



## **The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties**

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties are common sense principles in non-technical language. They were developed to help protect our nation's irreplaceable cultural resources by promoting consistent preservation practices.

The Standards may be applied to all properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places: buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts.

The Standards are a series of concepts about maintaining, repairing and replacing historic materials, as well as designing new additions or making alterations. They cannot, in and of themselves, be used to make decisions about which features of a historic property should be preserved and which might be changed. But once an appropriate treatment is selected, the Standards provide philosophical consistency to the work.

The Standards are neither technical nor prescriptive, but are intended to promote responsible preservation practices that help protect our Nation's irreplaceable cultural resources. For example, they cannot, in and of themselves, be used to make essential decisions about which features of the historic building should be saved and which can be changed. But once a treatment is selected, the Standards provide philosophical consistency to the work.

The four treatment approaches are Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction.

U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Preservation Assistance Division  
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**Preservation** is defined as the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new construction. New exterior additions are not within the scope of this treatment; however, the limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a preservation project.

1. A property will be used as it was historically, or be given a new use that maximizes the retention of distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships. Where a treatment and use have not been identified, a property will be protected and, if necessary, stabilized until additional work may be undertaken.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate, and conserve existing historic materials and features will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection, and properly documented for future research.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. The existing condition of historic features will be evaluated to determine the appropriate level of intervention needed. Where the severity of deterioration requires repair or limited replacement of a distinctive feature, the new material will match the old in composition, design, color, and texture.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

**Rehabilitation** is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

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. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources 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 and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

**Restoration** is defined as the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period. The limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a restoration project.

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use which reflects the property's restoration period.
2. Materials and features from the restoration period will be retained and preserved. The removal of materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize the period will not be undertaken.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate and conserve materials and features from the restoration period will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection, and properly documented for future research.
4. Materials, features, spaces, and finishes that characterize other historical periods will be documented prior to their alteration or removal.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize the restoration period will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated features from the restoration period will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials.
7. Replacement of missing features from the restoration period will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence. A false sense of history will not be created by adding conjectural features, features from other properties, or by combining features that never existed together historically.
8. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
9. Archeological resources affected by a project will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
10. Designs that were never executed historically will not be constructed.

**Reconstruction** is defined as the act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location.

1. Reconstruction will be used to depict vanished or non-surviving portions of a property when documentary and physical evidence is available to permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture, and such reconstruction is essential to the public understanding of the property.
2. Reconstruction of a landscape, building, structure, or object in its historic location will be preceded by a thorough archeological investigation to identify and evaluate those features and artifacts which are essential to an accurate reconstruction. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
3. Reconstruction will include measures to preserve any remaining historic materials, features, and spatial relationships.
4. Reconstruction will be based on the accurate duplication of historic features and elements substantiated by documentary or physical evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different features from other historic properties. A reconstructed property will re-create the appearance of the non-surviving historic property in materials, design, color, and texture.
5. A reconstruction will be clearly identified as a contemporary re-creation.
6. Designs that were never executed historically will not be constructed.

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## The Benefits of Design Review

By Nore' Winter

**T**oday, almost 2,300 historic preservation commissions operate throughout the United States, and many of these include design review in their responsibilities. All share a common goal: to protect the historic resources of their communities. Many of these places have developed and use design guidelines in their review of proposed renovations and new construction. Design guidelines are important and provide the following:

- A basis for making decisions that are fair
- Consistency in design review
- Incentives for investment
- A tool for property value protection and enhancement
- A tool for education

In recent years, numerous communities have asked for more protection in their historic districts, with the result that more historic preservation commissions are developing guidelines. A significant trend is that many of these commissions are developing guidelines in greater detail than ever before, while others are experimenting with educational and incentive programs to encourage property owners to follow their design guidelines.

However, the challenge that faces most commissions is: how may one develop guidelines that will be fair and protect historic resources while also encouraging

creative design solutions? Guidelines should focus on identifying the most important features of an historic district that should be respected, while refraining from dictating design outcomes.

### **WHAT ARE DESIGN GUIDELINES?**

Local governments typically create design review ordinances under local zoning regulations, within the framework of appropriate state enabling legislation. The courts have upheld this legal basis for design review, to the extent that local governments clearly have the right to adopt design review regulations as part of historic preservation ordinances; they also have a responsibility to see that such powers are fairly and consistently administered.

Design guidelines thereby convey community policies about neighborhood design. As such, they provide a common basis for making decisions about work that may affect the appearance of individual properties or the overall character of a district. They also serve as an educational and planning tool for property owners and their design professionals who seek to make improvements that may affect historic resources. **Continued p.3**

# The Benefits of Design Review

By Nore' Winter

Continued



*Winter & Co. developed design guidelines for the South Main St. Historic District in St. Charles, Missouri.*

Design guidelines typically address the following categories of work:

- **Rehabilitation and alterations to historic buildings:**

These may be individually designated historic structures or they may be properties designated as "contributing" in a locally defined historic district. Alterations to the exterior of a historic building, including construction of an addition, are subject to review.

- **Alterations to "non-contributing" structures in historic districts:**

These are properties that may be old but have lost their integrity as historic structures, or they may be newer buildings that have not achieved historic significance. In general, the guidelines for new construction apply to these properties.

- **New building:**

Construction of new, freestanding structures, either as primary or secondary buildings within a locally designated historic district, are subject to review.

- **Site work:**

This includes new landscaping designs, the removal of original or historic landscaping and new grading and driveway construction affecting an individually designated landmark and for any property within a locally designated historic district.



*Winter & Co. developed design guidelines for the Old Town Historic District in Wichita, Kansas.*

## **WHY HAVE DESIGN REVIEW?**

First and foremost, design review helps preserve historic districts as records of our heritage in a consistent and fair manner. The design guidelines used provide for unbiased and uniform reviews of proposed work in historic districts. They provide uniform standards by which all projects are evaluated. Design guidelines should not, however, dictate design by formula. Instead, they should identify key features of the historic resources that should be respected when planning any repairs, alterations or new construction.

Design guidelines also can establish a climate for investment for businesses, residents and property owners because the associated review process provides assurance that alterations and new construction by others will reinforce the preservation goals for the district. In a similar manner, where historic properties have been maintained, residents frequently adopt design guidelines to protect property values.

Design guidelines give local residents who wish to protect the distinct historic identity of the neighborhood a strong tool. They provide a framework for insuring compatible new construction that enhances, rather than undermines, a community's unique character.

Guidelines also may serve as educational tools, providing useful information about rehabilitation procedures and design concepts that are appropriate. They often provide practical guidance, helping property owners make well-informed design decisions.

*Winter & Co developed design guidelines for the Northwest Quadrant Conservation District in Beaufort, S. C.*



## **Benefits of historic preservation**

Across the nation, thousands of communities promote historic preservation because doing so contributes to neighborhood livability and quality of life, minimizes negative impacts on the environment and yields economic rewards. Many property owners are also drawn to historic resources because the quality of construction is typically quite high and the buildings are readily adaptable to contemporary needs.

### **Construction quality**

Most historic structures are of high quality construction. Lumber used came from mature trees and was properly seasoned and it typically was milled to "full dimensions" as well, which often yielded stronger framing. These structures also were thoughtfully detailed and the finishes of materials, including fixtures, wood floors and trim were generally of high quality, all features that owners today appreciate. By comparison, in today's new construction, materials of such quality are rarely available and comparable detailing is very expensive. The high quality of construction in historic buildings is therefore a "value" for many people.

### **Adaptability**

Owners also recognize that the floor plans of historic buildings easily accommodate comfortable life-styles and support a diversity of populations. Rooms are frequently large, permitting a variety of uses while retaining the overall historic character of each structure and open space often exists on a lot to accommodate an addition, if needed.

### **Livability and quality of life**

When groups of older buildings occur as a historic district, they create a street scene that is "pedestrian friendly," which encourages walking and neighborly interaction. Mature trees and decorative architectural features also contribute to a sense of identity, an attribute that is rare and difficult to achieve in newer areas of a city. This physical sense of neighborhood can also reinforce desirable community social patterns and contribute to a sense of security.

### **Environmental benefits**

Preserving a historic structure is also sound environmental conservation policy because "recycling" it saves energy and reduces the need for producing new construction materials. Three types of energy savings occur: first, energy is not consumed to demol-

ish the existing building and dispose of the resulting debris; second, energy is not used to create new building materials, transport them and assemble them on site; finally, the "embodied" energy, that which was used to create the original building and its components, is preserved.

By "reusing" older materials as a historic building, pressure is also reduced to harvest new lumber and other materials that also may have negative effects on the environment of other locales where these materials are produced. Because older buildings are often more energy-efficient than new construction, when properly used, heating and cooling needs are reduced as well.

### **Economic benefits**

Historic resources are finite and cannot be replaced, making them precious commodities that many buyers seek. Therefore, preservation adds value to private property. Many studies across the nation document that, where historic districts are established, property values typically rise, or at least are stabilized. In this sense, designation of a historic district appears to help establish a climate for investment. Property owners within the district know that the time and money they spend on improving their properties will be matched with similar efforts on surrounding lots; these investments will not be undermined by inappropriate construction next door.

The condition of neighboring properties also affects the value of one's own property: people invest in a neighborhood as much as the individual structure itself and, in historic districts where investment is attracted, property owners recognize that each benefits from the commitment of their neighbors. An indication of the success of historic preservation is that the number of designated districts across the country has increased, due to local support, such that an estimated 1,000,000 properties, both as individual landmarks and in historic districts, are under local jurisdictions.



*Design guidelines for downtown Boulder, Colorado, directed the developer of this parking garage to provide a two-story commercial storefront which relates to the traditional character.*



*Winter & Company developed design guidelines for the Napa Abajo/Fuller Park Historic District in Napa, California.*

Preservation projects also contribute more to the local economy than do new building programs because each dollar spent on a preservation project has a higher percentage devoted to labor and to purchase of materials available locally. By contrast, new construction typically has a higher percentage of each dollar spent devoted to materials that are produced outside of the local economy and to special construction skills that may be imported as well. Therefore, when money is spent on rehabilitating a building, it has a higher "multiplier effect," keeping more money circulating in the local economy.

Rehabilitating a historic building also can cost less than constructing a new one. In fact, guidelines for the rehabilitation of historic structures typically promote cost-saving measures: they encourage smaller and simpler solutions, which in themselves provide savings. Preserving building elements that are in good repair is preferred, for example, to replacing them. This typically is less expensive. In some instances, appropriate restoration procedures may cost more than less sensitive treatments, however. In such cases, property owners are compensated for this extra effort, to some extent, in the added value that historic district designation provides.



*Public participation is a vital component to any planning process, especially those directly related to a community member's quality of life. Here workshop participants in Carmel-by-the-Sea, California, help Winter & Company identify those character-defining features which are important and should be preserved.*

## **CASE STUDY: OLD TOWN FORT COLLINS HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Many architects have now engaged in successful projects within locally-designated historic districts. While they recognize that doing so may involve some limitation in the range of design choices available, they also acknowledge that design guidelines, when applied consistently and objectively, create a positive climate for investment. Numerous studies now demonstrate that local historic districts stabilize and often enhance property values. The Old Town Fort Collins Historic District is a dramatic example of such successes.

Old Town emerged in the 1880s as the central business district of Fort Collins, with its street grid oriented parallel to the Cache La Poudre river, and by 1900, it was the thriving focus of commerce for the community. It grew to include a mix of banks, hotels, retail stores, professional offices and apartments. The area continued to thrive until the 1930s, when College Avenue became the dominant business corridor. Then, in the 1960s, new strip commercial areas provided additional challenges. Over the years, Old Town declined, but many of its early buildings survived, although sometimes substantially altered. A few were demolished. Then, in 1979, the City of Fort Collins designated the area as a historic district and established a process to review alterations and new construction. Design guidelines were also developed that established the basic policies for review.

The guidelines asked that historic buildings be preserved, while accommodating new uses. When renovation was to occur, it was to be in a manner that maintained the character-defining features of the properties. New construction was to respect the historic context, but without literally imitating it.

*Over the past fifteen years, more than \$50,000,000 in investment has occurred in the Old Town area. The master plan and design guidelines helped establish a vision for the area and create a stable climate for this activity.*



*As investors came into Old Town Ft. Collins, they found structures in need of restoration. This row of buildings had lost some details over time and a monochromatic color scheme obscured the original design character.*



*In the early 1980s, the windows in the Miller Block were boarded and architectural details needed repair.*

*Restoration work followed the Old Town Design Guidelines. In some cases, missing storefronts were reconstructed. In others, later uses were retained and designs were developed that enhanced the historic character while retaining future restoration options.*

Individual investors were attracted to the area, purchasing buildings and restoring them. These early projects raised community consciousness of the potential for Old Town. Improvements continued into the mid-1980s when larger development companies became interested and spearheaded a series of major projects, including several rehabilitation and new building projects. Cooperative programs with the city led to an improvement district that guided construction of a pedestrian mall and parking structure.



*The Miller Block was restored, following Winter's Old Town Design Guidelines. The plaza in the foreground is a part of the Old Town Master Plan.*

Each project was executed in a manner compatible with the previous ones, and thus the cumulative benefits of each investment has been shared by everyone, including property owners and the public in general. Today, the area exhibits a distinct identity that combines individual historic resources with contemporary infill into a harmonious whole that is rich with variety and detail.



*During the 1890s, the City of Ft. Collins housed its first department and administrative offices in this pair of Old Town structures.*



*By the 1980s, the buildings had been severely altered. When sold as surplus property, a private investor sought to renovate the structures.*



*Winter assisted the property owner in developing a preservation approach that secured federal tax credits.*

The results speak for themselves. Old Town now is a lively neighborhood, with specialty retail, dining, entertainment and professional offices. A substantial economic generator in its own right, community leaders also acknowledge that Old Town helps in broader business recruitment strategies, because the quality of life that it represents is an attraction for many companies who may in fact locate elsewhere in the city.

While many other factors have certainly contributed to the success of Old Town, the preservation program has helped create an asset for the community and it also has generated many jobs, including several architectural commissions! It demonstrates that the use of design guidelines can be a strategic tool in enhancing the built environment.



*In 1982, The Reed & Dauth Building survived with upper story windows intact, but key ornamental features were missing or obscured.*



*The Old Town guidelines encourage reconstruction of missing elements, such as ornamental cornices.*



*Winter directed rehabilitation design sketches that illustrated the potential character of the Reed & Dauth Building.*



*After rehabilitation, the Reed & Dauth Building exhibits the distinctive cornice and arched ground floor that were a part of its history.*

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# Design Review Reviewed: A Comparison of Administrative Versus Discretionary Design Review

Jack L. Nasar and Peg Grannis

Most American cities use design review to improve the visual quality and compatibility of ordinary nonhistoric projects. They often use a discretionary design review process. How well does discretionary design review improve community appearance by keeping building projects compatible with their surroundings? This article presents two complementary studies aimed at answering this question. For a neighborhood in Columbus, Ohio, our research team did a physical inventory of the compatibility of 96 projects that underwent discretionary design review and 68 that did not. The latter projects met less restrictive administrative appearance controls present in the zoning ordinance. The team also surveyed 39 residents for their opinions of a subset of projects built according to either the discretionary review of the design or the administrative controls. The results indicate that discretionary design review is not demonstrably better than administrative review. Communities can use methods like the ones discussed here to evaluate their own design review programs. They may find that the replacement of discretionary design review with more explicit administrative appearance controls achieves the intended compatibility more efficiently.

Urban form results from many activities by many actors, including governing bodies, developers, banks, and independent groups (Bacow, 1995). To shape the design decisions of these agencies and individuals, urban designers use a variety of administrative, regulatory, and financial techniques (Shirvani, 1985). This article centers on one such technique: design review. Design review differs from most zoning, subdivision, and building regulations in its emphasis on appearance. Local governments say they use design review to serve such purposes as improving quality of life, enhancing a unique place, promoting vitality, creating comfortable places for pedestrians, protecting property values, promoting compatible development, or improving community appearance (Scheer, 1994). Critics complain that design review is cosmetic, limits designer creativity, and unnecessarily intrudes on private property (Lightner, 1992). Yet most courts support design review and hold aesthetics alone as an adequate public purpose in land use

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regulation (Mandelker, 1993; Smardon & Karp, 1993). In early decisions, courts found aesthetics to be an adequate government purpose if it advanced other legitimate purposes, such as the protection of property value. In *Berman v. Parker* (1954), however, the U.S. Supreme Court went further to state that the values of public welfare include "spiritual as well as physical, aesthetic as well as monetary. It is within the power of the legislature to determine that the community should be beautiful as well as healthy" (p. 33). Most State courts followed suit. Design review might also raise problems with free speech (Costonis, 1989; Lightner, 1992; Scheer, 1994). For example, if the review goes beyond regulating "the time, place and manner of architectural expression . . . [to] totally exclude an architectural style . . . courts could hold [this an] invalid prohibition on the content of free speech" (Mandelker, 1993, p. 479). However, the courts have consistently supported regulation of design over free speech, although in such cases the local government may have the burden of showing that design review serves a legitimate public interest, such as aesthetics (Mandelker, 1993).

Design review remains a major tool that local governments use to improve community appearance. A study of 1114 U.S. cities found that more than 90% had architectural appearance controls (International City Management Association, 1984). A later survey of 700 city and county planning departments obtained usable responses from 369 cities and towns (Lightner, 1993). Most of them (78%, 83% when counties were dropped, and 93 % of cities having more than 100,000 residents) had some form of design review, and only 3% "limited design review to historic districts" (p. 1). Most of these ordinances apply to single-family residences (Mandelker, 1993).

In areas with design review, private and public proposals for development must be approved by the design review board to proceed. Typically, one submits a design to local planning staff, who may approve it, disapprove it, or ask for modifications. A planning (or review) commission or a staff member makes the decision. The review may evaluate many factors, such as architectural excellence, visual bulk, style, scale, materials, or environmental or historical factors, but it most often evaluates the compatibility of projects with their surroundings (Lightner, 1993; Preiser & Rohane, 1988). Court support for zoning rests on the compatibility principle: Courts allow communities to protect areas from incompatible uses. Thus appearance controls for compatibility eases substantive due process problems (Mandelker, 1993). Psychological studies also suggest that humans need visual compatibility and order, especially in residential areas (Nasar, 1998). Compatibility does not necessarily require one to mimic the surroundings. Rather it refers to the degree to which a proposal has features that make it appear to fit with its surroundings. Project approval often rests on the appraisal of the compatibility of the proposed project.<sup>1</sup>

Communities vary in the amount of discretion left to the reviewers in deciding whether or not to approve a proposal. Discretionary design review refers to ordinances in which the decision rests on the reviewers' personal discretion. Administrative design review refers to ordinances that limit personal discretion by requiring projects to satisfy clear, precise, and measurable standards (Shirvani, 1985). As most U.S. cities lack the standards for administrative review (Lightner, 1993), they typically rely on a discretionary approach. This approach leaves them vulnerable to charges of abuse for being arbitrary, capricious, or vague (Hinshaw, 1995; Lai, 1994; Poole, 1987). To avoid such problems, communities have a compelling need to know how specific modifications of the physical environment will affect community appearance, and they need to develop clear guidelines or controls to support their objectives. They need to know how well design review boards perform, especially with discretionary reviews. Does discretionary design

review improve the publicly perceived compatibility and appearance of developments? Previous research suggests that it does not.

A series of studies in California found that more often than not, discretionary design review by a board did not result in buildings that the public found more appealing (see Stamps, 1997a). Consider one case study that examined the performance of discretionary design review in the Oakland Hills Restoration Area, California (Stamps & Nasar, 1997). After a 1991 fire destroyed more than 2500 houses in Oakland Hills, the Oakland Hills Restoration Area rebuilt rapidly. People built many houses without design review. Later, the local planning department set up a discretionary design review process, in which planning staff served as reviewers. The criteria the reviewers had for evaluating the projects were vague. For example, one criterion referred to not having an adverse effect on the "livability of adjacent homes" or "the harmony of neighborhood appearance." At the time of the study, the Oakland Hills Restoration area had completed 257 projects prior to discretionary design review and 476 under discretionary design review. Because all of the rebuilt houses had many characteristics in common, such as topography, planning process, demography, geographical location, trees, utility poles, street furniture, and car parking, the Oakland Hills Restoration Area provided a good opportunity to evaluate the performance of design review by comparing popular responses to houses built under discretionary design review to ones built with no design review.

Forty-two local and 40 nonlocal observers viewed photographs of seven projects selected at random from the design review projects and seven selected at random from projects with no design review. The results indicated that design review did not make a *noticeable* difference. Though the observers judged the discretionary design review houses as slightly more pleasant than the houses built without design review or appearance codes, the difference did not achieve statistical significance. Beyond statistical significance, the study examined the magnitude of effect. Cohen (1988) discusses three effect sizes—small, medium, and large. The analysis indicated a small effect (0.14). This means that the Oakland Hills Restoration Area discretionary design review had a nearly undetectable effect on public preferences.

In cases when design review deals with issues beyond appearance, such as functional effects of a structure through its site plan or building bulk, public opinion may not be the sole criterion. In the more typical case in which design review focuses on appearance, measures of the responses of individuals exposed to the project represent appropriate measures of success.

## **Design Review in a Columbus, Ohio Neighborhood**

No single study in one city can fully evaluate the performance of design review in the hundreds of communities that use it. The projects, designers, reviewers, criteria and degree of review board discretion may affect the result. We offer the present research to suggest that individual communities evaluate the performance of design review, and as an example of how they might go about such an evaluation.

The research reported here adds to the information provided in the Oakland study in several ways. First, it tests the performance of discretionary design review in a different city: Columbus, Ohio. Second, it does so in the context of additions and renovations, rather than new buildings. Third, to improve internal validity, it matches and compares discretionary design review projects with neighboring administrative review projects. Fourth, while the Oakland study compared discretionary design review with no design review, the present research

compares discretionary review with administrative review of mandatory appearance controls (such as roof pitch) in the zoning ordinance. Fifth, it looks at several dimensions of response and uses a multiple method approach. One method examines the physical compatibility of the houses resulting from the discretionary design review and those resulting from the administrative review; the second examines residents' ratings of preference and compatibility of the discretionary review and administrative review projects.<sup>2</sup>

The study centered on the University district, one of fourteen designated Area Commission Neighborhoods in Columbus, Ohio. Such neighborhoods elect their own commissioners to oversee development issues in the neighborhood and forward recommendations to City Council. The University District contains approximately 45,000 households in an area of 2 square miles. In September, 1990 the City of Columbus extended the jurisdiction of an appearance/compatibility review board from a core area of the University District to the full district on an interim basis for a 27-month trial period. To proceed, proposed projects had to meet zoning requirements for appearance and gain approval from this review board. The review board had no explicit criteria. Many projects in the outer district were completed both before and after the city established the interim design review board to do discretionary review. Prior to this design review process, the neighborhood had only an administrative review process in which residential projects had to satisfy some appearance controls in the zoning ordinance.

The research grew from a request from the City. In December, 1992, city planners asked the first author for help in determining whether the City should continue the discretionary design review for the outer area. The city attorney indicated that for the City to continue, he had to be convinced that the level of regulation would be legally defensible.<sup>3</sup> In the research, we compared projects completed under administrative review only with those completed under discretionary design review. Recall that we use the term administrative review to refer to a process removing discretion from the reviewers rather than to identify who does the review. City staff in the zoning department conducted the administrative reviews. One city planning staff member and a panel of residents appointed by the City made the discretionary review decisions. Consistent with national data showing that a majority of design review commissioners come from fields other than design, such as business, real estate, education, law, engineering, or home building (Sanders & Getzels, 1987), the panel had people from various backgrounds as well as design professionals.

## **Methodology**

We evaluated 164 projects—96 completed under discretionary design review (DR) and 68 completed earlier under administrative review (AR). The 96 DR projects included all applications heard by the interim review board during the 27-month trial period that were approved and eventually constructed. At the time of the study, the board had reviewed applications for 113 projects, 17 of which, though approved, had not yet completed construction. We also selected 68 AR projects from a list of building permits issued during the year prior to the establishment of the interim design review board. We chose AR projects that matched as closely as possible the neighborhood locations and type of work performed on the DR projects. For example, if a DR project involved new siding, we chose an AR project from the same block that involved new siding.

First, we conducted a physical inventory of the compatibility of the specific building features (e.g., roof pitch, siding material, lot coverage, deck size) that were considered in the

discretionary review and administrative review work, and gave each relevant feature a "compatibility" rating. Next, we had the public rate the compatibility of and their preferences for the appeal of selected discretionary design review and administrative review projects. We used two approaches to mitigate biases inherent in each one. The physical inventory evaluations allowed us to obtain ratings for a large number of discretionary and administrative review projects, but it did not assess popular reactions. The public ratings obtained popular reactions, but the research design limited it to a small number of projects. Together, the approaches allowed us to get compatibility judgments for every discretionary design review and administrative review project completed between September 1989 and December 1992, plus public appraisals of a selected subset of projects from that same time period.

## Physical Inventory Evaluations of Compatibility

We constructed a checklist covering a comprehensive set of the physical features in all the projects under study. The checklist included the address, type of modification, broad categories of work, and features within those categories that could affect compatibility (See Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. Physical Inventory Checklist for Building Features

Our judges scored whether or not each project feature was compatible with the rest of the building and the surrounding neighborhood. For reliability, we would have preferred to have a large number of judges complete the physical inventory on all 164 projects, but this proved impractical. Instead we enlisted seven graduate students in city and regional planning. To improve consistency, we had these judges run through pretests in which each person rated the same building followed by comparison and discussion of the ratings. The process was repeated until all judges had given consistent responses for three buildings. Then the seven students divided into teams of two or three members to inventory their subset of the properties.

The judges made their evaluations independently. They visited each project location and evaluated only the work completed under design review. While the yes/no choice may have overlooked degrees of compatibility, this simplification was necessary in order to inventory so many projects in a such a short period. We assigned each project one score between 0 and 100, representing the percentage of the relevant features judged as compatible.

**Results.** The physical inventory evaluations did not show the DR projects as more compatible than the AR projects; we found no significant differences in scores. The tally revealed a mean compatibility score of 87.7% ( $SD = 15.00$ ) for DR work and 84.4% ( $SD = 23.24$ ) for AR work. Though the results seem to favor the DR process, the difference did not achieve statistical significance. Further, the magnitude of the effect was small. This means that the difference may have resulted from chance, and that discretionary design review had a relatively undetectable effect on the rated compatibility.<sup>4</sup>

The physical inventory evaluations suggested that the addition of DR did not produce a meaningful improvement in compatibility over what resulted from AR. It is possible, however, that because the physical inventory was conducted by a small sample of judges, though it was

comprehensive, it did not reflect the perceptions of the public who experience the buildings on a regular basis. Also, the sum of the ratings of various elements of each building may not accurately reflect public perceptions. We therefore conducted a second study to gather and examine public evaluations of DR and AR designs.

## **Public Evaluations of Compatibility and Preference**

For the public evaluations, we sought pairs of projects similar to one another in location, kind of building, and type of work, but differing in whether they were AR or DR projects. We photographed all AR projects completed during the 12-month period prior to the start of the discretionary design review process and all DR projects completed during the 27-month period of the interim discretionary design review. Each photograph presented a color view of the target building from directly across the street. To show the building in its setting, the photograph included portions of the building on either side of the target building. We used color photographs because research consistently confirms that responses to color photos accurately reflect on-site response (Stamps, 1990). As the interviewees (see below) lived in the same neighborhood, we assumed they would judge the target buildings against their broader sense of their neighborhood's character.

For purposes of experimental control, we used a subset of the DR and AR projects for the public evaluation. We selected pairs of DR and AR buildings that had similar kinds of structures, locations, types of work, and other site features. For example, we compared DR and AR buildings of similar size; DR porch projects with AR porch projects, DR siding projects with AR siding projects, etc.; and we compared DR and AR buildings that had similar amounts of vegetation. In each case, we tried to control features other than the type of design review that might affect ratings. This process led to six pairs of projects; see Figure 2 for a black and white version of one color photo pair used in the study.

### **FIGURE 2. One of the six pairs of University District buildings used in the public opinion survey.**

Note: Photos had no labels during the experiment.

For each matched pair, we obtained paired comparison evaluations by surveying area residents. Interviewers worked in teams of two or three in each subarea of the study area, where they selected residences at random to recruit participants for the survey. They randomly choose streets, cross streets, number of houses from the corner, and the side of street. They returned to the selected addresses in early morning and late afternoon. If they failed to get an interview, they selected at random one of the five houses surrounding the target house.

A questionnaire given to participants stated that they would see photos of pairs of buildings. It asked them to respond to a marked building in each photo. The interviewers shuffled the photograph pairs before each interview to reduce potential order effects on responses. They also randomly varied the order of the placement of the DR and AR projects on the right or left. The photographs did not have labels, and we did not inform participants which project had gone through discretionary design review and which had gone through administrative

review. As each photograph showed several buildings, we placed a dot above the building that we wanted participants to judge.

For each pair, the interviewers called attention to the kind of work done (e.g., siding, front porch, roof). To reduce biases from considering other portions of the buildings, participants were instructed to consider only the remodeling work. Participants then answered two or three of the following questions:

- 1) When you look at the [name of work done] on each pair of buildings, which one better *fits* with its neighboring buildings?
- 2) When you look at the [name of work done] on each pair of buildings, which one do you *like* better?
- 3) When you look at the [name of work done] on each pair of buildings, which one do you think would command a higher *rent*?<sup>5</sup>

The interviewers told participants that if they felt the same about the two buildings, they could answer "neither."

Design review often seeks to create more compatible and more pleasant results. We used the first two questions to look at those aspects of design review. Of the various ways to obtain responses, we chose a rank order procedure which involved ordering projects relative to each other. We considered other kinds of scales and checklists, but studies have found that these different kinds of measurement scales produce similar results (Gould & White, 1974; Stamps, 1997a). Rank order approach offers additional benefits. It tends to produce a higher level of agreement among respondents, and it has greater efficiency in that it allows one to obtain responses to many scenes rapidly (Brush, 1976; Zube, Pitt, & Anderson, 1974).

Thirty-nine residents took part in the survey. We had 19 participants answer all three questions, and to reduce biases for judgments of *like* or *fit* on one another, we had 20 participants answer the *like* and *rent* questions only and 20 participants answer the *fit* and *rent* questions only. We varied the order of the questions to reduce systematic bias from question order. The interviewers also requested demographic information: whether the respondent had owned or rented, whether they owned any other properties in the area, how long they had lived at their present address, and whether or not they thought the area needs some form of regulation to ensure that new buildings, additions, and changes fit their surroundings.<sup>6</sup>

**Results.** Of the 39 participants, most (72%) said they were renters. Their tenure in the area varied. Most (67%) said they had lived there for more than a year (1-3 years, 41%; more than 3 years, 26%). They should have had enough familiarity with the area to make judgments about the target house's compatibility with the neighborhood. This sample had enough participants to allow statistical comparisons.

Tests of results by question order did not reveal significant differences. Therefore, we combined the data and examined the 25 responses to *fit*, and the 33 responses to *like*. Table 1 shows the percentages of participants who evaluated DR or AR work as a better fit to the surroundings, or better liked. It also shows the associated test statistics when differences were significant. For each measure, DR work received scores lower than or equal to those for AR work.

**Fit.** As shown in Table 1, more participants judged DR projects the better fit in three project pairs (A, C, and D) and AR in two project pairs (B and E), but only one difference achieved statistical significance. For project pair E, significantly more people selected AR as the

better fit. Adjusting for multiple comparisons, this effect becomes statistically insignificant. The analysis also looked at the effect size, calculated by transforming the  $X^2$  into a standardized difference between the means,  $d$  (Judd et al., 1991). Project pair E achieved a large effect ( $d = 1.21$ ) strongly favoring the AR project over the DR one.

**TABLE 1. Resident ratings of fit to surroundings, and preference for DR versus AR projects.**

<b>Better fit</b>			
Project Pair	DR	AR	Neither
A (n=25)	44.0%	28.0%	28.0%
B (n=25)	28.0	44.0	28.0
C (n=25)	48.0	40.0	12.0
D (n=25)	48.0	20.0	32.0
E (n=25)*	20.0	68.0	12.0
F (n=25)	40.0	40.0	20.0
Mean*	38.0	40.0	22.0
Total (= or better) n=150	62.0	38.0	—
Significant differences, Bonferonni adjusted for multiple comparisons E: AR+Neither better than DR: $X^2 = 9.0, 1 df, p < .02$			
<b>Better liked</b>			
Project Pair	DR	AR	Neither
A (n=33)*	0.0%	90.9%	9.1%
B (n=33)	63.6	18.2	18.2
C (n=33)	39.4	48.5	12.1
D (n=33)	42.5	42.4	12.1
E (n=33)	30.3	57.6	12.1
F (n=33)	39.4	39.4	21.2
Mean*	35.9	49.5	14.1
Total (= or better) n = 198	37.9	62.1	—
Significant differences, Bonferonni adjusted for multiple comparisons A: AR better than DR: $X^2 = 30.0, 1 df, p < .02$ A: AR+Neither better than DR: $X^2 = 33.0, 1 df, p < .02$ TOTAL: AR+Neither better than DR: $X^2 = 11.64, 1 df, p < .02$			

\*Significant differences, Bonferonni adjusted for multiple comparisons:

For discretionary design review to be justifiable, it should produce work that more than equals the fit of work done under administrative review: It should yield better results. To test

whether it did in our study, we compared the number of people judging DR work as a better fit to those choosing AR work or neither. The results of these comparisons suggested that discretionary design review is not demonstrably better than administrative review. For all six project pairs, 62.0% of participants rated the fit of the AR projects as equal to or better than that of the DR projects. Considering multiple claims, this became statistically insignificant, but it had a large effect ( $d = 1.72$ ). The results for each pair paralleled those for the full set: A majority of the participants rated the fit of the AR project as equal to or better than that of the DR project. The differences achieved statistical significance for two pairs, B and E, but with multiple claims, only the comparison in pair E remained significant. The effect sizes varied from medium (B:  $d = .86$ ) to large (E:  $d = 1.80$ ) against DR. Residents thus judged the fit of these AR projects as noticeably better than the fit of the DR projects.

**Like.** Table 1 also shows that the AR project was better liked in three pairs (A, C, and E), while the DR project was better liked in one pair (B). The differences achieved statistical significance for two pairs, A and B. With multiple claims, only the comparison in pair A remained statistically significant. Both A and B had large effect sizes, with A favoring AR ( $d = 1.57$ ) and B favoring DR ( $d = 1.15$ ). The comparison of those judging DR as better liked versus those judging AR as equal to or better than DR does not offer support for discretionary design review. For all six pairs, 62.1% of the participants rated the AR projects as equally or better liked than the DR projects. This remained statistically significant under multiple claims. It also had a large effect ( $d = 1.72$ ). The findings held for the comparisons of each pair. In five of the six pairs, fewer participants liked the DR projects better than liked the AR project equally or better. The differences achieved statistical significance for two comparisons (A and E), but with multiple claims, only the comparison in pair A remained statistically significant. The comparisons for A and E had a large and medium effect size, respectively (A:  $d = 4.00$ ; E:  $d = .69$ ).

In sum, the results show that residents rated DR projects as having a poorer fit for pair E and for the full set, with large effect sizes for each. For preferences, the results show DR projects rated as less liked for pair A and the full set, with large effect sizes for each.

## Discussion

The public opinion data on the six project pairs suggest that projects done under discretionary design review produced results that were viewed as neither more compatible nor more preferable than projects undergoing administrative review. These findings agree with the broader findings from the physical inventory, which indicated only minor differences in physical compatibility between the DR and AR projects. Both sets of findings result from a relatively small sample of respondents evaluating a small set of changes, additions, or remodeling of existing houses. Though limited, they agree with findings from larger samples of respondents evaluating the overall impact of completed projects (Stamps, 1997a; Stamps & Nasar, 1997).

As the present research only evaluated *completed* projects, it does not indicate whether discretionary design review had improved any projects as initially *proposed*. The results do indicate that discretionary design review failed to yield projects more compatible than or preferred to those approved through only administrative review. Because discretionary design review involves extra cost, resources, and time for both the City and individuals proposing

changes, the findings did not support it as a cost effective procedure. Columbus discontinued the discretionary design review process for the tested area.

Can we rely on public opinion over the informed judgment of design reviewers? Yes. Federal and state law support design review to improve the built environment for the public (Costonis, 1989), but the judgments of design professionals and other outsiders on such boards often differ from the judgments of residents (Nasar, 1999). Though some people believe the public will eventually follow the views of the experts, research suggests otherwise. Public preferences are remarkably stable over time. For example, a series of studies of an award-winning building found that negative public evaluations of the building remained unchanged 10 years after completion of the project (Nasar, 1999). When a developer proposed the Transamerica Tower in San Francisco, local planners objected. Public opinion obtained 2 years, 18 years, and 23 years after construction revealed that the public initially liked the building and continued to do so (Stamps, 1997b). A study of 20 buildings in San Francisco revealed similar stability in public evaluations (Stamps, 1997b). In sum, research indicates that compared to judgments by design professionals, public opinion polls offer a better indicator of likely long-term public preferences.

## Conclusion

Through a two-part study, we sought to determine whether discretionary design review adequately served the purpose of enhancing aesthetics in building designs, often mandated by local governments. The approaches also demonstrate methods for evaluating the effectiveness of both types of review. Placing discretionary design review and administrative review projects in matched pairs for the survey portion of the present study provided greater internal validity than the previous Oakland study (Stamps & Nasar, 1997) by controlling for extraneous variables. However, its reliance on a small sample of projects and survey participants may have reduced the generalizability of the findings. In response to this limitation, the Columbus study supplemented the small sample by examining compatibility judgments for all of its 164 projects.

The Oakland and Columbus findings differ in detail, but both show potential problems with discretionary design review. For the Columbus additions and renovations, the administrative review projects outscored those subject to discretionary design review in popular judgments of compatibility and preference. The physical inventory evaluations showed the discretionary design review work as slightly more compatible, but this difference did not achieve statistical significance, and the strength of the effect was small. For Oakland, the discretionary design review houses emerged as preferred to the houses that had no design review, but the strength of the effect was again relatively small. The findings replicate other work highlighting problems with discretionary design review (Stamps, 1997a). Though limited, our research agrees with a larger set of data. A meta-analysis of several design review studies in California indicated an insignificant correlation ( $n = 42$ ,  $r = .09$ ) between discretionary design review and public preferences (Stamps, 1997a).

The meta-analysis and the present study did not examine the effects of the makeup of the review board on the results. Research has consistently found that for evaluations of appearance, design professionals and outsiders differ from local residents and the public (Brower, 1988; Nasar, 1994). Though these findings may point to some benefits of design review panels of non-professionals and residents for issues of community appearance, those who choose to serve on

review commissions may judge design differently from their neighbors. Ambiguous criteria may also skew their judgments.

Our results point to the need for continued evaluations of design review in various contexts, and the present research offers methods that planners can use for such evaluations. The present findings suggest that communities could opt for administrative design controls over discretionary design review. Administrative controls involve less cost and time, and, if the present results are accurate, they produce designs that are judged equal to or better than those obtained through discretionary design review. However, the lower scores for discretionary design review projects may have resulted from the absence of explicit criteria or criteria based on scientific evidence to guide the reviewers' judgments. Communities may reduce problems by improving the discretionary design review procedures, through replacing ambiguous or unstated criteria with clear, specific, and explicit criteria. Courts have upheld challenges on the grounds of vagueness (Blaeser, 1994; Lai, 1994). For example, in *Anderson v. City of Issaquah* (1993), an appeals court in Washington decided against unconstitutionally vague provisions such as "compatible", stating: that "aesthetic standards . . . must be drafted to give clear guidance to all parties concerned. Applicants must have an understandable statement of what is expected"(p. 82). The Supreme Court has also placed a greater burden on local governments to demonstrate the benefit of their regulatory actions and has called for heightened judicial scrutiny for land-use regulations (*Dolan v. City of Tigard*, 1994; *Nollan v. California Coastal Commission*, 1987). Implicit or arbitrary appearance guidelines and controls may not provide an adequate legal basis for design review decisions.

## Acknowledgments

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> To prevent monotony, some ordinances require moderate but not excessive variation from the typical appearance in the surrounding neighborhood (Mandelker, 1993).
- <sup>2</sup> We also examined the minutes of review board meetings to understand the basis for decisions and to make recommendations for guidelines that could help applicants. This article does not include the analysis of the meeting minutes.
- <sup>3</sup> Recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions suggest that although aesthetics represents an adequate basis for control, in some cases local governments may have a greater burden to show an adequate public purpose (Lai, 1994; Mandelker, 1993).
- <sup>4</sup> For this test, we transformed the *F* value into the standardized difference between the means ( $d = .03$ ). According to Cohen (1988), this represents a small effect.
- <sup>5</sup> The question about rent related to a specific interest of City officials. As the rent variable does not link to the theoretical framework, we do not present results for it other than to note that they echo the findings for the other variables.
- <sup>6</sup> The question about support for regulations related to a specific interest of City officials. As the support variable does not link to the theoretical framework, we do not present results for it other than to note that most respondents (63%) favored regulation to ensure that design changes fit their surroundings.

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# PREPARING A PROJECT FOR DESIGN REVIEW

*Technical Paper No. 21*



**King County**

Historic Preservation Program, Business Relations and Economic Development  
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Any major restoration work or projects involving alterations to a significant feature of a designated King County Landmark property require a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA), which is obtained through an established design review process. This paper explains the purpose of design review and offers suggestions for planning a restoration or rehabilitation project. Contact Historic Preservation Program staff early in project planning, since they can help identify resources and provide technical information.

## **Purpose of Design Review**

A King County Landmark must exhibit physical “integrity.” This means that the property retains physical features and design characteristics that contribute to and reflect its historic significance. These features, which are called the "character-defining features," are unique to each property and may include the overall scale and massing of the building, design elements such as front porches or windows, or even planting materials and open space on the building site. The purpose of design review is to ensure that any project involving a Landmark property is carefully planned to maximize and protect the integrity--or historic character--of the property.

## **Design Guidelines**

The King County Landmarks Commission uses *The Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* and companion guidelines to guide the COA design review process. Because these *Standards* are used to review a project, it is best to consult them well before you begin to seriously plan a project. Copies are easily available via the Internet or can be obtained from the King County Historic Preservation Program. Every project involving an historic property is unique, so the *Standards* distinguish between four basic approaches (preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction) and the accompanying guidelines provide further specific guidance. Recommended general guidance is summarized below:

### *1. Identify, Retain and Preserve*

Identify historic building materials and design features that define the character of the property and should be retained in the process of rehabilitation work. These character-defining features are usually noted in the final designation report.

### *2. Protect and Maintain*

Extending the life of the historic building materials through timely and appropriate maintenance is always a priority. Protecting the historic materials typically helps reduce the need for more extensive repairs in the future. It is also important to consider the protection of historic features during a rehabilitation project. For example, if your project

involves cleaning a roof, choose a gentle cleaning method that does not damage the historic roofing material or adjacent siding and roof details.

### 3. *Repair*

When character-defining features and materials are deteriorated, repair is the first option to consider. Repair also includes the limited replacement of deteriorated or missing parts when there are surviving prototypes. For example, if shingles are missing from a roof, new shingles that match the originals should be installed to fill the gaps.

### 4. *Replacement*

When a character-defining feature is too deteriorated or damaged to repair, "in-kind" replacement (using the same design and materials) is the preferred option. If replacement in-kind is not technically or economically feasible, use of a compatible substitute material may be considered. For example, a roof originally clad with large cedar shingles might be re-roofed with a product of similar appearance since high quality cedar products are no longer readily available.

### 5. *Design for Missing Historic Features*

When an important architectural feature is missing, reconstruction of the element (based on sound documentation of the original design) is preferred. However, if documentation is unavailable, a second option for the replacement feature is a new design, which is compatible with the remaining historic features of the property.

### 6. *Alterations/Additions to Historic Buildings*

Construction of a new addition to a landmark building or within the boundaries of a landmark site should be undertaken only after carefully considering how best to accommodate the need for additional space. If an addition or new construction adjacent to an historic building is required, it should be designed to minimize alterations and/or visual impacts to the primary elevations and features of significance.

## **Preparing a Project for Design Review**

To prepare an application for design review, the applicant must clearly describe and explain the scope of the project, the present condition of the feature(s) involved, the original appearance of the feature(s), and the design standards and guidelines which apply to the project. The following section outlines questions the applicant should consider and information the applicant should gather when preparing a project for design review.

### 1. *Define the Scope of the Project*

What parts of the building or site does the project involve? How do those elements relate to the other parts of the landmark property? For example, will the project involve features of the Landmark that are visible from the roadway? Current photographs or design drawings (including a site plan) are usually essential to illustrate the scope of most projects.

2. *Document the Present Condition*

What is the present condition of the part of the property that will be affected by the proposed project? Are the building features in good repair, deteriorated, or missing? Photographs of the features and/or inspection reports serve to clearly document the present condition.

3. *Describe the Historic Appearance*

What did the property (building and site) look like historically? What changes have been made? Use historic photographs or archival materials to understand the historic appearance of the property and any alterations that may have occurred over time.

The Landmark Registration Form, prepared prior to the designation of the property, may describe the property's historic appearance. Also, consult the King County Historic Preservation Program to find out if there are historic photographs of your property on file or where photographs might be located. Plans, maps, and interviews may also help document the original appearance.

Close physical examination of the historic property can also yield useful important information. Take a good look at other local buildings of a similar construction date, function, building materials or architectural style. They may provide insight about the original appearance of the subject building. Architectural style guides and/or historic architectural plan books may be another useful source of information.

4. *Evaluate Alternatives and Determine Most Appropriate Action*

Once the above steps are completed; the applicant should use the information to evaluate alternatives recommended in the *Standards*. For example, if the goal is to restore a porch that had been previously removed, the applicant will be deciding how to replace a missing feature (See Note #5 above). So, the applicant will need to use a combination of sources (historic photographs, original plans - if they exist – and physical examination) to determine the original appearance of the porch and obtain sufficient information to design the replacement porch. If historic documentation is not available, the design of the new porch should not be based on conjecture but should be compatible with the historic character of the building.

### **Considerations in the Design Review Process**

While retaining or restoring a Landmark's historic appearance is always a priority, the design review process acknowledges that changes are often needed to extend the life of the property. In evaluating proposed alterations to historic properties, the Landmarks Commission also considers a number of factors. These include:

- the extent of impact on the historic property;
- the reasonableness of the alteration in light of other alternatives available;
- the extent alteration is necessary to meet the requirements of law; and
- the extent alteration is necessary to achieve a reasonable economic return.

Gathering information that helps answer these questions will enable the applicant to work expeditiously with the Design Review Committee to develop a restoration or rehabilitation strategy which preserves the historic character of the property while allowing for its continued use.

For more information about preparing a project for design review or obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness, please contact the Design Review Coordinator at (206) 296-8636.

**This information is available upon request in alternative formats for persons with disabilities at (206) 296-7580 TTY.**

Revised 09/08

## DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR HISTORIC DISTRICTS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING

by Noré V. Winter

Public officials often find themselves reviewing designs for new construction in historic districts to determine the appropriateness of proposed new buildings. These people are accustomed to dealing with standards for rehabilitation, based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, that are generally applied uniformly from one jurisdiction to another. When dealing with the issue of new construction, however, they are often rudely awakened to wide variations in local design policies for new construction. The reason is that design policies for new construction are not developed in a pristine setting in which "pure" preservation theory establishes the playing field. Local governmental structure, public opinion, and basic community goals influence the standards as do variations in the physical characteristics of the individual historic districts themselves.

Spacing between buildings is one of the most important characteristics of Remington Avenue in Fort Collins. The core group used this illustration to weigh the relationship of spacing to other visual characteristics of the street.

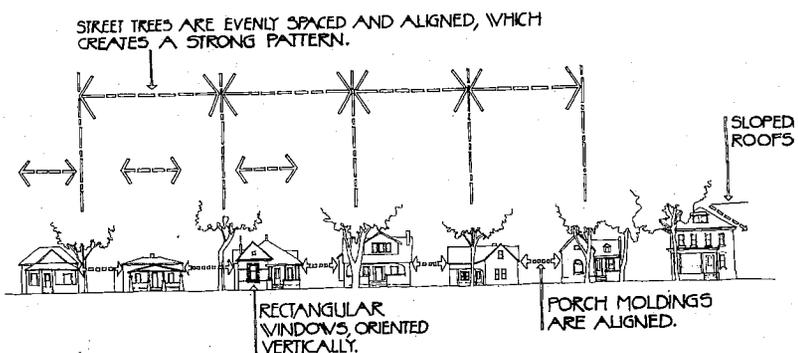


Illustration from the Fort Collins design guidelines prepared by Noré Winter.

### THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE LOCAL DESIGN STANDARDS

Governmental structure affects the character of the guidelines. The degree of regulation provided for an individual historic district will greatly influence the level of review and the specificity of the standards that are applied. City governments usually hold the strongest review powers. Some county governments have similar powers, but many have advisory capabilities only. Some state governments may also provide for design review of historic resources on state-owned lands, but the level of protection and detail of review varies widely. Even federal projects that involve the Section 106 process may yield widely varying results, depending upon the particular agency and the corresponding State Historic Preservation Officer.

Community goals also affect the character of the guidelines. Communities seeking to encourage development and growth may be less restrictive in their preservation regulations for historic districts than governments that are trying to limit the rate of expansion. Even where protection is provided for historic resources within the district, guidelines for new construction may be quite lenient. Other communities may seek to encourage new, creative architectural designs and therefore may feel that inhibiting creativity through design review in the historic district is inappropriate. They may argue for very limited criteria in order to allow wider flexibility in design solutions for new construction.

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## Executive Directors Message

Continued from page 1

Welcome to Charleston, South Carolina and the 44th National Preservation Conference. Here we are in the city that not only boasts the birth of historic district design review but also is the birthplace of the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions. Thanks for helping us celebrate a beautiful city that has literally changed the nation's definition of our sense of place.

This issue of *The Alliance Review* is dedicated to design guidelines. More and more review commissions are realizing the importance of having a road map to follow when they make decisions and both Noré Winter and Dale Jaeger have pointed out how important design guidelines are to effective local review programs. The NAPC strongly encourages commissions to begin the process of developing and using clear, concise and thorough guidelines as the basis for their decisions. Communities which have become Certified Local Governments have an even greater opportunity to use the grant money that is available to them for the production of guidelines. You should contact your State Historic Preservation Office for more information about how to take advantage of this program.

Many of you have received an invoice for membership in the Alliance recently. Some of you have already responded and renewed for another year, we appreciate that! Those of you who are waiting to renew....do it soon, the Alliance needs your support! Our hardworking board of directors and all volunteer staff want to continue serving your commission or preservation organization, so let us here from you.

Pratt Cassity,  
Acting Executive Director



The agenda of neighborhood groups may also influence the outcome of design review for new construction. They are usually more concerned about change in social character of the neighborhood than in the rehabilitation of the existing buildings. Other factors, including land use, traffic impacts, and property values often color their response to new design proposals and these sentiments frequently come to light in the design review process.

The desire to preserve general community character that extends beyond the boundaries of defined historic district boundaries may also influence local design guidelines and the public review process. Design guidelines for "transitional" or "conservation" areas may be developed in such cases.

Other community goals for the overall density of development, as defined in local zoning regulations and building codes, may also influence the character of new construction. These policies often suggest architectural solutions that contrast with the existing historic context and may be in direct conflict with stated policies in the design guidelines

The physical setting also greatly influences the details of the guidelines. Each district is a unique combination of physical characteristics, many of which may contribute to the historic significance of the area, and some of which do not. An inventory of the characteristics of the district helps to catalog those features that contribute to its significance and to establish priorities for writing guidelines based on the importance of these characteristics. Features to consider when conducting a visual survey include:

- The physical characteristics of individual buildings, including their style, materials, and scale
- The physical character of the landscape, including fences, plantings and paving.
- The spatial arrangement of these features, including buildings, site elements and public infrastructure
- The natural site forms and topography that often influence the way things are arranged

Temporal issues also influence the guidelines. Our attitude about design standards is also influenced by how important we perceive the physical characteristics of the district to be. Our perception of this character is

often a mixture of what is was like hysterically and how it exists today. Our sense of priorities for design standards is also influenced by how we anticipate the district will appear in the future, given current development policies and trends in the community.

### OPERATING IN A CHANGING ARENA

What do these factors mean, in terms of developing designs for new construction in historic districts? They suggest that officials should be prepared to operate in a political environment that holds a high degree of variability. Local zoning regulations may contradict what are assumed to be federal standards. For example, local regulations may allow an increase in site density, resulting in a reduction of open space that is an important characteristic of the area.

In some cases, the historic context is so "sub-standard" with respect to today's building codes that any new construction by definition will differ from the character of the original architecture. Local zoning may also allow new uses, with correspondingly different building types, that were unknown historically. If current zoning allows auto service businesses in the district, for example, there is little likelihood that structures built to accommodate them will resemble a row of town houses, no matter how materials are used or what style is used.

In these cases, the relationship of preservation goals to broader community plans and goals becomes very important. A residential neighborhood that seeks to reserve development to single family occupancy structures may therefore oppose a multi-family apartment project, even if the massing is configured to resemble the established building fabric.

Some confusion often occurs in the review process because local boards have a dual allegiance. They must serve their local masters (their town councils) by law, for these are the groups that create them. On the other hand they also seek to conform to what are perceived to be national standards for historic districts. In some cases they are more strongly obliged to promote such standards by participating in the Certified Local Governments program.

**Blending planning and preservation policies.** Policies for new construction will be a combination of the factors described above. As an example, the review board in the mountain resort of Telluride, Colorado, of which a significant part is a National Historic Landmark District, is concerned about loosing historic open space in the yards in the residential neighborhoods, but it also seeks to accommodate more employees as local

residents, because of housing pressures of a ski resort. The town cannot expand its boundaries to allow new development on the periphery without altering its "small town" character that is an essential marketing ingredient and source of civic identity.

Should the community allow an increase in density in its established neighborhoods to provide close-in worker housing, or does it maintain the historic low density, forcing new housing out of town and causing an increase in commuter traffic by employees who must then drive in to work? Such questions arise with each new development proposal. The results of the review process, the designs of structures that are built and of those that are denied permits will vary each year as the politics, local sentiment and community needs are blended into evolving preservation policies.

Most communities with historic districts face similar questions. Each must find their own answers to these are related design policies, which, if founded on clearly articulated goals and well understood design policies will help to retain the unique character of the district.

*Noré Winter is president of Winter & Company, a consulting firm in Boulder, Colorado, specializing in historic preservation and urban design. He has developed design guidelines and has conducted design review training programs for numerous communities and states. Recent projects include design guidelines for Biltmore Village, North Carolina, design review training for the counties of Hawai'i and planning for Flagstaff, Arizona and Aspen, Colorado. Winter also directs the architectural team for the rehabilitation of the Colorado governor's mansion and is member of the board of directors of the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions.*

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## Design Guidelines for the Landscape

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*by Dale Jaeger*

Design guidelines have typically addressed buildings and have given little attention, if any, to the landscape setting. The preservation movement in recent years has moved away from this building-only orientation to a recognition of the important role a setting plays in creating and preserving historic character. A comprehensive set of design guidelines should include all aspects of the built environment, including the landscape setting, natural and man-made. To develop guidelines for the landscape one should begin with a recognition of the overall form of a setting and the arrangement of elements within it, and identify the details

## CLARITY, COMMON SENSE AND DIPLOMACY

### The Challenges of Selling Design Guidelines

By: Sharon Ferraro

As dedicated preservationists determined to save our historic resources for upcoming generations, we all understand the importance of choosing to repair rather than replace and the importance of setbacks and massing in new construction to maintain the character of the districts. But in our throw-away society, we need to sell that concept to the property owners. The average property owner today wants to take good care of their investment and, in many cases, has no idea how to take care of an old structure. Our job is to persuade and educate along with requiring that the work meet the standards we have established. We need to be diplomats and salesmen as well as enforcers.

And the process of education and persuasion begins where the property owner first comes into contact with the design guidelines. This will be either the first phone call or visit to the buildings department or the process of filling out the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness or reading your design guidelines.

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#### FIRST CONTACT - DOCUMENTS - setting up the rules THE APPLICATION AND THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Application for Project Review/ Application for Certificate of Appropriateness

Keep the form as simple as possible while asking the applicant to provide full information. This simplicity will be different for different types of districts - clearly a large city with commercial 10 story buildings as well as modest bungalows may have a more complicated form - or perhaps more than one form, depending on the character of the buildings under review. But the over-riding principle should be simplicity. The applicant should be able to understand the form, whether an experienced carpenter or a single mom who is handy with power tools or a belligerent landlord who prefers duct tape and T-111 to tuck-pointing and code-compliant handrails. And keep in mind that the building department staff should also understand the form so they can assist the applicant.

Be clear about how detailed support materials should be. Do you expect simple line drawings with measurements? Or more detailed draftsman or architects style details? This may be project dependent. A set of front steps will need less detail than a three story exterior stair providing emergency egress to a finished third floor. It can be very helpful to have an example available as a handout.

#### ***A short comment about language.***

Whether you are a commissioner or part of the city staff that regulates the historic districts, be sure that you are actually communicating with the applicant. It may not be a problem to discuss the crown mould and decking and brackets with a roofer or the meeting rail and stiles with a window repair person. If you are talking to a grandmother who is making an application and she doesn't know a crown mould from a water table, be sure to define your terms so there is a level of necessary understanding. The use of appropriate language extends from conversations and discussions to your application for project review, the design guidelines and the commission meeting. If the applicant's eyes start glazing over, restate the topic in language they understand.



436 W. Dutton, Kalamazoo, prior to rehabilitation

Photo: Sharon Ferraro

### **The Design Guidelines**

Writing a set of design guidelines that cover every type of work on a historic building is impossible in a historic district of any size. Perhaps a set of exquisitely detailed standards could be written for a set of five Frank Lloyd Wright Usonian houses on the same block, but that kind of homogeneity is rare in most districts. Indeed it is the diversity that makes our districts attractive.

The ultimate goal of design guidelines is to assure that changes are appropriate to the specific structure in the context of its neighborhood and district. New handrails for a Queen Anne Barber pattern house will be substantially different from a Spanish Colonial Revival bungalow. The design guidelines **MUST** be comprehensible to the property owner and his contractor.

Avoid the obvious trap of making the design guidelines an exhaustive list of "Thou Shalt Not". Keep the specifically prohibited topics to a minimum. "Vinyl windows are strictly prohibited on any contributing structure within the historic districts." is appropriate. Be sure that every strictly prohibited item is an issue your commission is willing and able to support on appeal.

### **STANDARDS = Administrative review**

In Kalamazoo our design guidelines are very clearly differentiated. The **STANDARDS** apply to very specific, common projects, mostly eligible for administrative review. These include roofing, porch repairs, fences, storm doors and storm windows and eaves troughs. These projects are very clearly defined and if the application falls outside those specific details, it must be considered according to the guidelines.

### **GUIDELINES = Commission review**

The **GUIDELINES** are more general and philosophical. The standards may specify that spindles on a porch rail be 5/4" cedar or redwood, turned or square, spaced no more than 2½ " apart with a total height from the porch deck including rails not to exceed 24". The guideline will discuss the rail height relative to the height of the windowsills that face the porch and the spacing of the spindles relative to the style of the house.

The guidelines also refer to the context of the surrounding district and will cover complex issues such as new infill construction and rebuilding missing features. The guidelines rely much more heavily on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. So to comply with guidelines a new house to replace a burned house will have a setback from the road or sidewalk similar to the houses around it and have a massing similar to the houses around it. If the nearby houses are 1½-story bungalows,

the new house will not be a 3-story Queen Anne covered with gingerbread or, heaven forbid, an end gable one story manufactured house with an attached garage.

When you formulate your design guidelines be sure you have at least one reviewer who:

- 1) Is not a preservationist so they will be lost if your language is too specialized
- 2) Does not live in a historic district so they will not be reading with their own building in mind and miss the forest for the trees
- 3) Has no more than a passing understanding of building terms - i.e. may know the difference between a joist and a rafter but not too much more.

Consider using a glossary for terms to help applicants understand. Review line drawings for clarity and detail.

### WORKING WITH THE APPLICANT

Start with an assumption that the applicant is unfamiliar with the design guidelines. This is not always the case - there are many property owners out there - both owner-occupied and landlords that would rather ask forgiveness than permission. Starting from an assumption of unfamiliarity allows the property owner to back pedal and save face when he is caught. Confrontation, no matter how well justified, rarely opens the door to finding a solution and always leaves the owner prone to spread the word about how badly the "hysterical commission" treated him. Remember we are protecting the buildings, not our egos.

#### First - help the applicant define the project.

Listening to the applicant is vital. Let the applicant outline the proposed work and then re-state it back to him. Find out what he envisions as the final product. Then make a suggestion, which complies with the design guidelines.

**An example:** Mr. Albright shows up at the counter - he is a burly 50 year old and put a fence around his Arts and Crafts bungalow three years ago to keep his puppy in. He keeps calling the house a Cape Cod because that is what the realtor called it. Since then his son has gone off to college and wrecked his car and a tree has fallen on his garage. He does not remember all the details of the standards from his last visit and anyway, it was only a fence last time. Ask him to describe what he needs to do, or hopes to accomplish. He wants to do some repairs and modifications to the front porch. He wants to replace some of the decking, repair one column and he proposes enclosing the porch in a new low solid home center knee wall below with standard sized combination aluminum storms above. The storms are on sale at home center next week. Currently the porch has a low-spindled rail.

(Continued on page 9)



436 W. Dutton, Kalamazoo, after rehabilitation, demonstrating effective use of design guidelines.

Photo: Sharon Ferraro

What does he expect of the front porch project? After a little discussion it becomes clear that he is tired of being dive bombed by wasps and not being able to use the porch at night for fear of mosquitoes and West Nile Virus but he does not use the porch much in the early spring and late fall, mostly he likes to sit out there with a radio and a beer and listen to the ball game. So his application can be simplified to enclosing the porch with screens. He likes this because it will be much less expensive and he won't have to hire his brother-in-law's stupid neighbor again since he took six months to fix the garage last time. His original plan was something the commission would probably not approve. The compromise he has come to still fulfills his needs and is a project that complies with the design guidelines.

### Second - filling out the application

How much detail is needed to define the project? Too much detail may limit the project unnecessarily and make modifications impossible while work is in progress. Included as needed:

- ◆ **Measurements** - width of the new window frame, height of the new porch rail, overall footprint of the new garage.
- ◆ **Drawings** - preferably black ink on white paper, but be flexible - if a pencil drawing is clear and copies well, don't get hung up on media.
- ◆ **Photos** - May be provided by the applicant if necessary or the coordinator. Be sure that each project includes a photo of the full structure from the front and not just the item in question. A project application for a set of back porch steps should include a photo of the whole house, not just the back porch.



917 W. Lovell, Kalamazoo, prior to rehabilitation

Photo: Sharon Ferraro

### Third - Administrative or commission review?

If the project proposes no alterations, no additions, just repair of existing features, usually this can be an administrative review. For example, Mr. Albright's porch project. If his proposal was limited to the deck and column repair it could be approved administratively without full commission review. However, because he is proposing an alteration with the addition of the screening, it will need full commission review.

In Kalamazoo, there are some items that always require full commission review such as replacement siding, replacement windows, removing a chimney, removing windows or doors and any new construction.

### Fourth - Applying the design guidelines

Ideally, by this point the applicant and staff have worked out a proposal for work that will comply with the design guidelines and the review by the full commission is merely a formality. In many cases, however, there will need to be some negotiation between the applicant and the commission. Ultimately the commission's mandate is to protect the historic character of the district and the structure and not let bad things happen.



917 W. Lovell, Kalamazoo, after rehabilitation, demonstrating effective use of design guidelines.

Photo: Sharon Ferraro

Some items to consider when reviewing a project for compliance with the design guidelines:

- ◆ **Is the proposed work reversible?** Replacing a 2x4 porch rail with a slightly too tall square spindled rail to comply with the rental housing code is reversible next time. Removing all the windows and replacing them with tilt-in sash is not reversible. Paint color is reversible; paint on previously unpainted masonry is hard to reverse.
- ◆ **Does the proposed work preserve the historic character of the district and the structure?** Mr. Albright's porch screens preserve the character of the structure and the district. If he wanted to make the porch five feet deeper and change the pitch of the porch roof to accommodate this, it would alter the relationship of the house to the rest of the bungalows on the street and would be inappropriate.
- ◆ **Does the proposed work meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation?** A good exercise is to identify the standards the project complies with or violates and state it as part of the motion.
- ◆ **Finally, apply common sense.** Keep in mind the primary goal of preserving the district and the need to keep the property owners on the side of preservation. Overly restrictive decisions can sour owners on the idea of design review and make for more intentional violations and less cooperation. Don't fight over the 2x8 treads on the back porch steps, but insist on 5/4" on front and side steps.

As part of a historic preservation commission or as city staff working with historic districts, our ultimate responsibility is to speak for the historic buildings and resources. A significant part of that process will always be educating the property owners. We need the owners on our side and even when we need to restate a principle or a guideline for the seeming 100th time, we must do it. In this field you will meet ignorant people who own historic properties - and belligerent property rights owners and clumsy do-it-yourselfers as well as the occasional committed old building lover or skilled restoration contractor. Treat them all with respect, give them the benefit of the doubt and remember they are the stewards of the building - it is our job to teach them how to be good stewards.

*Sharon Ferraro is the historic preservation coordinator for Kalamazoo, a city of 78,000 in southwestern Michigan. She works with 1800 properties in five districts, primarily residential with an expanding commercial district downtown.*

*Scott Whipple, is the Historic Preservation Section Supervisor for the Montgomery County (Maryland) Planning Department. The Historic Preservation Section is responsible for research and designation, historic area work permit review, county preservation tax credit and historic preservation grant administration, and education and outreach activities, and is staff to the county Historic Preservation Commission and Planning Board.*

# Design Guidelines

## Getting the Most out of Your Commission's Design Guidelines

by Scott Whipple

Nearly all of us who serve on, or are staff to, historic preservation commissions (HPCs) recognize that commissions need to use design guidelines in order to act in a fair, appropriate, and defensible manner in the review of historic area work permit applications or Certificates of Appropriateness (COAs). Putting aside the legal obligation – most, if not all, state enabling legislation requires adoption of design guidelines – many commissions may not utilize their guidelines to their full potential when reviewing COAs. But what should guidelines include? How do jurisdictions set about getting the guidelines they need? And, once a jurisdiction has the guidelines it needs, what can be done to ensure that the HPC uses – actually *uses* – those guidelines?



Many jurisdictions turn to district-specific design guidelines. But developing guidelines specific for a jurisdiction generally involves getting outside help. As a result, an industry of consultants who specialize in drafting guidelines has emerged. So how do you get the process started? Elsewhere in this issue of *The Alliance Review*, Steph McDougal writes about factors to consider before hiring a consultant, including what goes into establishing the fee consultants charge to prepare a set of guidelines. Steph's article is full of good information. Think of it as knowing what is behind the sticker price on a car before walking into the dealership.

In Montgomery County Maryland, where I am staff to the historic preservation commission, we used a Certified Local Government grant to hire a consultant to develop general design guidelines to assist in the commission's review process (<http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/historic/designguidelines.shtm>). The guidelines were developed to supplement the existing criteria the County Council had adopted for issuance of Historic Area Work Permits. In our case, as in many other jurisdictions, the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation* are the basis of our review criteria.

Jurisdictions can also consider adopting the broader *Secretary of the Interior's Treatment for Historic Properties*, which encompasses the rehab standards along with standards for the three other preservation treatments [preserving, restoring, and reconstructing]. Although the rehabilitation standards are the most widely and often-used – and most appropriate for the majority of projects most HPCs review – once in a while commissions are bound to review a project where one of the other treatment standards are more appropriately applied and the flexibility to use them is beneficial.

*Design guidelines need to respond to emerging building material technologies such as replacement windows (below) and fiber cement siding.*

The Montgomery County Council has also seen fit to adopt district-specific design guidelines for nine of our 22 historic districts (and even site-specific guidelines for a handful of our 425 individually-designated sites). In some cases the adoption of district-specific guidelines was something of a political necessity to build support for the designation of these districts. District-specific guidelines also provide a mechanism to identify the specific physical characteristics of a district and its built environment, and provide guidelines that respond directly to those. In the Montgomery County experience, these guidelines are drafted to respond to a district's specific development type and pattern, its preservation needs, and in some cases, its residents' tolerance for historic preservation, not always in equal measure.

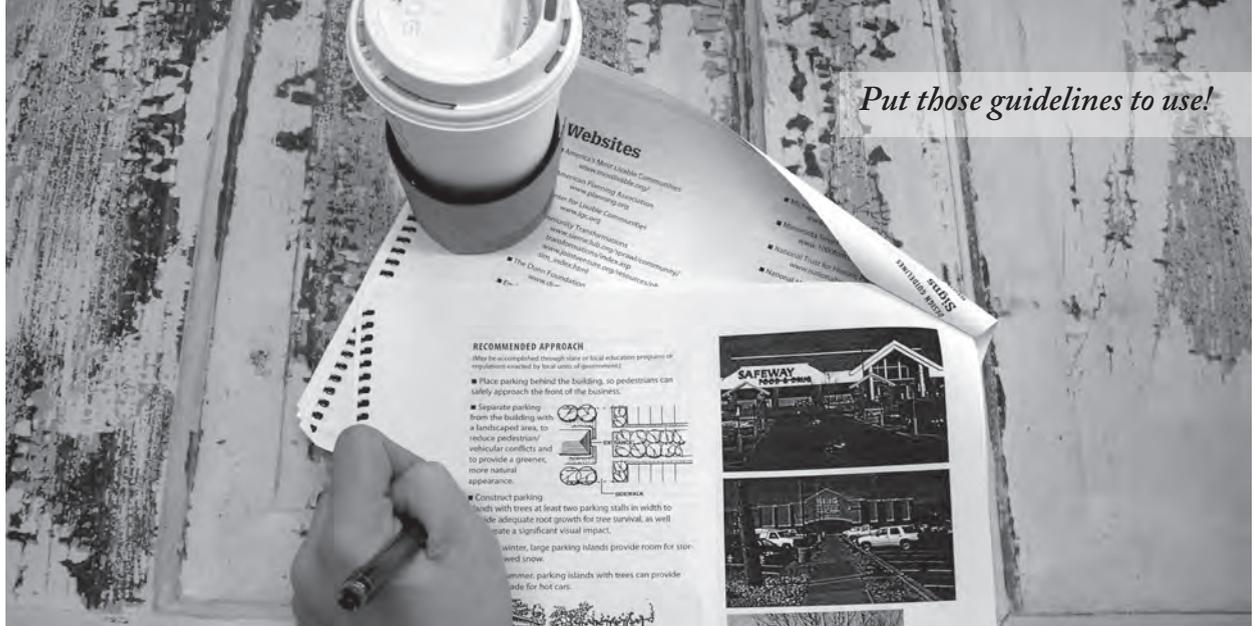
Take, for example, sustainability. An applicant's desire to implement 'green' strategies can put tremendous pressure on an HPC or, handled differently, can present a remarkable opportunity for an HPC to demonstrate the relevance, importance, and even cost-effectiveness of historic preservation. Phil Thomason's "Greening Oklahoma City's Guidelines" article, also in this issue, reinforces this point by making the case for establishing explicit connections between sustainability and historic preservation in design guidelines.

Each jurisdiction may respond somewhat differently to the range of historic preservation issues, and to my thinking, that is appropriate and necessary. This is where design guidelines come into play. But as the Oklahoma City case study illustrates, design guidelines can provide an opportunity for historic preservation to be forward looking, driving creative responses to challenges, rather than stuck in the past and susceptible to criticism that preservationists are afraid to change. By adopting guidelines that adequately reflect the preservation ethic in the community as it relates to the specific historic resources in that district, a community sets the ground rules for historic preservation in a way that everyone should be able to understand.

This brings me to my final point. Once agreed upon and adopted, design guidelines must be the basis for a commission's decisions. Commission members need to use – *actually use* – their guidelines in evaluating applications and making findings that lead to the approval,

Recognizing and responding to the different conditions and specific preservation needs in a community is important, from both an applied historic preservation vantage point as well as from the perspective of building support for historic preservation within the community. This intersection can change over time. The manner in which HPCs respond to an evolving understanding of historic preservation practice, acceptance (or not) of new materials or technology, and historic preservation's role in sustainability or urban development all may change how they evaluate applications before them. And guidelines need to change along with these considerations in order to remain relevant and useful.





*Put those guidelines to use!*

approval with conditions, or denial of an application. This should sound obvious. But as evident an observation as this may be, experience suggests otherwise.

A few questions illustrate the point. How many of us are aware of, or perhaps even affiliated with, a commission that has been accused of reaching arbitrary decisions or acting as an arbiter of taste? Who among us has heard during a hearing a commissioner say that he or she supported an application because they liked it or because it will make a historic resource look better? The same can be said for forming motions. How often have we heard motions that make no mention of the basis of the action? This is to say, a motion crafted simply to approve or deny an application without referencing the basis – what standard or criteria is used – of the action.

How we answer these questions and others has direct bearing on whether the criticism leveled against a commission in the first question is fair. By striving to leave personal taste out of the review of an application (and not allowing what a commissioner likes or dislikes to enter into the deliberation over an application) and attempting to include in their deliberation and motion-making a finding based on criteria established in the preservation ordinance, regulations, or rules of procedure, historic preservation commission members erode criticism claiming that they are acting in an arbitrary manner. Using guidelines leads to defensible decision-making.

In considering an application, the design guidelines should be the first document consulted, with each element of the project measured for appropriateness against the relevant section of the design guidelines. In the deliberation over an application, design guidelines should inform commissioners' position on the appropriateness of a project, and in

making a motion, the appropriate design guideline sections should be explicitly cited as the bases for the finding.

In those jurisdictions with staff support, staff can help commissioners by preparing staff reports that reference relevant sections of the design guidelines and include staff recommendations based on the appropriate design guideline standards. Without question, staff members make the review of applications easier for commissioners. But regardless of whether a commission is staffed, it is incumbent on commissioners to identify as the basis of their finding their interpretation of the relevant criteria for the action.

In the end, the one measure of the success of a set of design guidelines is whether or not they are used. As illustrated by Bill Frazier's article in this issue on the use of design guidelines in Virginia communities, guidelines need to include appropriate content, applicants need to be aware of the existence of guidelines and consult them during project design, and commissions need to base their decisions on their guidelines.

If commissions work to get the design guidelines they need – that is, guidelines appropriate for their community by reflecting the resources and the communities preservation ethic/tolerance for preservation – the guidelines will be easier to use, and therefore more likely to be used. Whether or not a commission uses their design guidelines is influenced by many factors, but clearly central to how well they are used is how well they reflect how a community does preservation: whether they are appropriately place-specific, reflecting the types of resources in a district, and whether they adequately respond to the community's preservation ethic, fully addressing and responding to the range of preservation issues of consequence to the community. Making sure you develop appropriate guidelines is important. Actually putting them to use is critical. ■

*Phil Thomason is a principal at Thomason & Associates, a preservation consulting firm based in Nashville, TN*

by Phil Thomason

## “Greening” Oklahoma City’s Guidelines

# GREENING



*Permeable parking surfaces allow greater water absorption and less runoff. New parking areas should be of these types of surfaces rather than asphalt or solid concrete. This is especially important in Oklahoma and the Southwest, which has suffered droughts in recent years.*

Preservationists are increasingly connecting sustainability with historic building rehabilitation and design review in historic districts. Many communities have also adopted formal programs in support of sustainability or “green” principles. Historic preservation and sustainability are both based on the ethic of reusing, recycling and retaining as much of the built and natural environments as possible. While these approaches are mutually compatible, making this connection more tangible is now the goal of historic preservation commissions and boards of architectural review to promote appropriate rehabilitation and new construction in historic districts.

In the past decade, the National Trust, the National Park Service, and many local and state governments have focused attention on the connection between

historic preservation and sustainability. This has taken place within the larger context of the “green” movement and adoption of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards in 1998 by the U.S. Green Building Council. Historic preservation guidelines have always emphasized reuse, recycle, repair, and replace-in-kind, which are some of the basic principles of sustainable design. As communities across the country adopt sustainable principles as an overarching ethic, historic preservationists are making the case that preserving and maintaining historic buildings is an essential part of a sustainable community approach.

Sustainable principles include conserving energy, increasing energy efficiency, using recyclable materials, and minimizing the use of non-renewable resources.

Dozens of reports studying various aspects of sustainability are published annually, and there is now a large body of research exploring various aspects of “green” design such as solar energy, weatherization of homes, permeable paving materials and geothermal heating and cooling systems. The importance of preserving and recycling existing buildings is a sustainable principle as well, and this ethic is now incorporated into many community’s “green” guidelines and standards.

The connection between historic preservation and sustainability has been a major theme of the National Trust and the preservation community over the past decade. *Preservation News*, the membership publication of the National Trust, has had several issues in recent years featuring sustainable design. The January/February 2008 issue was titled “The Green Issue,” and the majority of its articles discussed the connection between preservation and sustainable principles. Another National Trust publication, the *Forum Journal*, has devoted many articles on sustainability in the past several years. The Spring 2009 issue was headlined “Positioning Preservation in a Green World,” and all of the articles dealt with preservation and the green movement. The NAPC’s *The Alliance Review* has featured several “Going Green” articles in recent years, and its September/October 2010 issue was dedicated to weatherization of older houses.

In addition to these professional periodicals, there have also been a number of reports and studies published in recent years with a specific emphasis on how historic preservation commissions and design review boards can use sustainable principles in their advocacy and education efforts. Some of the best of these and available on-line include:

- *“It’s Easy Being Green: Sustainability from a Historic Preservation Perspective.” (City of Bayfield, Wisconsin, 2009).*
- *“Sustainable Preservation, an Addendum to Building with Nantucket in Mind.” (Clean Air-Cool Planet, 2009)*
- *Energy Efficiency, Renewable Energy and Historic Preservation: A Guide for Historic District Commissions (Clean Air-Cool Planet, 2009)*
- *Over-The-Rhine, Green-Historic Study, Exploring the Intersection Between Environmental Sustainability and Historic Preservation (Over-The-Rhine Inc. and Gray & Pape Inc., 2009)*

Beyond these studies, there are dozens of published reports providing recommendations for restoring historic buildings using green principles. The amount of literature published in recent years in America and the United Kingdom on energy efficiency, retrofitting, and overall rehabilitation using LEED standards is substantial and provides ample information relevant to historic design review guidelines. Of particular importance is the National Park Service’s *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* ([www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/)). Published in early 2011, this report provides specific recommendations for rehabilitating historic buildings based on sustainable procedures and actions.

The growing dialogue on historic preservation’s relevance to sustainable principles has shifted into the area of design guidelines as well. Most design guidelines are inherently “green” through the overall emphasis on preserving original materials, repairing rather than replacing historic elements, and, if replacement is necessary, using materials to match the original. While sustainability is inferred within these principles, the explicit connection to sustainability is a recent development. In the past few years some design guidelines prepared by local municipalities have featured introductory sections detailing the connection between sustainability and design review standards.

The National Trust’s *Forum News* has included two relevant articles on this subject in the past two years. The first of these is Jo Leimenstoll’s “Going Green: Applying a Sustainability Lens to Historic District Guidelines” from the Spring 2009 issue. In this article Ms. Leimenstoll discusses writing design guidelines for Davidson, North Carolina.

Her approach was to “weave sustainability principles into the document from its inception,” and this manual was largely completed by February of 2011.

The second article by Nore Winter in the December, 2010 issue, is “Developing ‘Green’-Friendly Guidelines: Advice for Preservation Commissions.” This article is a summary of recommendations in a booklet published in February of 2011 by the National Trust, “Developing Sustainability Design Guidelines for Historic Districts.” The *Forum News* article contends that preservation commission members have an opportunity to advocate for the inherent energy efficiency of historic buildings and to use their design guidelines to promote preservation and sustainability. The article concludes:

*The basic principles of most guidelines certainly call for preserving original materials and other character-defining features as well as respecting the inherent energy-saving properties of historic resources, but they usually only touch on sustainability indirectly. Commissions should take steps to move beyond that point, to provide clearer, positive guidance to users.*

This article was expanded into the informational booklet, “*Developing Sustainability Guidelines for Historic Districts*,” published in February of 2011 by the National Trust. This publication outlines the opportunities for historic preservation commissions to integrate sustainability into new or updated design guidelines. The three primary recommendations are: to rewrite or write design guidelines with sustainability emphasized throughout; to discuss sustainability as a stand-alone chapter; and, to present the information in a separate brochure or booklet.

The approach to rewrite existing guidelines was undertaken in 2010 by Oklahoma City, which has nine historic and predominantly single-family residential districts, four individually designated buildings, and one cemetery zoned as Historic Preservation (HP) or Historic Landmark (HL) Districts (all designated between 1969 and 1999). Until 2003, decisions regarding appropriate preservation treatments in HP- and HL-zoned areas were generally governed by the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. In 2003, the city prepared and adopted a new set of design guidelines, Preservation Guidelines and Standards for the Oklahoma City Historic Districts, which govern design review in the districts.

After attending sessions on preservation and sustainability at the 2010 NAPC Forum in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the staff of the Oklahoma Historic Preservation Commission researched funding options for introducing sustainability components into their 2003 guidelines. After applying for a grant, the city was awarded an Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant from the U.S. Department of Energy to revise the guidelines. The city then sought and hired consultants to prepare the guidelines and complete the project. This undertaking included several public forums and a series of neighborhood meetings. Over 150 residents attended a presentation where the overall approach to sustainability was discussed along with preliminary recommendations for changes to the current guidelines.

The approach taken by the city and consultants was to first include introductory sections on the inherent energy efficiency of older buildings. Nineteenth-century and

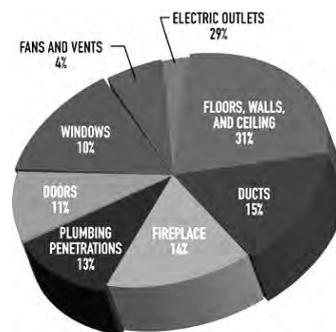
early twentieth-century houses are often considered difficult to heat and cool, when in fact houses built before 1920 are the most energy-efficient in America except for those built after 2000. The energy efficiency of these old dwellings comes from high floor-to-ceiling heights, operable transoms over doors for air circulation, operable double-hung windows, and broad eaves and large porches for shade. Even greater energy savings is gained through the installation of porch and window awnings which can cut air conditioning bills by 10% to 25% per



*The use of window awnings is encouraged to provide additional shading and reduce solar gain. Awnings can assist in lowering air conditioning bills by ten to twenty percent.*

year. Preserving original old-growth wood windows and adding storm windows provides as much thermal efficiency as new vinyl or aluminum windows with a much better payback to the owner.

Older houses can be made much more energy efficient not by replacement or concealment of original materials, but by adding attic insulation, sealing cracks around openings, and insulating ductwork. Most houses lose energy primarily through the ceiling and floors followed by fireplaces, plumbing penetrations and ductwork. Energy loss through windows is usually only 10% to 15% of a monthly household bill. Adding sufficient insulation in crawl spaces and attics along with appropriate sealants around openings, vents and ducts are all cost-saving measures and generally do not affect a historic dwelling’s architectural character.



*This energy loss chart illustrates how much energy is lost through windows versus ceilings, walls, floors, etc. A homeowner would improve energy efficiency more noticeably by increasing insulation, rather than replacing windows. (U.S. Department of Energy)*

The introductory sections on energy efficiency and conservation are followed by basic principles to be used by the city's Historic Preservation Commission as they review Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) applications. These principles are congruent with the Secretary of Interior's sustainability guidelines and include:

- Property owners and applicants are encouraged to first consider preserving, maintaining and repairing original or historic building features.
- If such features and elements cannot be preserved, maintained and repaired, replacement in kind is then recommended. They should ideally be replaced with the same materials and with profiles, dimensions, and textures to match the original as closely as possible.
- Architectural details and materials can be documented through historic and/or physical evidence. Such documentation will aid in defining appropriate rehabilitation activities.
- If replacement in kind is not feasible or practical, the Commission will consider the use of appropriate sustainable materials where feasible and practical.
- Rehabilitation of historic buildings is reviewed to determine impact, compatibility, and appropriateness of proposed work to the existing structure, site, streetscape, and district.
- Rehabilitation should "work with" the historic building or structure for which it is proposed. Compatible rehabilitation efforts are those that protect significant architectural and historic resources of individual buildings and the district.

Each chapter and subchapter of the guidelines is organized to provide background information as well as specific regulatory principles and requirements. Each design guideline element is described with a broad policy statement followed by justification of this policy on both design and sustainability principles. For example, in the case of windows, the policy statement and principles are:

#### POLICY:

*Retain original wood and metal windows. Repair, rather than replace, original windows. If the need for replacement can be demonstrated, new windows should match the original as closely as possible in materials and appearance.*

#### JUSTIFICATION - DESIGN:

*The proportion, shape, location, pattern and size of windows contribute significantly to the historic character of a residential building and help convey the architectural style and period of the building.*

#### JUSTIFICATION - SUSTAINABILITY:

*Most dwellings in the historic districts retain old-growth wood windows which can last indefinitely as long as they are properly maintained. In most cases, windows account for less than one-fourth of a home's heat loss. Insulating the attic, walls and basement is a much more economical approach to reducing energy costs, than replacing historic windows, which can benefit from weatherizing. Proper sealing of windows and added storm windows enhance a building's energy efficiency.*



*Maintaining original sash windows and adding a storm window equals or exceeds the thermal efficiency of most vinyl replacement windows.*

This approach provides property owners with clear policy statements and justification for rehabilitation based on both design and sustainability. It advances the arguments for preserving historic materials from purely design-related considerations to overall energy efficiency and cost-payback formulas. The guidelines also address the appropriateness of adding solar panels, solar shingles, and geo-thermal units to older dwellings as well as compatible and sustainable materials for new construction.

Historic preservation is now a key component in sustainable policies for many communities. Planning efforts on the local, state and national level are all integrating sustainability as an overarching ethic. Preservationists have made great strides in tying sustainability to preservation principles in order to revitalize downtowns and older neighborhoods. Revising existing design guidelines to emphasize sustainability educates property owners about the inherent "green" character of their buildings, builds public support for design review and overlay districts, and provides additional arguments for preservation based on conservation and sound economic principles. Over the next decade, many other communities are expected to follow Oklahoma City's example as they develop or revise their design guidelines. ■

# PRESERVATION

# *information*

*One in a series of Historic Preservation Information Booklets*

## Design and Development: Infill Housing Compatible with Historic Neighborhoods

*by Ellen Beasley*

**I**nfill development is a concept that has been with us for decades—for centuries—because buildings in most cities and towns reflect a continual

state of construction, alteration, and replacement. Infill is a never-ending process in a thriving, active community. It is distinguished from other types of development because it is surrounded by an existing, built-up area. The infill—the new construction—fills in a vacant parcel of land.

The term “infill” emerged as part of the preservation vocabulary in the 1970s, when many historic areas and inner-city neighborhoods experienced their first new construction in years. Although identified primarily with urban settings and neighborhoods—

areas where context is most obvious—the term is also applicable to new development in small, even rural, towns. The size of an infill project can vary dramatically, from single-family dwellings built on scattered lots to large mixed-use developments covering several city blocks.

Preservation is directly responsible for refining, if not actually defining, the second characteristic that now distinguishes infill projects from other types of development: The emphasis that is placed on relating the new design to the existing, surrounding context.

*Streetscape showing infill housing in the Edgefield Historic District in Nashville, Tenn. In the foreground is one of three structures completed in 1987 as part of the Russell Street Commons; in the center is the Napier house, 941 Russell Street, completed in 1997; and in the background is 943 Russell Street, an early 20th century residence. Photograph taken 1998.*



Photo: Gary Layda



National Trust for Historic Preservation

*A typical streetscape in the Edgefield Historic District exhibits a variety of building types and periods. Photograph taken 1988.*



Photo: Ellen Bensley

Certainly, design has always been a major consideration for infill projects in historic areas.

Since this *Information* booklet was first published in 1988 and reprinted in 1992, infill projects in older neighborhoods, especially in locally designated historic districts, have become less contentious for which there are several reasons. Preservation programs have existed long enough for communities to witness a stabilization and gradual rise in property values in many older neighborhoods. The economics in many of these neighborhoods now encourage the construction of single-family dwellings and small multi-unit residential buildings whereas, not so many years ago, high density development was perceived as the only financially feasible answer to new construction.

A general consensus has evolved regarding what defines an appropriate or successful new design for infill projects in older areas. This consensus often verges on direct replication, a solution that does indeed reduce controversy although it may not produce the most creative design.

Of course, the interpretation of what constitutes a "successful" design can vary according to the context. For neighborhoods characterized by heavy demolition and deterioration, the construction of any new housing may be a victory, regardless of design. In neighborhoods where the housing stock is intact and there are few vacant lots,

design may be the paramount concern. Unquestionably, however, neighborhood residents at all economic levels have become more demanding regarding the design and construction quality of infill projects.

Small-scale infill housing projects in older residential neighborhoods, the specific subject of this *Information* booklet, are built by a variety of groups for different reasons:

- Members of a neighborhood group want to ensure residential, rather than commercial, construction and buy a vacant lot to control development.
- A private developer sees an opportunity for profit.
- An individual home owner is attracted by an urban historic district, but wants a new house.
- A preservation group wants to demonstrate the feasibility of designing and constructing a compatible infill project.
- A local housing authority needs to provide affordable housing units and upgrade a deteriorating neighborhood.
- A city wants to put vacant land back on the tax rolls.

As was true in 1988, potential developers for residential infill projects in historic areas do not fit a single description. There has been, however, a growing interest among nonprofit organizations in controlling the development and design of infill construction. As a result, more and more

infill projects have become joint ventures between the public and private sectors, and for-profit and nonprofit groups and individuals.

Neighborhood and preservation groups may take part in such projects by purchasing vacant lots, pursuing sympathetic developers, joining the development team, or participating in the design review process. The city and the neighborhood may take an active role in encouraging infill development or become developers themselves through a local housing authority or development corporation. These collaborative efforts among diverse groups that have traditionally been adversaries can be helpful in obtaining both financial commitments and design acceptance for infill projects. It also means that all participants share an understanding of what the design and development processes require in order to achieve the common objective of building new housing compatible with an older neighborhood.

### *Understanding the Infill Development Process*

The development process itself has not changed since this booklet was first printed. Successful residential infill projects still demand focus and definition. Seeing such projects through to completion is not for the poorly organized or faint of heart. Experience may not be a prerequisite, but determination and purpose certainly are.

Many factors influence the choices and decisions made in the course of infill development and construction. Among them are

- program and budget for the project,
- ability of the developer to guide the project,
- skill of both the designer and the builder,
- level of support for project goals by all participants, and
- each party's understanding of its role and responsibilities.

This discussion focuses on the pre-construction phase of the infill process. The developer could be an individual, an organization, or a public-private joint venture.

### Defining the Goals

The potential developer must be prepared to answer several basic questions at the outset of any infill project. Most important, what is the primary goal of the project? Is it to control development? To clean up the area? To provide housing? To make money? To stabilize the neighborhood? To control design? Or, perhaps, all of the above?

The next question is whether the developer is able to administer and finance the project. If not, can the developer get the help needed? A

*Vacant lot at 935 Russell Street in Nashville's Edgefield Historic District, the site of the future Russell Street Commons. (Project 4)*

neighborhood organization in an established historic district may conclude, for example, that it can best control design by buying vacant lots and reselling them with deed restrictions, rather than actually developing the lots itself. A neighborhood group in a deteriorating area, on the other hand, might decide that the only way it can provide housing for moderate and low-income residents and stabilize the area is to become an active partner in a joint venture.

### Researching the Project Site

Determining the feasibility of residential infill projects begins with a research trip—or, more likely, several trips—to city hall. This research should identify

- ownership, availability and condition of vacant lots in the neighborhood,
- encumbrances on potential sites,
- applicable zoning, building and design regulations, and
- incentives offered by local government to encourage new development.

Getting this information will involve visits to community development, planning, housing, tax and other departments and possibly obtaining legal and technical assistance.

The amount of easily accessible information about vacant lots may depend on where they are located. Many

cities have inventoried vacant land parcels, which are often the legacy of urban renewal and demolition programs that began in the 1960s. These inventories, which should provide basic information such as lot size, ownership and encumbrances, are most likely to exist for less stable, lower-income neighborhoods where local governments are eager to encourage new development.

In fact, the local government may own many of these vacant lots, especially in deteriorating neighborhoods or urban renewal areas. Many cities hope to attract development by selling lots at below market value or by offering incentives, such as assuming the cost of site preparation, waiving water and sewer hookup fees, or offering tax abatements. Conditions may be attached to these incentives, including requirements that construction be under way within a specified period of time or that the developer be financially responsible for all infrastructure improvements, such as roads, utilities, and other public services. It is worth asking if incentives or conditions are negotiable.

The tax assessor can identify owners of privately held lots, although tax records are not always current. It is critical to establish the correct ownership and legal description of potential sites, even if it means lengthy deed

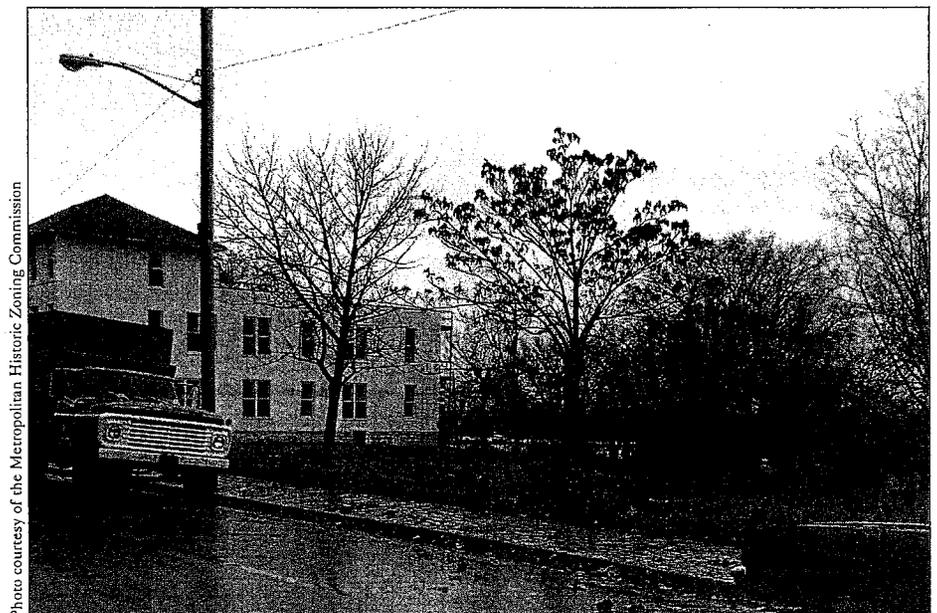


Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission

and title searches. Complications can arise with privately owned lots. Are back taxes due? Are there liens on distressed properties? Is the property in foreclosure? Even if a property is not formally for sale, the owner can be approached directly or through a real estate agent or broker to determine availability and price.

The developer should become familiar with zoning and building regulations and design guidelines, both for specific lots and the areas in which they are located. These documents define what *can* be built and what *should* be built to be compatible with the area. They will also help the developer formulate what *has* to be built to make the project economically feasible. Information on regulatory and review procedures, such as public hearing requirements and schedules for obtaining project approvals, can be obtained from the planning department.

The public utilities department and private utility companies—gas, telephone, electric—can provide information about existing infrastructure and utilities on the proposed site. Site clearance or new installations may not be required, but both can be expensive surprises if not anticipated.

At this point, the developer has the following information about the proposed project site:

- availability and cost of vacant lots,
- requirements for basic site preparation,
- zoning and design guidelines that define what can be built, and
- a reasonable project timetable that takes into account the required regulatory and inspection processes.

As an added benefit, the research effort provides an opportunity to become acquainted with key city hall staff who can help expedite the development and design processes.

## Understanding the Market and the Neighborhood

The viability of the real estate market and the interests of local residents are crucial to the success of any infill housing project in an older neighborhood. The developer should research both in the early stages of the project.

The goal of an infill project influences the extent to which market research is necessary. A developer planning to sell or rent units on the open market, for example, needs to identify the potential pool of buyers or tenants. A local housing authority that is building single-family housing for first-time home owners currently renting in housing projects knows the client group before the project takes shape. Market research in such a case would mean determining the number of current tenants eligible to buy the new units.

Although developers of small-scale residential infill projects may rely on instinct to recognize an area ripe for construction, financial institutions require hard data, including current and projected property values, demographics, and zoning restrictions for the project site. To obtain this data, the developer could commission a market study, although the elaborate studies prepared for large-scale projects are usually unnecessary for small residential infill projects. Data collected for city-wide market studies often does not apply to an infill situation.

Another option would be for the developer to conduct the market research. Much of the necessary information may be readily available from the city planning department, particularly if a neighborhood planning program exists. Other resources might include real estate agents who specialize in older neighborhoods, companies that provide new employee relocation services, financial institutions sympathetic to neighborhood revitalization, and preservation organizations with active real estate programs.

The developer is now equipped with a profile of the area and of potential buyers or renters, a summary of recent real estate activity in the area, and an outline of both the type and price of units considered feasible for new development in the proposed location.

At this point, discussions of the proposed project with representatives of the neighborhood association and other individuals familiar with the area are in order to ensure that the developer's goals are compatible with neighborhood interests. These individuals might include the city staff person for neighborhood programs or the design review commission, the neighborhood liaison of the local preservation organization, and a recognized community leader, such as the minister of a neighborhood church.

## Structuring the Development Team and Obtaining Financing

While background information is being collected, the developer should investigate the organizational structure that can best support the proposed infill project and potential sources of financing. An individual developer may conclude that an independent, for-profit business is the most desirable arrangement, especially if financing can be secured through conventional lending institutions at a reasonable interest rate.

More and more infill projects are being developed by varied combinations of public and private, for-profit and nonprofit interests, such as a private developer and a neighborhood association. The form a development team takes is often influenced by the availability of funding—particularly if public funds are involved. The common bond among partners, however, has to be more than money; it must include compatible philosophies and goals. The partnership must also be based on sound legal and tax counsel.

The possibility of sustained involvement in the infill project is another consideration in establishing the legal and organizational structure of the

development team. Will the team be responsible for long-term maintenance or management of the project? How many and what kind of staff will be required to plan and build the project? To manage and maintain it? Does the team plan to develop more than one project?

There are as many ways to arrange financing as there are to organize the development team. The first places to look are conventional lenders with a history of financing projects in older neighborhoods and municipal departments, such as housing or community development. Government funding for housing programs exists at the local, state, and federal levels.

### Writing a Project Program

The project program is written when the basic research is complete, the developer's organization is in place, and initial discussions have been held with neighborhood representatives and other involved parties. Although the project program need not be lengthy and its contents can vary, it should always include the following:

- goals of the project,
- members of the development team and their credentials,
- estimated budget,
- potential market,
- physical description of the proposed project, including building type(s) and proposed number and size of units,
- design and zoning parameters, and
- special considerations, such as the historic character of the surrounding area or topographical features.

The project program is a public document that can be used in many ways: to approach financial institutions and other funding sources; to make presentations to local government agencies; to initiate discussions with neighborhood groups; to prepare Requests for Proposals (RFPs); and as a constant reference for the development team itself. The publicly distributed version of a private developer's program usually omits financial information.

Again, the developer should touch base with neighborhood representatives and others who will be involved in the development and design processes before the program document is finalized.

### Selecting an Architect

The choice of an architect is critical to the success of an infill project in a historic neighborhood. If an architect is not already part of the team, the developer needs to select one. This process varies and may be influenced by the requirements of funding sources. Projects receiving public funds, for instance, are often required to solicit proposals from a number of firms, following a prescribed selection process. If the project is funded privately, the developer will often choose an architect with whom he or she has already worked. If the development team consists of representatives from several different groups, a committee may be appointed to make the decision. The selection process should be made clear to all prospective participants at the outset.

Design *ability* is only one consideration in selecting an architect. The design *philosophies* of the developer and the architect should also be compatible. It would be difficult, for example, to reconcile the approach of an architect who abhors imitative design to the plan of a developer who has precisely that in mind. The design process works best, therefore, when selection is based on the architect's sensitivity to the goals of the project and the special characteristics of the location, rather than on any preconceived notions of appropriate design. The architect's work on previous infill projects, as well as the ability to adhere to a schedule and to operate within budgetary constraints, are other important factors to consider.

The architect must be able to explain the design to a variety of audiences. In addition to regular meetings with the developer, the architect may be asked to make presentations to a neighborhood association and a design review commission. The architect also

needs to develop a rapport with future residents if they are directly involved in the design and planning of the project. Further, the ability to work with local government representatives is essential if the architect is charged with clearing the project through regulatory and permit requirements.

During the selection interviews, the decision-making process for planning and design should be clearly explained to the architect. Who will review and approve plans and drawings? One person or a committee? How accessible will they be? Does one person have the authority to speak for the group? Will the arrangement change once construction is under way? What is the architect's role during the construction phase?

### Designing the Project

The final design of an infill project in an older neighborhood results from the interaction of many different factors and personalities. The design must satisfy the developer, neighborhood residents, the architect and, in many cases, a preservation commission. It must meet zoning and other regulatory requirements, as well as the constraints of the project budget.

Before design work begins, the architect and developer should meet with representatives of both the neighborhood and the preservation commission. The neighborhood group discussion should deal with the relationship between design and economics and the schedule for the design process. The parties should decide how and when the neighborhood group will comment on the design. The architect may want to use drawings from previous projects to explain the phases of the design process and to illustrate the differences between conceptual, working, and finished drawings. The discussion at this and subsequent meetings should be recorded.

The design process begins with an in-depth analysis of the project site and its surrounding neighborhood. General design guidelines may exist

for the area, but are not likely to include a block-by-block analysis. The architect's conceptual design will consist of a series of drawings that focus on mass, scale, placement, and zoning constraints, such as density and parking. At this stage the drawings will not show architectural details.

The developer is the first to view the conceptual drawings. Once the developer is satisfied, the architect will show the drawings to municipal planning, building and utility departments to ascertain that the concept complies with zoning and building regulations. At this point, the drawings are also shown to interested neighborhood groups. For major projects, the preservation commission may require a preliminary review of conceptual plans.

After an agreement has been reached on the general direction of the design, the architect proceeds with the working drawings and calculates estimated costs to determine if design, budget, and program remain compatible. During this phase, the architect and developer should communicate regularly with neighborhood representatives. After it is finalized, the site plan is submitted as quickly as possible to the appropriate city department for approval, especially if zoning variances (such as changes in parking requirements or setback restrictions) are necessary. Denial of a variance can drastically alter both the design and budget of the project.

Reaching consensus on the final design is a challenging task. Balancing design and budget limitations with the expectations of the developer, the neighborhood and the preservation commission can be difficult. Differences of opinion are to be expected. Throughout the design process, therefore, it is imperative that there be continuous communication among all parties, that the established review and approval process be followed and that the goals of the project be emphasized repeatedly.

### **Beginning Construction**

Once the final drawings are approved, the required public hearings and reviews held, the financing arranged, and the site prepared, construction can begin.

The mechanism for formal, regular review of the work in progress should be clear. Nothing is more frustrating—or costly—than having to halt construction in midstream or undo work already done. Trees or other features that are to be saved should be marked on the site plan. Any general site improvements, such as utility installations, sidewalks, curb cuts and alleys, should be included in the construction schedule.

How a contractor is selected depends on several factors. If construction is publicly financed, bids from several contractors will probably be required. A contractor's references should be checked carefully and previous construction projects inspected. The architect might recommend a contractor. Some developers operate their own construction firms, as do some public agencies, such as local housing authorities. While not always possible, finding a contractor with infill experience is also a plus.

### **Making the Process Work**

Whether there is a formal groundbreaking ceremony or simply the arrival of a backhoe and work crew one morning, the start of construction on an infill site is the culmination of many people's efforts. Successful infill projects result from well-defined goals and the willingness of various participants to work together to achieve those goals. Economic necessity is often the primary motivation that encourages cooperation among diverse groups and the establishment of joint-venture development teams. These collaborations, formal and informal, also promote communication and understanding.

- The developer must deal directly with neighborhood concerns and fears.
- Residents realize that some choices have to be made between aesthetics and economics.
- Public officials and employees learn that neighborhood residents care about design quality.
- The architect must work with the community to receive design approval.
- Financial institutions broaden their community commitment.

Developing an infill project can be a lengthy process, but given the lasting economic, social, and visual impact this type of construction can have on a neighborhood or community, it is not a process that can or should be hastily concluded. The result is a tangible product—one or more buildings—but it is the interaction of people—an intangible—that makes the process work.

## Types of Infill Construction

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Residential infill projects can take any of the following forms:

- single-family dwellings,
- duplexes,
- multiple units, such as row houses or apartment complexes,
- alternative housing, such as shared housing,
- detached secondary units, such as rear houses, garages or apartments, or
- attached accessory units (additions).

The feasibility of a particular building type on a given infill site is determined by zoning restrictions, lot size, budget and design considerations.

Construction methods for residential infill projects can include the following:

- site-built,
- factory-built,
- a combination of factory and onsite construction,
- movable structures, such as modular or mobile homes, and
- relocation of existing buildings.

Local and state building codes influence acceptable construction methods.

## Options for Participation by Neighborhood Groups

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Neighborhood organizations can participate in the development and design of infill projects in a variety of ways.

- Communicate regularly with local government staff about building and demolition permits and zoning changes in the neighborhood, and with the preservation commission about applications for design review.
- Work with public planning staff to identify qualities that distinguish the neighborhood and that should be respected and enhanced by new development.
- Cooperate with public planning staff in writing and periodically reviewing a neighborhood plan.

- Send representatives to public meetings at which neighborhood development and planning are discussed, e.g., planning commission, preservation commission, zoning board of adjustment and city council meetings.
- Recommend appointment of informed, articulate and reasonable neighborhood residents to appropriate public bodies and committees, such as the planning commission, the preservation commission and neighborhood task forces.
- Stay informed about property transfers in the neighborhood and initiate early dialogue with purchasers and developers of vacant lots.
- Inventory vacant lots in the neighborhood, research zoning and ownership and define development potential.
- Maintain open and constructive communication with the developer throughout the course of designing and building an infill project.
- Acquire vacant lots and actively pursue their sale to selected developers with restrictions such as easements or design review requirements for proposed projects.
- Become developers either by creating a development corporation or participating in a joint venture with a private developer who has experience in infill projects.

## Benefits of Cooperation

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Many benefits can result from cooperation and communication between the neighborhood group and the developer of an infill project.

- Developing an awareness and understanding of each other's goals and interests.
- Identifying shared goals and ways to achieve them.
- Creating a defined procedure for neighborhood involvement and review.
- Minimizing surprises and misunderstandings during the planning and construction of an infill project.
- Obtaining financing and zoning variances.
- Promoting positive media coverage for the neighborhood and the developer.

Ultimately, cooperation may foster the creation of a joint venture, drawing upon the skills and strengths of both parties.

## DEVELOPING A MATERIALS EVALUATION METHODOLOGY, PART I

*Dan Becker, City and Regional Planning Division Manager, Dept. of City Planning, Raleigh, NC  
Jack Williams, Hoshide Williams, Architects, Seattle, Washington*

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

Preservation Briefs are technical assistance guides produced by the Technical Preservation Services division of the National Park Service. Initiated in 1975, there are currently 47 briefs that cover a vast range of preservation and restoration topics. Preservation Brief 16, released in 1988, covers the use of substitute materials on historic buildings, and is another resource available to local commissions when reviewing these types of proposals on designated properties.

Preservation Brief 16 emphasizes that substitute materials should only be used when all repair or restoration alternatives have been explored. When considering the appropriateness of a substitute material, a "thorough investigation" should be carried out to determine its durability, compatibility, and physical properties. It further suggests that the consideration of substitute materials should be based on the unavailability of historic materials and craftsmen, flaws in the original materials, and code compliance. Cost factors can vary depending on the area of the country, the amount of material needed, and the projected life cycle of the material.

The brief does not go into detail on common small-scale residential projects such as the installation of vinyl siding and replacement windows, noting the greater availability of in-kind materials and restoration solutions for these types of proposals.

*Continued on next page*

*The following article expands upon the Working Roundtable "Developing a Materials Evaluation Methodology" conducted during the NAPC's 2008 National Commission Forum hosted in New Orleans, Louisiana. The Forum session responded to requests from commissions to address alternative materials. During the session, the conversation expanded to new products embracing the ambitions of sustainable design. This article examines and integrates these twin themes in two installments; the article will conclude in the November/December issue of The Alliance Review. It is hoped that these thoughts will assist a policy discussion at your commission's next retreat.*

We continue to live in an era of increasingly rapid technological change, and the building sciences are seeing their share of evolution and innovation. The application of technical and chemical research principles in the development of various building systems has yielded many benefits, such as the remarkable advances during the past 15 years in construction joint caulk and sealant capabilities, and specialized industrial coatings. Critical to the successful use of these products is a thorough understanding of the purposes for which they were developed, their properties, their relationships to other components of a building system, and limitations on appropriate application.

Preservation commissions are continually asked to consider replacement materials and techniques. When the marketing power of product manufacturers is compared to the educational capacity of commissions, it is no wonder that these requests test the commission's ability to evaluate them. Commonly there are multiple parameters that commissions are asked to address, notably:

- Changes in availability and technology: the historic material is not as common nor of the quality that it was when used to construct resources, e.g. cedar shingle roofing, fast-growth farm-produced wood, or terra cotta decorative details;
- Vanishing trades: there are few or no local crafts persons that can work with the historic material, or alternatively, the local building industry is trained in and will only warrant the use of the new materials and techniques;
- Ease of maintenance: new materials are purported to be more durable than original materials;
- Cost: like material of equivalent quality is believed to be economically infeasible, leading to the utilization of less expensive materials as a substitute material during the repair or replacing of original fabric;
- Sustainability: the development of materials or systems that support the ambition of sustainable development, i.e. photovoltaic solar panels.

The use of modern materials on historic buildings has long been a subject of debate, and the literature is full of cautions toward their application. While publications do offer advice and assistance, little guidance is provided to local

preservation commissions to guide their thoughtful evaluation of such materials and products. As a result, they often find themselves struggling to strike a balance between the preservation industry's standards and local community standards and policies.

Since it is inevitable that commissions will continue to receive proposals for new materials and products, utilizing an evaluation methodology can help a commission when facing such requests. It will also improve community perception of the commission's work when citizens observe a thoughtful review taking place in a predictable manner, which will reduce claims of dogmatic refusal without analysis, or concerns of arbitrary and capricious decision-making.

### Starting with the Standards

Many communities have adopted *The Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Building (Standards)* for use by the local commission as their design review guidelines; some have local guidelines that are based upon the *Standards*. Given the *Standards'* common usage and long history of development, they are a logical place to start in providing the underpinnings for an evaluation methodology.

Among the ten standards, the four cited below most directly address the issues related to alternative or replacement materials. The authors have recast them into "action paraphrases" that distill the guidance to be applied to our task:

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterizes a property shall be avoided.

**Avoid...altering features...that characterize a property.**

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.

**Preserve distinctive features...that characterize a historic property.**

6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary physical, or pictorial evidence.

**Replacement features...shall match...in design, color, texture,...visual qualities and, where possible, materials.... Substantiate [with] evidence.**

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the his-

als. However, the points listed in determining the appropriateness of a substitute material can be instructive for local commissions which are regularly reviewing proposals for purported "maintenance-free" products such as engineered siding or trim. "Green" and energy-efficiency issues are also not addressed in the brief, although there is an emphasis on determining the performance expectations and sustainability of a proposed substitute material. In sum, the message is clear in Preservation Brief 16 that the restoration and repair of original materials is always the preferred option.

All Preservation Briefs are viewable online at the National Park Service's website:  
<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/TPS/briefs/presbhom.htm>



toric integrity of the property and its environment.

**Do not destroy historic materials...when constructing... exterior alterations. Differentiate the new work from the old and...protect...historic integrity...by requiring...compatible...architectural features.**

**Rehabilitation** is defined as “the process of returning a property to a state of utility, through repair or alteration, which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural, and cultural values.”

It is important to recognize that these are not the standards for Preservation or Restoration treatments. Rehabilitation provides additional latitude. The *Standards* are introduced with the definition of rehabilitation as “the process of returning a property to a state of utility....” The *Standards* further note that they “are to be applied in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.”

**The Goals of Integrity and Authenticity**

The National Park Service acknowledges the authenticity of a resource as its paradigm. The introduction to the *Standards* explains that “the treatment ‘rehabilitation’ assumes that at least some repair or alteration of the historic building will be needed in order to provide for an efficient contemporary use; however, these repairs and alterations must not damage or destroy materials, features, or finishes that are important in defining the building’s historic character.” When adopting the *Standards*, a local government embraces this philosophy as a policy statement.

It is, however, a difficult policy to apply. The preservation commission is the unit of local government that is called upon to implement this policy. It is important for local commissions to recognize that the *Standards* were created to serve specific federal uses. “Initially developed by the Secretary of the Interior to determine the appropriateness of proposed project work on registered properties within the Historic Preservation Fund grant-in-aid program, the *Standards for Rehabilitation* have been widely used over the years—particularly to determine if a rehabilitation qualifies as a Certified Rehabilitation for Federal tax purposes.” [<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/rhb/stand.htm>]

The commission, on the other hand, must be responsive to the local community’s culture of regulation and enforcement, and the “will of the citizenry” The *Standards* cannot be applied by the commission in a vacuum detached from the local context, nor does the National Park Service suggest that they should be: “The *Standards* are neither technical nor prescriptive, but are intended to promote responsible preservation practices that help protect our Nation’s irreplaceable cultural resources. For example, they cannot, in and of themselves, be used to make essential decisions about which features of the historic building should be saved and which can be changed.” [[http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide/overview/choose\\_treat.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide/overview/choose_treat.htm)]

The tools commonly available to commissions are the nomination documents, design review guidelines, and the process of design review. Ideally, thorough and thoughtful documentation in each of these three areas is available to the preservation commission for guidance in performing its duties.

During the nomination process, the significant features of the resource (individual or district) are identified thus establishing how the resource meets the

criteria for placement on the local register. It also clarifies those features that are important to protect—that is, those elements essential to the integrity of the resource.

The design review guidelines establish the acceptable levels of change and where change can occur and do no harm to the resource. They should also address the acceptability of alternative materials—that is, where departure from original fabric can be accommodated and still retain authenticity. Because new materials and changing technology are a constant, no guidelines can provide a definitive list of acceptable choices.

The process of design review sets out the type of information necessary for a fair and informed judgment as well as the sequences for evaluating the acceptability of the material. During this process, the twin goals of rehabilitation—continued or restored utility of the resource(s) and preserving historic character—are balanced. The “trade off” between the two challenges many commissions.

### Toward An Evaluation Methodology

A “top ten” (but unranked) list of today’s recurring requests might look like this:

1. Exterior Insulation and Finish System (Dryvit and other “synthetic stucco” products)
2. Fiber-cement siding (HardiePlank and related products)
3. Metal roof systems
4. Molded fiberglass/plastic exterior trim
5. Replacement shutters
6. Replacement windows
7. Roofing shingles (synthetic slate, and the like)
8. “Spray-on Siding” e.g. Liquid Vinyl and other exterior coating systems
9. Wood/plastic composite lumber (Trex)
10. And the growing interest in sustainable design expands the list to include:
  - a. Energy retrofit “packages”
  - b. Green roofs
  - c. Photovoltaic (solar) panels
  - d. Photovoltaic shingles
  - e. Wind turbines

Since every community has its own preservation ethic, no one can provide the commission with the “right answer.” Moreover, today’s list does not look like 1995’s list, and it is unlikely to look like 2025’s list. While commissions often look to each other for examples of how to address difficult issues, in the long term, we are better served by developing the capability to make well-informed decisions about these products as opposed to polling each other for pat answers. Each commission ultimately has the charge to find the best answer for its local circumstances.

### The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties



The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation &

Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings

The *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* are common-sense principles in non-technical language. They were developed to help protect our nation’s irreplaceable cultural resources by promoting consistent preservation practices.

The *Standards* may be applied to all properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places: buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts.

The *Standards* are a series of concepts about maintaining, repairing and replacing historic materials, as well as designing new additions or making alterations. They cannot, in and of themselves, be used to make decisions about which features of a historic property should be preserved and which might be changed. But once an appropriate treatment is selected, the *Standards* provide philosophical consistency to the work.

There are *Standards* for four distinct, but interrelated, approaches to the treatment of historic properties: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction.

**Preservation** focuses on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property’s form as it has evolved over time. (Protection and stabilization have now been consolidated under this treatment.)

*Continued on next page*

**Rehabilitation** acknowledges the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character.

**Restoration** depicts a property at a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods.

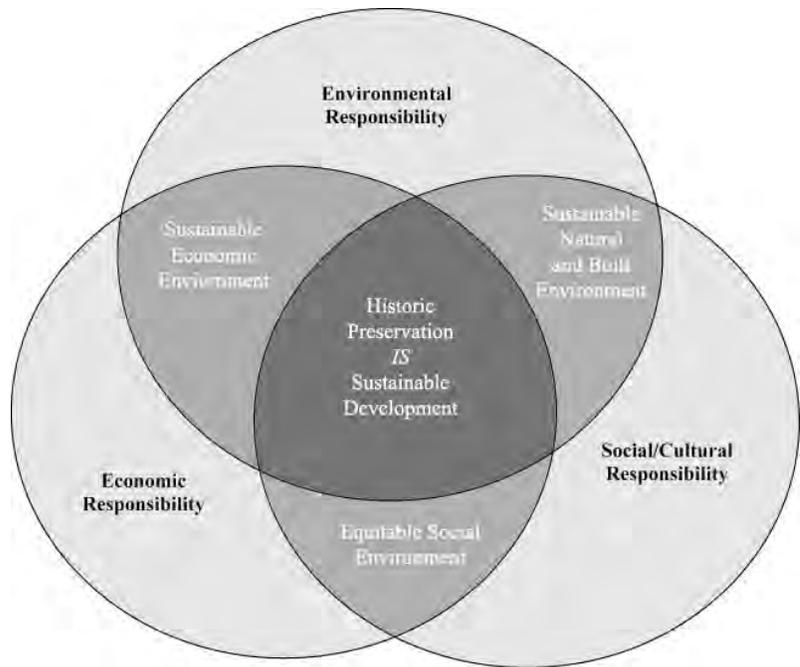
**Reconstruction** re-creates vanished or non-surviving portions of a property for interpretive purposes.

Source: [http://www.nps.gov/history/HPS/TPS/standards\\_guidelines.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/HPS/TPS/standards_guidelines.htm)

Thus, the commission's decision will come down to finding a community-appropriate balance among a wide array of valid concerns, some of which may stand in opposition to others. What is proposed, then, is a framework for commissions to organize the questions to be asked and to provide a means for weighing and balancing multiple objectives.

### A Sustainability Framework for Balanced Decision-Making

True sustainability is much more than energy efficiency or various green rating systems for building construction, such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). The "Three Pillars" framework for sustainability has three primary considerations to produce sustainable outcomes: economic, environmental, and social/cultural. Each of the pillars must be given proper weight to achieve a balanced result.



*The three pillars of sustainability—environmental, economic, and social/cultural responsibility—combine to ensure sustainable development.*

The trend is clear that we, as a global community, are moving toward a new decision-making paradigm—one that embraces these broader sustainability criteria as an umbrella under which individual decisions in a wide range of pursuits should be evaluated. With this background as our context, the next installment of this article will propose a means by which the framework of sustainability can be applied to the decision-making process when considering alternative materials and/or systems promoting sustainable design.

## A SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK FOR THE LOCAL CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE OR SUBSTITUTE MATERIALS – PART II

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Jack Williams, Hoshide Williams, Architects, Seattle, WA*

*This article builds upon the Working Roundtable, “Developing a Materials Evaluation Methodology,” conducted during the NAPC’s 2008 National Commission Forum hosted in New Orleans, Louisiana. The Forum session responded to requests from commissions to address alternative materials. During the session, the conversation expanded to new products embracing the ambitions of sustainable design. This article examines and integrates these twin themes in two installments; Part I appeared in the July-August issue of The Alliance Review, and this installment concludes the article.*

While this article focuses upon the evaluation of substitute materials, it is worth re-emphasizing at the outset that **the most sustainable practice remains the recommended preservation treatment approach of repairing and reusing existing historic fabric. Only after the commission determines by careful evaluation that the existing material cannot be repaired should replacement or substitute materials be considered.** The core treatments for historic preservation outlined in *The Secretary of Interior’s Standards* are demonstrably sustainable practices. The premise of this article is that preservation practitioners must take heed as sustainability concepts become increasingly mainstream. The authors believe that in the coming years, sustainability principles will become the language of decision-making in a broad array of human enterprises, including the preservation field. In particular, when considering **changes** to historic resources or materials, preservationists have a choice of mindset: we can “defend” our standards in the face of sustainability arguments (which the authors contend will be a “no-win” scenario), or we can use our standards to lead the way toward more sustainable outcomes. As the decision-making precepts broaden, so too then must our response to them. **We hope that the ideas presented here can be carefully explored by commissions in a retreat setting as part of the commission’s natural growth and evolution responding to a changing world.**

Readers of the July/August issue of *The Alliance Review* will recall that Part I of this article begins with a summary of the challenges that local preservation commissions face from applicant requests for alternative materials. It then:

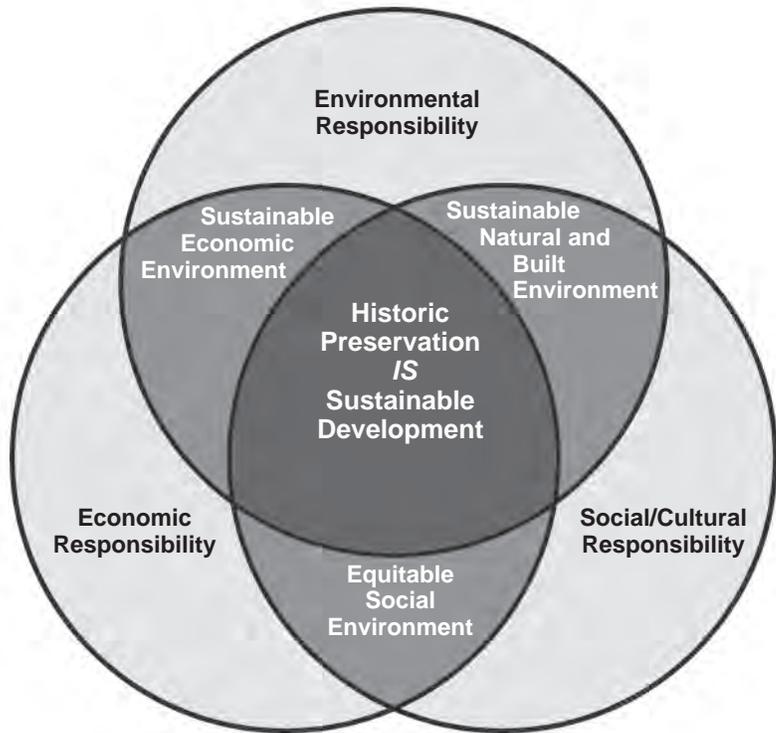
- examines *The Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* as they apply to this issue;
- discusses the goals of integrity and authenticity and their implications for public policy at the local level in the process of design review;
- suggests that because the preservation ethic varies from community to community that commissions are better served by developing the capability to make well-informed decisions regarding new materials and products that reflect community values.

The conclusion of Part I introduces a conceptual framework for balanced decision-making at the local level utilizing sustainability principles in the evaluation of alternative materials for historic resources. Part II, beginning below, explores how this framework might be applied, and the final section challenges us to expand our leadership role within our communities by embracing this broader paradigm of decision-making.

### **A Sustainability Framework for Balanced Decision-Making**

True sustainability is more than just environmental “green” sustainability. The “Three Pillars” framework for sustainability has three primary considerations to produce sustainable outcomes: social/cultural, environmental, and economic. Each of the pillars must be given proper weight in order to achieve a balanced result.

There is a rational nexus for applying sustainability principles to the evaluation of alternative or substitute materials that underlies the design review work that preservation commissions undertake. A commission's ordinance defines its powers and duties. Commissions commonly understand that their decisions have **economic** consequences. Their efforts stimulate the local economy and enhance the value of real estate. **Environmental** considerations flow from stewardship provisions of ordinances for the conservation of the built environment. This yields reduced pressure on further consumption of the natural environment and reduced expenditure of energy resources for materials manufacture, shipping, and new construction activities. The *Standards* provide the basis for responsible evaluation of the **social/cultural** aspects of projects upon heritage values, including the effect of substitute materials. It is from an awareness of local community standards that the commission determines the appropriate weighting for each of the three elements to achieve a balanced decision.



The following discussion of the three areas of sustainability offers a list of considerations that might be evaluated in examining proposals for alternative materials and systems. While the list is thorough, it is not presented as exhaustive; each community must respond to its own local requirements. It is intended to offer a starting point for the local commission to establish its own lines of inquiry to engage the emerging issue of sustainability during its decision-making process. It should also be noted that while the list is organized to place the various considerations where they seem to have primary relevance, they may also have secondary relevance in other areas.

**Social/Cultural Considerations**

Commissions commonly utilize the *Standards* as the basis for design review. The following four guidelines from the *Standards* (as recast into "action paraphrases" in Part I of this article) offer the most direct guidance when evaluating alternative materials or systems. Boldface terms appear in the table that follows the list.

SOI Standard number 2: Avoid altering features that characterize a property.

What does the designation documentation state regarding **property significance**?

- landmark, contributing to a district, non-contributing
- architecture, historic event

Where is the **location** of the feature?

- primary structure, primary or secondary façade
- historic addition, non-historic addition, accessory structures

Which are the **distinctive features**?

- architectural details, siding, massing, space

What is the **visibility** of the feature?

- close, far, public setting, within property

SO/ Standard number 5: Preserve distinctive features that characterize a historic property.

Is there a **condition assessment** that evaluates the historic fabric?

- credible, complete, clear

Does the assessment support preservation of the feature?

- preservability, **repairability**

Are there **local trades** persons who are skilled in preservation practices?

SO/ Standard number 6: Replacement features shall match in design, color, texture, visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Substantiate with evidence.

What are the **visual qualifications** of the character defining features?

- design, color, texture, *et. al.*

What is the **resemblance** of the proposed substitution to the feature?

- identical, passable, poor
- fabrication/installation details

Is the substantiating **documentation** credible?

- ASTM Standards for performances, manufacturer's test data

Is the **in-situ sample** offered for inspection reliable?

- length of time, weather, fabrication, material quality, representative of field construction capabilities

What is the **compatibility** of the alternative material with the historic fabric

- coefficient of expansion, electrolysis

SO/ Standard number 9: Do not destroy historic materials when constructing exterior alterations. Differentiate the new work from the old and protect historic integrity by requiring compatible architectural features.

Can **modern design materials** and methods be employed?

- additions and new construction of modern design
- compatibility, differentiation

With what **design elements** should the substitute material be compatible?

- massing, size, scale
- architectural features
- integrity of the property
- environment

What is the **visual effect** on the resource?

- overwhelming, supportive, compatible
- character-defining features? (e.g. a solar collector that covers patterned slates)
- character-defining design qualities? (e.g. a solar collector that is placed on the primary façade's roof slope)

Does the new work have a significant **historic fabric impact**?

- alteration, removal to accommodate installation

What is the **reversibility** of the new work?

- restoration of resource to its earlier configuration
- failure of untested material or design

This set of questions is neither exhaustive nor germane to all communities. But they can form a core for deliberation during your retreat.

### **Environmental Considerations**

Many communities are adopting policies and enacting legislation to implement a variety of climate change protocols, energy standards, and environmental initiatives, often under the rubric of sustainability. For commissions to act in concert with these actions, commission decision-

making should support key components of these policies. As we receive requests to approve applications proposing alternative materials or systems, we can expect to increasingly be called upon to consider these physical characteristics as well as the energy consumed if a certificate of appropriateness is granted.

**Durability:**

If new to marketplace with no track record is any ATSM accelerated aging test data available?  
Is today's fast-growth wood farm product vs. old-growth wood really a "like" material?

**Embodied energy:**

What is the energy of production that exists in the manufactured/installed product?

**Energy efficiency:**

What is reduction in greenhouse gases due to less energy input?  
What is reduction in required capacity of energy grid?

**Energy source:**

Is it carbon-based or renewable? Is it centralized or off-the-grid?

**Toxicity:**

What are the human health implications of the manufacture/use of the new material?  
(Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) are a good source for general composition of products when marketing materials are not forthcoming.)

**Recyclability:**

Is it possible? Is there a market? What are the energy costs of processing?

**Transport:**

What are the energy costs of shipping materials and systems to and from the building site?

**Economic Considerations**

The economic consequences of our decisions remain key to the viability of historic communities. Regardless of scale, whether it is the cost of an architectural detail, or the financial consideration of entire building systems, or determinations about a district's infrastructure, technical feasibility is tied to economic capability. We need to apply tools that more fully address both considerations.

**Cost/benefit analysis:**

Is it an expense or an investment?

**Life-cycle analysis:**

What are the costs per year of anticipated life span of alternative materials?

**Maintenance cycles:**

Is it reasonable to expect that the maintenance requirements of modern versions of traditional materials can be adhered to by the property owner? Can one really expect to keep all joints caulked and painted all the time on fast growth wood, etc.?

**Labor:**

What are the jobs created per unit of project cost?

**Erection:**

What is the complexity/scale of material/system installation.

**Proximity:**

How close is the harvest/manufacture/assembly of the material to the building site?  
What is the monetary value of recycling of local dollars in local economy?

The following table graphically presents a consolidation of this information in summary form showing relationships among the evaluation flow chain, inquiry considerations, and sustainability considerations.

Matrix for Evaluation of Alternative Materials and/or Systems		Sustainability Considerations		
Evaluation Flow Chain	SOI Considerations	Social/Cultural Responsibility (Secretary of Interior's Standards -- SOI)	Environmental Responsibility (SOI technical feasibility)	Economic Responsibility (SOI technical and economic feasibility)
Repair existing feature?	*property significance *location *distinctive features *visibility	SOI #2 & 5	*durability *embodied energy	*cost/benefit analysis *life-cycle analysis *maintenance cycles *labor *proximity
Match original design and mat'l of existing feature?	*condition assessment *repairability *local trades *visibility	SOI #5 & 6	*durability *embodied energy *energy efficiency *energy source *transport	*cost/benefit analysis *life-cycle analysis *maintenance cycles *labor *proximity
Exterior Alterations/Introduction of new material				
Match material design & visual qualities of feature w/ alt. mat'l?	*visual characteristics *resemblance *documentation *in-situ sample *compatibility	SOI #6	*durability *embodied energy *energy efficiency *energy source *toxicity *recyclability *transport	*cost/benefit analysis *life-cycle analysis *maintenance cycles *labor *proximity
Exterior Alterations/Introduction of new materials-features-systems				
Introduce new non-imitative material?	*modern design materials *visual effect *reversibility	SOI #9	*durability *energy *toxicity *recyclability *transport	*cost/benefit analysis *life-cycle analysis *maintenance cycles *labor *proximity
Introduce new feature?	*modern design materials *design elements *visual effect *reversibility	SOI #9	*durability *energy *toxicity *recyclability *transport	*cost/benefit analysis *life-cycle analysis *maintenance cycles *labor *proximity
Introduce new system?	*modern design materials *design elements *visual effect *historic fabric impact *reversibility	SOI #9	*durability *energy *toxicity *recyclability *transport	*cost/benefit analysis *life-cycle analysis *maintenance cycles *labor *erection *proximity
Confluence of these three columns yields SOI's "state of utility" or, looking forward to a new paradigm, "State of Sustainability."				

**Applying the Sustainability Framework**

This methodology provides a structured framework for commissions to work through a flow of issues prompted by four *SOI* standards to evaluate the social/cultural impact of the proposed change, as well as assessing environmental and economic considerations. The list of considerations should not be considered exhaustive, nor should it be assumed that all issues will be present in every case.

Presuming that the gathering of evidence has provided the commission with credible data, the commission can then balance the three pillars through application of the *SOI* definitions for rehabilitation. The *Standards* provide allowance for returning a resource to a “state of utility” (or looking forward to a new decision-making paradigm, “state of sustainability”) with an emphasis placed upon “reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.”

Final weighting and balancing during the decision-making process will require the application of subjective judgment. Careful use of clearly-stated procedures will become increasingly important to guide the process. Once the decision is made, the evidence and discussion should be carefully documented in the record. These are precedent-setting decisions that must be able to stand up to scrutiny; the commission will also want to be able to reference its decisions in the future to ensure consistency.

Balance: historic preservation goals with functional needs

- *SOI* “state of utility”;
- *SOI* “reasonable manner.”

Burden of proof: upon applicant.

Competent evidence: and substantiation of claims.

Expert testimony: validation of expert’s credentials.

Consultation: when expertise to evaluate evidence is not present among commission membership (e.g. SHPO, experienced trades persons, architects, etc.).

Because the trend toward this sustainability-based decision-making paradigm is in its infancy, final weighting and balancing will prove to be a difficult process in the near term. For example, there is a dearth of information available to make informed decisions about the full cradle-to-grave energy-use implications for any given material, product, or system. Without such data, how can a credible comparison be made to evaluate one item against another? Nonetheless, we have to start somewhere. As we begin to ask questions that yield data, a challenge before us is developing information systems that will allow decision-makers to share and retrieve the results of their investigations.

One probable outcome of this exercise is a predictive model that will enable revisions of your commission’s design review guidelines. These guidelines will reflect more than the community’s expectations regarding the cultural value of historic resources. They will also incorporate the community’s attitudes regarding the economic and environmental value of historic resources. The intent is to broaden the reasoned discussions and decision-making activities of the commission.

**Mainstreaming Local Preservation Leadership**

There is no questioning the consciousness-raising impact the environmental movement has had during the past fifty years. As a society, an environmental stewardship that did not exist fifty years ago is now deeply ingrained in many aspects of government and in-

dustry. Because preservation is so inherently a sustainability practice, we have a great opportunity to recast public perception of preservation values from the “hysterical” into the holistic. But to accomplish this, as we pursue our mission-driven objectives we need to engage in some soul-searching about how we connect with our fellow citizens.

Certainly the primary responsibility of commission review of exterior changes to cultural resources applies most directly to the social/cultural aspects of sustainability. If we are not the guardians of these values, who will be? However, no longer do we have the luxury of making these evaluations in social/cultural isolation; a case can be made that preservation commissions have sometimes (frequently?) applied the *Standards* that way in the past. Preservationists get agitated when people decide to install replacement vinyl windows based upon sustainability energy/environmental factors and fail to consider our preservation cultural/social standards, but pot-kettle-black we risk agitating people with our insistence on the immutability of the *SOI*—Social/Cultural factors with no allowance for economic considerations.

We need to take to heart the flexibility provided by the *Standards* when we are applying rehabilitation treatments. Too often perhaps we confuse rehabilitation treatments with restoration or preservation treatments, and hold applicants to too high a standard. Preservationists have long debated the underpinnings of material culture in our historic resources regarding “Authenticity” versus “Integrity.” Perhaps it is time to complicate matters further by bringing “Cultural Continuity” into the mix. Rehabilitation introduces the concept of human endeavor over time, suggesting a resultant imprint of current values on cultural resources. Setting aside resources of acknowledged significance that demand preservation and restoration treatments, should we be more open to the evolutionary continuum by acknowledging it, making it part of our process of evaluation, and ultimately embracing it? The social/cultural considerations of the preservation field have evolved greatly during the last 30 years; environmental and economic considerations may now need to be part of our continued progress.

Because of their years of experience, local preservation commissions are already frequently recognized as leaders in historic preservation by citizens that subscribe to preservation values. Our opportunity is to leapfrog the narrow focus of our society’s awakening to “green” sustainability to take control of the holistic application of sustainability principles where places that matter meet the lives of the general public: their homes, places of business, and community common spaces. In the process commissions will become leaders in setting the dialog, educating the public, and advancing wide-ranging goals of society. We can offer ourselves a gift: the experience of being perceived by the broader citizenry not as fringe obstructionists but as mainstream leaders.