

# 3. Guidelines for Additions

City of San Antonio Historic Design Guidelines

Office of Historic Preservation



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#### Using the Historic Design Guidelines

The City of San Antonio Historic Design Guidelines (“Historic Design Guidelines”) establish baseline guidelines for historic preservation and design. The Historic Design Guidelines apply to all **exterior** modifications for properties that are individually designated landmarks or within a locally designated historic district. All applicants are encouraged to review the Historic Design Guidelines early in their project to facilitate an efficient review process. In addition to compliance with the Unified Development Code (“UDC”), applicants must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness (“COA”) from the Office of Historic Preservation (“OHP”) for all proposed exterior modifications as described in the Using the Historic Design Guidelines section of the Historic Design Guidelines. The Historic Design Guidelines are comprised of eight sections as follows:

- 1. Using the Historic Design Guidelines
- 2. Guidelines for Exterior Maintenance and Alterations
- **3. Guidelines for Additions**
- 4. Guidelines for New Construction
- 5. Guidelines for Site Elements
- 6. Guidelines for Signage
- 7. A Guide to San Antonio’s Historic Resources
- 8. Glossary

The Historic Design Guidelines as a whole are intended to work congruently with other sections, divisions and articles of the UDC but have been separated into individual sections for ease of use. In the event of a conflict between other sections or articles of the UDC and these Historic District Guidelines, the Historic District Guidelines shall control except in the case of signage where the more strict regulation or guideline shall control. Additionally, if an exception from the application of Chapter 28 of the city code of San Antonio has been approved for signage in historic districts, such exception shall remain unless removed by official action of the City Council. The meaning of any and all words, terms or phrases in the Historic District Guidelines shall be construed in accordance with the definitions provided in Appendix A of the UDC. In the case of a conflict regarding a definition as provided in these guidelines and Appendix A of the UDC, the Historic District Guidelines definition shall control. All images courtesy of the City of San Antonio, Clarion Associates, and Hardy, Heck, Moore, Inc. unless otherwise noted.

**For questions and guidance please contact the Office of Historic Preservation:** Email: [ohp@sanantonio.gov](mailto:ohp@sanantonio.gov) | Phone: 210.215.9274

# Why Preserve?

*A message from Historic Preservation Officer, Shanon Shea Miller*

**W**e strive to preserve San Antonio's historic buildings and neighborhoods for many reasons. We recognize and celebrate the cultural, aesthetic, environmental and economic value historic preservation brings to San Antonio. It is by definition sustainable and is a proven economic development tool. No example in this country of successful central city revitalization has occurred without preservation as a component.



- Preserving our built environment helps tell the **story** of San Antonio's long, rich and diverse history. Taking care of our older buildings and neighborhoods provides a sense of belonging, a collective memory, and a sense of pride in our past. Preservation is about understanding that historic buildings are limited resources and we must be careful to preserve those that tell our many and varied stories. This includes not just major historic sites but neighborhood schools and parks, streets lined with bungalows, theaters, small-scale commercial buildings, shot gun houses, gas stations, and towering downtown landmarks.
- Preservation helps build strong **neighborhoods** by protecting their character. Preservation programs foster community pride, appreciation of history, learning, creativity, and a sense of place, thus making historic neighborhoods desirable places to live and work.



- Preservation is good for the **economy**. Reinvesting in our historic buildings and neighborhoods helps to stabilize our property values and community, and promotes tourism and economic development. Historic preservation is more labor-intensive than new construction and generally utilizes more local materials. Every time a building is rehabilitated or reused, specialized trades and skilled laborers are employed. This creates jobs and puts more money into our local economy.
- Additionally, historic preservation contributes to the **tourism** industry in our city. Studies have shown that the heritage visitor stays longer and spends more than any other category of visitor. These people are looking for the jewels that locals cherish...often it's our historic buildings and neighborhoods that provide that sense of place and community that attracts visitors, while contributing to the quality of life for local citizens. As Donovan Rypkema says, "Place is not a synonym for location. Place is a location that has been claimed by feelings." For that and many other reasons, historic preservation is good for the local economy!

- Preservation helps protect the **environment**. Reusing and adapting historic buildings and neighborhoods reduces our consumption of raw land, new materials, and other resources. Rehabilitating existing buildings and maintaining existing materials are sustainable solutions and are most often more cost effective over the life of the building than replacement or new construction. Fortunately the green movement is recognizing that the greenest building ever built is the one that already exists! Stewardship of the built environment is sustainability as well as preservation.



We want our neighborhoods and commercial districts to continue to tell the story of San Antonio's history to those who come after us. This can best be done by preserving the condition of our historic resources and giving them new life and new purpose by making them our homes and places of business. The Historic Design Guidelines are intended to serve the community as we work together to preserve San Antonio's historic resources to provide a quality environment for future generation ***Preservation is not about longing for the past or resisting progress. It's about building on the past toward the future.***

Sharon

"Historic preservation has become a fundamental tool for strengthening American communities. It has proven to be an effective tool for a wide range of public goals including small business incubation, affordable housing, sustainable development, neighborhood stabilization, center city revitalization, job creation, promotion of the arts and culture, small town renewal, heritage tourism, economic development, and others."

- Donovan Rypkema, *Measuring Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation*, 2011



# 3. Guidelines for Additions

## Introduction

These guidelines provide guidance to property owners, design professionals, homeowners, and decision-makers regarding the construction of an addition to an existing historic building; they are not intended as a substitute for consultation with qualified architects, contractors, attorneys, City of San Antonio staff, and/or the Historic and Design Review Commission (“HDRC”). All applicants are responsible for the professional, legal and/or other services required for their project. Countless variables in the design and character of additions exist within San Antonio’s historic districts. District-specific guidelines should address issues or elements that are unique within individual historic districts.

## Applicability

The Historic Design Guidelines generally apply to all **exterior** modifications to properties that are located within a locally designated historic district or that are individually designated landmarks. This section specifically applies to all additions to residential properties and non-residential or mixed-use properties.

## Guidelines

This section contains guidelines for residential and non-residential additions as follows:

- Massing and Form of Residential Additions
- Massing and Form of Non-Residential Additions
- Materials and Textures
- Architectural Details
- Mechanical Equipment and Roof Appurtenances
- Designing for Energy Efficiency

These guidelines contain numerous pictures, illustrations, drawings, and examples of projects that have successfully met, or failed to meet, the qualities that the guidelines address. Examples are provided only to illustrate and show context. They shall not be construed as the only possible design solutions allowed.

In considering whether to recommend approval or disapproval of an application for a COA for additions, the HDRC shall be guided by the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, the UDC, the Historic Design Guidelines, and any additional design guidelines adopted by the City.

## General Principles

Each of San Antonio’s Historic Districts features a distinct set of site characteristics and architectural styles. As such, each addition project will be reviewed within the context of its individual block and the surrounding historic district, as applicable. The following General Principles for will be considered during the review of additions in conjunction with the guidelines contained in this section:

### Principle #1: Ensure that Historic Buildings Remain the Central Focus of the District

Additions should not damage or obscure architecturally important details and materials of the primary structure or other resources on the site. Additions should be distinguishable from the original structure without distracting from it.

### Principle #2: False Historicism/Conjectural History is Discouraged

Design additions to reflect their time while respecting the historic context and architectural style of the original structure. Avoid using architectural details for additions that are more ornate than those found on the original structure or that are not characteristic of the original structure’s architectural character.

### Principle #3: Contemporary Interpretations of Traditional Designs and Details May be Considered

When applied to a compatible building form, contemporary materials, window moldings, doors, and other architectural details can provide visual interest while helping to convey the fact that the addition is new.

### Principle #4: More Flexibility in Interpretations of Traditional Designs and Details May be Considered in Locations Not Visible from the Public Right-of-Way

All facades of a building are important; however, the highest level of scrutiny related to compatibility should generally be placed on additions that are visible from public right-of-way. The OHP will review proposed alterations on a case-by-case basis to determine whether they are appropriate.

# 1. Massing and Form of Residential Additions

## Why is this Important?

Residential building forms in San Antonio’s historic districts vary significantly in terms of their size, roof form, architectural style, and historic context. Residential additions must be carefully sited and designed so as not to overwhelm or obscure the form and proportions of the historic structure and to maintain the integrity of the surrounding block context.



*An addition to this residence (visible at far right) is setback from the primary façade, clearly distinguishing it from the primary historic structure.*

## Guidelines

### A. GENERAL

- i. **Minimize visual impact**—Site residential additions at the side or rear of the building whenever possible to minimize views of the addition from the public right-of-way. An addition to the front of a building would be inappropriate.
- ii. **Historic context**—Design new residential additions to be in keeping with the existing, historic context of the block. For example, a large, two-story addition on a block comprised of single-story homes would not be appropriate.
- iii. **Similar roof form**—Utilize a similar roof pitch, form, overhang, and orientation as the historic structure for additions.
- iv. **Transitions between old and new**—Utilize a setback or recessed area and a small change in detailing at the seam of the historic structure and new addition to provide a clear visual distinction between old and new building forms.

### B. SCALE, MASSING, AND FORM

- i. **Subordinate to principal façade**—Design residential additions, including porches and balconies, to be subordinate to the principal façade of the original structure in terms of their scale and mass.
- ii. **Rooftop additions**—Limit rooftop additions to rear facades to preserve the historic scale and form of the building from the street level and minimize visibility from the public right-of-way. Full-floor second story additions that obscure the form of the original structure are not appropriate.
- iii. **Dormers**—Ensure dormers are compatible in size, scale, proportion, placement, and detail with the style of the house. Locate dormers only on non-primary facades (those not facing the public right-of-way) if not historically found within the district.
- iv. **Footprint**—The building footprint should respond to the size of the lot. An appropriate yard to building ratio should be maintained for consistency within historic districts. Residential additions should not be so large as to double the existing building footprint, regardless of lot size.
- v. **Height**—Generally, the height of new additions should be consistent with the height of the existing structure. The maximum height of new additions should be determined by examining the line-of-sight or visibility from the street. Addition height should never be so contrasting as to overwhelm or distract from the existing structure.

**This**



*A modest setback combined with compatible, but varied, roof forms distinguishes this rear addition (left) as new without distracting from the character of the original structure.*



*This addition is sited below the peak of the roof and is scaled so as not to alter the appearance of the home's front façade or otherwise detract from the original structure.*



*A side dormer addition with similar roof forms and architectural details complements, but doesn't detract from, the character of the original structure.*

**Not This**



*A lack of variation in roof form, height, and massing blurs the line between this rear addition (right) and the original structure.*



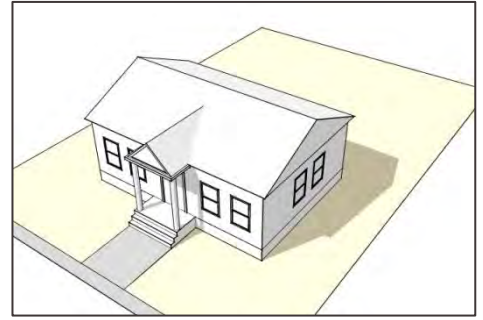
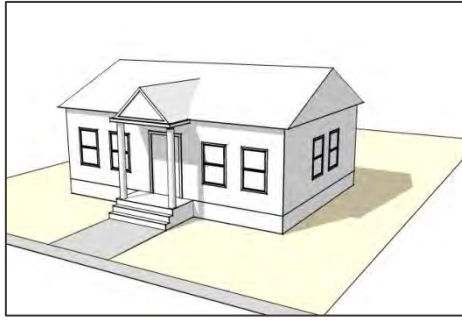
*The scale and placement of this inappropriate second story addition overwhelms and obscures the form and character of the original structure.*



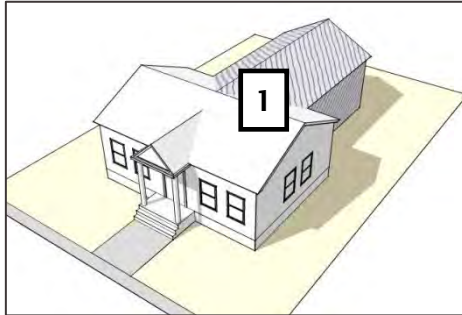
*This dormer addition varies dramatically in form and materials from the original structure and is clearly visible from the public right-of-way.*

## Massing and Form of Residential Additions

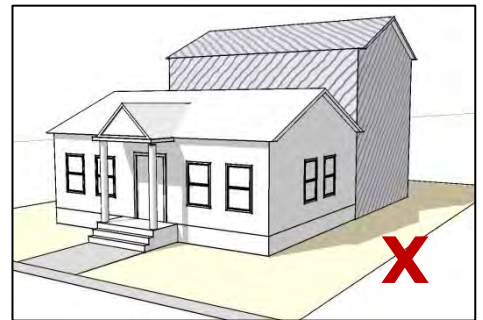
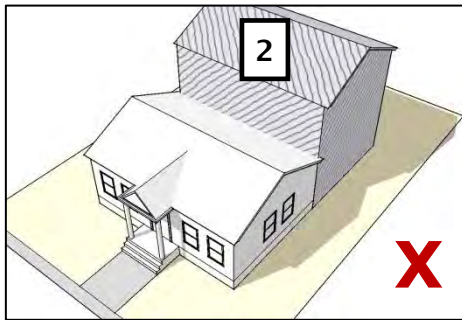
- 1** Site residential additions to the rear of the building whenever possible and provide a clear distinction between old and new building forms using a setback or other visual transition.
- 2** Residential additions that overwhelm or fundamentally change the overall massing of the original structure in terms of their height and building footprint are not appropriate.
- 3** Full-floor second story additions that obscure the form of the original structure or are in contrast with the historic context of the block are not appropriate.



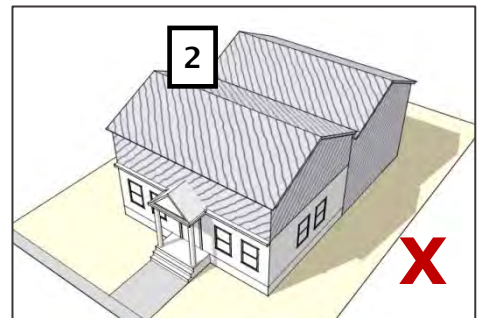
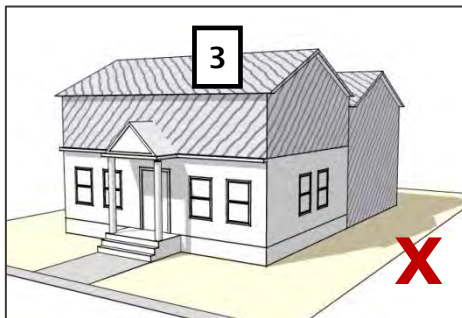
*Original one-story historic home characteristic of homes found along the block.*



*Appropriate one-story addition attached to the rear of the original structure.*



*Inappropriate two-story addition attached to the rear of the original structure*



*Inappropriate second-story and rear addition.*



## Additional Resources

*New Additions to Mid-size Historic Buildings*, ITS #18, by John Sandor. <http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/its-bulletins/ITS18-Additions-MidSizeBuildings.pdf>

*New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings; Preservation Concerns*, Preservation Brief #14, by Anne E Grimmer and Kay D. Weeks. <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief14.htm>

*Rear Additions to Historic Houses*, ITS #37, by Chad Randl. <http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/its-bulletins/ITS37-Houses-RearAdditions.pdf>

*Rooftop Additions*, ITS #36. <http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/its-bulletins/ITS36-Rooftop-Additions.pdf>

## 2. Massing and Form of Non-Residential and Mixed-Use Additions

### Why is this Important?

Historic non-residential and mixed-use building forms are often blocky in character and typically have flat roofs, offering a different range of options for additions than most residential building forms. In order to maintain the character of the historic structure and the overall district, the scale, proportions, and form of additions to non-residential and mixed-use building forms must be designed so as not to overwhelm or obscure the proportions of the historic structure. In addition, careful placement of additions can be used to minimize the appearance of the additions from the public right-of-way.



*A fourth floor addition to this historic building is set back from the primary façade, minimizing its visibility from the public right-of-way.*

## Guidelines

### A. GENERAL

- i. **Historic context**—Design new additions to be in keeping with the existing, historic context of the block. For example, additions should not fundamentally alter the scale and character of the block when viewed from the public right-of-way.
- ii. **Preferred location**—Place additions at the side or rear of the building whenever possible to minimize the visual impact on the original structure from the public right of way. An addition to the front of a building is inappropriate.
  - i. **Similar roof form**—Utilize a similar roof pitch, form, and orientation as the principal structure for additions, particularly for those that are visible from the public right-of-way.
  - ii. **Subordinate to principal façade**—Design additions to historic buildings to be subordinate to the principal façade of the original structure in terms of their scale and mass.
  - iii. **Transitions between old and new**—Distinguish additions as new without distracting from the original structure. For example, rooftop additions should be appropriately set back to minimize visibility from the public right-of-way. For side or rear additions utilize setbacks, a small change in detailing, or a recessed area at the seam of the historic structure and new addition to provide a clear visual distinction between old and new building forms.

### B. SCALE, MASSING, AND FORM

- i. **Height**—Limit the height of side or rear additions to the height of the original structure. Limit the height of rooftop additions to no more than 40 percent of the height of original structure.
- ii. **Total addition footprint**—New additions should never result in the doubling of the historic building footprint. Full-floor rooftop additions that obscure the form of the original structure are not appropriate.



*A second story addition to this commercial storefront is set back from the primary façade and is distinguishable from the historic building.*

## Massing and Form for Non-Residential and Mixed-Use Additions

- 1 Distinguish the addition from the historic building without distracting from the historic building.
- 2 Addition is set back from the primary façade.
- 3 Design additions to be subordinate to the primary façade in terms of their scale and mass. Additions should not distract from the historic façade.
- 4 Use a similar roof form as found on the historic building.

## Additional Resources

*New Additions to Mid-size Historic Buildings*, ITS #3, by Anne E. Grimmer.

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/its-bulletins/ITS03-Additions-MidSizeBuildings.pdf>

*New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings; Preservation Concerns*,

Preservation Brief #14, by Anne E Grimmer and Kay D. Weeks. <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief14.htm>

*Rooftop Additions*, ITS #36. <http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/its-bulletins/ITS36-Rooftop-Additions.pdf>

*Rooftop Additions on Mid-Size Historic Buildings*, ITS #47, by Liz Creveling.

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/its-bulletins/ITS47-RooftopAdditions-MidSizeBuildings.pdf>

### 3. Materials and Textures

#### Why is this Important?

Additions that use materials that are dramatically different in scale, texture, and proportion as those used on the historic building can detract from the character of the historic building. Materials should be compatible with the architectural style and materials of the original structure.



*The use of contrasting, but complementary, materials and a modest offset for this rear addition provides a clear transition between old and new building elements.*



*The upper-story addition (center) in this neighborhood commercial district incorporates complementary, yet varied, materials to protect the character of the surrounding historic district.*

#### Guidelines

##### A. COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

- i. **Complementary materials**—Use materials that match in type, color, and texture and include an offset or reveal to distinguish the addition from the historic structure whenever possible. Any new materials introduced to the site as a result of an addition must be compatible with the architectural style and materials of the original structure.
- ii. **Metal roofs**—Construct new metal roofs in a similar fashion as historic metal roofs. Refer to the Guidelines for Alternations and Maintenance section for additional specifications regarding metal roofs.
- iii. **Other roofing materials**—Match original roofs in terms of form and materials. For example, when adding on to a building with a clay tile roof, the addition should have a roof that is clay tile, synthetic clay tile, or a material that appears similar in color and dimension to the existing clay tile.

##### B. INAPPROPRIATE MATERIALS

- i. **Imitation or synthetic materials**—Do not use imitation or synthetic materials, such as vinyl siding, brick or simulated stone veneer, plastic, or other materials not compatible with the architectural style and materials of the original structure.

##### C. REUSE OF HISTORIC MATERIALS

- i. **Salvage**—Salvage and reuse historic materials, where possible, that will be covered or removed as a result of an addition.

## Materials and Textures for Additions

- 1 Use materials that match the original structure in terms of their type, color, and texture.
- 2 Any new materials introduced to the site as a result of an addition must be compatible with the architectural style and materials of the original structure. The corrugated metal siding used in this example may not be appropriate for an addition to a historic home with wood siding.



*Materials for additions should be compatible with the architectural style and materials of the original structure.*

## 4. Architectural Details

### Why is this Important?

The use of architectural details that are not characteristic of the original structure or the surrounding district can distract from the historic context. Additions should generally incorporate architectural details (windows, ornamentation, porches, cornices, etc.) that are in keeping with the architectural style of the original structure; however, contemporary interpretations of traditional designs and details may also be appropriate in some instances.



*These rear additions incorporate architectural details that are characteristic of the original structure.*

### Guidelines

#### A. GENERAL

- i. **Historic context**—Design additions to reflect their time while respecting the historic context. Consider character-defining features and details of the original structure in the design of additions. These architectural details include roof form, porches, porticos, cornices, lintels, arches, quoins, chimneys, projecting bays, and the shapes of window and door openings.
- ii. **Architectural details**—Incorporate architectural details that are in keeping with the architectural style of the original structure. Details should be simple in design and compliment the character of the original structure. Architectural details that are more ornate or elaborate than those found on the original structure should not be used to avoid drawing undue attention to the addition.
- iii. **Contemporary interpretations**—Consider integrating contemporary interpretations of traditional designs and details for additions. Use of contemporary window moldings and door surroundings, for example, can provide visual interest while helping to convey the fact that the addition is new.

### Architectural Details for Additions

- 1 Design additions to reflect their time while respecting the historic context.
- 2 Do not introduce new architectural details, such as this new shed roof addition, that visually compete with architectural details found on the original structure.
- 3 The introduction of sloped roof forms and strong vertical elements in this rooftop addition distracts from the historic character of the original structure.



*This rear addition complements architectural details found on the primary historic structure.*

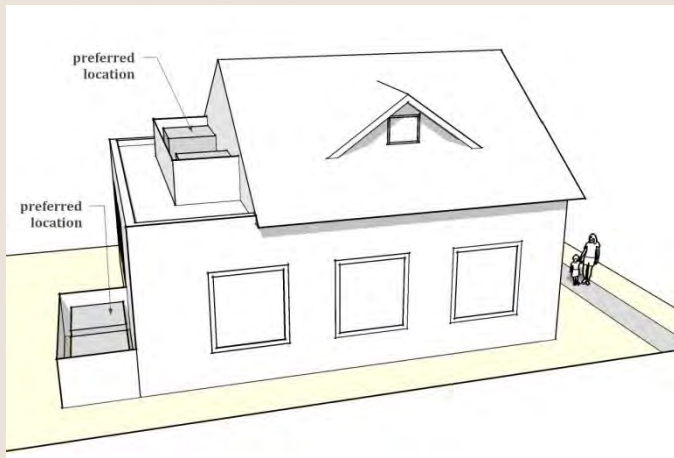
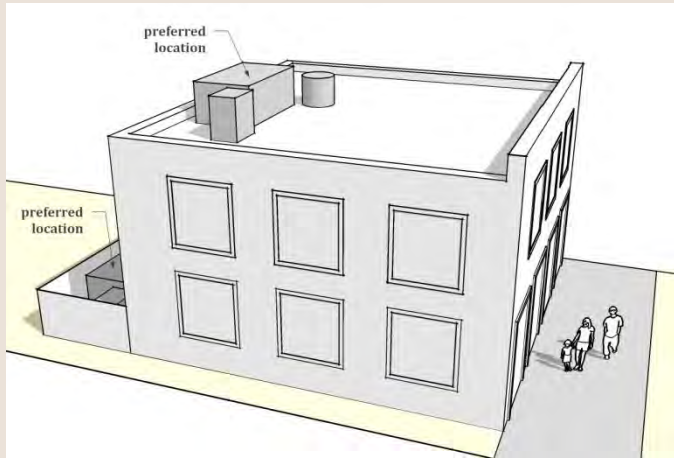


*These additions detract from, rather than complement, the character of the primary historic structures due to the use of incompatible roof forms, massing, and architectural details.*

## 5. Mechanical Equipment and Roof Appurtenances

### Why is this Important?

Without proper siting and screening, mechanical equipment and roof appurtenances can detract from the historic character of the building and can expose adjacent properties to noise, unsightly views, and other impacts.



*Mechanical equipment and roof appurtenances should be located and screened so as to minimize their visibility from the public right-of-way and to not detract from the historic character of the building they serve or the surrounding district.*

### Guidelines

#### A. LOCATION AND SITING

- i. **Visibility**—Do not locate utility boxes, air conditioners, rooftop mechanical equipment, skylights, satellite dishes, cable lines, and other roof appurtenances on primary facades, front-facing roof slopes, in front yards, or in other locations that are clearly visible from the public right-of-way.
- ii. **Service Areas**—Locate service areas towards the rear of the site to minimize visibility from the public right-of-way. Where service areas cannot be located at the rear of the property, compatible screens or buffers will be required.

#### B. SCREENING

- i. **Building-mounted equipment**—Paint devices mounted on secondary facades and other exposed hardware, frames, and piping to match the color scheme of the primary structure or screen them with landscaping.
- ii. **Freestanding equipment**—Screen service areas, air conditioning units, and other mechanical equipment from public view using a fence, hedge, or other enclosure.
- iii. **Roof-mounted equipment**—Screen and set back devices mounted on the roof to avoid view from public right-of-way.



**This**



*This utility box is located on a secondary façade and painted to match the color of the primary historic structure.*

**Not This**



*While the air conditioning unit is screened from view, the wall mounted utility box and other wires do not match the color of the building and distract from the overall character.*



*Air conditioning units should be located in a rear yard or along a secondary façade and screened from view.*



*Air conditioning units should not be placed on the primary façade of historic structures.*



*Rooftop mechanical equipment on this addition to a historic structure is screened from the public right-of-way.*



*Rooftop mechanical equipment should not be visible from the public right-of-way.*

## 6. Designing for Energy Efficiency

### Why is this Important?

The use of energy efficient building features, alternative energy sources, and site design techniques in additions and new construction can help conserve energy and water, reduce heating and cooling costs, and support citywide sustainability goals.



*If designed and sited properly, energy and water efficient features such as the solar panels (top) and cistern (bottom) can be incorporated into historic districts with minimal visual impact. Ideally, such features should be located towards the rear of the property to minimize the visual impact on the public right-of-way.*

### Guidelines

#### A. BUILDING DESIGN

- i. **Energy efficiency**—Design additions and new construction to maximize energy efficiency.
- ii. **Materials**—Utilize green building materials, such as recycled, locally-sourced, and low maintenance materials whenever possible.
- iii. **Building elements**—Incorporate building features that allow for natural environmental control – such as operable windows for cross ventilation.
- iv. **Roof slopes**—Orient roof slopes to maximize solar access for the installation of future solar collectors where compatible with typical roof slopes and orientations found in the surrounding historic district.

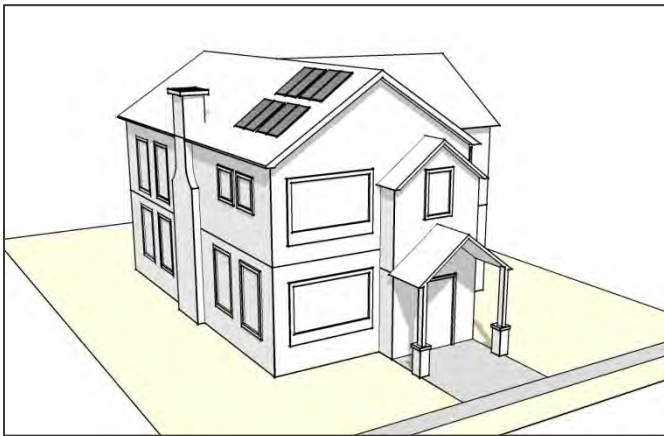
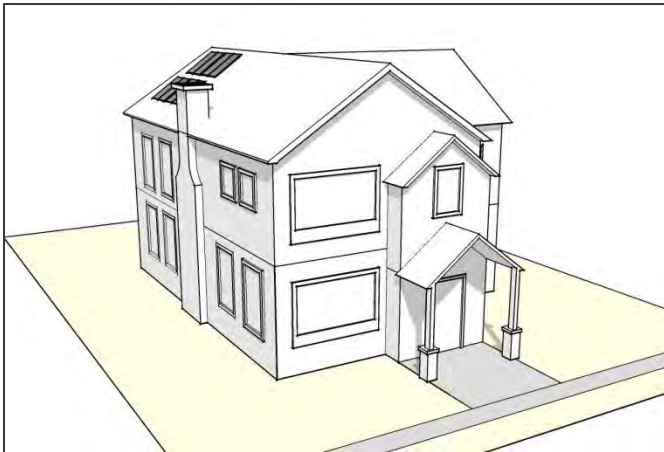
#### B. SITE DESIGN

- i. **Building orientation**—Orient new buildings and additions with consideration for solar and wind exposure in all seasons to the extent possible within the context of the surrounding district.
- ii. **Solar access**—Avoid or minimize the impact of new construction on solar access for adjoining properties.

#### C. SOLAR COLLECTORS

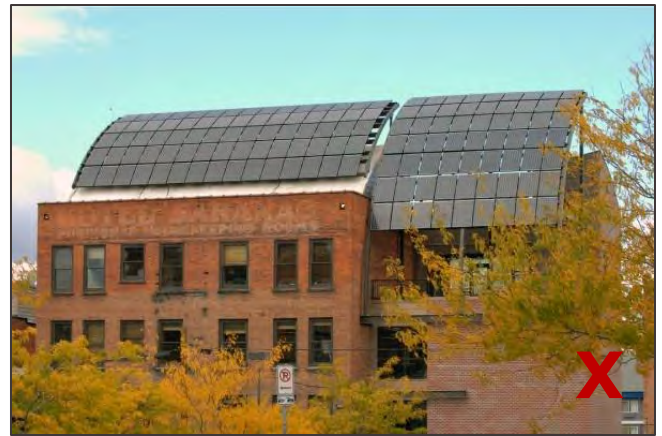
- i. **Location**—Locate solar collectors on side or rear roof pitch of the primary historic structure to the maximum extent feasible to minimize visibility from the public right-of-way while maximizing solar access. Alternatively, locate solar collectors on a garage or outbuilding or consider a ground-mount system where solar access to the primary structure is limited.
- ii. **Mounting (sloped roof surfaces)**—Mount solar collectors flush with the surface of a sloped roof. Select collectors that are similar in color to the roof surface to reduce visibility.
- iii. **Mounting (flat roof surfaces)**—Mount solar collectors flush with the surface of a flat roof to the maximum extent feasible. Where solar access limitations preclude a flush mount, locate panels towards the rear of the roof where visibility from the public right-of-way will be minimized.

## This



*Siting solar panels towards the rear of a visible roof surface or on a garage located at the rear of the property (top) is preferred to minimize the visual impact on the public right-of-way; however, where solar access is insufficient a more visible location (bottom) may be considered if panels are of a low profile and similar color as the roof surface.*

## Not This



*Solar panels should be mounted flush with the surface of the roof to minimize their visibility from the public right-of-way, regardless of the building type they are attached to. The design and placement of solar panels should not create a visual distraction that detracts from the historic building they are mounted to.*

### Additional Resources

*Incorporating Solar Panels in a Rehabilitation Project*, ITS #52, by Jenny Parker.  
<http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/its-bulletins/ITS52-SolarPanels.pdf>

### Did you know?

The greenest building is one that is already built. Take care to preserve materials, and avoid damaging the historic structure when installing new sustainable technologies.

## Reduce, Reuse, Recycle



(Photos: [www.jargol.com](http://www.jargol.com) (left); [www.yellowbot.com](http://www.yellowbot.com) (right))

Any unwanted or unusable materials should be sold to an architectural salvage yard or donated to a non-profit organization. Reusing historic materials is a sustainable way to keep quality, historic materials out of the landfill. Avoiding unnecessary waste benefits both our community and our environment.

If new materials are purchased, local and sustainable options should be considered. More information is available at: <http://www.buildsgreen.org/>

