

WHAT ARE DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR HISTORIC DISTRICTS?

Design guidelines are policy statements that guide communities on historic preservation matters. Guidelines enable local preservation and planning commissions to make consistent and fair decisions based on a uniform standard when property owners seek to renovate or construct new buildings in a historic area.

Design guidelines typically address both rehabilitation and new construction in the district. Some guidelines also cover signs, site design, demolition, moving structures, streetscapes, and treatment of individual landmarks.

Design guidelines can be either prescriptive or performance-oriented. **Prescriptive** guidelines mandate a certain design solution. These guidelines generally tend to be quantifiable. It is clear when one has met the guideline. For example, a guideline that states: "New buildings shall be set back twenty-five feet from the front property line" is prescriptive.

Performance-oriented guidelines devise several design solutions that would meet a desired qualitative outcome. For example, "New buildings should appear to be set back from the street a distance that is similar to those of historic structures in the area" is a performance-oriented guideline addressing the same issue of front yard setback.

Design guidelines begin with an introduction which gives some broad information about the community or historic district. It often includes a district map, history of the area, overview of the existing ordinances and explanation of what design guidelines are and when to use them.

They also affect the appearance of individual properties or the overall character of a district. They also serve as an educational and planning tool for property owners and their design professionals who seek to make improvements that may affect historic resources.

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What will the design guidelines look like?

Design guidelines appear in many forms, some of which are discussed later in this document, but comprehensive ones will contain the following four elements.

First guideline element

A *description* of the significant features of the design topic to be discussed, along with a statement of broader, related policies.

Second guideline element

The *guideline text* itself, addressing the design topic. This defines a quality of performance or provides a specific measure that one should meet.

Third guideline element

Any *amplifications of the design guideline*, where appropriate; these may suggest specific ways in which property owners or developers may meet the guideline's requirements.

Fourth guideline element

Illustration(s) that will clarify the intent of the guideline. Positive illustrations of appropriate solutions to the guideline should be used, as well as ones that depict inappropriate actions.

HISTORIC SHUTTERS

Wood shutters are common to Galveston buildings and have been used since the 19th century. Shutters provide protection from the heat and provide some protection from storms. Louvered or slatted shutters, also known as blinds, were placed on most window openings and many door openings. The louvers were usually operable.

Also see "Storm-Safety Features on Historic Buildings" on page 47.

2.22 Replace shutters where they previously existed.

Appropriate

- Use replacement shutters that match the size and scale of the original shutters.
- Match the width of new or replacement shutters to the width of the associated window or opening.
- Use replacement shutters that appear to be operable (even if they are not).
- Use replacement shutters that match the size of the window openings.

Inappropriate

- Do not use metal or vinyl storm shutters on windows that are visible from the street.
- Do not install shutters that are narrower than the associated window or opening.



Match the width of new or replacement shutters to the width of the associated window or opening.



Do not install shutters that are narrower than the associated window or opening.

How will the guidelines be organized?

Design guidelines can be organized in a variety of ways: by construction activity, by specific building component or by building type.

For example, all work related to rehabilitation of historic buildings may be presented in one chapter, while guidelines for new buildings may be in another.

Building Component

For example, guidelines for windows, for both their rehabilitation and standards for new windows, may be presented in one section.

Building Type

For example, design guidelines for commercial buildings may be presented in one section while guidelines for single family residential-type buildings may be in another.

In fact, most guideline documents will use a combination of these organizing principles, in a hierarchical arrangement as described earlier.

Some design guidelines may also include zoning items. For example, prescriptive standards that define setback

limits, building heights and floor area ratios are traditionally found in zoning ordinances, but may also appear in the design guidelines. Some communities even opt to provide separate zoning regulations for historic districts or as overlay zones.

How will the guidelines be used?

Design guidelines can be an advisory process, in which property owners voluntarily use the guidelines. In some cases, the property owner may appear voluntarily before the historic preservation commission to hear their comments, but compliance with their comments is purely voluntary.

Other communities require property owners to attend a design critique of their proposed actions, but compliance is not required. This system operates on the premise that well-informed property owners will "do the right thing," if they are informed.

Sometimes communities use the guidelines with special incentive programs that encourage investment in the historic district. For example, many Main Street programs offer low-interest rehabilitation loans to qualified property owners, on the condition that certain design guidelines

		TABLE OF CONTENTS	
1.0 Introduction	1	4.4 Rehabilitation Standards-Residential-Type Buildings	44
Significance of the historic district	1	Doors	44
Goals of the historic district	2	Fences	45
Reasons for design review	3	Porches	45
Concept of the historic district	3	Retaining Walls	46
		Roofs	47
2.0 Brief Architectural History	9	Siding	48
General History and Development	9	Windows	48
Settlement Phase	12		
Camp Phase	12	5.0 Design Standards for New Construction	51
Town Phase	14	5.1 Designing in Context	51
Stabilization Phase	16		
Interim Period	16	5.2 General Standards for New Construction Projects	56
Resort Phase	16	Building Scale	56
General Architectural and Town Plan Concept	17	Building Height	56
		Building Length	59
3.0 General Design Principles	19	Building Mass	59
Views	19	Human Scale	60
Settlement Patterns	20	Building Width	60
Parking Facilities	22	Building Setbacks	61
Landscape Design	24	Building Materials	61
		Architectural Details	62
4.0 Design Standards for Rehabilitation	27	Building Proportions	63
4.1 General Principles for Rehabilitation	27	Architectural Style	64
		Landscaping and Site Work	66
4.2 General Rehabilitation Standards-Existing Buildings	30		
Appropriateness of Use	31	6.0 Relocation of Historic Buildings	67
Preservation of Significant Original Qualities	31		
Replacement or Substitution of Original Features	33	Separate documents are available for special design standards for the following character areas within the Historic District. A map illustrating the character areas is found on page iii.	
New Systems and Code Compliance Issues	34	#1. East Side Residential Character Area	
Existing Alterations on Historic Buildings	36	#2. North End Residential Character Area	
Additions to Existing Buildings	36	#3. South End Residential Character Area	
		#4. North Main Street Residential Character Area	
4.3 Rehabilitation Standards-Commercial-Type Building	38	#5. Main Street Residential/Commercial Character Area	
Typical Building Components	38	#6. Core Commercial Character Area	
		#7. South Main Street Residential Character Area	

This table of contents for guidelines in Breckenridge, Colorado, organizes the guidelines by type of work (rehab versus new construction) and building type (commercial versus residential).

are followed. In this case, the owner voluntarily enters into the program, but then compliance is required in order to receive the funds.

In the majority of situations, however, design review is mandated under a historic preservation ordinance, and property owners must participate in the review discussions and they must abide by the findings of the commission. This application is the basis for the model process that follows.

Each of these alternative uses requires personnel to administer them in various forms. The chart on the page that follows summarizes the start-up and operating requirements of each of these applications of design guidelines.

It is important to distinguish the requirement of an owner to submit a design for review from the requirement to comply with design recommendations of a review board. Some systems require that owners submit their design

for discussion and yet do not require approval of the review board as a step in receiving construction permits.

Each method requires start-up efforts, such as development of guidelines and operating procedures; administration is also required. The start-up costs and administrative effort generally increase as the degree of control increases over development.

Advocacy Program - Guidelines are promoted for voluntary use by a public service organization.

Advisory Process - Property owners are required to listen to a critique of their project, but are not required to comply with the recommendations.

Incentive Program - Special loans or grants are offered to owners who will comply with the guidelines.

Regulated District - Review and compliance are required by historic preservation ordinance, or in some cases by covenant.

ALTERNATIVE USES OF DESIGN GUIDELINES IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS

<u>FUNCTION</u>	<u>APPLICATION</u>			
	ADVOCACY PROGRAM	ADVISORY PROCESS	INCENTIVE PROGRAM	REGULATED DISTRICT
Review	Voluntary	Mandatory	Voluntary	Mandatory
Compliance	Voluntary	Voluntary	Mandatory	Mandatory
Staff Assistance	Useful	Needed	Required	Needed
Start-up Costs	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
System Maintenance	Useful	Useful	Needed	Required
Maintenance Costs	High	Moderate	High	Moderate

How will the design guidelines affect the character of the district?

If well-written and informative, the design guidelines themselves will encourage appropriate design in the district, but those that are administered through an ordinance requiring approval of the commission will have a more noticeable effect. In essence, the greater the degree of control that is applied, the more direct the effect of the guidelines.

DEGREE OF CONTROL OF THE OUTCOME OF DESIGN REVIEW

