

PURPOSE OF THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

These guidelines are to be used when considering improvements to historic properties in Georgetown, and for new construction within the city's historic overlay districts. These Districts include the Downtown Overlay District and the Old Town Overlay District.

The historic core of Georgetown has served as the cultural center of the community for more than 150 years and retains many buildings that convey its early character. The blocks facing the courthouse square contain structures of historic significance that have been renovated and that enhance the quality of life as well as the economy for the community. Historic preservation and economic development are partners in the success of downtown. This relationship was formalized when the City established the Town Square Historic District (Area 1) in 1975, which was expanded in 2000.

In more recent years, citizens have come to recognize that the character of development in those blocks that frame the historic district also are of community interest. This area contains major commercial streets that lead through the downtown and it also incorporates some blocks of buildings that were originally residential and have been adapted to commercial uses. While many historic properties are found in this outlying area, other sites have newer buildings or are undeveloped. This broader area is defined as Area 2.

For the purposes of these design guidelines, two areas combined form the Downtown Overlay District (see map at left):

- **Area 1**—the Town Square Historic District
- **Area 2**—the remainder of the Downtown Overlay District (not including the Town Square Historic District)

Portions of these design guidelines are written to assure that those preservation efforts and property investments are protected by providing direction for future improvements in Area 1. It is also important that Area 2 serves as a frame for the historic district and that it, in its own right, is a



The Town Square Historic District.

place of active retail uses that invites pedestrian activity and contributes to the economy of downtown. Guidelines for Area 2 are also provided that encourage development, which draws upon the basic design traditions of the commercial core. They also recognize that this outer ring should not seek to imitate the historic buildings around the courthouse square.

The guidelines are for property owners planning exterior alterations, additions to or the rehabilitation of existing buildings. They also apply to the design of new buildings. The guidelines will assist property owners in understanding the historic character of the buildings and environment in which they are located, and assist owners when they are faced with decisions about repair, maintenance, rehabilitation, and new construction. The guidelines are not a rigid set of rules. They do not require that buildings be restored to an historical period or style. Rather, their purpose is to provide:

- Guidance to property owners and tenants about buildings, their distinctive characteristics, and how to maintain them;
- Various appropriate ways to address design, repair, and rehabilitation issues;
- Good maintenance practices; and,
- Appropriate ways to design new, compatible infill buildings and site layouts.

Design Goals

In order to assure that this distinction between Area 1 and Area 2 occurs in a manner consistent with traditional development patterns, a series of design goals are established for each sub-area. These design goals reflect the feelings of residents and property owners alike.



Area 1

Design in Area 1

The Town Square Historic District (Area 1) should continue to develop in a coordinated manner so that an overall sense of visual continuity is achieved. The dominant character of this area should be that of a retail-oriented, commercial environment, with an active street edge that is pedestrian friendly.

The design goals for Area 1 are:

- To rehabilitate existing historic commercial buildings;
- To continue the use of traditional building materials found in the area;
- To maintain the traditional mass, size, and form of buildings seen along the street (i.e., a building should be a rectangular mass that is one- to three-stories in height.);
- To design commercial buildings with storefront elements similar to those seen traditionally (i.e., a commercial building should include: recessed entries, display windows, kick plates, transom windows, midbelt cornices, cornices or pediments, and vertically-oriented upper-story windows.);
- To design a project that reinforces the retail-oriented function of the street and enhances its pedestrian character;

- To promote friendly, walkable streets (i.e., projects that support pedestrian activity and contribute to the quality of life are encouraged.); and
- To provide site amenities—such as benches, lights, waste receptacles, landscaping, etc.—to enhance the pedestrian clean, uncluttered experience.



Area 2

Design in Area 2

Those commercial streets in Area 2, surrounding the Town Square Historic District, should develop in a manner that is inviting to pedestrians while also accommodating automobiles. Development should include a mix of building types, including older structures and more contemporary ones. Each should reflect the design trends of its own time, while also contributing to a sense of visual continuity and strengthening the pedestrian experience. In addition, a combination of uses is encouraged, including residential, office, and retail.

The design goals for Area 2 are:

- To develop in a compatible nature with that of Area 1; whereas the entire Downtown Overlay District is seen as a distinct commercial district that also allows and encourages residential development;
- To define the sidewalk edge with elements that are amenities for pedestrians;
- To establish a sense of scale in buildings and streetscape design that can be enjoyed by pedestrians;
- To minimize the visual impacts of automobiles; and
- To strengthen the pedestrian network of sidewalks, plazas, and paths.



Civic institutions

Design for civic institutions

The design guidelines focus on principles for rehabilitation and infill of commercial and mixed-use projects that should reinforce the historic building fabric and enhance the pedestrian environment. To do so, they draw upon principles established in traditional commercial buildings. While these are the majority of property types that will occur in the area, civic facilities also should be a part of the urban mix.

These civic facilities include churches, schools, libraries, art spaces, meeting facilities, courts, and governmental offices. Traditionally, buildings for these uses have contrasted with the framework of storefronts. The historic courthouse is an example: It stands apart from the rows of commercial buildings, framed by a lawn as a foreground. Its entrances are more prominent. While it stands apart as a structure, it clearly is a part of the downtown, with its entrances oriented to the street and walkways promoting pedestrian use. This helps to convey its civic function as a gathering place. This tradition of designing civic institutions as landmarks in the urban fabric should be continued. At the same time, the basic principles of urban design outlined in this document should still apply. Among them are these key principles:

Design principles for civic facilities:

- Civic facilities should be located such that they encourage pedestrian traffic to nearby downtown businesses;
- Civic facilities should be designed to reinforce the downtown fabric of streets and sidewalks;

- Convenient pedestrian connections should link abutting civic buildings;
- The edges of a civic property should be inviting to pedestrians;
- The visual impacts of automobiles should be minimized;
- Primary entrances should face the street, not parking lots;
- A sense of human scale should be conveyed;
- Impacts on adjacent historic resources should be minimized; and
- Outdoor spaces designed for public use should be provided.



Streetscape amenities including light fixtures, tree grates, and trash receptacles enhance outdoor spaces.

Design in the Old Town Overlay District

The Old Town Overlay District should continue to reflect the traditional character, which is predominantly single-family residential.

The design goals for Old Town are:

- To preserve historic structures;
- To continue the use of traditional building forms and materials in new construction;
- To maintain the residential character of street facing facades, streets, and front yards, and the overall residential character of the area; and,
- To preserve the character of historic houses that may be adapted to new uses.

Fundamental Community Values

While the guidelines in this document focus on the design character of development in the downtown area, they are based on key values the community holds about town development in general. These are:

1. Georgetown protects its historic resources and its heritage in general.
2. The community maintains its unique character in the downtown area.
3. Downtown is safe and inviting for visitors, residents, and workers.



The design guidelines provide a basis for making decisions about the appropriate treatment of historic resources.

4. Downtown users are diverse; economically, culturally, and in age.
5. The community maintains a high quality of life and livability.
6. Downtown is relatively dense in population which supports a variety of activities and enhances the efficiency of alternative modes of transportation.
7. Downtown maintains its economic vitality. It is a place to work, conduct business, promote tourism, and be entertained.
8. Cultural activities in a vibrant downtown, including civic buildings (library, museum), art galleries, performance venues, and event and multi-purpose sites.
9. Old Town has a diverse mix of housing types and sizes.

Why Have Design Guidelines?

The design guidelines provide a basis for making decisions about the appropriate treatment of historic resources and compatible new construction. They also serve as a planning tool for property owners and design professionals who seek to make improvements that may affect historic resources.

While the design guidelines are written such that they can be used by the layman to plan improvements, property owners are strongly encouraged to enlist the assistance of qualified design and planning professionals, including architects and preservation consultants.



Many of the historic structures in the city were constructed with high quality materials and craftsmanship.

Why Preserve Historic Resources?

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.

Because Georgetown is rich in resources and offers an outstanding quality of life, it continues to attract development that challenges the community to seek creative ways of protecting its character. Preserving historic resources is a part of an overall strategy of maintaining community identity and livability. As Georgetown continues to grow the goal is to maintain its ties to the past through the preservation of its architectural heritage reflected in its historic resources.

From the 1980s, community planning efforts in Georgetown emphasized citizen concerns about the need to preserve the scale and character of the older commercial and residential neighborhoods. Preserving historic resources will help maintain the feel and way of life that makes Georgetown attractive.

For more information regarding the economic impacts of historic preservation in Texas, consult “Historic Preservation at Work for the Texas Economy.” This is a report prepared by a statewide preservation partnership consisting of: The Texas Historical Commission, Preservation Dallas, the City of Abilene, the City of Fort Worth, the City of Grapevine, the City of Laredo, the City of Lubbock, the City of Nacogdoches, the City of San Antonio and the Grapevine Heritage Foundation.

The report was based on the study, “Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation in Texas” by The Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University, Texas Perspectives and The LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin.

Preservation of the built environment provides a fundamental link to the past. Many of the buildings tell the story of Georgetown’s unique historical development and keeping these resources creates a sense of place for those who live here and provides visitors a connection with this unique heritage.

Construction quality

Many of the historic structures in the city were constructed with high quality materials and craftsmanship. Other buildings were more modest, but even so may have used lumber from mature trees that were properly seasoned and typically sawed or milled to full dimension, which often yielded stronger framing. Masonry walls were carefully crafted to fit together, resulting in buildings with considerable stability. These structures also were thoughtfully detailed and the material finishes, including fixtures, wood floors, and trim, were generally of high-quality features that owners today appreciate and value.

Adaptability

Owners frequently find that the floor plans of historic buildings easily accommodate modern lifestyles and support a diversity of populations. Many rooms are large, permitting a variety of uses while retaining the overall historic character of the structure. Even historic buildings that are smaller in scale are often on sites that can accommodate additions, if needed.

Livability and quality of life

When older buildings occur in groups, they create a street scene that is “pedestrian friendly,” and encourages walking and neighborly interaction. Mature trees and decorative architectural features also contribute to a sense of identity that is not found in newer areas. These historic buildings therefore help create desirable places to live and work.

Environmental benefits

Preserving an historic structure is also a sound environmental conservation policy because preservation and reuse saves energy and reduces the need for producing new construction materials. Four types of energy savings occur:

- First, energy is not consumed to demolish a building, dispose of the resulting debris, or use more land fill space.
- Second, energy is not used to create new building materials, transport them and assemble them on site.
- Third, the “embodied” energy that was used to create the original building and its components is preserved.
- Finally, by “reusing” older buildings, or their salvaged materials, pressure is also reduced to harvest new lumber and other materials that may have negative effects on the environment of other locales where these materials are produced.

Economic benefits

Nationwide studies prove that 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 the 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. Therefore, when money is spent on rehabilitating a building, it has a higher “multiplier effect,” keeping more money circulating in the community.

Historic preservation efforts also foster a charm and character that attracts visitors. Many small towns throughout the country have made tourism, based on their historic resources, a profitable and effective development strategy

Responsibility of ownership

Ownership of an historic property carries both the aforementioned benefits and a responsibility to respect the historic character of the resource and its setting. While this responsibility does exist, it does not automatically translate into higher construction or maintenance costs. Ultimately, residents and property owners should recognize that historic preservation is a long-range community policy that promotes economic well-being and overall viability of the city at large. In addition, they play a vital role in helping to implement such a policy through careful stewardship of the area’s historic resources.



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The Historic and Architectural Review Commission

The City of Georgetown appoints volunteer members to its Historic and Architectural Review Commission (HARC). A majority of the Commission members are chosen from: property owners within an Historic District; state licensed architects; landscape architects, professional planners, or urban designers; historians or persons with expertise in historic preservation; and developers, contractors or Realtors. The HARC and Planning and Development Department staff will use the guidelines when considering the issuance of a Certificate of Design Compliance for projects within the Overlay Districts.

How Are Guidelines Used?

Property owners, real estate agents, developers, tenants and architects should use the guidelines contained in this document when considering a project. This will help establish an appropriate direction for its design. For any project subject to review, the applicant should refer to the guidelines at the outset, to avoid planning efforts that later may prove to be inappropriate.

The Historic and Architectural Review Commission will also use the design guidelines for the review of proposed projects within the Overlay Districts to determine if the design policies presented herein have been followed. It is important to recognize that in each case a unique combination of design variables is at play and, as a result, the degree to which each relevant guideline must be met may vary. In making its determination of the appropriateness of a project, HARC's overall concerns are that:

1. The proposed work complies with the criteria in its ordinance.
2. The integrity of an individual historic structure is preserved.
3. New buildings or additions are designed to be compatible with surrounding historic properties.
4. The overall character of the Overlay Districts is protected.

The design review process is "reactive," in that it only applies to proposed actions initiated by a property owner. While it guides an approach to certain design problems by offering alternative solutions, it does not dictate a specific outcome and it does not require a property owner to instigate improvements that are not contemplated.

Ordinary repair and maintenance do not require approval. However, seemingly unimportant changes, like adding a driveway, fence, or enclosing a porch, can have a dramatic effect on the visual character of an historic resource and therefore are of concern to the City. Therefore, approval is necessary for any changes to the exterior of a building in the Downtown Overlay District and some buildings in the Old Town Overlay District.

The following is a list of changes that must be brought before HARC for design review:

Downtown Overlay District

- The construction of a new structure.
- Addition to a structure.
- The alteration or restoration of any exterior features of an historic resource.
- The removal or demolition, in whole or in part, of an historic resource.
- The construction of a new sign or changes to an existing sign.
- Applying a new exterior siding material.
- Adding a new window, door, or dormer.
- Creating a driveway or a parking area.
- Adding a satellite dish (TV) or other mechanical equipment, solar panel, etc.
- Building or enclosing a porch, carport, deck, fence, or garage
- Adding outdoor heaters, televisions, mounted electronic equipment, and similar items.

Old Town Overlay District

- The construction of a new structure; however, new single or two-family residential structures are exempt unless the structure exceeds the limitations set forth in UDC Section 4.09.030.B.
- The alteration of any exterior features of commercial structures, non-residential structures, bed and breakfasts, or residential structures used as or changing to non-residential or commercial use.
- Addition, removal, or demolition to the street facing façade of single or two-family residential structures.
- Addition to a non-single or non-two-family structure and any addition to a residential structure that exceeds the limitations set forth in UDC Section 4.09.030.B.
- The removal or demolition, in whole or in part, of an historic resource.
- The construction of a new sign and changes to existing signs.
- Applying a new exterior siding material to a non-single or two-family structure.
- Adding a new window, door, or dormer to a non-single or two-family structure.
- Creating a driveway or a parking area for a non-single or two family residential use.
- Adding a satellite dish (TV) or other mechanical equipment, solar panel, etc. to a non-single or two-family structure.
- Building or enclosing a porch, carport, deck, fence, or garage for a non-single or two-family structure.
- Adding outdoor heaters, televisions, mounted electronic equipment, and similar items to non-single and two-family uses.

Applying for a Certificate of Design Compliance (CDC)

Use the following steps for an efficient application process for a CDC:

Step 1. Consider professional design assistance.

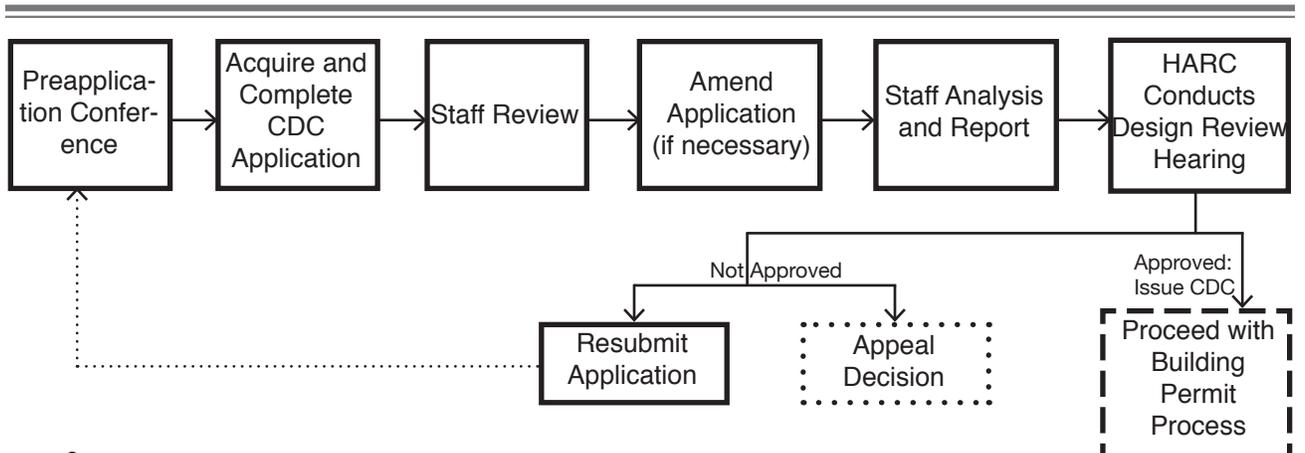
Property owners are strongly encouraged to engage licensed architects and other design and planning professionals to assist them in developing their concepts. Doing so may facilitate a smoother review process. If a project proposal is not clear, the review may be delayed for 30 days or longer while clarifications are made. HARC is available for consultation on a conceptual review prior to making a formal application.

Step 2. Check other City regulations.

The guidelines supplement other adopted City ordinances. The City of Georgetown Planning and Development Department can provide information about these regulations, which could affect the design character of a project. Examples include:

- The City of Georgetown Unified Development Code (UDC)
- The City’s Downtown Master Plan
- The Building Code (current version, as adopted by the City)
- The City’s Historic Resource Survey
- The City of Georgetown 2030 Comprehensive Plan
- Federal income tax credits for certified rehabilitation of historic buildings (if applicable)

The Design Review Process



Note: Historical markers at state and national levels carry varying protections and restrictions. If a structure or site has a state level designation of Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) or State Archeological Landmark (SAL), the owner needs to contact the Texas Historical Commission Architecture Division to coordinate any exterior alterations being considered (www.thc.state.tx.us).

Recorded Texas Historic Landmark is a legal designation and comes with a measure of protection. Owners of RTHL-designated structures must give the THC 60 days notice before any alterations are made to the exterior of the structure. Unsympathetic changes to these properties may result in removal of the designation and historical marker. An owner is encouraged to contact the THC Architecture Division for technical advice. A RTHL designation is a permanent designation that is retained with the property even upon a transfer of ownership.

State Archeological Landmarks are designated by the Texas Historical Commission and receive legal protection under the Antiquities Code of Texas. SAL designation stipulates that the property cannot be removed, altered, damaged, salvaged, or excavated without a permit from THC. The designation of SAL is conveyed with the property when sold.

Step 3. Become familiar with the design guidelines.

Review the basic organization of this document and determine which chapter(s) will apply to a project. Contact the City of Georgetown's Planning and Development Department with any questions.

Step 4. Review the site context.

Consider immediately adjacent properties and also the character of an entire block. In many cases, the character of the district is an important consideration.

Step 5. Develop a design concept using the guidelines.

The guidelines form the basis for HARC's design review decisions.

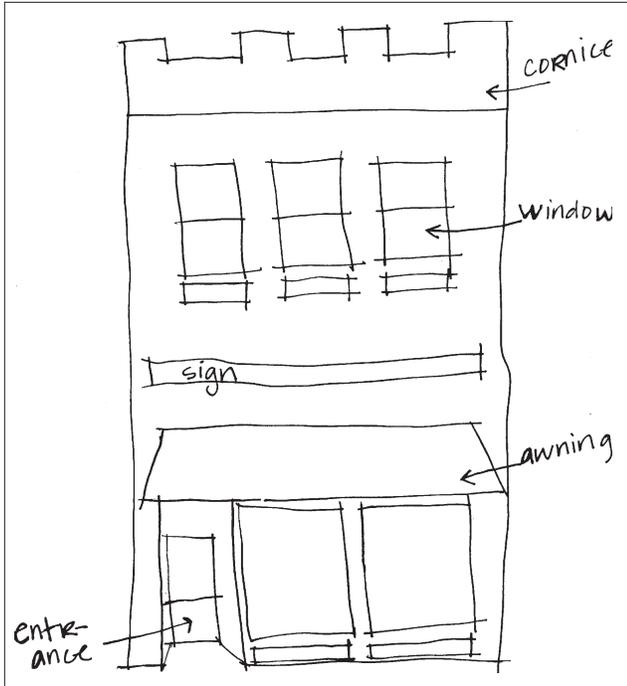
Step 6. Pre-application Conference.

Prepare a packet for preliminary review for by the Planning and Development Department prior to creating drawings for final review. This step is required prior to submitting an application for a CDC.

Step 7. Prepare and submit a complete application packet for formal review.

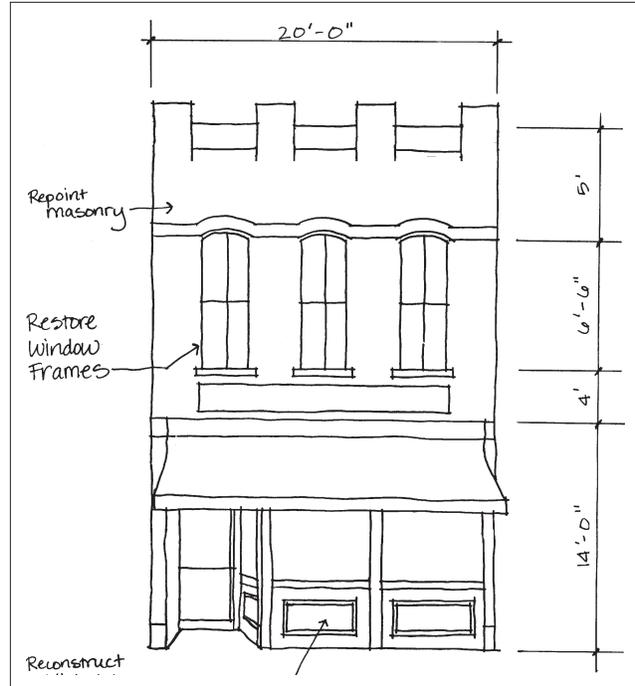
An application packet should be prepared and submitted to the Planning and Development Department for staff and HARC to review. Adequate documentation is essential to provide a complete understanding of the work proposed. The City requires that sufficient information be provided to facilitate an informed review and to document conditions of approval for effective enforcement. Minimum submittal requirements are described in the City's review procedures, which are available in the UDC Development Manual at the Planning Department. or on the web page at www.udc.georgetown.org. Applicants are required to submit the following documentation, based on application type:

- Completed application checklist
- Site plan/roof plan (drawn to scale)
- Floor plan for each floor or level (drawn to scale)
- Proposed building elevations (drawn to scale)
- Photographs of building conditions (existing and historic)
- Product literature or specifications
- Accurate material samples and color samples



Inappropriate drawing: the scale and character are not clearly conveyed, nor are there any dimensions.

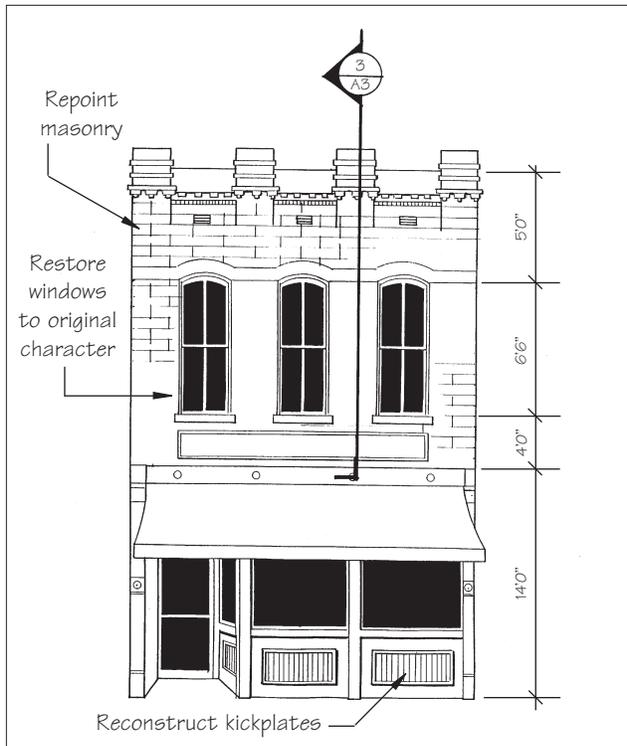
If a drawing is to be included in the submittal package, it should be drafted to scale and executed in a manner that clearly depicts the character of the proposed work. A professionally produced drawing is strongly encouraged as the sketches that follow illustrate.



Appropriate drawing: while in free-hand, this drawing does adequately convey the scale and character of the proposed work.

Step 8. Present your application before HARC.

Each project proposal will have a formal presentation by the applicant or agent familiar with the project, so attendance at the public meeting by the applicant is strongly encouraged. The presentation should focus on how the proposed project complies with the design guidelines. The public will also have an opportunity to comment after the presentation has been made and staff recommendation on the application has been presented. A critique by HARC will follow, and a decision will be made.



Appropriate drawing: mechanically drafted to scale, this drawing best conveys the character of the proposed work.

Step 9. Issuance of a building or sign permit.

After an application has been approved by HARC, the City will issue a Certificate of Design Compliance. This document is the applicant's proof that the proposed design meets the intent of the City's adopted design guidelines. At this point, the applicant can begin to acquire a building or sign permit from the City. A sign permit may be applied for prior to HARC approval, at an applicant's own risk. Remember, the building and sign permits processes are separate from receiving a Certificate of Design Compliance.

What is the Format of a Guideline?

A guideline contains the following components:

Pertinent subtopics

Each chapter is divided into subtopics. For example, in the chapter addressing “Site Design,” the subtopics include: public streetscape; building and street lighting; historic landscape features; mechanical equipment, service areas, and other equipment; and parking.

Policy statement

For each subtopic broad policy statements explaining the City’s basic approach for the treatment of the design feature being discussed may be included for reference. This statement provides the basis for the more detailed background information and design guidelines that follow. In a case in which special conditions exist that do not appear to be anticipated in the guideline, this broad policy statement serves as the basis for determining the appropriateness of the proposal.

Background information

A discussion of the issues typically associated with the specific design topic is presented next. This may include technical information as well as general preservation theories that are relevant to the topic at hand.

Design guidelines

Specific design guidelines are presented in this document in bold face font. These are numbered to indicate their relative position within a chapter and to aid in specific reference in the design review process. Supplementary requirements that clarify the primary design guideline statement and may suggest specific methods for compliance are listed as bulleted (*) statements.

Illustrations

Design guidelines are further explained through the use of photographs and illustrations. Examples given should not be considered the only appropriate options. In most instances, there are other solutions that meet the intention of the design guidelines.

If there are any questions regarding the appropriateness of a potential design solution contact the Planning and Development Department.

It is important to note that all of the elements of the design guidelines (i.e., including the introductory and informational sections, the policy statement, and the sub-points) constitute the material upon which the City will make its determination of the appropriateness of a proposed project.

Policy Statement

Background Information

Design Guideline

Additional Information

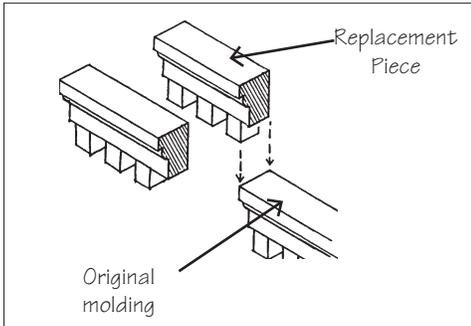
Illustration

Policy: Original architectural details that have deteriorated beyond repair should be replaced in kind.

While restoration of the original material or feature is the preferred alternative, in some situations a portion of the original building material may be beyond repair. Replacement should occur only if the existing historic material cannot be reasonably repaired. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match that being replaced in design, color, texture and other visual qualities.

4.7 Remove only that which is deteriorated and must be replaced.

- Match the original in composition, scale and finish when replacing materials or features.



Replacement Piece

Original molding

Where replacement of a detail is required, one should remove only those portions that are deteriorated beyond repair.

A sample of the format of a design guideline and its components, as used in this document.

How do the Design Guidelines relate to the City's Unified Development Code and Downtown Master Plan?

Unified Development Code

The Unified Development Code (UDC) details the development standards for all properties within Georgetown. The standards that are applied to each property are based on zoning and use and include development issues such as parking, landscaping, tree protection, land use, and building design.

Properties located in the Overlay Districts must meet the development standards of their specific zoning district as well as the Design Guidelines. The zoning district standards often address items that might not be included in the Design Guidelines and vary based on zoning designation. For example, a residentially zoned historic property located in the Downtown Overlay District must meet the residential setback and parking requirements of the UDC as well as the design standards in the Design Guidelines, while a property zoned Mixed-Use Downtown must meet different UDC parking and setback requirements as well as the Design Guidelines.

Downtown Master Plan

The Downtown Master Plan is a planning document designed to illustrate the overall vision of the downtown and enable the City, property owners, and citizens to make informed strategic decisions about future developments and enhancements. The Plan details a framework of how public infrastructure, streetscape design, way finding systems, circulation, parking, new construction, redevelopment, and preservation work together to provide a strong, viable downtown.

During site review of proposed projects in the Downtown Overlay, property owners will be asked to design public improvements, streets, sidewalks, street furniture, and other elements in conformance with the Downtown Master Plan. To help facilitate these improvements, there may be financial assistance or other incentives available.

