

VIII. Standards and Criteria

8.1 Introduction

As required by Sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the statute creating the Boston Landmarks Commission (Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts), standards and criteria must be adopted for each district designation by the commission. These standards and criteria are intended to serve two purposes, first to inform property owners of what kinds of changes are permitted in the district, and second, to guide the members of the District Commission in deciding what proposed changes are permissible.

They are not retroactive, but apply only to changes proposed after the formal designation of the district.

After a public hearing, the review commission may grant a Certificate of Design Approval for proposed changes which are consistent with these guidelines, or a Certificate of Exemption when substantial economic hardship would be imposed on the property owner if proposed changes are not approved. A Certificate of Exemption may also be granted for proposed changes which involve only routine maintenance or repair not materially affected [sic] the building or which are necessary for reasons of public safety. A Certificate is required before work can begin.

It is recognized that changes may be required for a variety of reasons, not all of which are under the complete control of the Commission or the owners. Building code conformance and safety requirements are primary examples of causes of such changes.

Conformance with these other requirements may, in some cases, present conflicts with the Standards and Criteria. Evaluation of an application for a Certificate in such cases will be based upon the degree to which such changes are in harmony with the character of the property and the district in which the property exists.

8.2 General Standards for Properties in Districts Designated by the Boston Landmarks Commission

The intent of the Standards and Criteria is to preserve the existing qualities that brought about the designation of the district.

As intended by the statute, a wide variety of districts are eligible for designation, and an equally wide range exists in the latitude allowed for change. Some districts of truly exceptional architectural and/or historical value that are designated as Landmark Districts will permit only minor modifications, while for some other areas, designated as Architectural Conservation Districts, the Commission encourages changes and additions with a contemporary approach, consistent with existing features.

In all cases, the design approach to a proposed change in a district should begin with an understanding of the fact that the overall character of a district is greater than the sum of its parts, and that a pattern exists within a district, which is made up of each building, each landscape element and each detail. It is the aggregate character which is most important.

Additions and new construction should not disrupt the essential form and integrity of an individual building or of the district. The size, scale, color, material and character of this work should be compatible with the character of the existing buildings and their environment. The design should be contemporary and not imitative of an earlier style or period of architecture.

In the design of alterations, which may have a less significant impact than additions or new construction, one should, whenever possible, retain or repair existing materials and features, rather than remove and replace them.

When it is necessary to replace such materials or features, replacement should, whenever possible, be based on physical evidence, or evidence contained in documents such as plans and photographs indicating the appearance and other characteristics of the materials or features being replaced. New materials used in replacement should, if possible, match the materials being replaced in physical properties, design, color, texture and other visual qualities.

Careful evaluation should be made as to the nature of changes which have occurred over time to a building or the district as a whole. These changes are a part of the history of the area and may be significant in their own right.

In general, proposed changes which are easily reversed are far less serious than those which are irrevocable.

IX. SPECIFIC STANDARDS AND CRITERIA*

ST. BOTOLPH STREET, ALBEMARLE, BLACKWOOD/ CUMBERLAND, DURHAM, FOLLEN, GARRISON, HARCOURT, WEST NEWTON, HUNTINGTON AVENUE AND MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY LIE WITHIN THE DISTRICT

WINDOWS AND DOORS

1. The original character of windows will be retained.
2. No new openings in facades will be allowed unless they are re-openings of the original.
3. Original window and door openings will not be enlarged, framed down, or closed.
4. Existing non-conforming window and door openings may only be altered to conform to the original size, shape, and style.

Window Sash

1. All sashed windows will be double hung.
2. The number and arrangement of panes will not be changed, including instances where replacement windows are necessary, unless documentation can be supplied to show that the proposed change would be more accurate historically.
3. Stained or leaded glass windows will be retained.
4. Non-wooden sash (consistent with the original design of the house) should have factory applied color closely matching the selected trim color.
5. Only clear-paned, non-tinted glass should be used.

Doors

1. All proposed eliminations and exterior changes to doors and doorways including transoms, fanlights, sidelights, etc., will be subject to District Commission 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.
3. Entryways and paneling will be retained. Modern style alterations will not be permitted.

*Unless otherwise stated, items listed will be subject to District Commission review and approval.

Storm Doors and Windows

1. Storm doors on front entrances will not be allowed.
2. Storm windows should be as unobtrusive as possible. They may be wooden, aluminum or synthetic materials in a color closely matching the trim color.
3. Storm windows should conform to the shape of the original window and sash.
4. In some cases, storm window protection may be applied on the inside, but the method used should be carefully reviewed to be sure it does not accelerate deterioration of the sash.

Ornamentation

1. Original decorative molding, stonework, or 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 and style of architecture will not be added.
3. Iron bars, grilles and grates on windows and doors may be added, subject to District Commission review and approval.

Exterior Shutters and Blinds

Shutters (solid panels) or blinds (louvered panels) should only be added if documentation can be supplied to prove historical accuracy.

Hoods

Any original 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 District Commission.

Air Conditioners

1. Portable window air conditioners will, whenever possible, be installed on the rear of the building, and when installed on the front should not protrude beyond the facade plane. They will be painted to match the trim color. (Not subject to District Commission review).
2. Air conditioners will not be installed so as to require new openings in the facade of the building.

Light Fixtures

1. Light fixtures should be appropriate to the period and style of the building. They should be residential in character and not overly large or glaring. (Not subject to District Commission review).
2. Unobtrusive exterior flood lights with minimal spill-over to abutting buildings may be acceptable.

Window Boxes - (not subject to District Commission review).

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

Mailboxes and Communication Devices

1. Mailboxes will not be permitted on the facade of the building. Mail slots are acceptable.
2. Communication devices, including alarms, will be as unobtrusive as possible and are subject to District Commission review and approval.

House Numbers - (not subject to District Commission review).

1. All original house numbers will be retained where possible.
2. House numbers will be in keeping with the style and scale of the house. Plastic, vinyl or similar materials should not be used, nor will numbers be painted on exterior masonry or wood.

STOOPS AND FRONT STAIRS

General

Original stoops and steps on the main facade will be retained when possible.

Railings

Wherever possible, original railings will be retained. Replacement railings will be of iron, of a simple rolled stock design, and are subject to District Commission review and approval.

Ramps

Any ramps required to provide access for the handicapped will be located in the rear, otherwise subject to District Commission review and approval.

Materials

Whenever possible, original materials will be retained and repaired.

If it is necessary to replace steps, they should be rebuilt of stone or concrete. Concrete should be formed and colored to be similar to original stonework. Replacement steps are subject to District Commission review and approval.

ROOFS, DORMERS. VERTICAL ADDITIONS

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. Alteration or replacement of dormers will be subject to District Commission review and approval.
3. Materials will be consistent with the original in design and color and [are] subject to District Commission review and approval.
4. Any vertical addition that can be seen from a public way will be subject to District Commission review and approval.

ROOF DECKS

1. Roof decks, including decking and railing, should not be visible from any public way. Partial visibility of the railing may be allowed on a case-by-case basis based on the following criteria: placement to minimize visibility, minimizing visible mass, non-reflective dark appearance, and conformance to State Building Code requirements. Any visible railings must be black metal.

OTHER FACADE ELEMENTS

Cornices

1. The entire cornice including original detail will be retained. 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. Replacement must strongly compliment the general appearance if duplication is impossible.

Gutters and Flashing

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

Downspouts and Stormwater Conductor Pipes

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

Electrical Conduits

Electrical conduits will not be attached to the facade of the building.

Balconies and Fire Escapes

1. No new fire balconies will be permitted on the facades of buildings unless required for safety and an alternative egress route is clearly not possible.
2. Fire balconies will not be connected vertically unless the abutter refuses to allow horizontal connection.
3. If existing fire balconies are removed, the facade material should be carefully repaired to match existing.
4. Replacement fire escapes should be made of wrought or cast iron, painted black, in a design proportioned and located to have minimal effect on the facade. Old or re-cast fire balconies that clearly reflect the style of the building may be installed.
5. Original decorative (including accessible) balconies should be retained. No new decorative balconies will be added.

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 for doors, trim, as well as main façade colors, is dependent on the style of the building and is subject to District Commission review and approval.

Paint Removal

1. Paint may be removed with proper safeguards 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 removing or repainting.

Trim Color

1. Exterior wood (e.g., doors, window, framing, mullions, etc.,) will be painted or stained a subdued earthtone complimenting the material of the building.
2. It is preferable that one color be used. If a second color is used, it should be compatible with the first.

Iron or Other Metal Details

1. Metal decorative elements, including railing and fences, should be painted flat black.
2. Heavy cast iron 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 made to blend with the roof's 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, including decorative areas, should be retained.
2. Masonry should never be sheathed in another material because it is a porous material and is susceptible to moisture and chemical damage.
3. Sandblasting will not be permitted. Gentler cleaning methods should be used.

Replacement

1. All replacement elements should match the original in size, color and porosity.
2. Installation and design should match the original.

Repair

1. 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 the new mortar.
2. Cracked or broken masonry elements should be repaired and retained in all possible situations, or if replacement is necessary, with like or similar material. For example, stone lintels or other stonework should not be replaced with brick.
3. Previously painted masonry will only be painted in a subdued earthtone color.

YARDS AND WALKWAYS

General

Much of the character of the district is dependent on the scale and appearance of the green spaces. These features (yards and walkways) as defined by curbing should be retained as originally intended. Compatibility with adjacent yards is encouraged.

Fences

1. Existing wrought and cast iron fences should be retained (and repaired if necessary).
2. New or replacement fences will be made of either wrought or cast iron of standard or rolled stock and must not exceed five feet in height.
3. Wood, chainlink, wire and opaque fences are not appropriate. Privacy screening should be done with painting.

Landscaping

1. Specific plant material is not controlled, although artificial materials are discouraged.
2. The general arrangement and design of the plantings should reflect the overall character of the district. (Not subject to District Commission review).
3. Permanent features, such as pieces of art and foundations, are subject to specific review and should be carefully designed and located to reinforce 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 concrete is the preferred material.
3. Asphalt will not be used.

Walls

1. Original freestanding walls should be retained.
2. Although they will be reviewed individually, erecting new walls is generally not encouraged and will not be allowed forward of the general facade line.

SIGNS

General

All signs within the district will be subject to the Boston Sign Code. All signs must be approved by the District Commission in order to ensure architectural and historical consistency.

Temporary Signs

1. The size and location of the temporary sign will be controlled so that no architectural detailing is covered or obscured. The sign will be no larger than four square feet.

2. Temporary signs will not be specifically lighted.

Professional Signs and Directories

1. The design and material of the sign should reinforce the architectural character of the building.
2. Advertising or general information signs are not allowed.
3. Freestanding or projecting signs and directories are not allowed.

Lighting of Signs

1. No illuminated, neon, 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.

PUBLIC AREAS

Public sidewalks should be designed and constructed to reinforce the character of the district. Any alteration to public sidewalks is subject to District Commission review and approval.

Street Furniture

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

DEMOLITION

All plans for demolition of any existing building will be subject to District Commission review and approval.

RECONSTRUCTION

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

NEW CONSTRUCTION

All new construction is subject to District Commission review and approval. Plans submitted for approval must be consistent with or complimentary to the historical and architectural character and appearance of the neighborhood. Particular attention will be paid to scale, materials, and rhythm of the street facade(s).