

Historic Preservation Commission Design Guidelines for Exterior Changes

The HPC is charged with promoting the “preservation and appreciation of the historic nature of the Town as a whole and specific sites and structures within the Town for the education and welfare of the residences of the Town, visitors thereto, and sojourners therein (Article 15.1 of the Ordinances).” To these ends, the HPC engages in a variety of activities including the review of permit applications by property owners to the Planning Commission for exterior modifications to their houses or accessory structure or to construct a new building.

Changes to structures requiring review by the HPC

Reviews by the HPC focus entirely on the exterior of private and public buildings and accessory structures. No review by the HPC is required for modification to interiors. A review by the HPC is required of plans to construct new private and public buildings, to make changes in the exterior of existing structures that will be visible from a public way, and/or to relocate, move, or demolish structures. The HPC does not review the following:

- Routine exterior maintenance, including painting;
- Construction of or change in fences and walls, trellises and screens, tree houses, oil and gas tanks and AC equipment, shutters, decks, patios, and temporary structures.

Criteria for designation of historic or “contributing” structures

In order to protect the significant elements of the Town’s historic character, the HPC has developed criteria for classifying structures as “contributing” (to the historic character) or “non-contributing”. The period of historic significance is the same as on Washington Grove’s Nomination to the Register of Historic Places: the years from 1873 to 1937. The former is when the Methodists purchased the 268-acre property in order to establish the camp meeting. The closing year marks the dissolution of the camp meeting association, the end of the era of seasonal occupancy and the transition to secular administration and incorporation as a Town. As a general rule, structures constructed during this period of significance are classified by the HPC as contributing if the structure retains enough of its architectural integrity that the original building or significant portions thereof, may still be discernible within the present structure.

In general, structures are considered to be non-contributing if they were constructed after 1937 or have been so altered that the character or form of the original structure is no longer evident. However, the HPC will also consider classifying structures as contributing if they represent outstanding examples of characteristic architecture from later periods or if they or their owners played a significant role in the Town’s history. The closing year will be re-examined periodically against the state and national standards that evaluate age as a criterion for determining contribution.

Design criteria used to evaluate building applications

This document describes architectural features that the HPC regards as character defining and hence important to preserve. The Nomination Application describes certain characteristics as “notable elements of the Town’s architectural heritage”. These provide a basis for the following list. Though the range of style includes Carpenter Gothic, Victorian, Dutch Cottage and Art & Crafts elements, the overall nature of this heritage is “one of adaptive reuse coupled with an eclectic spirit”. Modifications to existing houses should in all cases be compatible with each individual house as well as the overall character of the Town. In our comments and recommendations to those proposing to modify the exterior of their houses or construct new ones, we are reviewing the proposed designs in light of the features listed below that we seek to preserve.

Scale and Massing

- One of the most common features of Grove houses is the *steep pitch of the roofs (6:12 or greater)*. In referring to Carpenter Gothic Cottages, the Application takes as one of the most notable elements of Town architecture the “high-pitched, steep gable ends, with their attendant high narrow interior spaces.” It goes on to note that “the high-pitched roof has as its most direct antecedents in the Grove the tents used by the early Methodists for their summer retreats.”
- *Modest height with the dominant eave lines at one or one & one-half stories*, preserving the scale of the original cottage and compatibility with adjoining houses.
- *First floor lines close to the ground*, encouraging a close relation to the outdoors.
- *The overall form of the house consisting of a primary “high-pitched roof with lower additions off to the sides” or to the rear*, the rooflines of which are designed to break up the overall mass of the house and be secondary in effect to the original roof.
- *Multiple rooflines and features such as dormers* that reduce the scale of the roof surfaces.
- *Porches around the front and/or sides* that bring together the different parts of the house. “This porch motif ... is even more sensible in the Grove, since the use of the porches was and is so much a part of the total social fabric of the Town.”

Siting and Orientation

- *The houses do not present a single façade* in terms of materials or detailing. They are conceived to “blend into their surroundings” and ensure the “lots meld with the natural surroundings without boundaries.” They secondarily relate to several orientations (walkways, roads, alleys, and side yards) through the use of multiple porches and entrances.
- *The relationship with the walkway should be reinforced* as the primary symbolic entrance, best achieved with a porch., “from which the residents greet their strolling neighbors and enjoy the cool evening air.”
- *Garages should be visually separated from the main house* and/or garage doors should not share a principal face of the residence. The use of breezeways or enclosed halls to pull a house and an accessory structure together is not encouraged; instead maintenance of the original separation of the main building from the accessory structures is seen as a means of preservation of the original character of the Town.

Materials

- *Surfaces of natural materials* including wood siding, cedar shingles, stucco, etc. that are part of “that non-tangible element which makes the Grove houses unique, that of integrating the houses into the forest. This “Town within a forest” is also a town of the forest for the height of the houses, their narrow peaked roofs reaching for the sky and the fact that the majority are of wood make them blend into their surroundings so well that it is often difficult to know precisely what the extent of the house really is.”

Elements and Detailing

- *“Eclectic integrated assemblages”* of details.
- *Ample use of windows on all sides of the house*, single or in pairs, proportioned and positioned consistent with the original windows, encouraging connection between the inside with the outside.
- *Use of “high windows in the ends of the gables*, both rectangular and the more evocative Gothic rose windows, ...to introduce light into the long narrow spaces, ...to lighten the gable end, thus allowing those inside to view the trees and the constantly changing light as the sun moved through them.”
- *Extensive use of gabled, shed or eyebrow dormer windows* in the high-pitched roofs making possible the “use of the high interior spaces as a ‘renovated’ second floor.”
- *Doors and large windows opening onto porches* to encourage the integration of inside and out.

- **Wide-boarded window trim** where located in wood siding and no trim where located in stucco.
- **Gable and barge board ornamentation and porch detailing** compatible with “the use of gingerbread (that) is perhaps the most interesting aspect of Grove houses. Certainly its use is one of the reasons that houses take on a unifying character....Taken from the Victorian style of carving the woodwork of porches, dormers, and other elements of the façade, this scroll work is in keeping with the early residents’ desire to upgrade their cottages.”
- **Classical detailing of porches** that can reflect the eclectic spirit of the cottages.
- The scale & character of new construction should be compatible with the scale & character of this type of detailing.

Adopted March 15, 2005