

GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS IN HINGHAM'S HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Understanding The Treatment of Historic Buildings and Streetscapes

Establishing a local historic district enables a community to protect the historically and architecturally significant assets that help define the character of a community. Providing practical information to property owners in the form of guidelines, is an effective way of promoting an understanding of historic preservation and the rationale used to establish the criteria for what is and what is not appropriate when altering or adding to an historic building. Each local historic district throughout the country develops its own local guidelines to reflect the principles set forth in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are national standards that allow alterations to older buildings to make them suitable for contemporary life while preserving their architectural character. Local historical and historic districts commissions use the Standards for Rehabilitation as the basis for review of historic properties across the country. In addition, the National Park Service and the Massachusetts Historical Commission use the Standards for Rehabilitation to guide the projects of preservation grant recipients and to evaluate projects for federal and local rehabilitation tax credits.

Understanding of and respect for original materials and design, preservation of historic building elements, and a desire for architectural compatibility form the foundation for the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, which are summarized as follows:

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. All buildings, structures, and sites shall be recognized as products of their own time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes that may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right and this significance shall be recognized and respected.
5. Distinctive stylistic features, finishes, construction techniques, or examples of skilled craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old

in materials, composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Replacement of missing architectural features will be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural design of different architectural elements from other buildings or structures.

7. Chemical or physical treatments for the surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building materials shall not be undertaken.

8. Archeological resources affected by, or adjacent to, a project will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

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

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

Every local historic district throughout the country uses the local guidelines derived from these standards to assist property owners as they contemplate changes to their historic properties. The guidelines which follow have been adopted to guide the planning and construction of additions and other new construction.

More detailed information about the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation can be found on the National Park Service website:

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments/treatment-rehabilitation.htm>

Guidelines for New Construction and Additions in Hingham's Historic Districts

I. New Construction

A. NEW CONSTRUCTION refers to the construction of any new freestanding structure on a property. All submittals for new construction must conform to the "Application Requirements for a Certificate of Appropriateness" available on the Historic Districts Commission webpage or in the Historical Commission Office at Hingham Town Hall. All new construction must conform with setbacks, and other requirements as set forth in Hingham's Zoning By-Law.

B. SITE new construction to be compatible with surrounding buildings that contribute to

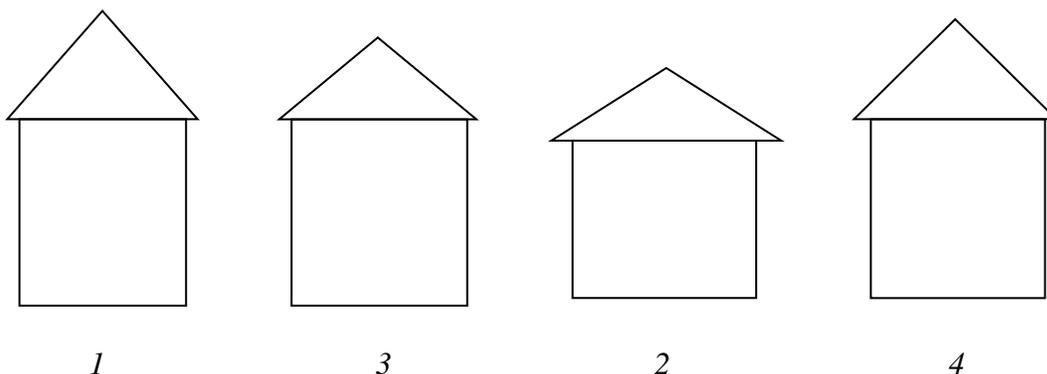
the overall character of the historic district in terms of setbacks, orientation, spacing, and distance from adjacent buildings.

- C. SCALE refers to the size of something compared to a reference standard (like a human being). Scale is the visual size of a structure when compared to adjacent structures and the site. The scale of new construction should be consistent with the width to height proportions and floor-to-floor proportions of the other historic buildings in the streetscape.
- D. MASSING refers to the overall composition of the major exterior volumes of a building; i.e., the total of the geometrical forms or blocks of a structure. Both SCALE and MASSING determine the ability of a new construction project to fit in with its historic environment. The specific components of a structure that combine to create its overall scale and massing include height, design, materials, roof forms, foundation, and footprint.
- E. The HEIGHT of new construction in a district should be compatible with the adjacent historic buildings and other historic buildings in the streetscape.
- F. PROPORTION refers to the proper and harmonious relation of one part to another or to the whole; for example, the way the eyes, nose and mouth relate to one another on a face, or the pattern of windows and doors on a building facade (void-solid relationship)
- G. There is a RHYTHM to the streetscapes in historic districts. The spacing, placement, scale, orientation, proportion, and size of window and door openings in proposed new construction should be designed to be compatible with the surrounding buildings that contribute to the special character of the historic district.
- H. The DESIGN of new buildings should be architecturally compatible with surrounding buildings that contribute to the overall character of the historic district in terms of height, form, size, scale, massing, proportion, and roof shape. New buildings should exhibit a design that is in keeping with the other buildings on the streetscape and fits comfortably into the character of the district, but is discernible from the surrounding historic structures.
- I. Select MATERIALS and finishes for proposed new buildings that are compatible with historic materials and finishes found in the surrounding buildings that contribute to the special character of the historic district in terms of design, pattern, detail, texture, finish, color, and sheen. Traditional materials, e.g. wood clapboard, cedar shingles, and brick, should be used for new construction where appropriate. Synthetic or manufactured materials are not appropriate in historic districts.
- J. Select WINDOWS and DOORS for proposed new buildings that are compatible in material, subdivision, proportion, pattern, and detail with the windows and doors of surrounding buildings that contribute to the special character of the historic

district. Windows and doors should be made of wood. Windows are usually double hung with divided lights. The use of true divided light (TDL) windows is recommended, as they are more visually compatible with traditional windows found within the districts. True divided lights may be required on the front-facing facades of new buildings. A storm window, an energy panel, or storm panel should be installed with true divided light windows. Wood simulated divided light (SDL) windows are generally appropriate on new construction provided they have interior and exterior fixed muntins with internal spacers to reference traditional designs and match the style of the building. The Commission evaluates the type and use of SDL windows on a case by case basis. The spacing, placement, scale, size, orientation and proportion of window and door openings in proposed new construction should be compatible with the surrounding buildings. Note: See the section on "Windows" in the Guidelines for Work in Historic Districts for more detailed information. The guidelines are available on the Town of Hingham website <http://www.hingham-ma.com/historical/Documents/Guidelines.pdf> or in the commission office.

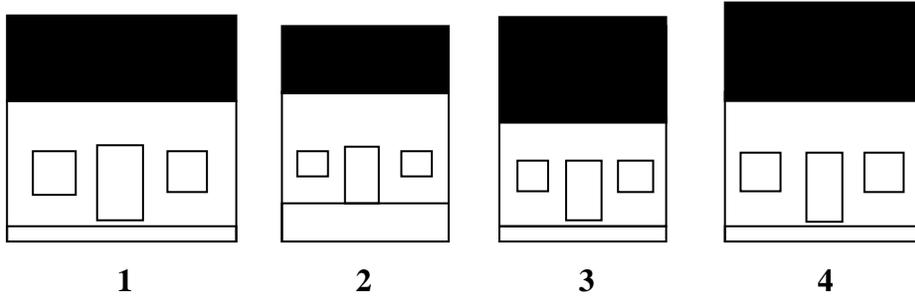
- K. ROOF forms and pitches should be consistent with adjacent historic buildings.
- L. New construction should be designed so that the overall CHARACTER of the site, site topography, character-defining site features, trees, and historically significant district vistas and views are retained.
- M. New OUTBUILDINGS, GARAGES and other ANCILLARY buildings should be simple in design to complement and blend with the principal building on the site.
Historically, these buildings were typically placed to the rear of the principal building and were detached. New outbuildings should meet the "Guidelines for New Construction"

Height of New Construction



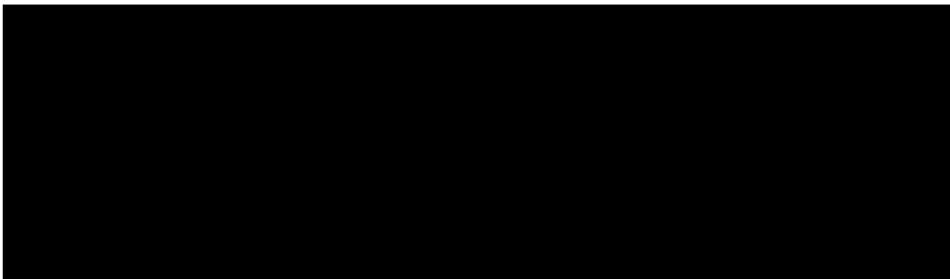
The height of a new building(3) should be compatible with the heights of surrounding buildings(1, 2 and 4).

Scale of New Construction



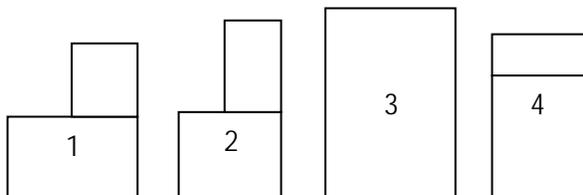
Buildings 2 and 3 are not consistent with the width to height proportions and floor-to-floor proportions of the other historic buildings (1 and 4) in the streetscape.

Proportion of New Construction



The overall ratio and relation of window and door openings within the facade should be consistent with surrounding buildings (void-solid relationship).

New Construction - Size



The footprint of the new building (3) is not consistent with the footprint of adjacent buildings, and is not an appropriate building in the streetscape.

II. Additions

1. The **SIZE** of new additions must be compatible with the mass and scale of the historic building. The additions must be visually subordinate to the historic building, allowing the historic building to remain the principal focal point of the site. The Historic Districts Commission will carefully review additions in order to protect both the original character of the historic property and the visual consistency of the neighborhood; *however, additions that are over 50% in size (square feet) to the original house will be carefully examined and may not be approved.* The intent is to minimize the visual impact of large additions in order to maintain the integrity of the original structure and the character of the district.
2. Proper **LOCATION** or **PLACEMENT** of an addition to an historic building is critical. Additions should not be made to principal elevations. Additions should be placed to the rear of an historic building. Additions at the rear of buildings, such as additional enclosed living space, decks, and porches are appropriate providing they are not, or are minimally visible from the public way. Side additions may be appropriate if located toward the rear of the building and are visually subordinate to the historic building.
3. The **DESIGN** of a new addition should be architecturally compatible with the historic character of the primary building but should not replicate its historic design. Making the addition an exact replica of the primary building, can actually compromise the character of the historic building by confusing the visual record of its historical development. A design for an addition that meets the guidelines of this section and that draws from the architectural vocabulary of the primary building is encouraged. The addition should blend with the character of the primary building while at the same time express its compatible construction. Adding to an historic building is a design challenge that will have a lasting impact on the cohesion of the streetscape and the character of the historic district. There should be a clear visual distinction separating the addition from the existing building.

Changes and additions to the rear or side of properties will be considered from the viewpoint of the neighboring properties in addition to the view from the public way.

4. The **SHAPE** of an addition should be compatible in shape with the existing historic building. The shape of the roof of the addition should be compatible with that of the historic building, and should have a similar pitch.
5. **MERGING** or physically connecting residences and outbuildings that were historically separate is not appropriate.

6. The criteria of REVERSIBILITY means the new additions should be constructed in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic building and its environment would be unimpaired.

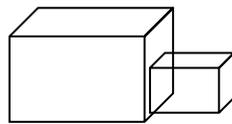
The Technical Services branch of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service The published a series of technical Preservation Briefs to assist owners of historic properties in their preservation efforts. Preservation Brief #14, *New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings*, prepared by Architectural Historians Anne E. Grimmer and Kay D. Weeks, deals specifically with new additions to historic buildings. The section titled "Guidance on New Additions - Preserve Significant Historic Materials, Features and Form " addresses the concept of REVERSIBILITY. An excerpt from that section follows:

"Attaching a new exterior addition usually involves some degree of material loss to an external wall of a historic building, but it should be minimized. Damaging or destroying significant materials and craftsmanship should be avoided, as much as possible.

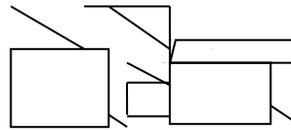
Generally speaking, preservation of historic buildings inherently implies minimal change to primary or "public" elevations and, of course, interior features as well. Exterior features that distinguish one historic building or a row of buildings and which can be seen from a public right of way, such as a street or sidewalk, are most likely to be the most significant. These can include many different elements, such as: window patterns, window hoods or shutters; porticoes, entrances and doorways; roof shapes, cornices and decorative moldings; or commercial storefronts with their special detailing, signs and glazing patterns. Beyond a single building, entire blocks of urban or residential structures are often closely related architecturally by their materials, detailing, form and alignment. Because significant materials and features should be preserved, not damaged or hidden, the first place to consider placing a new addition is in a location where the least amount of historic material and character-defining features will be lost. In most cases, this will be on a secondary side or rear elevation. One way to reduce overall material loss when constructing a new addition is simply to keep the addition smaller in proportion to the size of the historic building. Limiting the size and number of openings between old and new by utilizing existing doors or enlarging windows also helps to minimize loss. An often successful way to accomplish this is to link the addition to the historic building by means of a hyphen or connector. A connector provides a physical link while visually separating the old and new, and the connecting passageway penetrates and removes only a small portion of the historic wall. A new addition that will abut the historic building along an entire elevation or wrap around a side and rear elevation, will likely integrate the historic and the new interiors, and thus result in a high degree of loss of form and exterior walls, as well as significant alteration of interior spaces and features, and will not meet the Standards."

Preservation Brief #14 can be seen in its entirety at:
<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/14-exterior-additions.htm#additions>

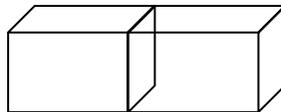
Massing of an Addition



A



B



C

A. The addition to the rear is appropriate because it is subordinate to the primary building.

B. A larger addition is appropriate when the mass is separated into components.

The connector ensures that the rear addition is subordinate to the primary building.

C. The addition to the rear is not appropriate because it changes the mass of the primary structure.

III. Identifying and Preserving Character-Defining Features

Each of the properties on the *Town of Hingham Comprehensive Community Inventory* is recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and original use.

New Construction and Additions must be designed and constructed so that the character-defining features of the historic building are not radically changed, obscured, damaged, or destroyed.

Features that may be important in defining the overall historic character of a building include:

- **Siding:** Clapboard, weatherboard, shingles, and other siding, and elements – both functional and decorative.
- **Windows:** A critical element in the overall historic character of a building. Window styles, glazing and patterns, materials and proportions are all important architectural features of a structure.
- **Entrances and porches:** Particularly important when they occur on primary elevations; and equally as important when they do not occur.
- **Roofs:** Features such as roof shape, dormers and cupolas (or lack of them), eaves and chimneys, as well as the size, color, and pattern of the roofing material.
- **Architectural features:** Appropriately sized trim details, treatment of gables, overhangs.
- **Masonry** - Chose brick and stone carefully to convey a desired architectural style. Man-made or machine made bricks or stone will not have an authentic effect. Brick and stone should have a slightly imperfect texture and quality.

Preserving the significant materials, architectural features, original proportions and overall historic character of a primary historical building as well as the character of the district as a whole can be accomplished in several ways:

1. Placing the new addition on an inconspicuous side or rear elevation so that the new work does not result in a radical change to the form and character of the primary historic building;
2. Setting an infill addition or connector back from the historic building wall plane so that the historic building can be distinguished from the new work;
3. Setting an additional story well back from the roof edge to ensure that the historic building's proportions and profile are not radically changed;
4. Limiting the size and scale of the addition so that it does not diminish or overpower the primary building or detract from the character of the historic district.
5. Differentiating the ridge height significantly between the new and the old to allow the historic building to remain dominant.

IV. Demolishing Structures in Historic Districts

When planning new construction or an addition, the project plan may include removing an existing outbuilding or addition. An important first step is to assess the significance of the existing structure to determine whether or not it should be preserved. Demolition of historically or architecturally significant primary buildings is prohibited in historic districts. Partial demolition may be considered acceptable where it involves an inappropriate alteration or addition to a building; or, in some cases, where an existing addition is not historically significant.

Removal of architecturally significant features, and alterations to historic facades are inappropriate. If, during the process of construction, the applicant encounters existing materials that, in the judgment of the applicant, need to be repaired, removed or replaced, it is incumbent upon the applicant to notify the commission, or its designated representative, in lieu of taking action unilaterally. Failure to do so may result in fines being imposed in accordance with section IX, paragraph 3 of the Historic Districts By-Law.

V. Pre-Project Consultation

It is highly recommended that property owners considering significant alterations and additions to their historic properties contact the Historic Districts Commission Administrator to discuss the proposed project. Preliminary plans and concepts can be reviewed for compatibility with the HDC guidelines before a significant investment is made in architectural plans that may have to be reworked. The Historic Districts Commission is available to consult with homeowners on an informal basis during a regularly scheduled HDC meeting. Contact the Administrator for additional information and to schedule a meeting time. The telephone number for the commission office is 781.741.1492

VI. Criteria for Reviewing Proposed Additions to a Building in an Historic District

The review process addresses the elements identified and defined in the guidelines: massing, scale, proportion, setbacks, materials, siting, sightlines, architectural style, historic features and design.

- The proposed change will not adversely affect any significant historical, cultural, architectural or aesthetic feature of the concerned property or of the historic district in which it is located, and is consistent with the spirit and intent of these guidelines;
- The proposed change is consistent and compatible with the architectural period of the building;
- The proposed change is compatible in architectural style with existing adjacent contributing structures in the historic district;
- The scale, massing, proportions, materials, colors, textures, fenestration, decorative features and details proposed are consistent with the period of the existing house and are compatible with adjacent structures.
- The proposed change will be made so that if later reversed, the historic structure would remain intact.

VII. Preserving Hingham

A major goal of these guidelines is a heightened awareness of significant architectural features, original materials and the historic character of a structure and its site before planning a new construction or an addition so that change may be effected within a responsible preservation context.

WHEN WE LOSE A HISTORIC PLACE, WE LOSE A PART OF WHO WE ARE.

National Trust for Historic Preservation