

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR INFILL CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS IN THE OLD TOWN OVERLAY DISTRICT

This chapter presents design guidelines that apply to non-residential and multi-family development in the Old Town Overlay District, the area that surrounds the Downtown Overlay District, and the construction of additions to and new construction of residential structures that propose to exceed the minimum standards of Unified Development Code Section 4.09.030.B, Single-Family and Two-Family Residential Development Regulations. The design guidelines are organized into a series of relevant design topics. Within each category, individual policies and design guidelines are presented, which the City will use in determining the appropriateness of the work proposed.

This area has a history of residential buildings, with some institutional type uses such as churches and a school, with later development of some small commercial uses such as medical offices and small convenience retail sales. These non-residential uses are developed at a relatively low density, with substantial areas devoted to parking for the use. Most of the office uses are located within former residential structures that have been converted to commercial use. Overall, the District has preserved its residential feel and pedestrian-orientation with sidewalks and generally lower traffic volumes on neighborhood streets. Most of the residential buildings have some historic significance and these resources should be preserved, protected and when feasible, incorporated into new developments.

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The area should remain primarily residential in character with a minimum of non-residential encroachment. Any improvements should occur in a manner that enhances the experience for residents, pedestrians, and to build a sense of visual relatedness between the residential and non-residential properties.

Any new design should relate to the traditional design characteristics of surrounding buildings while also conveying the stylistic trends of today, as well as attempting to incorporate sustainable practices. The sense of human scale must be conveyed and maintained with any new development or conversion to a non-residential use.

Summary of Key Characteristics

Key design characteristics of this area include:

- Buildings have similar setback alignment along the street frontage
- One- to two-story, traditional residential buildings, with an occasional third floor for the grander houses
- Masonry and wood are the primary construction materials
- First floor porches and multiple windows on all façade sides and floors
- Pitched roofs
- Primary building entrance that faces the street with a walkway connected to a sidewalk along the street
- Sidewalks and typically on-street parking
- Parking accessed via a driveway with parking area or garage located to the rear of the main building façade
- Traditional landscape features such as large trees, shrubs, and other plantings that are visible from the street

Design Goals

The dominant character of this area should continue to be that of a quiet, residential environment with a street edge that is oriented toward pedestrian traffic from the nearby houses.

The design goals for the Old Town Overlay District are:

- To rehabilitate existing historic residential buildings rather than construct new buildings.
- To respect the design period or style of residential properties with any additions or alternations.
- To respect the residential character of the district.
- To continue the use of traditional building materials found in the area.
- To maintain traditional residential mass, size, and form of buildings seen along the street (i.e., a building should generally be a rectangular mass that is one- to two-stories in height).

- To design commercial buildings without store-front elements.
- To minimize the visual impacts of automobiles.
- To locate parking to the rear of properties screened by buildings and located to limit visibility from residential properties.
- To maintain a residential front yard appearance related to landscaping, trees, lighting, etc.

Building Setbacks

New buildings and additions in Old Town need to respect the residential setbacks established over time. There should be a defined front yard that is not overly encumbered by parking.

Mass and Scale

A variety of building sizes exist in this area. While contemporary design approaches are encouraged, developments should continue to exhibit a variety of sizes, similar to the buildings seen traditionally in the neighborhood.

Building Form

One of the most prominent unifying elements of the Old Town District is the similarity in building form. Generally, residential buildings are simple rectangular solids, either wider than they are deep or deeper than they are wide. Typically, residential roof forms are pitched. These building form characteristics are important and should be preserved.

Building Materials

Building materials of structures should contribute to the visual continuity of the area. They should appear similar to those seen traditionally to establish a sense of visual continuity. Brick, stone, and wood siding are the dominant materials and their use in new construction is preferred.

Architectural Character

There is a variety of architectural character in the Old Town area. There are simple vernacular farm houses, Sears Roebuck kit houses, and Prairie style architecture as well as more elaborate Victorians. Additions to existing buildings should be respectful of a building's original style or design or in the case of subsequent renovations the period of significance and seek to not alter that significance. New construction should be sensitive to the character of the existing buildings in the area and any design should attempt to maintain a similar mass and scale and be in context to the area.

Properties designated by the City as a High, Medium, or Low Priority Structure shall be given a more in-depth review, so that its architectural character is not lost or damaged by any proposed addition or alteration.

Pedestrian Environment

Streets, sidewalks, and landscaping should present a residential sense of scale rather than a more urban, congested appearance. Projects that have automobile activity associated with them should be designed to provide a safe environment for the pedestrian. Automobile circulation patterns, both internal and external, should be clearly identified and should not interfere with pedestrian circulation systems.

New Construction

New construction in the historic district is encouraged if the proposed design and siting are compatible with the District's character. When siting new construction, compatibility with existing setbacks, the spacing of buildings, and the orientation of buildings should be considered. Compatibility of proposed landscaping, lighting, paving, signage, and accessory buildings is also important.

The purpose of guidelines for new construction is not to prevent change in the Old Town Overlay District, but to ensure that the District's architectural and historic character is respected. The height, the proportion, the roof shape, the materials, the texture, the scale, and the details of the proposed building must be compatible with existing historic buildings in the District. However, compatible con-

temporary designs rather than historic duplications are encouraged.

Additions

An addition to a structure can radically change its perceived scale and character if inappropriately designed. When planning an addition, the effect the addition will have on the building itself should be considered. When creating an addition, keep the size of addition small in relation to the main structure. If an addition must be larger, it should be set apart from the main structure and be connected with a smaller linking element or placed to the rear, not in prominent view from the street. A design for a new addition that would create an appearance inconsistent with the character of the building, especially an historic one, is discouraged.

One also should consider the effect the addition may have on the character of a street or neighborhood, as seen from the public right-of-way or from neighboring residential properties. For example, a side addition may change the sense of rhythm established by side yards in the block. Locating the addition to the rear could be a better solution in such a case.

The compatibility of proposed additions with historic buildings will be reviewed in terms of the mass, the scale, the materials, the roof form, and the proportion and the spacing of windows and doors. Additions that echo the style of the original structure and additions that introduce compatible contemporary design are both acceptable.

Adaptive Use

The adaptive use of a residence for a commercial or office use is a distinct possibility in Georgetown. In fact, a large majority of the Downtown Overlay District is zoned Mixed Use Downtown (MU-DT), which allows for a variety of uses. However, when such adaptations must occur, they should be designed to have the least impact on the historic character of a neighborhood—some of which is residential in character. Although for commercial use, these adapted properties should not be commercial in character. This means that the overall form of a building (with a sloping roof) and the landscaped front lawn should not be altered.

Demolition/Relocation

Demolition is forever, and once a building is gone it takes away another piece of the City's character. Demolition of a historic building or resource that has most of its original design and features should only be an action of last resort. HARC can delay or deny requests for demolition while it seeks solutions for preservation and rehabilitation.

HARC should not allow the demolition or relocation of any resource which has historical and/or architectural significance unless one or more of the following conditions exist and if, by a finding of HARC, the proposed demolition or relocation will materially improve or correct these conditions:

1. The resource constitutes a hazard to the safety of the public or the occupants, as determined by the Building Official.
2. The resource is a deterrent to a major improvement program that will be of substantial benefit to the community and the applicant proposing the work has obtained all necessary planning and zoning approvals, financing, and environmental clearances.
3. Retention of the resource will cause undue financial hardship to the owner when a governmental action, an act of God, or other events beyond the owner's control created the hardship, and all feasible alternatives to eliminate the financial hardship, which may include offering the resource for sale at its fair market value or moving the resource to a vacant site within the historic district, have been attempted and exhausted by the owner.
4. Retention of the resource is not in the interest of the majority of the community.

HARC should consider the following when evaluating proposals to demolish or relocate historic resources:

1. Does the resource proposed for demolition or relocation have architectural and/or historical significance?
2. What would be the effect on surrounding buildings of demolition or relocation of the resource?
3. What would be the effect on the Overlay District as a whole of demolition or relocation of the resource?
4. What would be the effect on safeguarding the heritage of the City of the demolition or relocation?
5. What has been the impact of any previous inappropriate alterations?
6. Is the demolition solely a matter of convenience?
7. Has the owner offered the property for sale?
8. Has the owner asked a fair price?
9. Has the property been marketed for a reasonable time?
10. Has the property been advertised broadly in a reasonable manner?
11. Has the owner sought the advice of a professional experienced in historic preservation work?
12. What would be the effect of open space in that location if the lot is to be left open?
13. What would the effect of any proposed replacement structure to the community?
14. What is the appropriateness of design of any proposed replacement structure to the Overlay District?

Policy: A new building should maintain the wall of the building at a residential setback.

Continuity of design within the Old Town Overlay District is a goal of the City, both in terms of connecting individual project, houses and town blocks. Not only should a new building in Old Town be set back from the sidewalk edge, but it should be designed to provide visual interest.

14.1 Locate a new building using a residential type setback.

- Align the new non-residential building front at a setback that is in context with the area properties.
- New residential buildings should meet the minimum front setback requirement of the UDC or use an increased setback if the block has historically developed with an extended setback.
- Generally, additions should not be added to the front facing façades.
- Where no sidewalk exists, one should be installed that aligns with nearby sidewalks.

14.2 In the front yard, acknowledge the residential character of the area with residential type landscape treatments.

- Landscaping elements should be compatible with the character of the area in size, scale, and type. Free-form, suburban type landscaping is inappropriate in this setting.
- Consider using landscaped beds, trees, low level lighting, sidewalks, etc. to reflect a more residential appearance of the property.
- Limit front yard pavement to driveways rather than parking lots, or if parking lots are deemed necessary make them heavily screened by low level shrubs, vines, and decorative walls. Consider pavers or other less impactful materials.



Locate a new building using a residential type setback.

Policy: The overall mass of a new building or addition should convey a sense of human scale.

Buildings in the Old Town Overlay District should appear similar in height and width to residential structures seen traditionally in the area.

14.3 Consider dividing a larger non-residential building into “modules” that are similar in scale to buildings seen traditionally.

- If a larger building is divided into “modules,” they should be expressed three-dimensionally throughout the entire building.

14.4 Building heights of larger projects should provide variety.

- A larger development should step down in height towards the street or smaller surrounding structures.
- A larger house should step down in height towards all setbacks, especially near smaller surrounding houses.

14.5 Large project sites should be developed with several buildings, rather than a single structure.

- This will help reduce the perceived size of the project.
- Large residential projects might utilize a detached garage to reduce the size of the main structure.

14.6 Where a large building is needed, divide the building into modules that reflect the traditional size of residential buildings.

- A typical building module should not exceed 20 feet in width. The building module should be expressed with at least one of the following:
 - A setback in wall planes of a minimum of 3 feet
 - A change in primary façade material for the extent of the building module
 - A vertical architectural element or trim piece.
- Variations in façade treatments should be continued through the structure, including its roofline and front and rear façades.

14.7 Maintain views to the courthouse.

- In certain circumstances views to the courthouse shall be taken into consideration when designing a new building or addition.
- A new building shall not be so tall as to block views of the courthouse.

Note: See UDC Section 4.12 Courthouse View Protection Overlay District.



It is appropriate to use changes in materials as an accent in building design. This can help to express individual modules or units. (Boulder, CO)



Variations in façade treatments should be continued through the structure, including its roofline and front and rear façades.

Policy: Building materials for new construction should be visually compatible with the predominate materials of this area. Materials for additions should be the same materials as the predominate materials of the existing building.

New materials should relate to the scale, durability, color, and texture of the predominate materials of old town and in the case of building additions, to the existing structure. Additions to existing historic buildings should use the same materials as the primary building.

14.8 Masonry materials that convey a sense of scale are preferred for new non-residential buildings.

- Brick and stone are preferred for new construction.
- New materials should appear similar in character to those used traditionally. For example, wooden siding, brick, and stone should be detailed to provide a human scale.
- New materials should have a demonstrated durability in the Central Texas climate. For example, some façade materials used in new construction are more susceptible to weather and simply do not last as long as stone or brick.

14.9 Historic building materials of existing buildings should be maintained and respected when additions are proposed.

- See Chapter 5 for design guidelines related to maintaining and protecting historic building materials.

14.10 Non-traditional siding materials are discouraged.

- Typically, artificial stone and brick veneer are not appropriate.
- Asphalt shingles are not appropriate.
- Aluminum and vinyl are not appropriate.



Building materials that appear similar in scale, color, texture and finish to those seen historically in the context are preferred. (Arvada, CO)

Policy: Design alterations and additions to be compatible with the historic character of the property. Minimize the visual impacts of an addition.

14.11 Avoid alterations that would damage historic features.

- Avoid alterations that would hinder the ability to interpret the design character of the original building or period of significance.
- Alterations that seek to imply an earlier period than that of the building are inappropriate.

14.12 An addition shall be compatible in scale, materials, and character with the main building.

- An addition shall relate to the building in mass, scale, and form. It should be designed to remain subordinate to the main structure.
- An addition to the front of a building is usually inappropriate.



An addition shall be compatible in scale, materials, character, and character with the main building.

Policy: Design an addition to a residential structure to be compatible with the primary building.

14.13 Design a new addition such that the original character can be clearly seen.

- In this way, a viewer can understand the history of changes that have occurred to the building.
- An addition should be distinguishable from the original building, even in subtle ways, such that the character of the original can be interpreted.
- Creating a jog in the foundation between the original and new structures may help to define an addition.
- Even applying new trim board at the connection point between the addition and the original structure can help define the addition.
- See also *Preservation Briefs #14: New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings*, published by the National Park Service.

14.14 Place an addition at the rear of a building or set it back from the front to minimize the visual impacts.

- This will allow the original proportions and character to remain prominent.
- Locating an addition at the front of a structure is usually inappropriate.

14.15 Do not obscure, damage, destroy, or remove original architectural details and materials of the primary structure.

- When preserving original details and materials, follow the guidelines presented in this document.

14.16 An addition shall be compatible in scale, materials, character, and architectural style with the main building.

- An addition shall relate to the historic building in mass, scale, and form. It should be designed to remain subordinate to the main structure.
- While a smaller addition is visually preferable, if a residential addition would be significantly larger than the original building, one option is to separate it from the primary building, when feasible, and then link it with a smaller connecting structure.
- An addition should be simple in design to prevent it from competing with the primary façade.
- Consider adding dormers to create second story spaces before changing the scale of the building by adding a full second floor.

14.17 An addition shall be set back from any primary, character-defining façade.

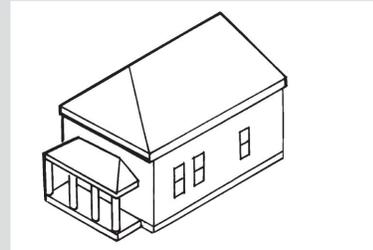
- An addition should be to the rear of the building, when feasible.

14.18 The roof of a new addition shall be in character with that of the primary building.

- Typically, gable, hip, and shed roofs are appropriate for residential additions. Flat roofs may be more appropriate for commercial buildings.
- Repeat existing roof slopes and materials.
- If the roof of the primary building is symmetrically proportioned, the roof of the addition should be similar.

LOCATING AN ADDITION ON A RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY

Original Building



Appropriate Addition to the Rear



Addition is set back behind the original and accessed by a connector.

Policy: Additions should acknowledge and respect and where appropriate include architectural features of existing building.

Architectural details play several roles in defining the character of an historic structure and area. A building's features are often associated with particular styles, and therefore their preservation is important.

14.19 The architectural features of existing buildings should be protected when additions are proposed.

- See Chapter 4 for design guidelines related to protecting architectural features.

14.20 An addition shall not damage or obscure architecturally important features.

- For example, loss or alteration of a porch should be avoided.
- Addition of a porch may be inappropriate.

14.21 An addition may be made to the roof of a building if it does the following:

- An addition should be set back from the primary, character-defining façade, to preserve the perception of the historic scale of the building.
- Its design should be modest in character, so it will not attract attention from the historic façade.
- The addition should be distinguishable as new, albeit in a subtle way.



This two-story rear and rooftop addition is compatible with, yet remains subordinate to, the original one-story structure.

Policy: Additions should maintain and where appropriate include compatible building elements.

Individual building elements give structures their sense of style and character and taken with other structures set the character for a particular area.

14.22 Individual building elements of existing buildings should be preserved, protected, and replicated where appropriate when additions are proposed.

- See Chapter 6 for design guidelines related to preserving individual building elements.

Policy: When adapting a residence to a commercial use, respect the residential character of the building and neighborhood.

Converting a building to a new use that is different from that which its design reflects is considered to be “adaptive use”. When residential use ceases to be viable, the first preference is to choose new uses that minimize any negative changes in building features. Often there are new uses that are inherently less disruptive to residential structures such as a bed and breakfast, professional offices, small specialty restaurants, and personal service businesses.

14.23 Seek uses that are compatible with the historic character of the building and neighborhood.

- The primary goal should be preserving the original residential character, appearance, and scale of the structure.
- Building uses that are closely related to the original use are preferred. Avoid radical alterations to either the interior or exterior of the structure.
- Avoid altering porches and original windows and doors.



When adapting a residence to a commercial use, respect the residential character of the building and neighborhood.



This house was moved to a new, compatible location.

14.24 When use changes demand that structures be altered such that little or no use can be made of the original structure, consider moving the structure to a compatible location.

- This move can be made to another location on the same site or to a vacant site in the neighborhood or another neighborhood.
- Historic structures should be relocated within Georgetown whenever possible.

14.25 Only as a last resort should an historic structure be considered for demolition.

- Where a structure must be razed, then a record shall be made of it prior to demolition. This shall include photographs and architectural drawings.
- A structure should never be demolished as a matter of convenience.
- See UDC Section 3.13 for provisions related to proposed demolition and/or relocation of historic structures.