

PREFACE

PURPOSE AND INTENT

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. To date, these Districts include the Downtown Overlay District, the Old Town Overlay District, and the Johnson House Local Historic Landmark.

The historic core of Georgetown has served as the cultural center of the community for more than 170 years and retains many buildings that convey its early character. The blocks facing the Courthouse Square (Area 1) contain structures of historic significance that enhance the quality of life as well as the economy of 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 in 1975, which was expanded in 2000.

Georgetown citizens have come to recognize that the character of commercial and civic development in the blocks that frame the Town Square District is also of community interest. This area contains major commercial streets that pass through the Downtown and it also incorporates blocks of buildings that were originally residential and have been adapted to commercial uses and structures. 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 of the Downtown Overlay District.

To the south and east of the Downtown Overlay District, the Old Town Overlay District contains decades of residential development. Houses in Old Town are diverse in age, style, and size but share general characteristics typical of single-family residential construction in the public realm, orientation, general massing, and site development.

While the Guidelines in this document focus on the design character of development in the Downtown and Old Town and Overlay Districts, they are based on key values the community holds about town development.

These are:

- 1 Georgetown protects its historic resources and its heritage.

- 2 The community maintains its unique character in the Downtown area.

- 3 Downtown is safe and inviting for visitors, residents, and workers.

- 4 Downtown users are diverse economically, culturally, and demographically.

- 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 include 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.

- 10 Historic Landmarks are irreplaceable.

Why Have Design Guidelines?



Historic photo from Area 1

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.



Historic photo from Area 1

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



Historic photo from Area 1



Historic photo from Area 1



Organization and Use of Guidelines

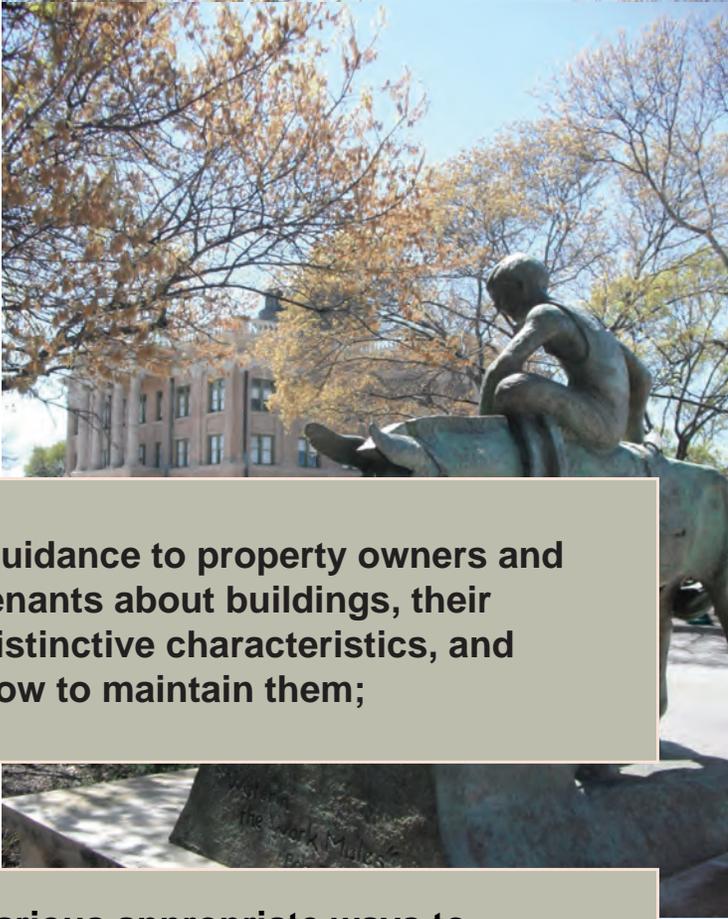
For the purposes of these Design Guidelines, two areas are combined to form the Downtown Overlay District:

Area 1 the Town Square
Historic District

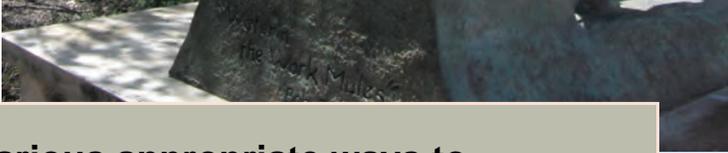
Area 2 the remainder of the
Downtown Overlay District
(not including the Town Square
Historic District)

These Design Guidelines are written to ensure that preservation efforts and property investments are protected by providing direction for future improvements. It is important that Area 2 of the Downtown Overlay District serves as a frame for the Town Square Historic District (Area 1) and that it, in its own right, is a place of active commercial uses that invite pedestrian activity and contribute to the economy of Downtown. Guidelines for Area 2 encourage development that draws upon the basic design traditions of the commercial core. They also recognize that changes in this outer ring should not seek to imitate the historic buildings around the Courthouse Square.

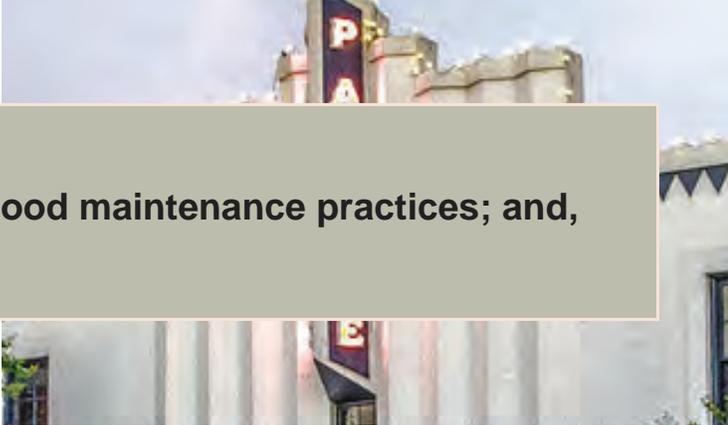
The Guidelines are for property owners planning exterior alterations, additions to, or the rehabilitation of existing buildings. They also apply to the design of new buildings, signs, and the demolition of historic structures. The Guidelines assist property owners in understanding the historic character 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 a specific historical period or style. Rather, their purpose is to provide:



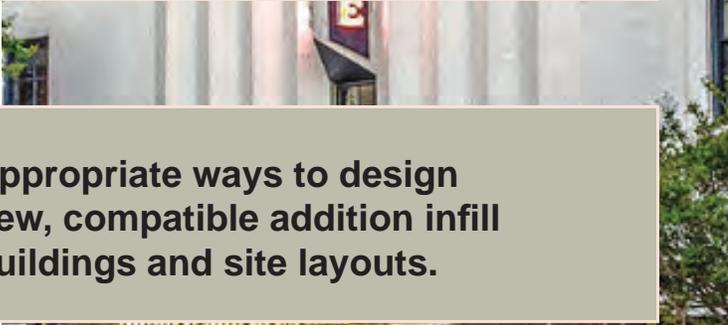
Guidance to property owners and tenants about buildings, their distinctive characteristics, and how to maintain them;



Various appropriate ways to address design, repair, and rehabilitation issues;



Good maintenance practices; and,



Appropriate ways to design new, compatible addition infill buildings and site layouts.

*Waterin' the Work Mules Statue in the Courthouse Square,
The Georgetown Palace Theater*



PH Dimmitt & Co. Building

Approval Process in Georgetown

Construction, additions, modifications and alterations to the City's historic resources as well as new infill construction and demolitions, removals, and relocations require the review and approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) to ensure the proposed improvements are in keeping with the community's historic character and value. To assist in this review and determination, the City of Georgetown established the Historic and Architectural Review Commission (HARC).

The Historic and Architectural Review Commission (HARC)

The commission consists of volunteer members that are appointed by the City Council. The Commission members may include: property owners, architects, landscape architects, planners, urban designers, historians, developers, contractors or Realtors with expertise in historic preservation.

Historical Preservation Officer (HPO)

City staff also has the authority to administratively approve certain Certificates of Appropriateness (COA). The HPO is trained in historic preservation and can provide guidance to applicants to assist them through the process.

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.

HARC and the HPO use the Guidelines when considering the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness for projects within the Historic Overlay Districts. 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.

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 design review. However, seemingly unimportant changes, like adding a fence or enclosing a porch, can have a dramatic effect on the visual character of an historic resource and are of concern to the City. Approval is necessary for any changes to the exterior of a building and construction of new buildings in the Downtown Overlay District and Old Town Overlay District.

In making its determination of the appropriateness of a project, HARC’s overall concerns are that:

- 1. The proposed work complies with the applicable approval criteria.**
- 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 Historic Overlay Districts is protected.**



Aerial of Georgetown circa 1886.

The Design Review Process

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

- Construction of a new structure and infill development.
- Adding to a structure.
- Altering or restoring of any exterior features of an historic resource.
- Removing or demolishing, in whole or in part, of an historic resource.
- Constructing of a new sign or changing an existing sign.
- Applying a new exterior siding material.
- Adding a new window, door, or dormer.
- 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.

See the City of Georgetown Unified Development Code for a complete list.

Applying for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)

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

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. The Planning Department staff and/or the Historic Preservation Officer are available for consultation prior to submitting a project application.

Step 2. Check other City regulations.

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

- The Unified Development Code (UDC)
- The 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

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 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 surrounding character is an important consideration.

Step 5. Develop a design concept using the Guidelines.

The Guidelines form the basis for design review decisions.

Step 6. Pre-application Meeting.

Prepare a packet for preliminary review for by the Planning and Development Department staff prior to creating documents for application review. This step is recommended prior to submitting an application for a COA.

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

An application should be prepared and submitted to the Planning Department staff. 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. 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 at www.georgetown.org. Applicants are required to submit the following documentation, depending on project type:

- Property owner consent form and Letter of Intent
- Site plan/roof plan (drawn to scale)
- A property survey
- 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 for proposed materials
- Accurate material samples and/or color samples
- Renderings are helpful but not required

If a drawing is to be included in the application submittal, 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 encouraged.

Step 8. Present your application before HARC or HPO.

Some projects can be approved by the HPO. Projects reviewed by HARC will have a public meeting and so attendance and/or presentation by the applicant is strongly encouraged. The presentation should focus on how the proposed project complies with the Design Guidelines, as well as the other approval criteria. The public will have an opportunity to comment after the presentation has been made and staff recommendation on the application has been presented. Questions and comments by HARC will follow, and a decision will be made.

Step 9. Issuance of a building or sign permit.

After an application has been approved, the City will issue a Certificate of Appropriateness. This document is the applicant's proof that the proposed design has been determined to meet the intent of the City's adopted Design Guidelines. At this point, the applicant can submit an application for 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. The building and sign permit applications are separate from receiving a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Coordination with Other Regulations

The City of Georgetown Unified Development Code (UDC)

- 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 land use and subdivision requirements and include development issues such as parking, landscaping, tree protection, permitted uses, and building design requirements.
- Properties located in the Historic 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.

The City's 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 plan review of proposed projects in the Downtown Overlay District, applicants may be asked to design public improvements and other elements in conformance with the Downtown Master Plan.

Recorded Texas Historic Landmark

- Buildings that are RTHLs are subject to review by the Texas Historical Commission (THC). Consultation and applications for exterior work must be submitted to THC prior to beginning construction.

State Antiquities Landmarks

- Buildings that are SALs are subject to review by the Texas Historical Commission (THC). Consultation and applications for exterior work must be submitted to THC prior to beginning construction

Building Code (current version, as adopted by the City)

The City’s Current Historic Resource Survey

The City of Georgetown 2030 Comprehensive Plan

Federal income tax credits for certified rehabilitation of historic buildings (if applicable)



Statue of Themis atop the dome of the Courthouse.