

**Vienna Historic Preservation Commission**  
**Vienna Central Historic District**  
**Design Guidelines**

Amended & Adopted by Vienna City Council

4/23/2009

**PART 1:**  
**GUIDELINES FOR SITE DESIGN**

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**SETBACKS:**

1. Maintain the pattern and alignment of buildings established by the traditional setbacks from the street.

**ENTRANCE ORIENTATION:**

2. Maintain the traditional placement or location of site entrance.

**PLANT BEDS AND PLANTINGS:**

3. Locate plantings in traditional areas of the site.
  - \* Along fences, walks, foundations, and at porch edges are good locations.

**FENCES:**

4. Maintain traditional fence lines where they existed.
  - \* Preserve historic fences in their original location.
5. Chain link fencing can be installed on the backyard of an interior lot if it will not be visible from the street. If any portion of the fence is visible from the front of the property, it should be disguised with plantings or appropriate fence materials.

**PAVING:**

6. Where historic paving materials exist in the area, consider using similar materials for new paving.
  - \* Preserve historic paving materials in their original location.

**PARKING LOTS:**

7. Plan parking lots to be sub-divided into small components so that the visual impact of large paved areas is reduced.
  - \* Provide planting buffers at the edges of the parking lots.
  - \* Also include islands of planting in the interior of lots.
  - \* Side or rear locations are preferred for parking lots.

**SIGNS:**

Signs should be subordinate to the architecture and overall character throughout the district. All sign applications must meet the City of Vienna's Zoning Ordinance section 82-84 on signage. The types and sizes of signs allowed are defined in the City's Zoning Ordinance. These guidelines also apply:

8. **No permanent moveable or portable signs are allowed in any location in the District.**
9. Position flush-mounted signs so they will fit within architectural features.
  - \* Locate flush signs so they do not extend beyond the outer edges of the building front.

- \* Avoid obscuring ornament and detail.
10. Locate projecting signs along the first floor level of the façade.
    - \*Positions near the building entrance are encouraged.
  11. Where several businesses share a building, coordinate the signs.
    - \*Align several smaller signs, or group them onto a single panel.
    - \*Use similar forms or backgrounds for the signs to visually tie them together.
  12. Locate pole-mounted signs in landscaped areas.
  13. Sign materials should be compatible with the building materials.

**PART 2:  
GUIDELINES FOR THE REHABILITATION OF CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

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These guidelines, #14-31, apply to the rehabilitation of all contributing structures in the "Historic District" in addition to the site guidelines, #1-13.

**ESTABLISHING A GENERAL APPROACH:**

The primary objectives of a rehabilitation plan should be:

- \*The preservation of all important or "character-defining" architectural materials and features of the building; and,
- \* Provision for a safe and efficient contemporary use.

**WHAT DO I NEED TO DO MY PROJECT?**

A plan should contain strategies for these three types of work:

- \* **Protection and maintenance** of historic features that survive in generally good condition.
- \* **Repair** of historic materials and features that are deteriorated.
- \* **Replacement** of historic materials and features with new materials where deterioration is so extensive that repair is not possible.

A project MAY also include strategies for:

- \* **Alterations** to the exterior of the historic building.
- \* **Additions** of new rooms or spaces to the exterior of the historic building.

**General Preservation Policy:**

Preservation of historic features of buildings is a top priority, and alterations and repairs should accurately represent the historic qualities of the buildings. Original documentation, such as old photographs and plans, should be used for restoration work whenever possible. Where these are not available, interpretations of similar elements that occurred in the area may be considered.

**DESIGN CHARACTER:**

14. Respect the original design character of the building.
  - \*Analyze the building to determine which elements are essential to its character.
  - \*Don't try to make it appear older (or younger) in style than it really is. The genuine heritage of the District should be expressed.

## **CHANGE IN USE:**

15. New uses that require the least change to existing structures are encouraged.
  - \*Every reasonable effort should be made to provide a compatible use for the building that will require minimal alteration to the building and its site.

## **REPAIRING ORIGINAL FEATURES:**

16. Avoid removing or altering any historic material or significant architectural features.
  - \*Original materials and details that contribute to the historic significance of the structure are qualities that should be preserved whenever feasible. Rehabilitation work should not destroy the distinguishing character of the property or its environment.
  - \* Examples of historically significant architectural features are porches, window trim, and chimneys. Other significant elements may be the overall building form, its roof shape or material finish.

## **17. PROTECT AND MAINTAIN EXISTING SIGNIFICANT STYLISTIC ELEMENTS:**

- \*Protection includes the maintenance of historic material through treatments such as rust removal, caulking, and re-painting.

## **18. USE PROCEDURES FOR CLEANING, REFINISHING, AND REPAIRING HISTORIC MATERIALS.**

## **19. MINIMIZE INTERVENTION WITH HISTORIC ELEMENTS:**

- \*Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible.
- \*Patch, piece-in, splice, consolidate, or otherwise upgrade the existing material, using recognized preservation methods, whenever possible.

## **20. THE REPLACEMENT OF MISSING PORTIONS OF AN ELEMENT MAY BE INCLUDED IN REPAIR ACTIVITIES.**

- \* Match the original material when feasible. A substitute material is acceptable if the form and design of the substitute conveys the visual appearance of the original.

## **21. WHEN DISASSEMBLY OF AN HISTORIC ELEMENT IS NECESSARY FOR ITS REHABILITATION, USE METHODS THAT MINIMIZE DAMAGE TO THE ORIGINAL MATERIALS.**

- \*Always devise methods of replacing the disassembled materials in their original configuration.

## **REPLACING ORIGINAL FEATURES:**

22. Replacement of missing architectural elements should be based on accurate duplications of original features.
  - \*In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match that being replaced in design, texture, and other visual qualities.
  - \*The design should be substantiated by physical and/or pictorial evidence, whenever feasible.

## **23. USE MATERIALS SIMILAR TO THOSE EMPLOYED HISTORICALLY WHERE FEASIBLE.**

- \*If alternate materials must be used (such as vinyl siding or hearty plank), they should match the original in appearance as closely as is possible.

**24. WHERE RECONSTRUCTION OF AN ELEMENT IS IMPOSSIBLE BECAUSE OF A LACK OF HISTORICAL EVIDENCE, THEN A NEW DESIGN THAT RELATES TO THE BUILDING IN GENERAL SIZE, SCALE AND MATERIAL MAYBE CONSIDERED.**

\*Use design elements that reflect the building's style.

**EXISTING ALTERATIONS:**

25. Preserve older alterations that have achieved historic significance.

\*Many changes to buildings that have occurred in the course of time are themselves evidence of the history of the building and its neighborhood. These changes may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected.

\*An example of such an alteration may be a porch or a kitchen wing that was added to the original building early in its history.

26. More recent alterations that are not historically significant may be removed.

**SERVICE AREAS AND EQUIPMENT:**

27. Screen equipment and trash containers from public view.

\*The visual impact of mechanical and electrical equipment should be minimized.

28. Satellite Dishes

\*Use is strongly discouraged in visible areas. If it **must** be placed in view, it should be screened with fencing and or plantings. If roof placement is needed, must be located on rear section of roof.

**ACCESSORY OR AUXILIARY BUILDINGS:**

29. Accessory buildings can contribute to the overall character of the principal structure. Their orientation, design, scale, materials, and architectural details should be preserved. If repairs are necessary, they should be made using the same materials or ones that are very similar to the originals.

30. Accessory buildings that have deteriorated beyond repair, should be replaced with a design and materials that are compatible with the principle structure in siting, scale, and fenestration.

31. Proposed changes to non-significant structures should likewise be compatible with the character of the property and the Historic District. If metal buildings must be used, they should be located at the rear of the property where as not to be seen from the street.

**NOTE:**

\*If the rehabilitation project involves a commercial type of building, also see guidelines #32-36.

\*If the rehabilitation project involves a residential type building, also see guidelines #37-43.

**PART 3:**

**SPECIAL GUIDELINES FOR COMMERCIAL TYPE BUILDINGS**

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These guidelines apply to the rehabilitation of commercial type structures in the "Historic District" in addition to the general guidelines, #1-31.

**DISPLAY WINDOWS:**

32. Maintain the large display windows that are characteristic of commercial buildings.
- \*The traditional "storefront" image should be preserved at the street level.
  - \*When replacing glass or restoring windows, maintain the original size and shape of the storefront opening.

**SECOND STORY WINDOWS:**

33. Preserve the original size and shape of upper story windows.

**BUILDING ENTRANCES:**

34. Maintain original recessed entries where they exist.

**ROOFS:**

35. Preserve original roof forms where they contribute to the historic character of the building.
36. Maintain original roof materials where they are visible to the street when feasible.

**PART 4:****SPECIAL GUIDELINES FOR RESIDENTIAL TYPE STRUCTURES**

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These guidelines apply to the rehabilitation of residential type structures in the "Historic District" in addition to the general guidelines, #1-31.

**MATERIALS:**

37. Use material similar to those employed historically where feasible.
- \*Using modern siding treatments like vinyl or aluminum is discouraged. If synthetic siding is used, it should match the original material in appearance as closely as possible. Choose siding that most closely matches the shape, size, profile, and texture of wood siding. Hardboard products such as cement-wood boards (hearty plank) are preferable to vinyl or aluminum siding. New vinyl siding should be 4" or 5" lap siding and not Dutch lap siding.

**TRIM AND ORNAMENT:**

38. Maintain historic trim and ornament.
- \*Preserve existing trim in place where it survives.
  - \*Where original trim is missing, replace missing elements with designs to match the original.
  - \*Use original proportions for trim designs.

**ROOFS:**

39. Preserve roofs at their original pitch.
40. Preserve the character of original roofing materials.

**WINDOWS:**

41. Maintain historic window proportions.
42. If storm windows are used, they should not obscure original window proportions.

**ENTRANCES:**

43. Maintain the historic character of the building entrance.

\*Where porches exist, they should be preserved.

\*Where original doors contribute to the historic character, they should be preserved.

**PART 5:****GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

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In general, new buildings should be harmonious in form, material, sitting and scale with the established district character. In addition to the general site design guidelines #1-13, the following guidelines apply to all new construction in the "Historic District."

**BUILDING ORIENTATION:**

44. Align the façade of the new building with the established setbacks for the area.

**BUILDING FORM AND SCALE:**

45. New buildings should appear similar in mass and scale with historic structures in the area.

\*Where new building facades will be wider than those found traditionally, subdivide the surface into portions similar in scale to historic facades by varying set-backs, roof forms, and materials.

46. Use building forms that match those used historically.

47. Use roof forms that match those used historically.

**MATERIALS:**

48. Use building materials that are similar to those employed historically for all major surfaces.

\*Materials for roofs should be similar in appearance to those used historically.

\*New materials may be used if their appearances are similar to those of the historic building materials.

\*Use finishes similar to others in the district.

**ENTRANCES:**

49. Orient the main entrance of the building in a manner similar to established patterns in the district.

\*If porches are typical of the district, use similar elements to define entrances to new buildings.

**WINDOWS:**

50. Use of window sizes and proportions similar to historic designs is encouraged.

**NOTE:** If the new construction includes an addition to an existing building, also see guidelines #51-56.

**PART 6:****ADDITIONS TO "CONTRIBUTING" STRUCTURES**

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These guidelines apply for additions to contributing structures in the "Historic District" in addition to guidelines, #1-13 and #44-50.

### **RELATIONSHIP TO MAIN BUILDING:**

51. Additions to existing buildings should be compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the main building and its environment.

\*Additions include porches and bay windows, as well as entire wings or rooms.

### **ORIGINAL DESIGN CHARACTER:**

52. Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to buildings should not obscure or confuse the essential form and character of the original building.

53. Avoid new additions or alterations that would hinder the ability to interpret the design character of the historic period of the district.

\*Alterations that seek to imply an earlier period than that of the building are inappropriate.

\*Alterations that seek to imply an inaccurate variation on the historic style are also inappropriate.

### **LOCATION:**

54. When locating additions to historic buildings, maintain the pattern created by the repetition of building fronts in the area.

\*Site additions back from the building front so they will not alter the historic rhythm of building fronts.

55. Locate additions so they will not obscure or damage significant ornament or detail.

\*Place additions to the side or rear.

\*Avoid impacts to special moldings, decorative windows or dormers.

### **MATERIALS:**

56. Use building materials that are compatible with the original building.

## **PART 7**

### **DEMOLITION**

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The demolition of historic buildings diminishes the built environment and creates unnecessary waste. Demolition of historic buildings should be avoided whenever possible. When a historic building is demolished rather than reused, everyone pays an economic cost.

If a demolition is unavoidable, every effort should be made to mitigate the loss. Options include locating a buyer who might have an alternative use for the building or relocating the building to another site. If all efforts have failed, buildings of particular significance should be carefully photographed and documented prior to demolition. Special architectural features and ornamentation can be saved and incorporated into the design of the replacement structure.

### **DEMOLITION OF A NON-CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE (non-contributing defined as not being 50 years old):**

57. Demolition or relocation of a main non-contributing building or structure, a portion of a main non-contributing building or structure, or a non-significant building or structure should not have a substantial adverse effect on the aesthetic, historic, or architectural significance of the Historic District. In the case of structures proposed for demolition, a site plan for the property must be presented to the Historic Preservation Commission for approval **prior to demolition**. No structure,

regardless of age, will be approved for demolition without having a plan for proposed site improvements and a timetable for completion. Site improvements will fall under the guidelines for new construction. (Part 5)

**Note:** Mobile homes that have been grandfathered in to the Historic District cannot be replaced by another mobile home when demolished or removed. Mobile homes are inappropriate for historic districts – see local zoning regulations.

**DEMOLITION OF A CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE (contributing defined as an historic resource being 50 years or older):**

**58. The demolition of an historic resource, including significant outbuildings, must meet one of the following criteria: a) the proposed replacement structure is more appropriate and compatible with the historic character of the district than the building proposed for demolition, or b) the structure poses an imminent threat to public health or safety.**

59. All demolition applications must present plans for the use of the site after demolition. The Historic Preservation Commission will review the plans using the guidelines for new construction of residential or commercial buildings.

60. All demolition applications should provide a comparison between the cost of rehabilitating the current historic resource and the cost of demolition and the subsequent improvements to the site.

61. An application to demolish a structure that poses an imminent threat to public health and/or safety must be accompanied by a report from the City Inspector and photographs depicting the current condition of the building.

62. Demolition or relocation of a **non-significant addition** to a portion of a main contributing building or structure, or for a **non-significant building or structure secondary to the main contributing building or structure**, should not have substantial effect on the aesthetic, historic, architectural, or archaeological significance of the Historic District.

**DEMOLITION FOR A REPLACEMENT PROJECT OF SPECIAL MERIT:**

63. Demolition or relocation of a contributing or noncontributing building or structure in a Historic District which would have a substantial adverse effect on the aesthetic, historic, architectural, or archaeological significance of the Historic District can be performed if a replacement project is of special merit. For a replacement project to be of special merit, it must meet the following criteria:

- a. it must have significant benefits to the city of Vienna or the community by virtue of exemplary architecture, specific features of land planning, or social or other benefits having a high priority for community services; and,
- b. it must clearly serve the public interest to a greater extent than the retention of the present building(s).

**DEMOLITION BY NEGLECT:**

64. Neglect of historic buildings is hazardous and detrimental to the individual property and the surrounding area and/or district. Because property owners are legally responsible for providing ordinary maintenance and repair, neglect should be avoided.



65. a. The term "Demolition by Neglect" refers to the gradual deterioration of a building when routine or major maintenance is not performed. The types of deficiencies identified as "Demolition by Neglect" includes any structural deficiency or a deficiency in a building part, which left unrepaired could lead to deterioration of the building's structural frame. A building is also identified as "Demolition by Neglect" if it is open to entry by vandals or vagrants.

b. The owner of an historic landmark or a contributing building or structure within an historic district or within a proposed historic district shall comply with all applicable codes, laws, and regulations governing the maintenance of property. It is the intent of this section to preserve from deliberate or inadvertent neglect the exterior features of buildings and structures designated as contributing or significant, and the interior portions thereof when such maintenance is necessary to prevent deterioration and decay of the exterior. All such buildings or structures shall be preserved against such decay and deterioration and free from structural defects through prompt corrections of any of the following defects:

1. Facades which may fall and injure persons or property;
2. Deteriorated or inadequate foundation, defective or deteriorated flooring or floor supports, deteriorated walls or other vertical structural supports;
3. Members of ceilings, roofs, ceiling and roof supports or other horizontal members which sag, split or buckle due to defective material or deterioration;
4. Deteriorated or ineffective waterproofing of exterior walls, roofs, foundations, or floors, including broken windows or doors;
5. Defective or insufficient weather protection for exterior wall covering, including lack of paint or weathering due to lack of paint or other protective covering; or
6. Any fault or defect in the building which renders it not properly watertight or structurally unsafe.

c. Any owner who fails to maintain their building or structure in compliance with this section shall be subject to the remedial procedures of section 67 as well as the penalties.

66. The Historic Preservation Commission shall help insure that structures located within the local historic district are not allowed to be demolished through the neglect of the owners.

67. The process by which a building is officially cited for Demolition by Neglect involves several stages. They are as follows:

- a. Initial identification of such properties may be made by a Commission member, staff inspection of the neighborhood, or by referral from someone in the area
- b. The report of the building with photos is presented to the Commission at their public meeting.
- c. If the Commission determines the property qualifies for Demolition by Neglect, the Commission petitions the Zoning and Planning Officer to follow through with notification to the property owner and code enforcement procedures, including condemnation if required, to protect any historic building from Demolition by Neglect.