

Bay State Road/Back Bay West Architectural Conservation District SPECIFIC STANDARDS

Part I: Bay State Road and side streets¹

WINDOWS AND DOORS

Window and Door Openings

1. No new openings in façades will be allowed.
2. Existing window and door openings shall not be framed down.
3. Window opening may be enlarged to be used as doors; however, the design shall be subject to review and approval by the Commission.

Window Sash

1. The number and arrangement of panes will not be changed unless documentation can be supplied to show that the proposed change would be more accurate historically.
2. Stained or leaded glass windows will be retained.
3. Non wooden sash (consistent with the original design of the house) should have factory applied color closely matching the selected trim color.

Doors

1. All exterior changes to doors and doorways will be subject to review and approval.
2. Original doors and hardware will be retained whenever possible. If replacement is necessary, the new doors will match the original as closely as possible. Aluminum and glass doors will not be acceptable.

Storm Doors and Windows

1. Wherever possible, modern aluminum storm doors will be confined to the backs of buildings, and will have factory applied color closely matching the trim color.
2. Solid wooden storm doors will be permitted.
3. Storm windows should be as unobtrusive as possible. They may be wooden, or aluminum with a factory applied finish in a color closely matching the trim color.
4. In some cases, storm window protection may be applied on the inside, but the method used should be carefully reviewed to be sure that it does not accelerate deterioration of the sash.

Ornamentation

1. Decorative molding, stonework, glass lights surrounding a window or door will be retained wherever possible. If such material is missing or so deteriorated as to require replacement, it will be replaced with an element which duplicates the mass and general form of the original.
2. Ornamentation belonging to a different period from the date of the building will not be added

¹ Including Granby St., Sherborn St., Deerfield St., Raleigh St., to the extent that they lie within the district

Shutters and Blinds

1. Shutters (solid panels) or blinds (louvered panels) should only be added if they are appropriate to the building.
2. New shutters or blinds will be one half the width of the window opening and will be or appear to be, operable.

Hoods or Canopies

1. Any structural projection over a window or door should be retained. If it is unfeasible to retain a hood because of extensive deterioration, designs for its removal or replacement will be subject to review and approval by the Commission.
2. Canopies will be simple in form and of a color which is compatible with the residential character of the neighborhood.

Air Conditioners

1. While portable air conditioners are not subject to review by the Commission, the latter urges that air conditioners will, whenever possible, be installed on the rear of the building, and that air conditioners installed on the front will not protrude beyond the main façade plane.
2. Air conditioners will not be installed so as to require new openings in the front façade of the building.

Light Fixtures

Light fixtures should either be appropriate to the period and style of the building or modern in design. In either case, they should be residential in character and not overly large or glaring.

Window Boxes

Window boxes should be no wider than the window where they are placed and should be a subdued color in harmony with the other colors used on the building.

Mailboxes

Mailboxes will not be inserted into masonry or wooden elements of the façade of the building.

House Numbers

Plastic, vinyl or similar materials will not be used.

STOOPS AND FRONT STAIRS

General

Stoops on the main façade of the building will be retained.

Railings

Wherever possible, original railings will be retained. New railings will be of iron, of a simple rolled stock design.

Ramps

Any ramps required to provide access for the handicapped shall be located in the rear if possible and will be as unobtrusive as possible.

Materials

Whenever possible, original materials will be retained and repaired.

If necessary to replace steps, they should be rebuilt of masonry. Concrete formed to be similar in shape as original stonework may be preferable to brick. This is an important element and will be carefully reviewed by the Commission.

ROOFS

Shape

The original form and slope, if any, of the roof will be retained.

1. Whenever possible, existing dormers seen from a public way should be retained.
2. New dormers will not be wider than two windows and will be placed in locations consistent with the original.
3. New dormers should approximate the shape of the originals. They should be unobtrusive, preferably dark in color.

Penthouses and Other Vertical Additions to Roofs

1. Efforts should be made to minimize the visual effect of new penthouses. Thus, they should be set back 10 feet from the front façade of the building. Materials, other than glass, should be dark in color.
2. Similarly, fences added to the roofs of buildings should be set back from the plane of the front façade so as to minimize their effect. Simple dark colored railings are to be preferred to stockade or similar fence materials when they can be seen from the front of the building.

OTHER FAÇADE ELEMENTS

Cornices

1. The entire cornice including original detail will be retained and repaired. Needed replacements of the whole or pieces will match the original in size, shape, material and type of detail.
2. Cornices with visual continuity with adjacent buildings should be treated to reinforce that continuity. Replacements must strongly compliment the general appearance if duplication is impossible.

Gutters

1. The size and location of the gutter is an integral part of the cornice. Original gutters should be retained and repaired. Replacements should match original design in shape and method of attachment.
2. Gutters should be painted to match the cornice or trim or left natural in the case of copper or similar material.

Downspouts

1. Original downspouts should be retained and repaired. Replacements will substantially match originals in shape, location and installation technique.
2. Additional downspouts will be made to match and located to blend into the façade as much as possible. Existing locations should serve as a guide for locations new downspouts.
3. Downspouts should be painted to blend in with the façade material, match the cornice and trim color or be left natural.

Balconies and Fire Escapes

1. Existing balconies may be retained and repaired.
2. No new balconies will be permitted on the façades of buildings unless required for safety and an alternative egress route is clearly not possible.
3. Fire balconies will not be connected vertically unless the abutter refuses to allow horizontal connection.
4. If existing fire balconies are removed, the façade material should be carefully repaired to match existing.
5. Decorative (including accessible) balconies should be retained and repaired.
6. Replacement balconies should be made of simple wrought iron, in a contemporary design proportioned and located to have minimal effect on the façade. Old or re-cast balconies that clearly reflect the style of the building may be installed.
7. Balconies and other metal trim elements should be painted flat black or another very dark material. If the intent of cast iron elements was to resemble stone, it should be painted to match or blend with other façade materials.

EXTERIOR PAINT

General

1. Materials that have never been or were not intended to be painted should not be painted: e.g., copper or brick or sandstone.
2. The appropriate color of paint is dependent on the style of the building. For instance:
 - colonial or federal revival designs should be painted white or another light color; never pastel.
 - European revival designs should be painted dark, earth tones.

This is true for trim as well as main façade colors.

Paint Removal

1. Paint may be removed from any surface not originally intended to be painted, including most masonry.
2. In general, the most benign method that works should be used. Brick and other porous masonry will not be sandblasted.
3. Allowing the continuing deterioration of existing paint may be preferable to either removal or repainting.

Trim Color

1. The trim color, whether to contrast or complement, is dependent on the style of the building. Multiple colors are appropriate to some styles.
2. Shutters may be painted a different, darker color.

Iron or Other Metal Details

1. Metal decorative elements including railings and fences should be painted flat black, or a very dark earth tone.
2. Heavy cast pieces may be painted to resemble stone.

Dormers and Roof Structures

1. Projections, and their trim, which were designed as integral parts of the roof (e.g. mansards) should be painted to blend in with the roof material.
2. Other projections, such as dormers, should be painted to match the predominant trim color.
3. New roof projections, when approved, should be painted to minimize their impact on the appearance of the building.

MASONRY

General

1. All masonry elements should be retained and repaired.
2. Masonry should never be sheathed in another material.
3. Masonry is a porous material and is susceptible to moisture and chemical damage.

Replacement

1. All replacement elements should match the original in size, color, and porosity.
2. Installation techniques should match original to the extent that the replacement is unnoticeable. Since this is a very difficult process, retention and repair is encouraged.

Repair

1. Defective mortar joints should be carefully repaired so the color and raking match the original.
2. Attention to the mix and application is encouraged to minimize shrinkage of the new mortar.

3. Cracked or broken masonry elements should be retained in all possible situations rather than being replaced.

YARDS AND WALKWAYS

General

1. Much of the character of the district is dependent on the scale and appearance of the green spaces.
2. The specific elements of these spaces are less static than the architectural elements and, therefore, will be less critically reviewed. The general appearance, however, is critical.

Fences

1. Wrought and cast iron fences should be retained, and repaired if necessary.
2. New or replacement fences should match other existing fences in scale and appearance.
3. Wood and opaque fences are not appropriate. Privacy screening should be done with planting.

Planting

1. Specific plant material is not controlled, although plant types sympathetic to the style and date of the building are encouraged.
2. The general arrangement and design of the plantings should reflect the overall character of the district.

Walkway Materials

1. The private sidewalks are visually related to the building and should reinforce the quality and appearance of the architecture.
2. Scored and patterned concrete or brick are the preferred materials. Geometric and formal patterns are suggested.
3. Asphalt should not be used.

Walls

1. Existing walls should be retained, and repaired as necessary.
2. Although they will not be reviewed individually, erecting new walls is generally not encouraged and may not be allowed forward of the general façade line.
3. Side and rear yards may be enclosed with solid masonry walls. Their design and construction should be sympathetic to the architecture.

Yard Furniture

1. All furniture used in yards should be moveable.
2. Permanent features such as pieces of art and fountains are allowed and should be carefully designed and located to reinforce the overall character of the district.

SIGNS

General

All signs within the district will be subject to the Boston Sign Code although more restrictive controls may be applied.

Temporary Signs

1. The size and location of the temporary sign will be controlled so that no architectural detailing is covered or obscured.
2. Temporary signs will not be specifically lighted.

Professional Signs and Directories

1. Signs that announce a service within the building, e.g., a doctor's office, are allowed.
2. The design and material of the sign should reinforce the architectural character of the building.
3. Advertising or general information signs are not allowed.

Lighting

1. No illuminated or back-lit signs are allowed.
2. Signs should not be flood-lighted. Small, shielded light sources may be used if no spill-over is visible to abutting properties.

Multiple Signs

1. Signs on adjacent buildings of similar architectural appearance should be consistently designed and located.
2. Signs on buildings owned and operated by a common entity should be consistently designed and located.

PUBLIC AREAS

Sidewalks

1. Public sidewalks should be designed and constructed to reinforce the character of the district.
2. Granite and brick are preferable materials.

Street Furniture

1. Trash containers and benches should be selected and located to reinforce the pattern and scale of the district.
2. Materials used should be sympathetic to the appearance of the district; rustic images are inappropriate.
3. Cast metal and stone and simply detailed wood are the preferred materials.

PART II: BACK STREET

WINDOWS AND DOORS

Window and Door Openings

1. No new openings in façades will be allowed.
2. Existing window and door openings shall not be framed down.
3. Window openings may be enlarged to be used as doors; however, the design shall be subject to review and approval by the Commission.

Window Sash

1. Stained or leaded glass windows will be retained.
2. Non wooden sash (consistent with the original design of the house) should have factory applied color closely matching the selected trim color.

Doors

1. All exterior changes to doors and doorways will be subject to review and approval.
2. Wherever possible, modern aluminum storm doors will be confined to the backs of buildings, and will have factory applied color closely matching the trim color.
3. Solid wooden storm doors will be permitted.

Storm Windows

1. Storm windows should be as unobtrusive as possible. They may be wooden, or aluminum with a factory applied finish in a color closely matching the trim color.
2. In some cases, storm window protection may be applied on the inside, but the method used should be carefully reviewed to be sure that it does not accelerate deterioration of the sash.

Air Conditioners

1. Air conditioners may be installed on the rear of the building.
2. Whenever possible, air conditioners will not be installed so as to require new openings in masonry.

STOOPS AND STAIRS

Railings

Wherever possible, original railings will be retained. New railings will be of iron, of a simple roiled stock design.

Ramps

Ramps required to provide access for the handicapped may be located in the rear and will be as unobtrusive as possible.

Materials

Whenever possible, original materials will be retained and repaired.

ROOFS

Shape

The original form and slope, if any, of the roof will be retained.

Penthouses and Other Vertical Additions to Roofs

1. Efforts should be made to minimize the visual effect of new penthouses. Materials, other than glass, should be dark in color.
2. Simple dark colored railings are to be preferred to stockade or similar fence materials.

OTHER FAÇADE ELEMENTS

Balconies and Fire Escapes

1. Existing balconies may be retained and repaired.
2. No new balconies will be permitted unless required for safety and an alternative egress route is clearly not possible.
3. Fire balconies will not be connected vertically unless the abutter refuses to allow horizontal connection.
4. If the existing fire balconies are removed, the façade material should be carefully repaired to match existing.

EXTERIOR PAINT

General

1. Materials that have never been or were not intended to be painted should not be painted: e.g., copper or brick or sandstone.
2. If paint is to be removed, the most benign method that works should be used. Brick and other porous masonry will not be sandblasted.
3. Allowing the continuing deterioration of existing paint may be preferable to either removal or repainting.

MASONRY

General

1. All masonry elements should be retained and repaired.
2. Masonry should never be sheathed in another material.
3. Masonry is a porous material and is susceptible to moisture and chemical damage.

BACK YARDS

It is recommended that consideration be given to the installation or retention of trees or other landscape materials which soften the appearance of buildings as viewed from Back Street and Storrow Drive.

SIGNS

General

All signs within the district will be subject to the Boston Sign Code although more restrictive controls may be applied.

Temporary Signs

1. The size and location of the temporary sign will be controlled so that no architectural detailing is covered or obscured.
2. Temporary signs will not be specifically lighted.

Professional Signs and Directories

1. Signs that announce a service within the building, e.g., a doctor's office, are allowed.
2. The design and material of the sign should reinforce the architectural character of the building.
3. Advertising or general information signs are not allowed.

Lighting

1. No illuminated or back-lit signs are allowed.
2. Signs should not be flood-lighted. Small, shielded light sources may be used if no spill-over is visible to abutting properties.

Multiple Signs

1. Signs on Adjacent Buildings of similar architectural appearance should be consistently designed and located.
2. Signs on buildings owned and operated by a common entity should be consistently designed and located.

PART III: COMMONWEALTH AVENUE²

WINDOWS AND DOORS

Window and Door Openings

1. No new openings in façades will be allowed, except as allowed for approved designs to increase commercial space.
2. Existing window and door openings shall not be framed down.
3. Window openings may be enlarged to be used as doors; however, the design shall be subject to review and approval by the Commission.

Window Sash

1. Stained or leaded glass windows will be retained.
2. Non wooden sash (consistent with the original design of the house) should have factory applied color closely matching the selected trim color.

Doors

1. All exterior changes to doors and doorways will be subject to review and approval.
2. Original doors and hardware will be retained whenever possible. If replacement is necessary, the new doors will match the original as closely as possible. Aluminum and glass doors will not be acceptable. Doors which have been “modernized” may be retained.
3. Wherever possible, modern aluminum storm doors will be confined to the backs of buildings and will have factory applied color closely matching the trim color.
4. Solid wooden storm doors will be permitted.

Storm Windows

1. Storm windows should be as unobtrusive as possible. They may be wooden or aluminum with a factory applied finish in a color closely matching the trim color.
2. In some cases, storm window protection may be applied on the inside, but the method used should be carefully reviewed to be sure that it does not accelerate deterioration of the sash.

Air Conditioners

1. Air conditioners may be installed on the rear of the building.
2. Whenever possible, air conditioners will not be installed so as to require new openings in masonry. If unavoidable, these openings will be located and designed to reinforce the original façade design.

² Including portions of building façades facing on streets perpendicular to Commonwealth Avenue.

STOOPS AND STAIRS

Railings

1. Wherever possible, original railings will be retained.
2. New railings will be made of iron, of a simple rolled stock design. Exceptional material on design may be approved as part of a new façade design for increased commercial space.

Ramps

Ramps required to provide access for the handicapped may be located in the rear and will be as unobtrusive as possible.

Materials

Whenever possible, original materials will be retained and repaired.

ROOFS

Shape

The original form and slope, if any, of the roof will be retained.

Penthouses and Other Vertical Additions to Roofs

1. Penthouses and other vertical additions should be designed and located to minimize their visual impact and preserve the original skyline of the building.
2. Materials for all additions should be dark in color, except glass.
3. Simple dark colored railings are to be preferred to stockade or similar fence elements.

OTHER FAÇADE ELEMENTS

Balconies and Fire Escapes

1. Existing balconies may be retained and repaired.
2. No new balconies will be permitted unless required for safety and an alternative egress route is clearly not possible.
3. Fire balconies will not be connected vertically.
4. If existing fire balconies are removed, the façade material should be carefully repaired to match existing.

EXTERIOR PAINT

General

1. Materials that have never been painted or were not intended to be painted should not be painted: e.g., copper or brick or sandstone.

2. If paint is to be removed, the most benign method that works should be used. Brick and other porous masonry will not be sandblasted.
3. Allowing the continuing deterioration of existing paint may be preferable to either removal or repainting.
4. Paint may be removed from any surface not originally intended to be painted, including most masonry.

Color

The color chosen for buildings should reinforce the basic architectural character of the building and the street and not be used as a distinguishing feature.

MASONRY

General

1. All masonry elements should be retained and repaired (see Commercial Fronts)
2. Masonry should never be sheathed in another material.
3. Masonry is a porous material and is susceptible to moisture and chemical damage.

BACK YARDS

It is recommended that consideration be given to the installation or retention of trees or other landscape materials to soften the appearance of buildings as viewed from Newbury Street and Charlesgate West.

COMMERCIAL FRONTS

General

1. Any façade changes intended to increase the amount of visibility of commercial space will be subject to review and approval by the Commission.
2. The essential character of the building as originally designed will be preserved in all changes. Including retention of doorways and major architectural features.
3. Façade changes for commercial use will not be allowed above the main floor of the building.

Materials

1. The maximum amount of existing material possible will be retained in the new façade design. The intent of the design should be an appeal to pedestrian traffic.
2. New material should be sympathetic to those of the existing building and need not match.
3. Wood will not be used as a facing material on any façade change.

Design

1. Proposed façade changes will be designed to compliment the design of the building.
2. Façade changes should be clearly contemporary and detailed to match the quality of the original building.

Signs

1. Proposed signs should conform to the Boston Sign Code, although compliance may not ensure approval.
2. Signs should be signed and placed to reinforce the architectural elements of the façade.
3. No sign will obscure any significant detail or decorative element of the existing building.
4. Neon, back-lit or electrically operated signs are not permitted; sign lighting should be shielded and indirect.
5. Free standing signs are not permitted.
6. Trade-marks will be limited to 25% of the total allowable sign area.
7. Bulletin boards and defined spaces used as bulletin boards are considered as part of window signage and shall be less than 30% of available window space. Exterior walls may not be used as display or bulletin boards.

SIGNS – NON COMMERCIAL

General

All signs within the district will be subject to the Boston Sign Code although more restrictive controls may be applied.

Temporary Signs

1. The size and location of the temporary sign will be controlled so that no architectural detailing is covered or obscured.
2. Temporary signs will not be specifically lighted.

Professional Signs and Directories

1. Signs that announce a service within the building, e.g., a doctor's office, are allowed.
2. The design and material of the sign should reinforce the architectural character of the building.
3. Advertising or general information signs are not allowed.

Lighting

1. No illuminated or back-lit signs are allowed.
2. Signs should not be flood-lighted. Small, shielded light sources may be used if no spill-over is visible to abutting properties.

Multiple Signs

1. Signs on adjacent buildings of similar architectural appearance should be consistently designed and located.
2. Signs on buildings owned and operated by a common entity should be consistently designed and located.

NEW CONSTRUCTION

General

In the event of demolition, replacement structures should be designed to match the former building in size and general profile. Contemporary design is allowed. Particular attention will be paid to the scale and rhythm of the street façade. All new construction is subject to review and approval of the Commission.