

MISSION HILL TRIANGLE ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

ARCHITECTURAL GUIDELINES SPECIFIC STANDARDS & CRITERIA

A. GENERAL

The intent of these standards & criteria is to preserve the physical features, historical and architectural character, and residential nature of the Triangle area.

The dominant historical and architectural features of the district are the late 19th-century masonry rowhouse units. Houses within these units appear relatively uniform in size, materials, setback, and style, with the individuality of the unit being subordinate to the harmony of the street.

These standards and criteria are intended to guide the inevitable changes to the exteriors of buildings and physical features within the district, in order to ensure that changes are sensitive to the architectural character of the district, and to prevent intrusions. There is no requirement to do work that is not initiated by the owner of the property.

The most important feature of the buildings is the façades (including roofs) that face the public streets and avenues, and therefore these are subject to review. Sidewalls visible from within the district are also under review.

Any proposed changes or alterations to the elements mentioned above will be reviewed unless specifically exempted; preference will be given to alterations that maintain, preserve, or restore according to the standards and criteria for elements identified in the following sections.

B. WINDOWS AND DOORS

The original configuration of windows will be retained. No new openings in façades will be allowed unless they are re-openings of original openings. Original window and door openings will not be enlarged, framed down, or closed, with the possible exception of basement windows (subject to review). Existing non-conforming window and door openings may be altered to return to their original size, shape, and style. Greenhouse windows are not allowed on the façades.

Window Sash

All sash windows that are double hung will be retained. If replacements are necessary, they must be double hung, or appear to be double hung. Colored-, art-, or leaded-glass windows will be retained.

The original number and arrangement of lights (glass panes) will be retained. Applied exterior muntins will be allowed if they are painted and bonded to exterior surface of the glass. Non-wooden sash should have a finished color closely matching the selected trim color. Effort should be made to maintain wooden sashes whenever possible.

Sills and Lintels

Original sills and lintels should be retained and repaired, if possible. Replacement sills and lintels, when necessary, shall correspond to original elements, if possible.

Oriels

Original oriels, if existing, should be retained.

Doors

All proposed exterior changes involving replacement doors and doorways, including transoms and vestibule sidewalls, will be reviewed.

Original doors will be retained whenever possible. If replacement is necessary, the new doors will match the original as closely as possible. Non-original doors, when replaced, should be of wood or appear to be wood with

panels and double leaves. Special consideration should be given to the preservation of etched- or frosted-glass door panels. Contemporary style changes to doorways are not encouraged and are subject to review.

Original entryways and paneling will be retained.

Modern-style alterations are not encouraged and shall be subject to review. Outer transoms should not be closed in or removed.

Outer Vestibule Doors

Installation of new outer vestibule doors is subject to review. Metal-and-glass storm doors are not encouraged; if used, raw, unpainted metal is inappropriate.

Ornamentation

Original decorative moldings and stonework surrounding a window or door will be retained whenever possible. If such material is missing or so deteriorated as to require replacement, it will be replaced with an element which duplicates the mass, material texture and general form of the original. Ornamentation belonging to a different period and style of architecture is not appropriate.

Iron bars, grilles and grates on windows and doors should be as unobtrusive as possible. (See section P, "Items that are Exempted from Review")

C. STOOPS AND FRONT STAIRS

Original stoops (including stringers, risers, and treads) and steps on the main façade will be retained whenever possible. Replacements should match the original in their massing and location. Concrete colored to match other masonry trim is a preferable treatment for replacement.

Since the use of marble is frequent in the district, the replacement of deteriorated marble in kind is encouraged. Brick and/or bluestone are inappropriate materials for this architectural period. Railings, if added, should be as unobtrusive as possible. Black iron is preferable.

D. FRONT PORCHES

Original front porches should be retained and repaired whenever possible. Replacement should match original in size and location.

E. ROOFS, DORMERS, VERTICAL ADDITIONS

The original form and slope, if any, of the roof will be retained. Significant characteristics of this district are the intact cornice, mansard, and flat roof lines within units of rowhouses.

Rooftop additions visible from public ways are virtually non-existent within the district; continuation of this precedent is important. Whenever possible, existing dormers seen from a public way should be retained. Replacement of dormers should approximate the shape and placement of the original. Materials will be consistent with the original in design. Ornamental dormer trim should be retained.

Any vertical additions (penthouses, railings, solar panels, mechanical equipment) that can be seen from a public way within the district are not appropriate and will not be approved. In buildings with a pitched roof, additions may occur behind the ridge line of the roof if the vertical addition does not interrupt the roofline as seen from the front of the building. Size and placement of satellite-dish antennas will require review.

Original slate roofs visible from a public way should be retained. Replacement should be of slate, slate substitute, or dark asphalt shingles.

The use of siding on the mansard levels of buildings is not encouraged. If siding is used, material should be narrow to approximate the pattern of slate courses and must not cover any trim.

Chimneys

Original brick chimneys, caps, and pots should be retained. Replacement should match original.

F. OTHER FAÇADE ELEMENTS

Cornices

The entire cornice, including original details, will be retained wherever possible. Replacements of the whole or of sections will match the original in size, shape, material, and detail. Cornices with visual continuity with adjacent buildings should be treated to reinforce that continuity. Replacement must strongly complement the general appearance if duplication is impossible.

Gutters and Flashing

The size and location of the gutter is an integral part of the cornice. Replacements should match original design in shape and method of attachment. Raw, mill-finished metal (other than copper) is not appropriate.

Downspouts and Stormwater-Conductor Pipes

Originally, downspouts and stormwater conductor pipes were located in unobtrusive places. Replacements, when needed, will substantially match originals in shape, location, and installation technique.

Additional downspouts and stormwater conductor pipes will be made to match and located to blend into the façade as much as possible. Existing locations should serve as a guide for locating new downspouts and stormwater pipes.

Downspouts and stormwater conductor pipes should be painted to blend with the façade material, match the cornice and trim color, or be left natural copper. (See section P on color choice)

Electrical Conduits

Alarm systems should be as unobtrusive as possible and should be located next to existing windows. Wiring and conduits are not to be attached to or cross the surface of the building façade.

Balconies and Fire Escapes

No new fire balconies will be permitted on the front façades of buildings unless required for safety and an alternative egress route is not possible. Fire balconies should be connected horizontally. If existing fire balconies are removed, the façade material should be carefully repaired to match existing materials. No new decorative balconies should be added to the façade.

G. EXTERIOR PAINT

General

Materials that have never been or were not intended to be painted should not be painted (e.g. copper, brick, sandstone, or marble). (See section H, "Masonry")

Exterior Paint Removal

Exterior paint may be removed with proper safeguards from any surface not originally intended to be painted, including most masonry. In general, the most benign method that works should be used; brick and other porous masonry will not be sandblasted. Allowing the existing paint to weather to the original surface may be preferable to either removing or repainting.

(For information on trim color, see section P, "Items that are Exempted from Review")

H. MASONRY

General

All masonry elements, including decorative areas, should be retained. Masonry should never be sheathed in another material, due to potential moisture and chemical damage. Sandblasting will not be permitted. Gentler cleaning methods shall be used.

Previously unpainted masonry surfaces should not be painted, except if deterioration or repair requires it. In this case, the color choice should match, as near as possible, the original color of the masonry.

Replacement

All replacement elements should match the original in size, color, and surface texture as closely as possible.

Repair

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

Cracked or broken masonry elements should be repaired and retained in all possible situations, or if replacement is necessary, with the same or very similar material. For example, stone lintels or other stonework should not be replaced with brick.

In the event that a party wall becomes exposed as a side wall, the exposed wall should have adequate structural reinforcement and a finished treatment, such as a course of standard brick of closely matching hue.

I. FRONT YARDS AND WALKWAYS

General

Much of the character of the district depends on the scale and appearance of the open spaces along streets. These features, the front yards and walkways, are generally bordered by masonry curbing, which should be retained as originally intended. Compatibility with adjacent yards is encouraged.

Front Fences

Existing iron fences should be retained (and repaired as necessary). New or replacement fences should be made of materials appropriate to the period and style of the building. Wrought or cast iron of standard or rolled stock, not exceeding the height of the window sills of the first floor, are recommended. Wood, chain-link, or opaque fences are not appropriate to front yards. Where existing, they should be treated to be unobtrusive in color, and preferably screened by a hedge of similar height. Stone and marble curb walls surrounding the front yards should be maintained.

Front-Walkway Materials

The private sidewalks are visually related to the building and should reinforce the quality and appearance of the architecture. Cement, brick, and granite pavers are the preferred materials. Asphalt shall not be used. Original paving stones or slabs over coal chute covers or openings should be retained whenever possible.

Front Yards

The uniform setback of buildings and the resultant front yards, accomplished through early deed restrictions, are a significant feature of the neighborhood. Existing front yards should not be paved. Excavation of major portions of front yards below existing grades should not be allowed except for small areaways to accommodate existing window openings, ventilation, or drainage.

Construction of buildings, portions of buildings, or other ground-level projections in the front yards will not be permitted.

J. PUBLIC AREAS

Sidewalks

Public sidewalks should be designed and constructed to reinforce the character of the district. New paving materials for public sidewalks will be of consistent material throughout the area and are subject to District Commission review and approval.

Street Furniture

All street furniture is subject to District Commission review and approval.

Street Lighting

All new street lighting is subject to District Commission review and approval.

Utility Items in Front of Buildings

Any new wiring for electrical service, telephone service, cable television, etc., should be placed underground, and the street and sidewalk must be repaired to match the surrounding area in form, material, and detailing. Receptacle boxes (exempting remote utility-reading devices) should not be placed on building façades.

Water, Gas, Sewage Lines

Installation of new underground lines or repair of existing lines shall result in the street and sidewalk being repaired to match the surrounding area.

K. NEW CONSTRUCTION

All new construction is subject to Commission review and approval. Plans submitted for approval must be consistent with, or complementary to, the historical and architectural character and appearance of the neighborhood. Particular attention will be given to scale, materials, set backs, and rhythm of the façade. Design should not be imitative of a style earlier to that which is prevalent in the district.

L. DEMOLITION

All plans for demolition of any existing building or portion of a building, visible from a public way, will be subject to District Commission review and approval.

M. RECONSTRUCTION

In the event of fire or other destruction to an existing building, replacement structures or elements thereof should match the original in design and materials as closely as possible and are subject to District Commission review and approval.

N. SIGNS

General

All signs within the district are subject to the Boston Sign Code. New and additional signage is also subject to this code. All signs must be approved by the Commission in order to ensure architectural and historical appropriateness.

Minimal illumination of signs is encouraged.

Signs shall not have applied plastic letters. Use of painted wooden signs of a traditional design is encouraged.

Billboards are not permitted. Exterior blank walls should not be used as a sign, display, or bulletin board.

Exterior lighting (new or additional) should not be glaring. Mechanical equipment must be visually enclosed and placed so as to be unobtrusive.

O. COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

Commercial Properties Constructed After The Main Period Of The District's Significance

These few properties include 1617 Tremont Street, 134–140 Smith Street, and 690 Huntington Avenue, at the corner of Wigglesworth Street. Because of the later construction dates, and non-conformity in use and architectural character to the remainder of the district, these will not be subject to the same standards and criteria as the district's residential properties.

Changes and alterations, except for demolition and new construction, to these structures will be reviewed only in the following:

Height: Cannot exceed the top roofline of the abutting structures within the district.

Land Coverage and Setback: Must conform to those established by the abutting structures within the district.

Overall Materials: Should harmonize with the materials of the abutting structures within the district and should relate to those of the existing structure being changed or altered.

Massing: Must conform to that established by the abutting structures within the district.

Storefronts Previously Constructed as Additions to Façades and Side Elevations

Changes to these additions will be reviewed. If removal of these additions, in whole or in part, is desired, the repair to the adjacent wall should be in harmony with the remainder of the row.

P. ITEMS THAT ARE EXEMPTED FROM REVIEW

A number of features are exempt from review. Nonetheless, the visual character of these elements contributes to the overall harmony of a building and to the district. The following is an attempt to guide the homeowner in making appropriate and sensitive choices:

Light Fixtures

They should be appropriate to the later Victorian style of the buildings, residential in character, and not overly large or glaring. Early period or colonial styles are not in keeping with the character of the district. Use of exposed conduit is discouraged and, where necessary, should be painted to match the background material. Simple contemporary fixtures of "appropriate" size are often compatible to an architectural district. Unornamented modern fixtures can be appropriate. Exterior flood lights should have minimal "spill over" to abutting buildings.

Exterior Shutters and Blinds

Louvered window blinds are most appropriate on buildings with original shutter hardware. New blinds should be of wood, mounted on pintles, and appear to be operable. They should match the height and one-half the width of the window opening. They should also be dark in color.

Window Grilles

Security grilles should be comparatively simple in design and sized to fit fully within the window opening. They should be painted black, and the horizontal rails should have pierced joints (and not overlapping, welded joints). Grilles should also be mounted within the reveal of the windows and secured into the mortar joints (rather than into the masonry).

Portable Window Air Conditioners

Seasonal window air conditioners should be installed, whenever possible, on secondary elevations. Those on façades should not protrude beyond the line of the building. No through-wall air conditioners shall be allowed.

Intercom and Alarm Devices/Door Hardware

Door hardware should be compatible with the size and finish of original examples; Victorian-era styles are most appropriate, and early American "colonial" styles are the least appropriate. Buzzers, intercoms, and mailboxes

should be located within the recessed entry (or vestibule) and not on the façade of the building. Brass-plated devices are encouraged. Alarm devices should be mounted only in inconspicuous locations.

Window Boxes

These should be painted to match the trim color and sized to match the width of the window opening.

Canopies/Awnings

These are not encouraged, unless physical evidence on the building (photographic evidence) documents their original presence on the building. Where used, they should be of canvas mounted on retractable hardware (rather than a fixed, metal frame).

Storm Windows

Exterior combination storm windows should have a baked-enamel finish that closely matches the trim color of the window. In some instances, the frames of existing storm windows may be repainted to match the trim; dark finishes (bronze, black) are more appropriate than standard white. Mill-finished aluminum storm windows are strongly discouraged. The framing should be narrow, and the meeting rail should align with the primary window.

Paint Color

IN NO CASE SHOULD PAINT BE ALLOWED ON PREVIOUSLY UNPAINTED MASONRY SURFACES, THIS EXEMPTION PERTAINS ONLY TO COLOR CHOICE.

Although paint color will not be reviewed, the following is an attempt to guide the homeowner in making appropriate and sensitive choices:

Window casings/trim

In general, dark earth-tone colors or a combination of a lighter, stone-colored trim and black sash are most appropriate.

Sills and Lintels

When painted, sills and lintels should be in earth or stone tones, matching the color of the original material as closely as possible.

Marble

If previously painted, marble may be repainted in light tones.

Metal Storm Doors

If used, a metal storm door should match the color of the existing door.

Gutters and Flashing

Gutters and flashing should be painted to match the cornice or trim, or in the case of copper, left natural.

Dormers

In some cases should be painted a separate color on the mansard level; often harmonizing with slate tones is most appropriate.

Street Signs

Including traffic, directional, and parking, should be attached to an existing public lamp post or pole whenever possible.

Sign posts for public signs should be installed only if necessary. Number of posts used for public signs on a street should be maintained to the minimum number necessary to perform their function.