

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR ADAPTIVE RE-USE, ADDITIONS, & ALTERATIONS

This chapter presents design guidelines for additions and alterations to historic buildings. They apply to individually listed historic resources, as well as historic properties located in the Downtown and Old Town Overlay Districts. 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.

Design of Alterations

Alterations may be considered for historic buildings; however, these alterations should occur in a manner that will not diminish the historic integrity of the property and they should be reversible for future property owners.

Additions

Many buildings have experienced additions over time, as need for additional space occurred, particularly with a change in use. An historic addition typically was subordinate in scale and character to the main building. The height of the addition was usually positioned below that of the main structure and it was often located to the side or rear, such that the primary facade remained dominant. An addition was often constructed of materials that were similar to those in use historically. In some cases, owners simply added on to an existing roof, creating more usable space without increasing the footprint of the structure. This tradition of adding on to buildings is anticipated to continue. It is important, however, that new additions be designed in such a manner that they maintain the character of the primary structure.

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The compatibility of proposed additions with historic buildings will be reviewed in terms of the mass, the scale, the materials, the color, the roof form, and the proportion and spacing of windows and doors. Additions that echo the style of the original structure and additions that introduce compatible contemporary design could be 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 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. More detailed information about the treatment of an adaptive use project can be found in the Design Guidelines, on page 79.

Demolition/Relocation

Demolition is forever, and once a building is gone it takes away another piece of the city's character. Demolition of an historic building or resource 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 that 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. Has the owner offered the property for sale?
7. Has the owner asked a fair price?
8. Has the property been marketed for a reasonable time?
9. Has the property been advertised broadly in a reasonable manner?
10. Has the owner sought the advice of a professional experienced in historic preservation work?
11. What would be the effect of open space in that location if the lot is to be left open?
12. What will be done with the empty lot?
13. What would the effect of any proposed replacement structure be to the community?
14. What is the appropriateness of design of any proposed replacement structure to the Overlay District?

Policy: Design an alteration to be compatible with the historic character of the property.

7.1 Avoid alterations that would damage historic features.

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

7.2 Properties designated by the City as a High or Medium Priority Historic Structure should be preserved and their historic character retained.

- Due to special circumstances, a structure's historic priority may change over time (because a reduced number of similar style structures in stable condition still exist within the district or city, or if unknown historic information becomes available that adds significance).



This row of buildings had lost some details over time and a monochromatic color scheme obscures the original design character. Overhead garage doors that had replaced original storefronts were later alterations without historic significance. (Compare with the “after” photograph below.)



The windows in this structure were boarded and architectural details needed repair. (Compare with the photo below.)



After rehabilitation, the row of buildings shown in the photograph above conveys a stronger sense of its historic character. Note that some old uses were retained, while other new uses were also introduced. Some noncontributing alterations were removed and storefronts reconstructed. One was retained, but was painted to minimize impacts. (Ft. Collins, CO)



Storefront windows were reopened and upper-story windows were repaired. (Ft. Collins, CO)

Design of Alterations, continued...



Photo (circa 1900) - A modest building can also be renovated to be compatible with the context. In this photograph the original millinery shop front had simple moldings at the top. (Compare with the photos to the right and below.)



Photo (circa 1980) - Years later, all original detail had been stripped from the building. (Compare with the photos below.)



Photo (circa 1982) - An interim renovation recalls the original molded cornice and includes a simple kickplate.

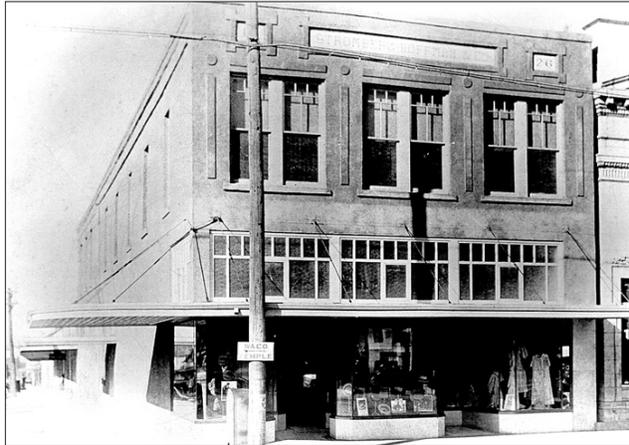


In 2009, a more extensive rehabilitation includes a brick molding and a more detailed kickplate.

Rehabilitation Case Study

1885 Condition

In this case study, the application of the preservation guidelines is demonstrated for a major rehabilitation project. The Stromberg and Hoffman Company Building, at 718 Austin Avenue, was constructed in the late nineteenth century (circa 1885). Early photographs show a handsome Victorian-era facade, with decorative cornice.



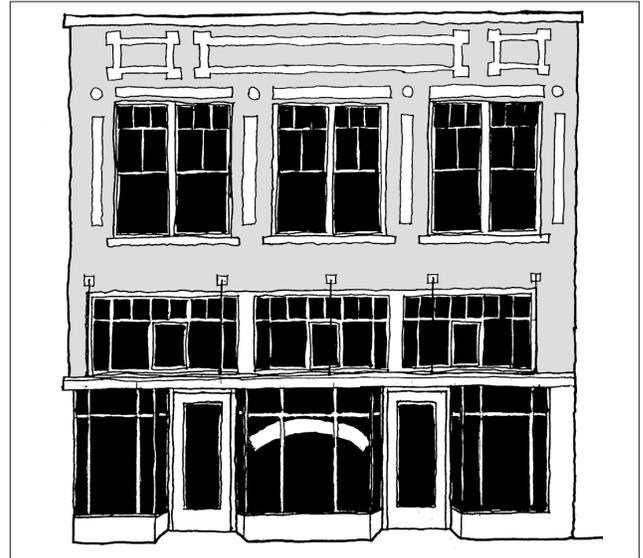
1920s (20th Century) Condition

In the early twentieth century, the front was substantially altered. Decorative masonry was applied in simple rectilinear patterns, evocative of some craftsman styles popular at the time. In keeping with that approach, windows were installed with divided lights in the upper portions and a multi-paned transom was constructed above the display windows. The new display windows included a stone base and metal frames. A center island display element was the focal point of the ground level.



2001 Existing Condition

In the later part of the 20th century, however, the facade was covered, obscuring the upper floor details. The key elements of the street level display windows remained, although the center island was removed.



21st Century Proposal

The early 20th century design serves as the basis for the rehabilitation. Although an earlier design is documented in photographs, no significant features from that period survive. The second-generation facade, the early twentieth-century design, has taken on historic significance of its own, and substantial portions survive. In the rehabilitation design, the covering material is removed, exposing original details.



2009 Restoration in Progress

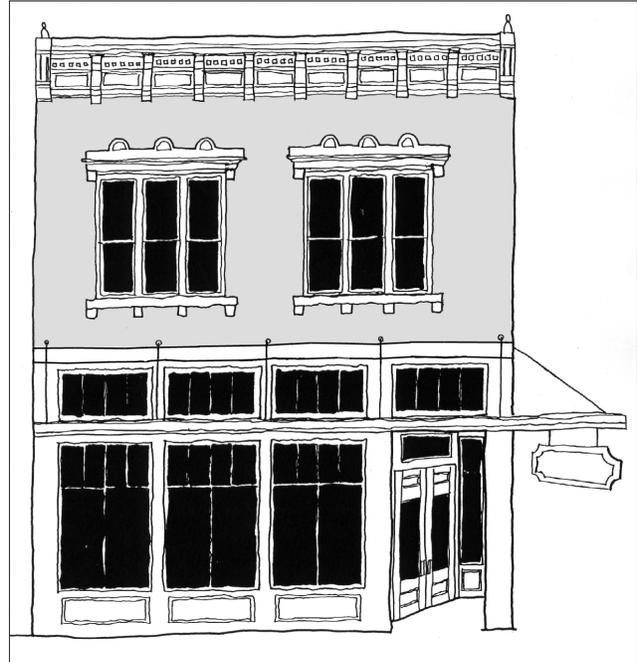
In 2009, rehabilitation in progress illustrates the principle of removing non-contributing coverings. Original details are revealed.

Rehabilitation Case Study



Before:

This example, of the McDougal-Booty Building at 120 West 8th Street (photographed in 2001), illustrates the application of the rehabilitation principles for historic buildings. In this case, significant details of the upper floor are intact; these include a decorative cornice and trim around upper story windows. The stone above the storefront also survives. In contrast, the lower floor has experienced alterations: Display windows are enclosed and the original kickplates are missing.



After:

In the sketch of the proposed rehabilitation, brick veneer at the ground level is removed and a new storefront, using metal and wood frame elements, is constructed to be similar in character to that seen historically. The display windows are reopened, as well as the transoms above them. Kickplates with decorative trim are reconstructed and a horizontal canopy shades the sidewalk.

The stone above is cleaned, using a gentle wash technique and mortar is repointed, using a mix that matches the original in composition and appearance. The corner entry is preserved as well.

Policy: Minimize the visual impacts of an addition to a commercial building.

Two distinct types of additions are considered to be appropriate by HARC: ground-level or roof-top.

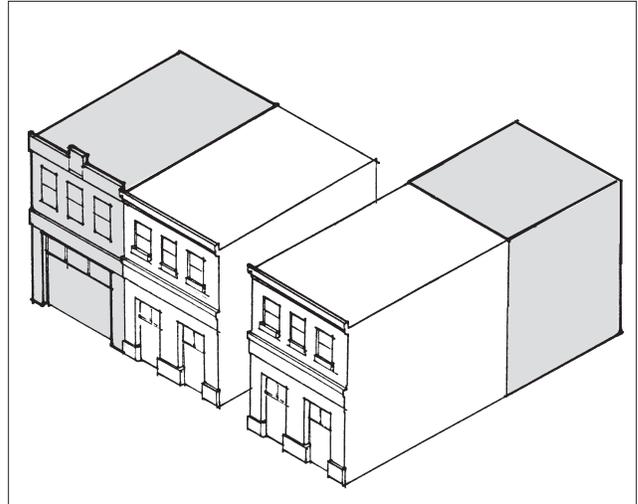
First, a ground-level addition that involves expanding the footprint of a structure may be considered. Such an addition should be to the rear or side of a building. This will have the least impact on the character of a building, but there may only be limited opportunities to do this.

Second, an addition to the roof may be designed that is simple in character and set back substantially from the front of a building. The materials, window sizes and alignment of trim elements on the addition should be compatible to those of the existing structure, but also visually subordinate in character so as to avoid calling attention alteration to the addition.

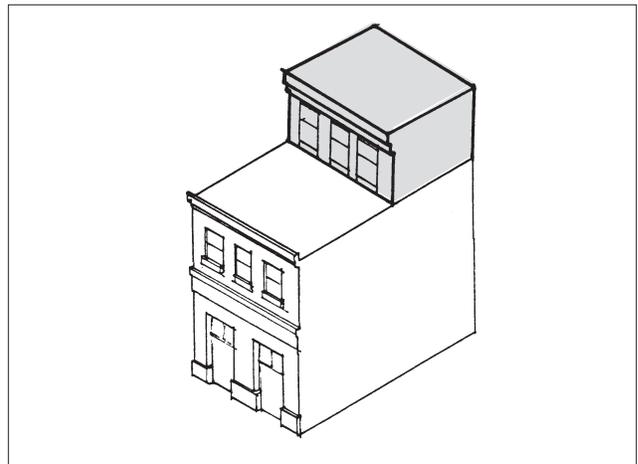
Another option, which will only be considered on a case-by-case basis, is to design an addition to the front wall plane of the existing building. This option may only be considered on a “newer” or more contemporary building that was originally constructed set back from the front property line or sidewalk edge.

7.3 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 inappropriate. However, where a building in the Downtown Overlay is set back from the front property line and the structure does not have historic significance, the first consideration for the placement of an addition should be to fill the gap between the existing building and sidewalk. This will maintain the consistent “street wall” desired in the downtown.
- For example, mounting a sign panel in a manner that causes decorative moldings to be chipped or removed would be inappropriate.



New ground-level additions to the side and rear.



New roof-top addition set back from the front facade.



Where a building is set back from the front property line, the first consideration for the placement of an addition should be to fill the gap between the existing building and sidewalk.



This historic, three-story building has a two-story addition that is set back from the front.

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

- For example, loss or alteration of a cornice line should be avoided.

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

- An addition should be set back from the primary, character-defining facade, 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 facade.
- The addition should be distinguishable as new, albeit in a subtle way.
- The roofs of additions should not interfere with the original roof form by changing its basic shape and should have a roof form compatible with the original building.



In the angle view above, two newer floors are visible. Note how in this building the addition cannot be seen when looking at the building straight on in the top photo. (Denver, CO)

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

An addition to a structure can radically change its perceived scale and character if inappropriately designed. When planning an addition, consider the effect the addition will have on the building itself. When creating an addition, keep the size of the addition small, in relation to the main structure. If an addition must be larger, it should be set apart from the main structure and connected with a smaller linking element. A design for a new addition that would create an appearance inconsistent with the character of the building, especially an historic one, is discouraged.

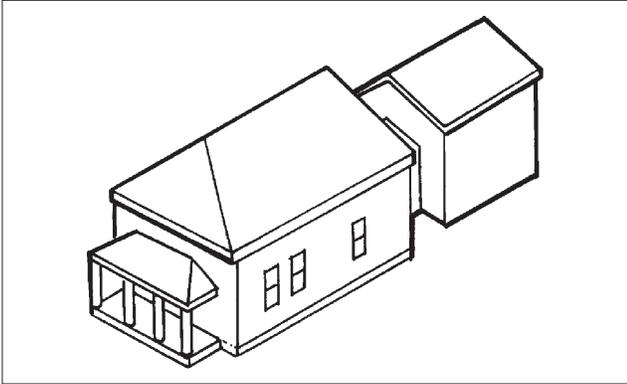
One also should consider the effect the addition may have on the character of a street or neighborhood, as seen from the public right-of-way. For example, a side addition may change the sense of rhythm established by side yards in the block. Locating the addition to the rear could be a better solution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

7.6 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 made 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.
- The amount of foundation exposed on the addition should match that of the original building, in appearance, detail, and material.
- Even applying a 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.



Design a new addition such that the original character can be clearly seen. This addition to the front of the historic structure is inappropriate.



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



An addition should be simple in design to prevent it from competing with the primary facade. Although this is a new building, it demonstrates the effective use of a connector



An addition shall be set back from any primary, character-defining facade. An addition should be to the rear of the building, when feasible. (Durango, CO)

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

- Setting an addition back from any primary, character-defining façade will allow the original proportions and character to remain prominent.
- Locating an addition at the front of a structure is inappropriate, and an addition should be to the rear of the building, when feasible.

7.8 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 earlier in this chapter.

7.9 An addition shall be compatible in scale, materials, and character 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 facade.
- Consider adding dormers to create second story spaces before changing the scale of the building by adding a full second floor.

7.10 The roof form 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 are appropriate for commercial buildings in the downtown area.
- Repeat existing roof slopes, overhangs, and materials.
- If the roof of the primary building is symmetrically proportioned, the roof of the addition should be similar.
- The roofs of additions should not interfere with the original roof form by changing its basic shape or view of the original roof, and should have a roof form compatible with the original building.

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

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 the negative changes in building features. Often there are new uses that are inherently less disruptive to residential structures such as bed and breakfasts, professional offices, small specialty restaurants, and personal service businesses.



7.11 Seek uses that are compatible with the historic character of the building.

- The primary goal should be to preserve 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.

Seek uses that are compatible with the historic character of the building. The openness of a front yard should be preserved for example. A new use that requires a large number of parking spaces is not a compatible use.



When adapting a residence to a commercial use, respect the residential character of the building by preserving the overall form of the building, the front porch and front yard character.

7.12 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 another neighborhood.

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

- Demolition of any original feature or part of an historic building should be avoided.
- Demolition of a building that contributes to the historic or architectural significance of a locally or nationally designated district should not occur, unless:
 - + Public safety and welfare requires the removal of the building or structure;
 - + The building has lost its architectural and historical value/significance and its removal will improve the viability of the neighborhood;
 - + A building does not contribute to the historical or architectural character and importance of the district and its removal will improve the appearance of the neighborhood; or
 - + The denial of the demolition will result in a substantial hardship on the applicant as determined by the process outlined in the City's Unified Development Code.

- Where a structure must be razed, then a record shall be made of it prior to any deconstruction or demolition. The owner shall be responsible for providing the record, which shall include, but is not limited to, photographs, architectural drawings, and deed records, if available. This record shall be deposited with the Planning and Development Department.
- A structure should never be demolished as a matter of convenience.
- If a demolition is approved, work with HARC to identify salvageable materials and potential buyers or recipients of salvaged materials. The removal of all salvageable building materials before demolition is encouraged, through a proper demolition by deconstruction method as determined by HARC at the public hearing, and may be required depending on the significance of the building.
- Preserve historic garages and other secondary buildings where feasible.
- Demolition of secondary buildings (garages, etc.) 50 years or older may be appropriate if substantially deteriorated (requiring 50% or more replacement of exterior siding, roof rafters, surface materials, and structure members).
- Relocating buildings within the Overlay Districts may be appropriate if compatible with the district's architectural character through style, period, height, scale, materials, setting, and placement on the lot.
- Relocation of a building out of the Overlay Districts should be avoided unless demolition is the only alternative.
- See also Unified Development Code Section 3.13 for demolition or relocation criteria, standards, and procedures.