

Section 2 DESIGN GUIDELINES

2.1 District, Neighborhoods & Streetscapes

St. Charles' Historic Districts developed from the mid 19th to the early 20th centuries and most blocks retain their original character of site and setting. Dwellings were built with consistent setbacks from the street, with front yards for landscaping and plantings, and with the houses' porch and main entrances oriented towards the street. Most blocks were laid out with similar lot dimensions and distances between homes, creating a constant rhythm and pattern in the location of dwellings and their intervening spaces. This streetscape character is retained on most blocks in the locally designated districts and should be preserved and maintained. The following guidelines provide information on changes and alterations to a property's site and setting which could affect the architectural appearance of the neighborhood and district.

Size and Scale

Recommended

- ✓ Retaining the historic relationship between buildings

Not Recommended

- ❑ Introducing a new building, or feature that is out of scale with the neighborhoods' historic character

Period of Construction

Recommended

- ✓ Use Architectural style or features from a common time period of neighborhood.

Not Recommended

- ❑ Using an architectural style from an earlier time period or much later time period.

Architectural Dominant Style

Recommended

- ✓ Preserve buildings and streetscape and landscape features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the neighborhood.
- ✓ Where possible, base new features on historical, pictorial, or physical documentation. New features should be compatible with the historic character of the neighborhood.

Not Recommended

- ❑ Removing or radically changing those features of the district or neighborhood which are important in defining the overall historic character so that as a result, the character is diminished.

Infill

Recommended

- ✓ Design parking areas to be unobtrusive, with preference towards shared parking in side and rear locations.
- ✓ Designing and constructing new additions to historic buildings when required by the new use. New work should be compatible with the historic character of the district or neighborhood in terms of size, scale, design material, color, and texture.

Not Recommended

- ❑ Placing parking facilities directly adjacent to historic buildings which would cause the removal of historic plantings, relocation of paths and walkways, or blocking of alleys.
- ❑ Introducing new construction into historic districts that is visually incompatible or diminishes historic relationships within the district or neighborhood.

Demolition and Moving Buildings

Recommended

- ✓ Removing non-significant buildings, additions, or streetscape features which detract from the historic character of the neighborhood.
- ✓ Moving buildings into the locally designated districts if compatible with the district's architectural character through style, period, height, scale, materials, setting, and placement on the lot.
- ✓ Moving buildings such as garages or other outbuildings from one location to another on the same lot is acceptable if the relocation will not be readily visible or is otherwise compatible with the building site.

Not Recommended

- ❑ Removing a historically significant or contributing building or streetscape feature that is important in defining the overall character of the neighborhood.
- ❑ Demolition of a building or architectural feature without an architectural review
- ❑ Altering streetscape features by unnecessary widening of pavement, changing paving materials, or introducing inappropriately located new streets or parking lots.
- ❑ Removing or relocating historic buildings or features of the streetscape in a manner that diminishes the historic relationship between buildings, features and open space.
- ❑ Demolition or removal of architectural features which contribute to the streetscape, such as iron fencing or decorative historic streetlights.
- ❑ Moving buildings that contribute to the historic and architectural character of the neighborhood

New Residential Buildings

Few vacant lots exist in the St. Charles Historic Districts. However, it is important that any new construction on these lots be compatible with neighboring historic dwellings. The general approach to new construction is for it to be compatible with adjacent dwellings or to blend in with the district through replication. Compatible means reinforcing typical features that buildings display along the block such as similar roof forms, materials, windows and door sizes and placement, porch size and location, and foundation heights. Dwellings that are constructed to be exact copies of historic buildings forms or architectural styles are called replications.

It is important that new construction complement the dwellings found along its specific block. Each new building has to be evaluated within its exact location and surroundings. A design that may be appropriate along one block may not work for a different block. For example, a new dwelling compatible with one-story Bungalow designs may not be appropriate for a block where two-story Queen Anne architecture predominates and vice versa. Commonality of architectural styles balanced with variety and diversity shall be a goal.

Recommended

- ✓ Variations of asymmetrical, rectangular, and square forms are the most appropriate for the locally designated areas.
- ✓ New construction should not vary more than one-half story from the predominate building height typical of dwellings along a block. In most blocks, this would require new construction to be no more than two-and-one-half stories.
- ✓ Roof shape and pitch should match other dwellings on the block. Roof slope for new construction should be a minimum of 6:12 to a maximum of 12:12. (6:12 refers to six inches of rise to 12 inches of run in measuring slopes) Roof forms of gable and hipped variations are more common on most blocks than roof forms which are flat, mansard or gambrel forms.
- ✓ Front and side yard setbacks should respect the setbacks found along the block on which the building is sited.
- ✓ Porches should have roof forms of gable, hipped or shed design and at least cover the entrance. Porches extending partially or fully across the front of the building are recommended.

Not Recommended

- ❑ Using forms such as geodesic domes and A-frames.
- ❑ Installing an open wood deck without a roof attached to the front elevation of a building.
- ❑ Using slab foundations or at-grade foundations on fronts or readily visible sides of buildings.
- ❑ Using white or light mortars which provide too much contrast with typical dark brick colors.
- ❑ Using masonite, grained pressboard, aluminum or vinyl siding, or synthetic stucco.
- ❑ Replacing a character-defining streetscape or landscape feature when the feature can be incorporated as part of the new construction.
- ❑ Using dark tinted windows, reflective glass and coatings for windows is discouraged on readily visible sides of the building.

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Recommended Continued....

- ✓ Porches should have columns and railings with balusters that are traditional in design and compatible with the overall character of the building.
- ✓ Height of foundations should generally be similar to foundation heights in the area. Foundation heights can increase along the sides or at the rear of a building if necessary to follow slope contours.
- ✓ Porch heights and depths should be consistent with adjacent dwellings.
- ✓ The use of stone, cast concrete block, split-faced block, brick or veneered poured concrete above grade.
- ✓ If the new construction is of brick, the brick should closely match typical mortar and brick color tones found in the locally designated districts and along the block.
- ✓ If the construction is of frame, the preferred exterior material is wood or a material which is similar to original materials in the area like clapboard, shingle, stucco, etc. If wood siding is used, its exposure should reflect the exposure of traditional wood siding (i.e. smooth-side out).
- ✓ Wood construction is preferred for windows. However, the use of vinyl clad or aluminum clad windows is also acceptable as long as they are sized to be compatible with historic window openings.
- ✓ The details and textures of building materials should be applied in a manner consistent with traditional construction methods (including consistent use on all sides of the building) and in a manner compatible with surrounding structures.

Recommended New Construction

Traditional Architectural Style

Use of traditional architectural styles that fit within the neighborhood is strongly recommended. A building does not need to look exactly like the rest of the homes on the block, but adding architectural details such as a front porch, turret, and thicker casings on the corners and around windows and doors can make a positive impact. Designs derived from newer suburban-style subdivisions are often not compatible with traditional neighborhood and may appear out of scale for the building lot and out of proportion compared to neighboring houses.



Sensitivity to Height

Height can have a major affect on how your new home fits into a traditional neighborhood. Be aware of and consider the existing heights of the surrounding homes. While it is not always possible to maintain the same height as your next door neighbor, staying within the average height of the homes in the neighborhood and using traditional architectural details, such as a lower-pitched open porch, lower roof lines, or stepped back second stories, can soften height differences and help the house more readily blend with the neighborhood.



Recommended New Construction

Garage location and orientation

Most older homes have detached garages, especially those that have alleyways. If an attached garage is preferred, locating the garage in the rear of the home is suggested. If that is not possible, consider a side load garage so that the front elevation looks like it is part of the home and the garage door is not visible from the street. If the garage must be a front load, setting the garage back by 5 ft or more is recommended so that the house itself is the most visible element when viewed from the street.



Setbacks

Using similar front and side setbacks to those of your surrounding neighbors is recommended, provided the setbacks meet current zoning regulations. If there are various setbacks within the neighborhood, consider

