

Historic District Guidelines for Building Care & Modifications

The Framingham Historic District Commission seeks to be your partner in the preservation and stewardship of your historic property. The following guidelines outline general principles for the preservation, maintenance, addition, and changes to historic properties. That said, each property and prospective change is different, and the HDC's review and decision about a given project will respond accordingly.

These guidelines are adapted from the [Secretary of The Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties](#) and are used by more than 2300 communities nationwide.

Purview

Any change to the exterior of a property located in an historic district that is visible from a public way requires a review and a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic District Commission.

The following items are **exempt** from review under City of Framingham General By-Laws Article VII, Section 5.6:

- a. Temporary structures erected for a period of ninety days or less;
- b. Two-dimensional signs of four (4) square feet or less;
- c. Terraces, walks, driveways, and sidewalks so long as such structure is substantially at grade level;
- d. Storm doors, storm windows, screens, gutters, antennae, and window air conditioners;
- e. Color of paint;
- f. Color of roof materials.

In addition, ***maintenance or ordinary repair*** is exempt from the HDC's review. This generally covers replacing or repairing architectural features without changing the design, materials, color, or outward appearance of the feature.

****To determine if your project is considered ordinary repair or if it will require review, it is always best to contact the city's historic preservation staff.****

In addition, the HDC asks that property owners notify the HDC and its staff when making repairs, so that the HDC has a full record of alterations to buildings in the districts.

General Guidelines

- The historic character of a property should be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property should be avoided.
- Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, should be avoided.
- Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right should be retained and preserved.

- Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property should be preserved.
- Demolition of entire structures is strongly discouraged and will likely not be approved. If necessary, deteriorated historic features should be repaired rather than replaced. When the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature should match the old in design, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials.
- New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction should not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work should be differentiated from the old and be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
- New additions and adjacent or related new construction should be undertaken in a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Click on the following links to find guidelines related to specific areas of planned change to a historic property:

[Accessibility](#)

[Additions/New Buildings/Outbuildings](#)

[Architectural Elements, Siding, Artificial / Imitation Materials, Exterior Trim](#)

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Specific Guidelines and Recommendations

Accessibility

Accessibility improvements should be installed so that they improve access without having a negative impact on the historic or architectural character of a building or public space. Each case is unique; for guidance see the following resource:

National Park Service, Preservation Brief 32, "Making Historic Properties Accessible"
www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/32-accessibility.htm.

Additions/New Buildings/Outbuildings

New additions to historic buildings should be in harmony with the original building and its settings.

Additions on the main façade are discouraged. Side additions should be stepped back from the façade to reduce their impact on the general building mass.

The scale, shape and size of the addition should be subordinate to the main building.

An addition to any elevation that may alter the significance of the building is unlikely to be approved.

Decorative features (windows, doors, siding, and other materials) should be chosen to harmonize with the original building. The addition should remain subordinate to the existing structure and quality and materials should be consistent with the existing structure and the district.

Existing additions to historic buildings may have gained historic significance if they are in a style that displays historical or stylistic development that contributes to the original building or the district. Additions on existing buildings will be reviewed in the same manner as other historic defining features within the District.

Outbuildings, such as barns, garages, sheds, greenhouses, and gazebos are subject to review and require approval if they are visible from a public way.

Existing outbuildings that date to the District's period of significance should be retained and restored, and are subject to these Guidelines. Particular attention will be given to siding, roof, windows and doors.

The construction of a new outbuilding may be approved provided it is designed and located in a manner that respects the style of the other building(s) on its site and respects the development pattern and siting of other historic outbuildings in the District. A site plan should be provided to indicate the relationship to other buildings and structures on the lot and neighboring lots.

Architectural Elements, Siding, Artificial/ Imitation Materials, Exterior Trim

Traditional materials including, but not limited to, wood, stone, slate, brick and copper, are preferred. Trim work is an essential part of a building's architectural character. Features such as cornices, brackets, window moldings, doorway pediments, corner quoins, and all other decorative elements should be retained.

Deteriorated material should be repaired or replaced, where necessary, with new material that duplicates the original as closely as possible.

Alternative materials may be approved depending on the appropriateness of the material to the age and architectural style of the structure and on the location where the material will be used. Aluminum, vinyl, and concrete siding will be discouraged. Artificial siding covers up the distinctive features and surfaces of older buildings. Wood siding is an integral part of older buildings and their architectural character.

If an old building has been re-sided with vinyl, aluminum, or concrete it may be worthwhile to remove the synthetic siding and to restore the original material underneath.

Brickwork, Chimneys and Masonry

Brickwork should be sand or water-struck to match existing work, of the same size, and laid in the same pattern. New mortar should not be darkened artificially but should be allowed to weather over time. Pointing mortar should match the original in color, style, strength and consistency. Joints shall match existing joints including tooling.

Chimneys with historical importance should be preserved. If repointing or replacing is required, the new chimney should reuse materials where possible, or otherwise match the original material in color, shape, and size.

Unpainted masonry must remain unpainted as masonry is a significant architectural feature of a building. Previously painted masonry should continue to be painted; sandblasting to remove paint will damage historic masonry surfaces.

Decks, Patios, Terraces, Flag Poles, Flags, Banners

Decks, patios and terraces should be compatible with a building and its site in design, proportion and materials.

Flags, banners and flagpoles visible from a public way require review. Commercial flags are also subject to review and to other City regulations concerning signs.

Demolition

Demolition of any structure or portion thereof within the District requires the approval of the Historic District Commission except when ordered by the Building Inspector or other safety officer for reasons of public health and safety. The Commission's authority covers outbuildings as well as the principal structure on a property. Demolitions should be contemplated with great caution, since they irreversibly alter a historic building, its site and the neighborhood; less

drastic alternatives may be available. Renovation and/or replacement in kind is preferred to demolition of all or a portion of historic structures. Decorative architectural elements such as trim, brackets, bays, doors, windows and porch columns should not be removed without HDC approval. Preference will be given to replacement in kind.

Before a Demolition Permit will be issued by the Framingham Building Commissioner, complete plans for reuse of the site must be approved by the Framingham Historic District Commission.

Doors and Entrances

Original or historically significant doors should be retained whenever possible. Replacement of original or historically significant doors, if necessary, should match the existing in material, size, design and location. In addition to the door itself, original or architecturally significant surround details, such as frames, fanlights, sidelights, canopies, transoms and other decorative trim should be preserved or, if necessary, replaced in kind.

When there is a need for a storm or screen door, a wood unit is preferred. The original entrance design and arrangement of door openings should be retained. New openings in existing walls are discouraged. Altering the size of the original door openings for the purpose of fitting stock doors is also discouraged.

Fences

Fences are subject to HDC review and must be reviewed and approved prior to installation.

Fences in front of buildings should be open and low (not exceeding 42" in height) so as not to block the public view. Fences should be compatible with the existing building in material, proportion, style and historic period and should enhance the streetscape. Architecturally significant fences should be maintained and repaired or restored whenever possible. More solid, taller fences are appropriate to provide privacy or safety but should be located where they have minimal visual impact from public ways. These fences should also be appropriate to the structure and surrounding area. Five feet is the recommended maximum height. Vinyl, stockade, chain link, light gauge metal and concrete block are not appropriate materials for fences and generally will not be approved.

Foundations

Existing Foundations: In both residential and commercial buildings, the typical foundation material is unpainted brick or granite. In all cases, the material and design of the original or architecturally significant foundations should be preserved whenever possible. When repair and re-pointing is necessary, refer to the Masonry Guideline.

New Foundations: Often, new foundations are substantially higher than historic ones. Every effort should be made to design a low foundation and screen a foundation that must be high due to building code conditions.

Gutters

Gutters are exempt from HDC review by the City's General Ordinances. However, the HDC encourages the retention and repair of historic wood or copper gutters, or the installation of gutters with a similar profile where historic gutters must be replaced.

Gutters can dramatically affect the appearance of a building's cornice and roofline, and should be chosen carefully to preserve the original appearance of the building. New gutters or

downspouts should not obscure or require the removal of historic architectural features such as cornices, brackets, or cornerboards.

Lighting

Original light fixtures, where they survive, can be important and rare architectural features, contributing significantly to the structure's historic resource value. For this reason, original or later appropriate light fixtures should be retained, and if possible, repaired using recognized preservation methods. Deteriorated or missing elements should be replaced with like materials. Replacement should be based, if possible, on physical or documentary evidence. New light fixtures should be of a design and scale that is appropriate to the style and period of the building rather than imitate styles earlier than the building or structure.

Modern Equipment and Energy Conservation

Modern equipment includes utility meters, HVAC equipment, ducts, fans, solar panels, antennas, cellular towers, satellite dishes, propane tanks, and dumpsters. Modern equipment should, in general, be located to minimize visibility from a public way, and should not be located in a front yard, whenever possible. Visible elements should be designed or use colors to blend the equipment into its surroundings or be screened by an appropriately designed and scaled fence or plant material.

All such equipment is subject to review by the HDC.

The HDC encourages the use of "green" technology where possible, to further adapt historic buildings to modern living. Solar panels – mounted on the roof of a building, solar shingles, or freestanding panels – are allowed within the districts as long as they do not interrupt the historic appearance and character of the property and the larger district.

Solar panels on a roof should be installed so that they are reversible and do not do any permanent damage to the roof face or structure. The slope of the solar panel should match the slope of the roof, and they should be installed no more than three inches above the roof surface.

If possible, solar panels should be installed on a roof face that is not visible from the public way or in a location that is shielded by architectural features such as a chimney or dormer. The placement of solar panels on a non-historic addition is preferable to their installation on a historic section of roof. If it is not possible to mount them on a roof not facing the public way, consideration should be given to ground-mounted solar panels that can be sited in a section of the property that is not visible from the public way.

The color of the panels and any associated mechanical equipment should match the roof surface and/or be painted to match the walls of the house.

Paint Colors Exterior

See guideline above regarding unpainted masonry surfaces.

Paint and stain colors are associated with particular architectural styles and periods, and reflect settlement patterns and development in specific geographic locations. Exterior paint COLOR selection, *while not regulated by the Commission*, should ideally reflect the structure's period and style. Interior paint colors are not regulated by the Commission. For examples of period specific paint color, and information on choosing colors, particularly how many colors to choose, can be found on Cambridge's Tips for Painting Historical Exteriors at: <http://www.cambridgema.gov/historic/aboutchc/paintinghistoricexteriors>.

Porches and Balconies

Porches can be an important character defining feature, and their ornamentation is often a character defining element in the style of a building. Original or architecturally significant porches should be retained and restored. Where replacement of deteriorated elements is necessary, the replacement should match the original in appearance, material, and design. Replacement of decorative elements with simpler design or synthetic materials is discouraged. Enclosure of porches that obscures the original design character is discouraged. The addition of new porches should follow the design of porches on buildings of similar period and massing.

Where balconies are original or historically/architecturally significant to a building, they should be preserved and repaired. The addition of new balconies on historic buildings is inappropriate unless documentation shows that they previously existed. Balconies on non-historic or new buildings may be allowed provided they do not dominate the elevation or detract from a significant streetscape. The number of balconies and the design should be consistent with balconies on other buildings in the district.

Roofs, Roofing, Dormers

The shape of a roof is a key feature of a historic building and relates to the period of development as well as the style. Roof shape and slope should be retained on historically significant buildings.

Historic rooflines and shapes, as well as their wood, slate, or terra cotta covering, should be repaired and maintained. Asphalt shingle or other synthetic materials are allowed only for like-kind replacement. While roofing materials are subject to HDC review, their color is not.

The original historical significance of the roof shall be retained when considering the addition, relocation, or removal of dormers. Dormers should be appropriate in scale and in harmony with the original building proportions. Dormers that are part of the original structure should not be altered. New and existing dormers should match. New dormers should correspond with the rest of the building's elements and composition.

Shutters

Shutters were an important decorative and practical element of many residential styles. Original or architecturally significant shutters should be retained and restored where possible. If replacement is required due to deterioration, the replacement should match the original in material, size, and design, including shutter hardware. New shutters, including replacement of missing shutters, may be added to windows provided shutters are appropriate to the style of the building, and are designed and installed in a historically appropriate manner. Historically appropriate shutter hardware should be used.

Exterior Signage Visible from the Public Way

All signs must conform to the City of Framingham's ordinances regarding signs (General By-Laws Article VII, "Signs and Districts"). Property owners seeking to alter a sign or install a new sign should first submit a Sign Permit Application to Inspectional Services, to be sure that the proposed signage conforms to the ordinances.

Signs located around the Centre Common and along Pleasant Street will be sited in a largely residential area. Their design and size should be respectful of the surrounding historic buildings. Internally illuminated signs are not appropriate.

Signs in the more commercial part of the Centre Common Historic District, closer to Route 9, should be in keeping with historic sign designs. Traditionally commercial buildings were constructed with a signboard above the doors and windows of the main façade. This signboard should be maintained on buildings where it is still found, and new signs sized appropriately to fit within the existing signboard. Signs should not be placed so that they obscure significant architectural elements, such as a cornice or door surround. Synthetic materials such as vinyl should be avoided in favor of wood. Lighting should be installed to focus on the sign and prevent spillage.

Sign applications should include a plot plan showing where all signs are to be installed and the direction they will face; color renderings showing all text or designs on the sign; and scale renderings providing all measurements, including thickness.

Steps, Stairways, Railings

Original features and detailing of stairways, steps and railings should be retained or repaired in the same design and material. If they are not original, it is recommended that the replacement be appropriate to the style of the building. Approval for temporary or permanent ADA ramps or similar structures shall not be unreasonably withheld. Any such structure proposed for a commercial property should be appropriate to the style of the building.

Windows, Storm Windows, and Transoms

Windows

The functional and decorative features of windows that help define the building's historic character should be identified, retained, and preserved. These features include but are not limited to frames, sash, muntins, glazing, sills, heads, hoodmolds, lintels, and paneled or decorated jambs and moldings.

Original window sash and related trim should be retained and repaired except in cases where they are beyond repair. The complete replacement of all windows in a building in which only a few are in disrepair is discouraged.

Original historic glass should be retained wherever possible.

If replacement becomes necessary due to severe deterioration, the windows should duplicate the existing material, design, configuration and hardware. Replacement windows should match the original window characteristics. This includes characteristics such as the number and size of divided window panes and the size and configuration of sash and muntins.

Transoms

Transoms are defined as a window located above a door and are usually made of glass. Transoms and their associated trim and dressing should be repaired rather than replaced. If replacement is necessary it should be consistent with existing transom windows. Transoms should not be covered or filled. If the transom glass requires replacement, the new glass should match the style and historic era of the structure. For example, stained glass would not be consistent with the style of a colonial era structure.