

DESIGN GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS



INTRODUCTION

Owning a property in a Historic District is both a privilege and a responsibility. Property owners can enjoy the benefits of generally increasing property values and protection from changes which would destroy the historic character of their neighborhood. In return however, property owners are responsible for helping to maintain the distinctive characteristics which make each historic district unique. In order to assist property owners in this effort, the City of Battle Creek established the **Historic District Commission (HDC)**. This commission serves to “safeguard the heritage of the city by preserving districts and historic properties within a city which reflect elements of its cultural, social, economic, political, or architectural history”. Any time exterior changes are planned on a historic property, that change must be reviewed by HDC before changes take place.

FACADE

These features include, but are not limited to, the size, style, and placement of window and door openings, the entry and porch, use of decorative and/or structural trim and the materials used in covering the exterior of the building.

GUIDELINES

The architectural features which compose the façade of any historical building define its style and cannot be removed/significantly altered without destroying all or most of the historic quality and economic value of the building.

WINDOWS

GUIDELINES

The HDC will not approve removing, downsizing or changing the shape of windows.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Wherever possible, existing glass panes (including but not limited to art glass, stained glass, leaded windows) should be retained and repaired. If replacement is necessary new glass should resemble the original form, style, color, thickness, and texture.
- New storm windows should use a minimal frame, no wider than, and aligned with the sash of the interior window. They should be painted to match the existing building trim. Homeowners are urged to explore the use of interior storm windows. Shutters and awnings should be of size, style, and material appropriate to the original house.

PORCHES

GUIDELINES

The HDC will not approve the removal of porches, significant change in the level of floor of the porch, or the removal of trim elements from the porch.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Whenever possible, original porches and their design elements should be retained and repaired. If replacement is necessary, they should resemble the original in shape, style, and material.
- If the porch is to be enclosed, the use of storm and/or screens should not obscure the appearance of the original porch. This means original architectural features, including railings, columns, supports, and spindles should be retained and kept visible.
- Decks are permitted in the rear or on non-visible facades. If decks are constructed on visible facades, they should be screened visually by the use of appropriate fencing or plantings.

EXTERIOR SURFACES

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The HDC strongly recommends that the original exterior surface of the house be retained and repaired. If it must be replaced, the new surface should maintain the scale and appearance of the original material.
- Brackets, corner boards, cornices, and trim elements should not be removed or concealed if replacement surface is installed.
- If it is absolutely necessary to clean a brick, stone, or masonry surface, it should be done in the gentlest manner possible. Artificial stone or brick surfaces which are permanently attached to the original material will not be approved.
- Mortar used in tuck pointing should match the original color, material, and profile.
- It is recommended that original surfaces of brick, stone, and other masonry be retained without treatment of waterproof and/or repellent coating which will damage the original materials.

ROOF

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The HDC strongly recommends that the original roof martial be retained and repaired. Gutters should be retained and repaired.
- If replacement is necessary, materials and dormers which resemble the original should be used.
- Skylights and solar collection systems are remitted on non-visible facades and roofs.

DOORS & ENTRIES

GUIDELINES

The HDC will not approve changing size or configuration of entry doors, removal of porticos, or the removal of trim elements from main entry areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Whenever possible, the original doors and entries should be retained and repaired. If replacement is necessary, the profile, scale, style, and material of the new elements should resemble the original.

TRIM

This includes window, door, and porch decorative elements, brackets, and ornamental molding. These decorative elements are integral to the style of the building.

GUIDELINES

The HDC will not approve the removal of trim from historic structures.

HANDICAP ACCESS/FIRE ESCAPES/OUTDOOR

STAIRWAYS

GUIDELINES

The design and location should be in proportion to and appropriate to the original building. The structures should be visually screened and/or installed in rear of the building.

ADDITIONS

GUIDELINES

Additions to a historic building should be distinguishable from the original (not an attempt to fake history with a new addition), but compatible in style, materials, and scale.

FENCES/WALLS

GUIDELINES

Fences and walls should be appropriate to the original house and to the historic streetscape in scale, style, and materials.

RECOMMENDATIOS

- Generally wood and wrought iron are appropriate; split rail or cyclone fencing are not appropriate.

PARKING

GUIDELINES

Parking areas should be set back at least to the building line and visually screened from front and neighboring yards.

STREETSCAPE

The setting of a historic building alone within a historic district has a major impact on its appearance and value. The streetscape created by the neighboring buildings and landscaping features such as fences, planting, entrances, parking areas, etc. can enhance or detract from the impact of a building. In a pleasing streetscape, a regularity and rhythm is created by a similarity of height, size, shape, roof forms, and building setback. This streetscape creates a framework in which the differences in style and detail from house to house become accented and enhanced. Some elements which will determine the quality of the streetscape include: Handicap access, fire escapes/outdoor stairways, additions, fences/walls, parking, and signs.