterior storms should be undivided or have primary divisions that correspond to those of the original window.
- 2.5.15** The introduction of **new window openings or alteration or infill** of existing openings are not appropriate on primary facades. If creating new openings or infilling existing openings is necessary to accommodate new interior uses, locate openings on secondary or non-contributing facades.



Example of appropriate window infill on a non-primary facade.



Example of replacement windows that are not appropriate.

FURTHER READING

For more information on the maintenance, repair, thermal upgrade, and replacement of historic windows, refer to [National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, Preservation Brief 3: Improving Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings](#); [Preservation Brief 13: The Repair and Thermal Upgrading of Historic Steel Windows](#); [Preservation Brief 16: The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors](#); [Preservation Brief 33: The Preservation and Repair of Stained and Leaded Glass](#); [Preservation Brief 44: The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings](#); [Preservation Brief 47: Maintaining the Exterior of Small and Medium Size Historic Buildings](#).

Shutters and Security Grilles

- 2.5.16** Repair and restore original wood shutters whenever possible. Restore original hardware.
- 2.5.17** Consider removal of purely decorative, non-functional shutters installed after the historic period, as was sometimes done in the mid-twentieth century to create a more “Colonial” appearance.
- 2.5.18** Consider replacement of previously-altered, non-historic shutters with those that are more historically accurate.
- 2.5.19** When replacing historic shutters, ensure they are fabricated to be operational and mounted with historically appropriate hardware.
- 2.5.20** Install new shutters only if shutters existed previously on the building, and match the window shape. The width of the shutters should correspond with the window width so that the shutters would cover the full window when closed.
- 2.5.21** Window security grilles should be simple in design and should not overly obscure sight lines to the historic windows.



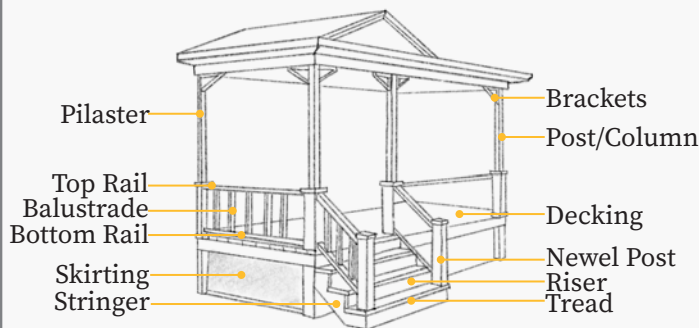
Example of appropriate window grill configuration.

2.6 PORCHES & STOOPS

Porches are designed to shelter home occupants and visitors at the entrance and to extend the living space of the home outward toward the public realm. Stoops provide a transition between the sidewalk and a home's front door and relate, architecturally, to both. Porches and stoops are important character-defining features of the houses that have them, and they contribute greatly to the overall character of the historic district. Removing porches and stoops or replacing their elements with inappropriate materials alters one of the most character-defining assets of a home and diminishes the streetscape.

- 2.6.1** Porches on primary and contributing secondary façades shall not be removed or enclosed. Roof size and shape of porches should not be changed.
- 2.6.2** Repair and restore original historic porches as the first course of action. Retain original materials and designs of elements such as posts, piers, columns, rails, spindles/balusters, skirting, ornament such as brackets or fretwork, floors, steps, and roofs, including historic porch cornices and gutter systems.
- 2.6.3** If repair is not feasible due to extensive deterioration, severe damage, or missing elements, replace porches and/or their individual elements in kind, matching as closely as possible the materials, design, composition, proportion, visual appearance, and transparency of the original porch.
- 2.6.4** Substitute materials that can be milled or routed to historic shapes and profiles and that can be painted may be considered as appropriate replacements for severely damaged, deteriorated, or missing historic wooden porch elements. These may include cellular PVC or wood fiber/polymer composites. Use of dimensional lumber is not appropriate for the replacement of visible porch features. Vinyl railings and trim are not appropriate replacements for historic wood elements.
- 2.6.5** Appropriate substitute materials for tongue-in-groove wood porch floorboards may include composite wood decking, if a close match to original dimensions.

ANATOMY OF A PORCH



Examples of original front stoops.

MAINTENANCE TIP

Keep wood porches painted to help protect the wood from moisture damage and degradation.

- 2.6.6** If in-kind replacement of the porch is not feasible, a design that closely resembles the original in materials, composition, proportion, visual appearance, and transparency may be considered.
- 2.6.7** Consider replacement of previously-altered non-historic porch elements with elements that are more historically appropriate. Historic photographs of the building may document its original porch for reference. If such documentation is not available, look to original porches on nearby historic buildings of the same architectural style and period of construction.
- 2.6.8** Avoid removing, altering, or covering historic ornamental details on porches.
- 2.6.9** Stone is the typical material for historic stoops and their steps. While stone is highly durable, replacement may be considered in cases of extensive erosion or other damage. Replace stone stoops and steps in kind when possible. Concrete may be an appropriate substitute material if poured, colored, and tooled to match the historic stone as closely as possible.
- 2.6.10** Historic ornamental stoop railings shall be retained, repaired, and/or replaced in kind.
- 2.6.11** New stoop railings to replace non-historic railings, or where there is no existing railing, should be metal with a simple picket-and-rail design. Railings of vinyl or dimensional lumber are not appropriate for historic stoops.



Porches along the front facade of attached homes.

FURTHER READING

For more information on the maintenance, treatment, and repair of historic porches, refer to [National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, Preservation Brief 45: Preserving Historic Wooden Porches](#).

2.7 ACCESSORY STRUCTURES

Accessory structures are generally located in the rear of the property and include carriage houses, garages, and sheds. In many cases, these structures may be secondary or non-visible. The exteriors of accessory structures visible from the public right-of-way are reviewed by HRC staff. Historic accessory structures should be maintained with the same care as the primary building and should adhere to all guidelines above.

- 2.7.1 Repair and restore** historic accessory structures as the first course of action.
- 2.7.2** When **rehabilitating historic accessory structures**, retain the dimensions of the structure to the fullest extent possible. Accessory structures shall remain subordinate in proportion to the primary building and property footprint.
- 2.7.3** If **rehabilitation** of an historic accessory structure is not feasible due to extensive damage or severe deterioration, refer to Chapter 6, Guidelines for Demolition, regarding considerations for demolition, documentation, and appropriate replacement.



Accessory structures are considered contributing when they carry their own architectural significance. Often, historic accessory structures have similar detailing as the main structure.



Noncontributing accessory structures are those built outside of the period of significance for the historic district, and do not contribute to the historic fabric of the district.

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CHAPTER 3

GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORTING ELEMENTS

3.1 SIGNAGE

Signage in historic districts provides essential wayfinding and identification of commercial activity. Signs should be appropriately located, complement the building's design, and should not obscure or detract from its architectural character-defining features. All signage must comply with the Pittsburgh Zoning Code. Address placards do not require permits and are not subject to review by the HRC..

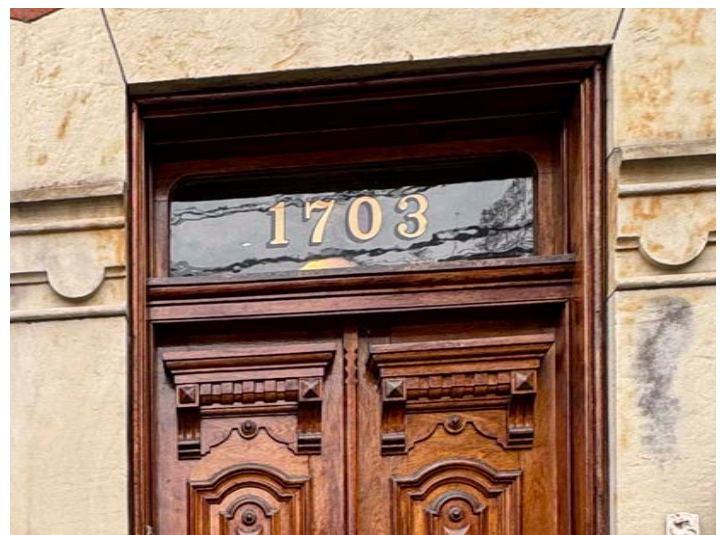
- 3.1.1 Retain evidence of historic signage**, e.g. painted “ghost signs” on building walls, whenever possible.
- 3.1.2 Locate new signs** in historically appropriate locations, such as in the sign band above a storefront.
- 3.1.3 Avoid** obscuring character-defining architectural features with a new sign installation.
- 3.1.4 Do not remove, damage, or destroy** historic building materials or features to install a sign. Mount anchors in mortar joints, not in masonry units, where applicable.
- 3.1.5 Window signage** should maintain the transparency of the window by using graphics without a solid background.



Historic storefront that utilizes the historic signboard for business identification.

CITY OF PITTSBURGH ZONING CODE

Refer to the City of Pittsburgh Zoning Code for building signage requirements beyond address numbers.

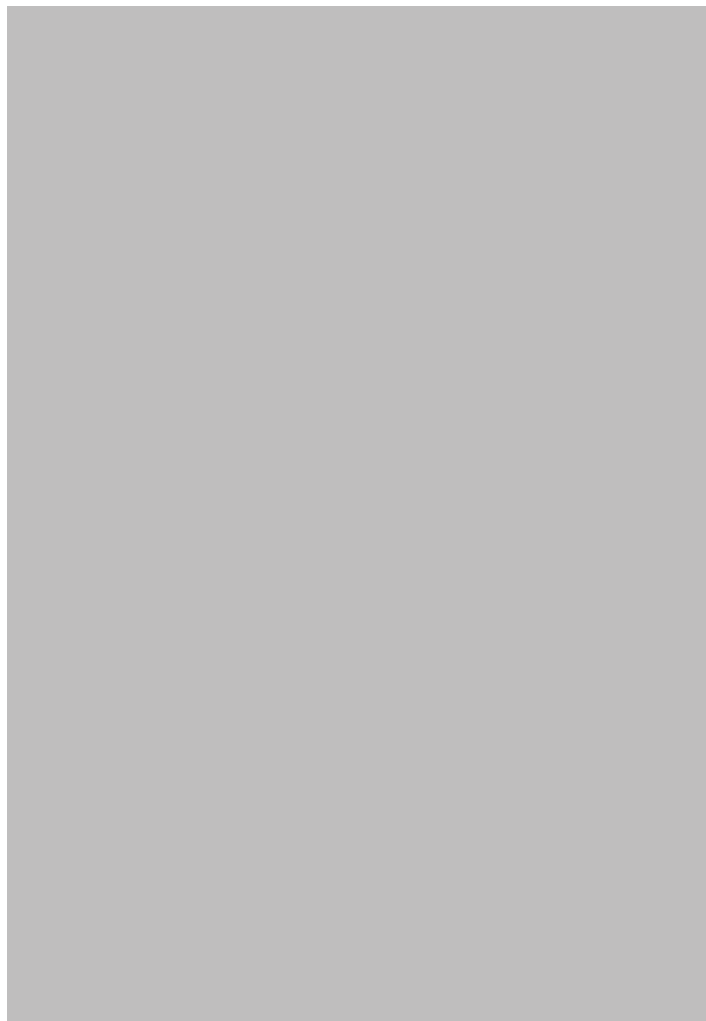


Appropriate address label in doorway transom.

3.2 MURALS & ARTWORK

Murals, sculptures, and other outdoor artworks can celebrate local history and community values and complement the architectural character of a historic district. They should be located sensitively and installed in a way that does not damage historic materials and is reversible should the artwork be removed in the future.

- 3.2.1** The HRC reviews only the location and method of installation of public art for its affect on historic fabric and character. The HRC does not review the content of public art.
- 3.2.2** Murals and artwork should not be painted onto unpainted brick or masonry.
- 3.2.3** Murals and artwork on buildings should be painted or applied with materials that are vapor permeable and compatible with brick, concrete masonry units, wood, or other underlaying substrates.
- 3.2.4** Do not remove, damage, or destroy historic building materials or features to install a sign. Mount anchors in mortar joints, not in masonry units, where applicable.
- 3.2.5** Murals and artwork should not cover windows, doors, or key defining architectural features of the facade.



Examples of public artwork.

ARTWORK VS SIGNAGE

Murals and artwork that contain words and lettering that **promote a product or business** may be considered as “signage” or “signs” and therefore contribute to the signage allowance of the property. Refer to the City of Pittsburgh Zoning Code.

MAINTENANCE TIP

Painted murals or applied artwork should be maintained on an ongoing basis or with intermittent refurbishment, or have a timeline for removal and restoration of the original facade.

3.3 ACCESSIBILITY

Most historic buildings were not designed to be readily accessible to all and will require sensitive renovations to make them so. Appropriate solutions will effectively address accessibility requirements while minimizing impacts to historic character-defining features. Historic buildings are not exempt from the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), but there is additional flexibility for designated historic properties.

- 3.3.1 Assess existing accessibility** barriers and opportunities in the context of the property's character-defining features. The property's site and entrance(s) will be the most likely focus of accessibility planning, but consider also how solutions, such as ramps, may affect other character-defining features and spatial relationships.
- 3.3.2 Design and construct modifications** to avoid damaging, removing, or obscuring historic materials and architectural elements; ensure modifications can be reversed without damaging historic fabric in the future.
- 3.3.3 Provide access** through a primary entrance whenever feasible.
- 3.3.4** If necessary to establish a **new accessible entrance**, first consider whether an existing opening on a secondary facade close to the main entrance can be sensitively modified for this purpose.



Example of an appropriate accessible entry modification.

ADA COMPLIANCE FEASIBILITY

If full compliance with ADA standards is not feasible, the building may be eligible to meet alternative minimum standards. Contact the Pittsburgh Department of City Planning and/or Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO), who can provide guidance on feasible accessibility solutions. Contact the [PA SHPO's Western Region Community Preservation Coordinator](#).

FURTHER READING

For more information on historic buildings and accessibility, refer to [National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, Preservation Brief 32: Making Historic Properties Accessible](#).

ADA APPLICABILITY

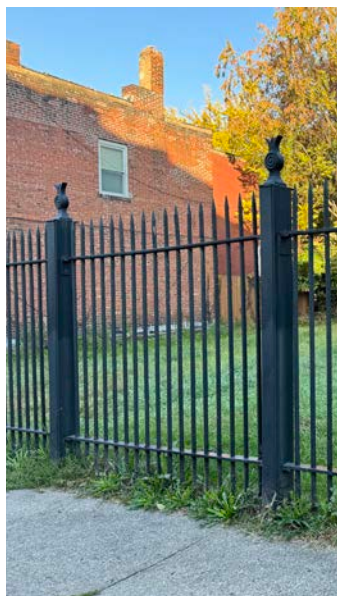
ADA is applicable to all places of public accommodation and does not apply to residential buildings. However, these guidelines still apply to residential building owners who desire to make accessibility upgrades to their property.

3.4 FENCES, WALKWAYS & OTHER LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS

Site features such as **fences, retaining walls, and walkways exist in spatial relationship to historic buildings.** They help establish the visual character of the historic district and the rhythm and texture of its streetscapes, especially when they are located in relation to primary facades. A variety of ornamental iron fences are seen throughout the Mexican War Streets Historic District.x

Fences

- 3.4.1 Avoid removing** historic fencing, including to make openings for new walkways, driveways, or parking areas.
- 3.4.2 Repair and restore** existing historic fences as a first course of action. This includes the rails, balusters, bases, and ornamental details.
- 3.4.3 If repair is not feasible** due to extensive deterioration, damage, or missing elements, replace fences and/or their components in-kind, matching as closely as possible the materials, height, proportions, design, transparency, and overall visual appearance.
- 3.4.4 If in-kind replacement** of the fence is not feasible, a design that closely resembles the original in materials, height, proportions, design, transparency, and overall visual appearance may be considered.
- 3.4.5 New fences** must comply with the Pittsburgh Zoning Code and should complement the architectural style of the building and not obscure the view of the primary façade or negatively impact the pedestrian experience on the sidewalk.
- 3.4.6 Appropriate fencing materials** may include wrought or cast iron, wood, and vegetation (hedgerows or shrubs). Synthetic materials such as vinyl and plastics are not appropriate materials for visible fencing in the historic district.
- 3.4.7 Appropriate fence designs** may include picket, capped picket, and spindle. Avoid chain-link, split-rail, ranch-rail fences, or those composed of modern stock profiles. Stockade-style privacy fencing is permitted in the rear of properties only.



Iron fence with decorative post finials.



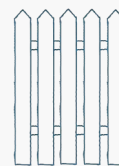
Example of brick and iron fence

FENCE STYLES

APPROPRIATE fence styles use materials that would have existed historically and in patterns typical at the time of initial construction.



Wrought Iron

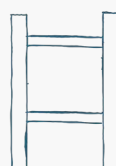


Picket

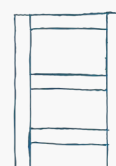


Shadow Box

INAPPROPRIATE fence styles use materials that would not have existed historically, or in a style that is out of place from the period or area.



Ranch Rail



Split Rail



Chain Link

NEW FENCES

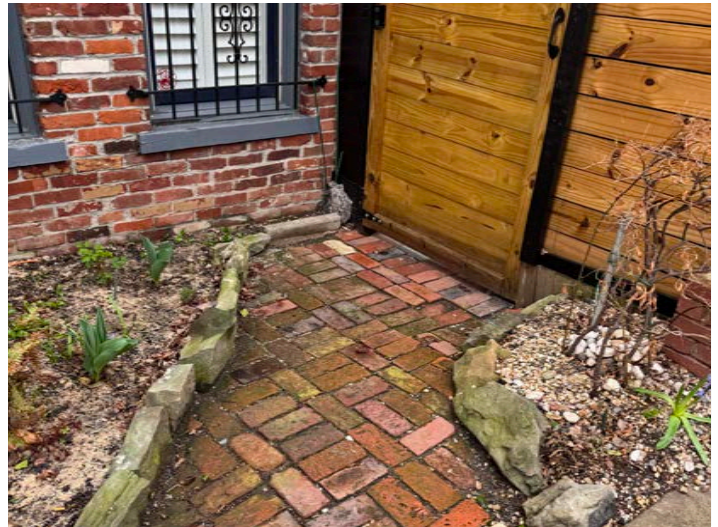
New fences should be designed to comply with City of Pittsburgh Zoning Regulations.

Walkways & Features

- 3.4.8 Repair and restore** historic masonry retaining walls. Preserve the existing height and appearance of the wall and its relationship to associated historic site features, such as steps, cheek walls, and fencing. Repoint with a compatible mortar (see Chapter 2.1) to match existing in color, texture, strength, joint width, and joint profile.
- 3.4.9** Cracked, spalled, or deeply eroded stone should be **repaired** using a Dutchman technique, in which only the damaged section of stone is carefully cut out and replaced with a new or salvaged stone block to match adjacent material as closely as possible.
- 3.4.10** If repair of a **historic masonry retaining wall** is not feasible due to extensive damage or deterioration, replace the wall in kind, matching as closely as possible the masonry unit materials, color, and surface texture, the historic height of the wall, and its relationship to related historic site features, such as steps, cheek walls, and fencing.
- 3.4.11** When constructing **new retaining walls**, use materials that are compatible with the surrounding materials of the district in appearance, texture, and scale.
- 3.4.12** Preserve the distinctive historic features of the **landscape and streetscape**, including walkways and paving which contribute to the character of a property. Ensure bricks and pavers are properly set.
- 3.4.13** Replace **deteriorated walkways** and other site features with in-kind materials, replicating the historic color and pattern.
- 3.4.14** If **in-kind replacement is not feasible**, utilize a visually-compatible substitute material. Reference DOMI requirements for public sidewalk walkways.



Existing brick sidewalks should be maintained.



Brick is an appropriate material for walkways.



Cobblestone sidewalk.

3.5 TECHNOLOGY & EQUIPMENT

Requirements for modern technology, such as security cameras and telecommunications wiring, must be sensitively located so as not to impact the integrity of historic buildings. It is preferred that roof- and surface-mounted equipment be located outside of historic districts when feasible; if installed within a historic district, the goal is to have the least possible visual impact on the historic district.

- 3.5.1 Locate equipment** on non-visible or non-contributing facades or on roof slopes or set them back on flat roofs behind the parapet to minimize sight lines from the public way.
- 3.5.2 Mount equipment** on non-historic materials or in the least intrusive manner feasible; anchor to mortar joints instead of masonry units on walls.
- 3.5.3** If necessary to install **equipment** on a primary façade (such as a security camera), select the smallest possible unit, place in a concealed location, and select finish or paint to blend in to adjacent surfaces.
- 3.5.4 Install wiring and conduit** on secondary or non-contributing facades.
- 3.5.5** Technology and its equipment change frequently. **Remove obsolete** equipment from building exteriors when it is no longer in use.



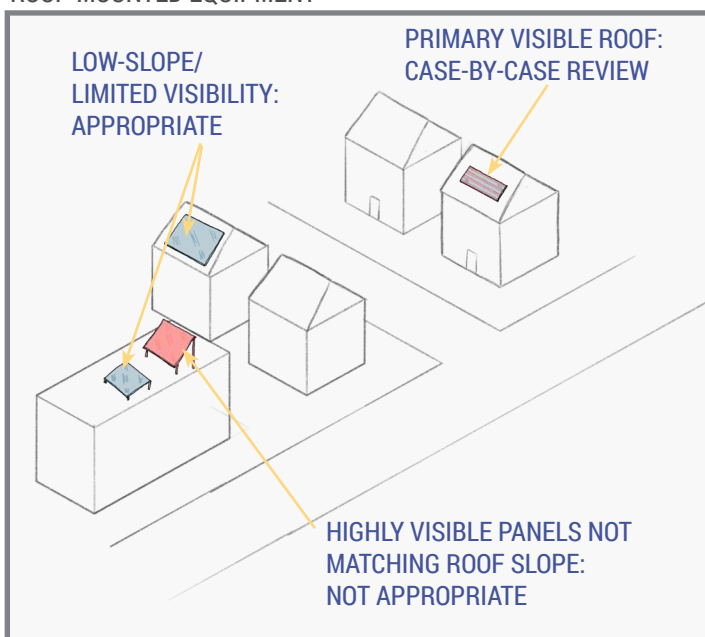
Modern facade lighting is concealed under the eave and the fixture color blends in; this is an appropriate installation.

3.6 ENERGY & SUSTAINABILITY

Historic Preservation is an inherently sustainable practice because it conserves the energy expended during the building's original construction. Well-maintained historic materials are often the most durable and sustainable. While significant advancements have been made in the development of energy-efficient building products, installing and implementing them in a historic context requires careful consideration of their impact to character-defining features of individual buildings and the historic district.

- 3.6.1** Prioritize energy upgrades that require the least alteration of historic architectural fabric.
- 3.6.2** Efforts to improve energy efficiency should begin with the existing building envelope. Work such as insulation, particularly of roofs/attics, basements, ducts, and pipes; filling cracks and open joints and sealing drafts around openings; utilizing historically-appropriate storm windows, awnings, and/or interior window treatments such as shutters or insulated curtains or shades; and updating mechanical systems and/or using them more efficiently can significantly improve a building's thermal performance, leading to less energy use.
- 3.6.3** A professional energy audit is recommended to obtain a detailed understanding of building performance and recommendations for upgrades that will be effective for the historic building. Studies have shown, for example, that window replacement does not result in energy savings that pay for themselves within a reasonable amount of time.
- 3.6.4** Alternative energy systems, such as solar devices, should be located on the ground, an accessory structure, and/or non-historic additions as a first resort. Primary buildings with flat roofs and/or high parapets that obscure sight lines from the public way may be good candidates for the rooftop installation of solar devices.
- 3.6.5** Installing solar devices on the primary historic building with a visible roof slope should only be considered after other locations have been evaluated and determined infeasible.

ROOF-MOUNTED EQUIPMENT



Solar panel installation on a visible primary roof slope is reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

- 3.6.6** Solar devices should be as low-profile to the roof as possible so as to not obscure the geometry of the roofline and character defining features of the building. Typically, solar devices are appropriate on non-visible or non-contributing roof slopes that are minimally visible from the public right-of-way.
- 3.6.7** Alternative energy systems should be installed in a manner that does not damage historic roofing material and in a reversible manner.
- 3.6.8** Windmills and turbines are generally not recommended for direct placement on historic buildings or sites, unless they are not visible from a public right-of-way.
- 3.6.9** Green roofs can be an option for historic buildings in some cases. However, they should not be visible from a public right-of-way, and engineering studies will need to be completed to determine if the historic building can accommodate the weight and water requirements of a green roof.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INSTALLATION ON A PRIMARY ROOF SLOPE:

- Current Roofing Material
- Slope of Roof & Slope of Solar Panel Installation
- Attachment Method of Panels
 - Is installation reversible?*
 - Does it damage the existing roof?*
- Geometry/Layout of Solar Panel Installation
- Visual Impact of Installation from Public Right-of-Way

Solar panel installation

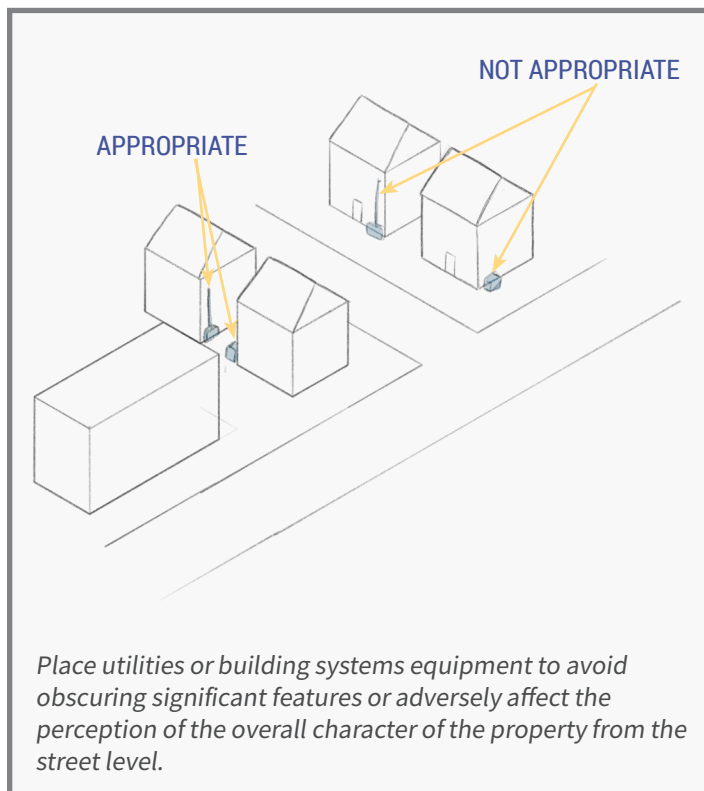
FURTHER READING

For more information on making historic buildings more sustainable and energy-efficient, please refer to the resources on the [National Park Service Technical Preservation Services page “Sustainability, Energy Efficiency, Resilience, and Historic Buildings:”](https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/sustainability-energy-efficiency-resilience-historic-buildings.html)
<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/sustainability-energy-efficiency-resilience-historic-buildings.html>

3.7 UTILITIES & BUILDING SYSTEMS

Modern building systems, including mechanical systems, air conditioning, and electrical systems, are necessary to maintain comfort within historic properties, but they should be installed and located sensitively in order to not obscure historic architectural features or intrude upon the character of the historic district.

- 3.7.1** Install **new mechanical systems** that result in the least alteration possible to the historic building, its character-defining features, and its appearance from the public right-of-way.
- 3.7.2** Any **mechanical equipment**, such as HVAC units, installed on rooftops should be situated so that they are not visible from the public right-of-way. Ground-level mechanical equipment should be set back from primary facades and screened with fencing or non-deciduous vegetation so that it is minimally visible.
- 3.7.3** Locate **vents and penetrations** on non-contributing or non-visible roof slopes or facades, or conceal behind chimneys.
- 3.7.4** Make every effort to **coordinate with utility companies** to install meters on secondary, non-contributing, or non-visible facades rather than the primary façade.
- 3.7.5** **Minimize the visual impact** of existing meters through the use of fencing or landscaping if permitted by the utility company.



FURTHER READING

For more information on historic buildings and building systems, refer to [National Park Service Technical Preservation Services, Preservation Brief 24: Heating, Ventilating, and Cooling Historic Buildings](#).



Example of a meter located on a primary facade.



Example of a meter and vents placed on secondary facade.

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CHAPTER 4

GUIDELINES FOR ADDITIONS

4.1 GENERAL GUIDELINES

New additions to historic buildings should be considered only after determining that the existing interior spaces cannot be modified to fit the intended use and that the site can accommodate an addition away from the historic building's primary facade. New additions shall comply with all applicable ordinances in the Pittsburgh Zoning Code.

- 4.1.1 Additions should be differentiated** in scale and geometry from the original historic building. They must be deferential to the primary building in size, location, and design.
- 4.1.2 Additions should be compatible** with the general architectural vocabulary, rhythm, and proportion of the primary building and surrounding district without directly imitating historic construction. Avoid historicizing, or creating the aesthetic impression that new construction is original historic fabric.
- 4.1.3 Choose materials for new additions** that complement the scale, textures, and colors of contributing buildings in the historic district to promote compatibility of design.
- 4.1.4 When planning and constructing** an addition to a historic building, take steps to minimize changes to the original exterior walls and materials and ensure that historic architectural features are not irreversibly damaged, completely destroyed, or hidden.
- 4.1.5 New additions** should be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the original historic building and its materials and features would not be compromised.
- 4.1.6 Reconstruction** of missing architectural features must be supported through physical evidence (shadows or “ghosts” on walls), documentary evidence (photographs or drawings), or examples on similar buildings to document original conditions. See also “Porches and Stoops,”



Example of appropriate massing and location of an addition.



Example of additions appropriate in massing, scale and location.

4.2 LOCATION OF ADDITIONS

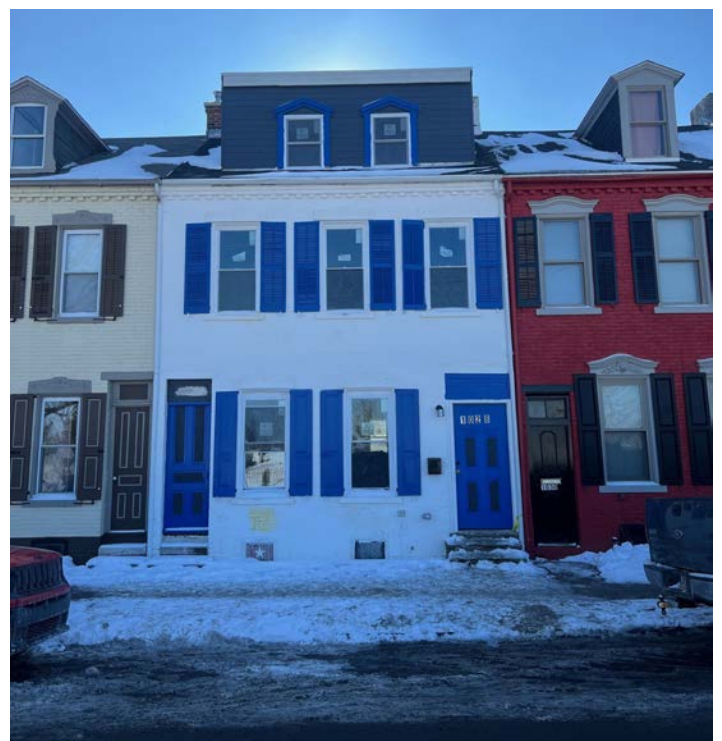
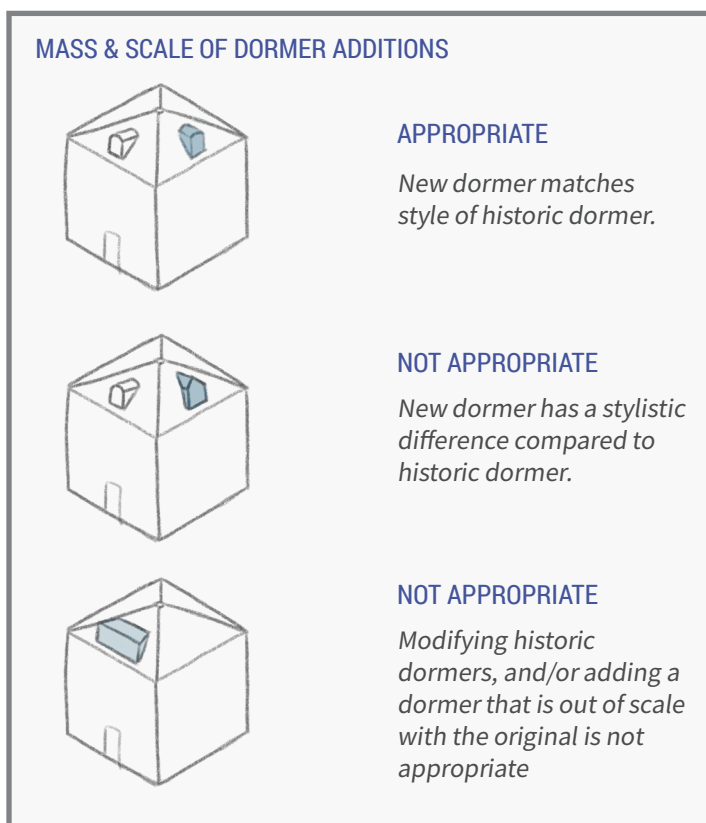
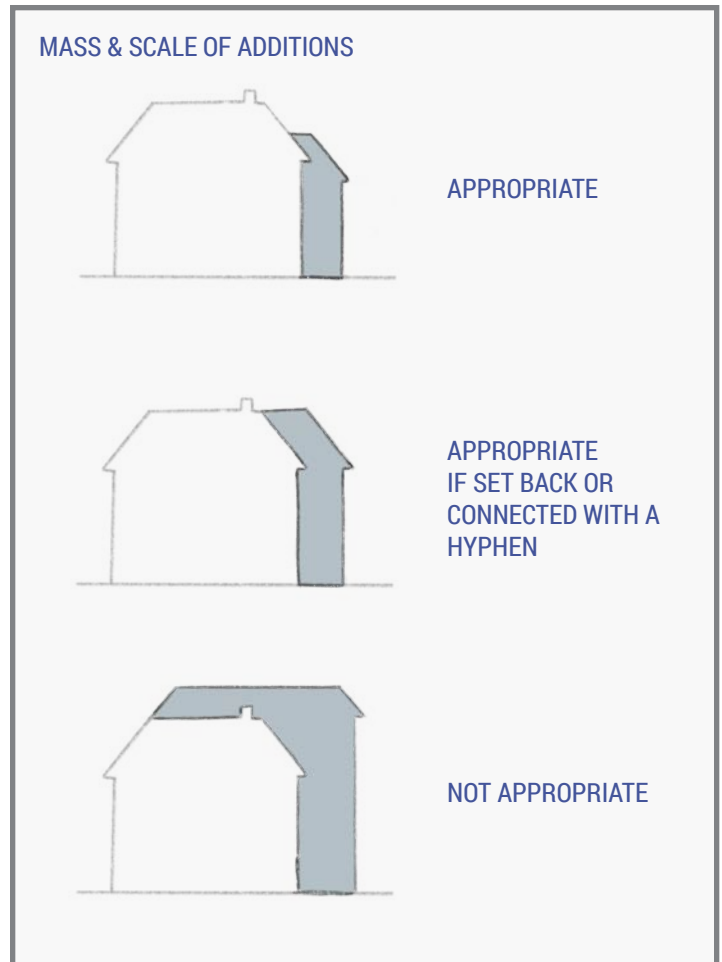
- 4.2.1** Avoid constructing additions that impact or alter the primary façade of the building.
- 4.2.2** Design additions to be subordinate to the original building, preferably located on a non-contributing façade, or on a secondary façade if a non-contributing façade is not feasible.
- 4.2.3** Set side additions back from the primary façade of the building.
- 4.2.4** Rooftop additions, such as rooftop decks, should be located on non-contributing or non-visible facades and set back from the vertical plane of the façade.



Appropriate roof deck on noncontributing accessory structure

4.3 MASS & SCALE OF ADDITIONS

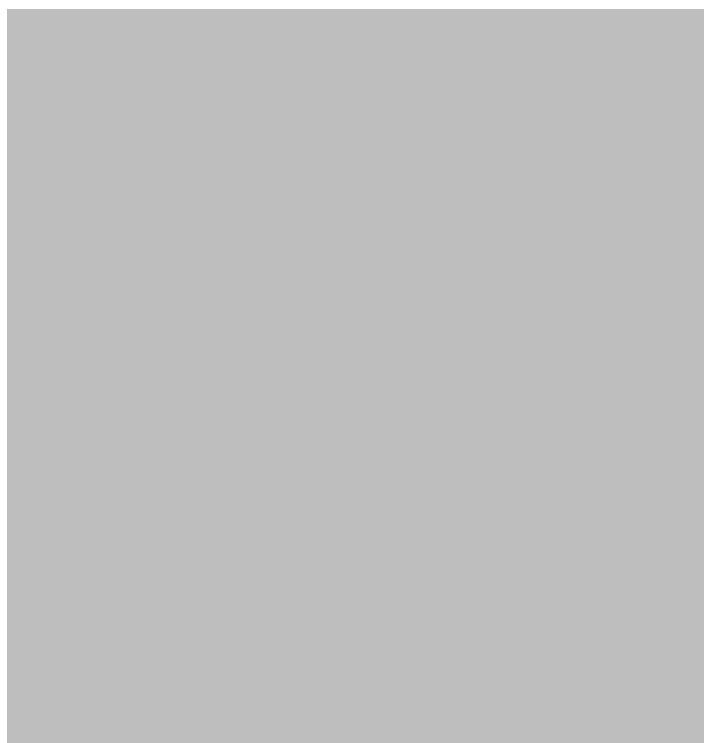
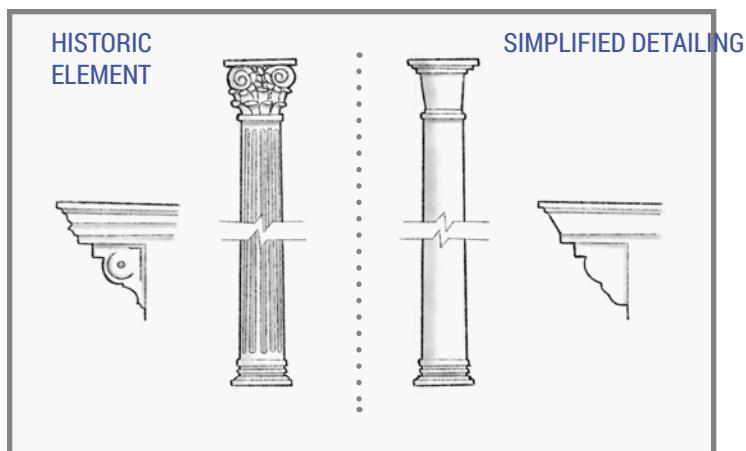
- 4.3.1 Design additions** to be subordinate to the original historic building. New additions should be smaller in proportion overall to the size of the primary building.
- 4.3.2 Additions** should be shorter in height than the original historic building. If an addition must be the same height as the original building, it should be set back considerably from the front façade of the building or lightly connected to the original building by a passageway or hyphen. Additions should never be taller than the primary historic building.
- 4.3.3 Dormer additions** should be **subordinate** to the dimensions of the existing roof. They should not be taller than the existing roof, span across the building, or extend from the eave of the roof to the roof's ridge.
- 4.3.4 Dormer additions** should be **simple** in design. Dormer roof shape, slope, and material should be consistent with the primary roof and architectural style of the historic building.



Example of an not appropriate dormer addition, which removed an original dormer and created non-historic proportions.

4.4 NEW ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

- 4.4.1** When designing **new buildings or additions**, it is generally discouraged to create exact replicas of historic buildings or ornamental details. Instead, the focus should be on contextual building form, placement, organization, materials, colors, and textures. Simplified interpretations of historic features are recommended.
- 4.4.2** **Windows** in an addition should generally match the size and shape of the windows of the original building but may be of a modern material and/or simplified design.
- 4.4.3** **New porches** should not be added to the primary or secondary contributing façades of historic buildings. If a porch was historically present on the original building and a new porch is desired, design the new porch with the same general dimensions as the original porch.
- 4.4.4** **Roofs of additions** should match the pitch and the overall color, pattern, and texture of materials on the original historic building.



Appropriate new architectural element.

FURTHER READING

For more information on additions to historic buildings, refer to [National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, Preservation Brief 14: Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings.1](#)

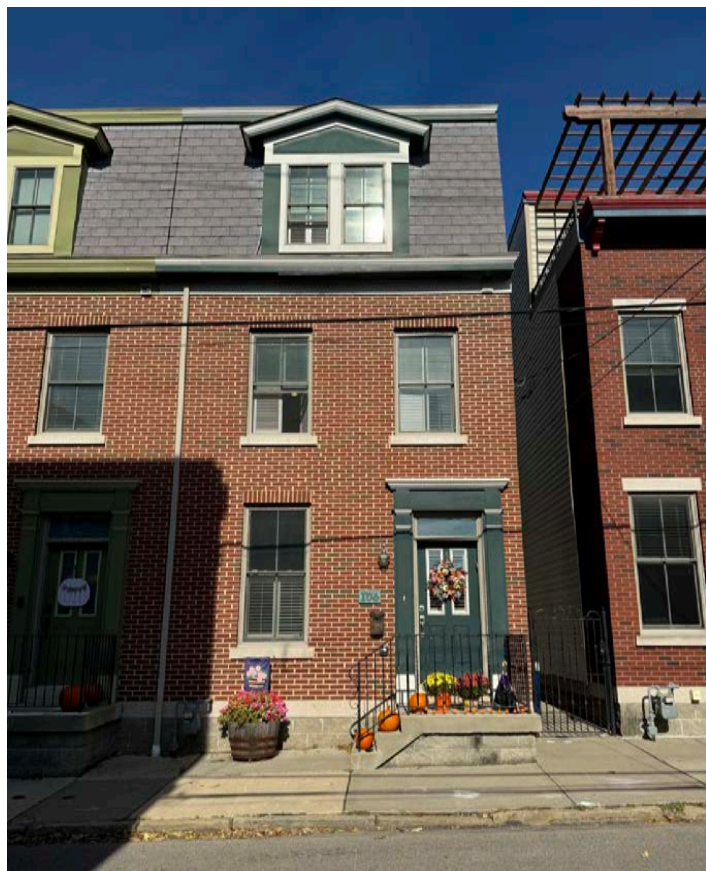
CHAPTER 5

GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

5.1 GENERAL GUIDELINES

New construction within the historic district should fit the character of the neighborhood in terms of scale, setback, materials, massing, size, and proportion. While there are buildings from different time periods in the district, they share common characteristics that create the district's coherent character. New buildings should not be designed to be mistaken for historic, but they should relate to their historic context without standing out as intrusions. New buildings shall comply with all applicable ordinances in the Pittsburgh Zoning Code.

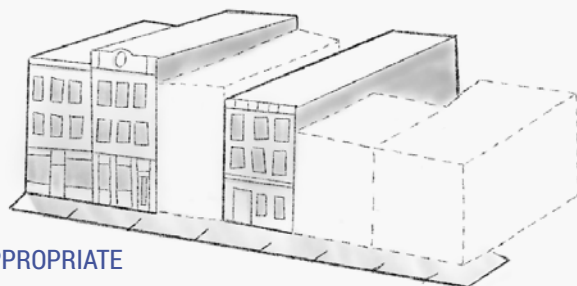
- 5.1.1 Design new construction** in the historic district to observe similar building sizes, setbacks, proportions, and building types (e.g. detached, duplex, or row house) as nearby buildings in the district.
- 5.1.2 Use of traditional building materials**, proportions and locations of window and door openings, and roof shapes will also help new buildings to blend in with their historic neighbors.
- 5.1.3 The design of newly-constructed buildings** should be contextual with the established historic character of the district, but visually differentiated as new construction. This approach will allow the new construction to fit into the traditional patterns of the neighborhood while allowing the use of contemporary design, materials, and building techniques.
- 5.1.4 Reconstructed façades** are generally discouraged for use on new buildings. Sourcing salvaged materials is encouraged, but care should be taken to ensure the style and time period of the salvaged material is appropriate, and that they are installed in an appropriate manner.



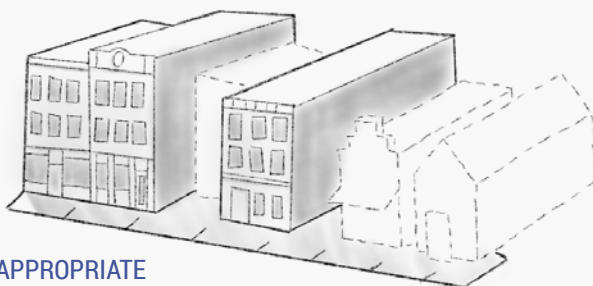
Example of new construction that blends in with the proportion and material palette of the surrounding area.

5.2 LOCATION OF NEW CONSTRUCTION

- 5.2.1** New construction to fill existing gaps or utilize vacant or underutilized lots in the historic district is encouraged.
- 5.2.2** These **infill buildings** should observe consistent building sizes, setbacks, proportions, and building types (e.g. detached, duplex, or row house) as nearby buildings in the district.



APPROPRIATE

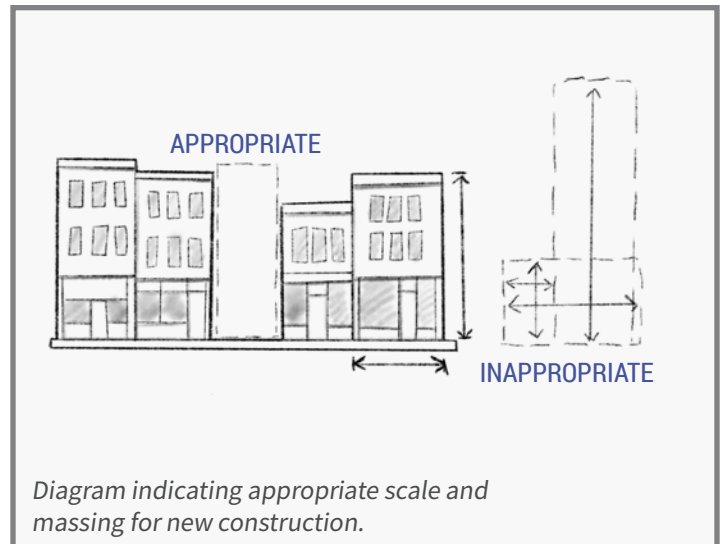


INAPPROPRIATE

Diagram indicating appropriate infill construction in regards to setbacks and proportions/roof shapes.

5.3 MASS & SCALE OF NEW CONSTRUCTION

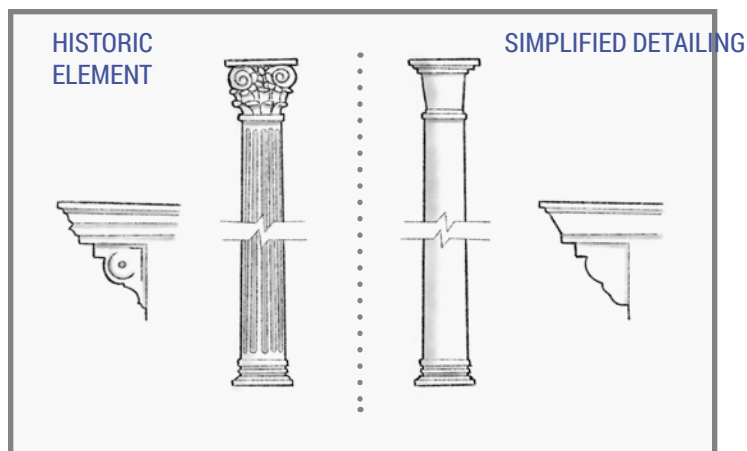
- 5.3.1** New construction should take cues from **contributing buildings** in the historic district with respect to their orientation; setback; form; dimensions, proportions, and rhythm of wall openings; materials; textures; and colors.
- 5.3.2** New buildings should be of the same **scale** as existing historic buildings in terms of height, width, and massing. The new building should not stand out in a way that is incongruent with the character of the historic district.
- 5.3.3** New **corner buildings** should be designed so that there are two primary façades that are treated equally in terms of design, materials, and details.



The newer construction on the left is not an appropriate addition to the historic neighborhood, in style, massing, setback, or proportion.

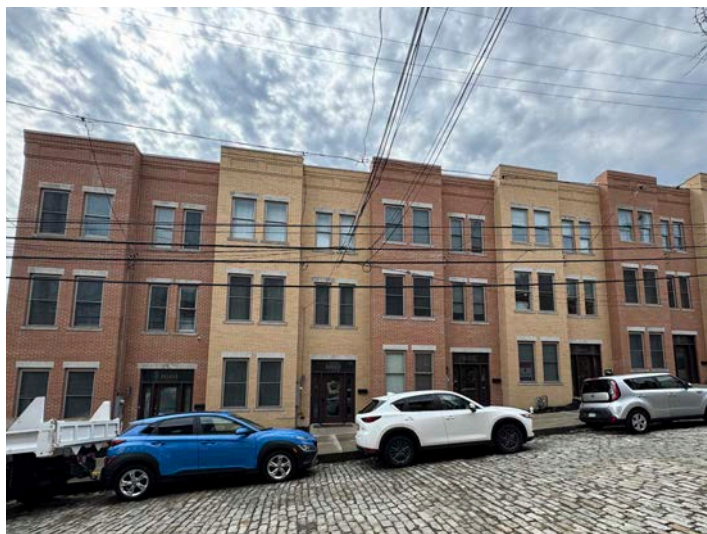
5.4 BUILDING FEATURES

- 5.4.1 The ratio of solid/void** (wall to window) creates a rhythm of openings that helps characterize a façade. New construction should respect the nearby historic pattern and proportion of openings (windows and doors) to unify the streetscape.
- 5.4.2 The facade composition** of new construction should be similar to that of historic buildings in the district, including prominent horizontal and vertical emphasis through belt courses, lintels, cornices, pilasters, and other traditional and contemporary devices.
- 5.4.3 Main entrances** to new buildings should be on the primary façade facing the street. For commercial buildings located at corners, a main entrance at the corner is also an option.
- 5.4.4 Doors and windows** of new buildings should reflect the size, proportion, rhythm, and type of the building openings on adjacent or nearby historic buildings. New windows and doors should not be inappropriately large, nor should they be smaller than those of the surrounding historic buildings. Their proportion and type (e.g., vertical double-hung windows) should also be consistent with those of historic neighbors.
- 5.4.5 New construction** should employ similar roof shapes and slopes to those of the adjacent historic buildings.



5.5 BUILDING MATERIALS & FINISHES

- 5.5.1 Brick masonry** is the primary traditional material of most of the existing historic buildings in the Mexican War Streets Historic District, with wood utilized for detailing, ornament, and trim. These materials are still widely available today, and their use will create the most traditional appearance in new construction.
- 5.5.2** Incorporate **local materials** and materials common in the surrounding neighborhood in consideration of durability and sustainability.
- 5.5.3 Contemporary materials** are also permissible for new construction if selected to be compatible in scale, texture, and color with the materials of adjacent buildings to blend with the unified materials palette within the historic district.
- 5.5.4** Most synthetic materials and metal siding such as vinyl, plastics, and aluminum **should be avoided** for use on exterior walls for new construction and renovations.
- 5.5.5 The style of the new construction may be contemporary or simplified traditional**, but should not attempt to directly imitate the style or detailing of historic buildings. Architectural ornament, if desired, should be simplified.



Example of new construction following rhythm and form of the surrounding historic streetscape.



Example of new construction emulating rhythm and variation in the district.

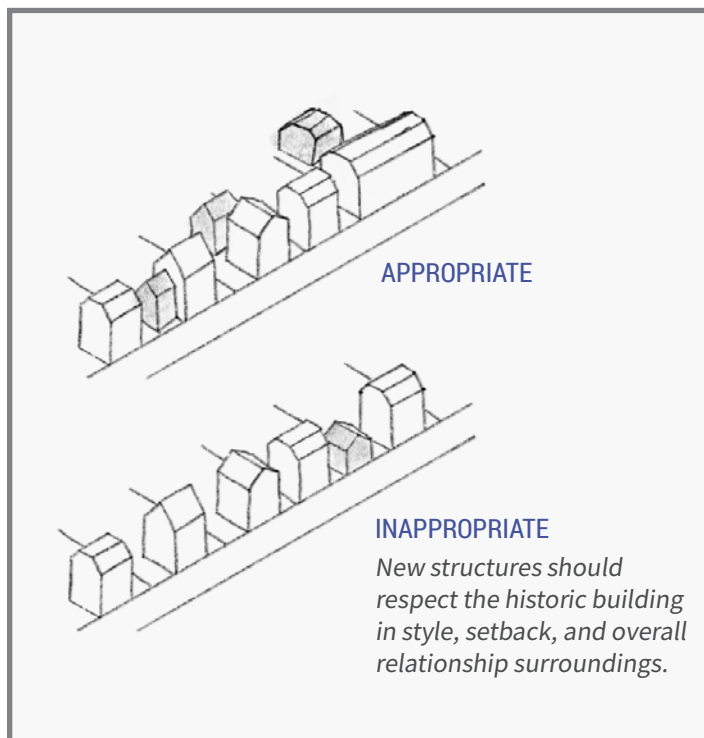


Example of new construction emulating scale and materials.

5.6 ACCESSORY STRUCTURES

Historically, **accessory structures** included carriage houses, garages, and sheds located in the rear of the property. These structures were often designed to be secondary or non-visible. New accessory structures should retain the same historical relationship to primary buildings as historic accessory structures.

- 5.6.1** Locate newly constructed accessory structures at the rear of the property or in a location that is minimally visible from the public street.
- 5.6.2** New accessory structures should be proportionate in mass and scale to the primary building.
- 5.6.3** New accessory structures should generally reflect the size, shape, and proportions of nearby historic accessory structures.
- 5.6.4** New accessory structures should use a similar palette of materials to primary buildings. Traditional materials such as masonry and wood are more appropriate than synthetic materials, but high-quality synthetic materials that resemble traditional materials may be considered in this context.



Appropriate new accessory structure(s).

CHAPTER 6

GUIDELINES FOR DEMOLITION

6.1 GENERAL GUIDELINES

Review is required for proposed demolitions of any structure in the Historic District. Demolition of an existing structure should only be considered as a last resort when all rehabilitation options have been explored and exhausted.

- 6.1.1 In lieu of demolishing an historic building, **explore alternatives** such as rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, relocation of the building, or a sale to another property owner. Investigative assessments and feasibility studies can be utilized to guide potential reuse options and configurations.
- 6.1.2 Structures should be maintained to prevent **‘demolition by neglect’**; at a minimum, maintenance and repair of the roof, drainage, and exterior façade should be performed regularly to prevent deterioration.
- 6.1.3 The **design of a new building** to occupy the existing site should follow the guidelines in Chapter - Guidelines for New Construction.
- 6.1.4 If demolition is to take place, ensure that building materials from the demolition can be **salvaged**. Contact local construction material salvage organizations to explore the feasibility of transporting the demolished building materials to be reused elsewhere.



Demolition removes historic structures and creates a void in the streetscape.

DEMOLITION BY NEGLECT

“Demolition by neglect” is a phrase describing the willful or negligent failure to provide ordinary and necessary maintenance and/or repair a building or structure, which leads to severe disrepair, resulting in stability and structure removal.

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

The City of Pittsburgh Department of Permits, Licensing, and Inspections (PLI) enforces the [International Property Maintenance Code](#) as adopted by the City of Pittsburgh Code of Ordinances, Title 10 Chapter 1004. PLI also enforces the Zoning Code (Title 9). These codes apply to all properties within the City, regardless of historic district boundaries.

- Weeds and/or debris on a property
- Abandoned vehicles on private property only
- Sidewalks that are a tripping hazard
- Electrical violations
- Building Violations
- Zoning Violations

6.2 CONSIDERATIONS

If demolition of an historic building is proposed, the following questions should be asked and the answers reviewed with City of Pittsburgh Department of City Planning staff:

- What is the **historical significance** of the building?
- What **condition** is the building in? Is the building deteriorated to the point that it has to be demolished for life safety purposes or blight removal?
- Are there **other buildings** in the City similar to the building proposed to be demolished, or is the building individually unique?
- What **impact** would demolition have on the surrounding buildings and the neighborhood as a whole?
- Is demolition the most **cost-effective** means of improving the property, or is preservation a financially viable option?
- Can the historic building be **modified** in a way to make it more usable for a new use?
- If demolition is to take place, can the **new building** be designed in a way so that it is compatible with the surrounding buildings in the Historic District?



Historic photos can provide insight on the history of buildings

HISTORIC RESEARCH

There are a variety of resources available for historic documentation on buildings and areas in the City of Pittsburgh, including:

- City of Pittsburgh Archivist
- Local libraries
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps
- Archives of local or state higher education institutions such as the Carnegie Mellon University Archives, University of Pittsburgh Archives, and Penn State University Archives
- Google Street View imagery from past dates

OPPORTUNITIES FOR VACANT LOTS

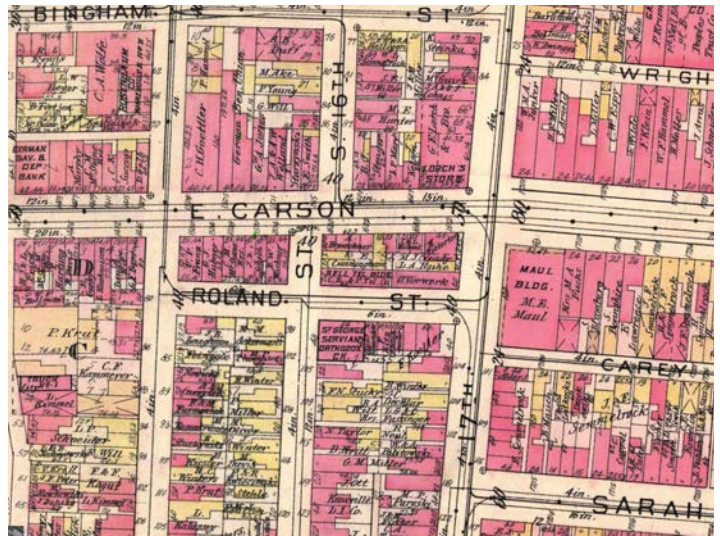
Parcels that were previously demolished may serve the community with a use besides a new structure, such as community gardens.

6.3 PROCEDURES FOR DOCUMENTATION

If demolition is to take place, complete the following steps to **document the historic building**:

- Take **photographs of the exterior and interior** of the building and its architectural details. Note the **condition and character** of these spaces and their details.
- Take **measurements** of the outside of the building and record its dimensions as well as its setbacks from neighboring buildings.
- **Send** your photographs, notes, and measurements to the City Planning staff.

NOT YET REVISED



Sanborn Maps can help approximate the date and original materials of a building, and catalogue changes in the area.

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