# NORHILL HISTORIC DISTRICT
# DRAFT DESIGN GUIDELINES

**City of Houston, Texas**

January 2026

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**NOTE**
These design guidelines were prepared pursuant to the direction given by the City Council of the City of Houston by Ordinance No. 2016-848 and have been prepared in accordance with the authority granted to the City of Houston under the Constitution and laws of the State of Texas, to protect and promote the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION



## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

The following guidelines are a means to maintain the historic character of the district and guide future development. Property owners and their design professionals, builders, or contractors must consult these design guidelines as early as possible when planning a project that involves a change to the exterior of a building, including construction of a new building, within these historic districts. The City of Houston Office of Preservation (HOP) staff and the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission (HAHC) will also refer to these design guidelines when considering applications for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA).

This document contains both measurable (quantitative) standards and qualitative guidelines. The measurable standards apply to the construction of additions and new buildings; these requirements generally must be met to obtain a COA. The qualitative guidelines encompass the aesthetic elements and are determined on their own merits, considering the circumstances of a particular property and the work that is being proposed. Preservation staff are available for consultation as you plan your project. This pre-planning opportunity helps avoid pitfalls and delays in the review process.

### 1.1.a. Background

The Norhill neighborhood is a designated historic district in the City of Houston. These guidelines provide guidance on the interpretation of the approval criteria in the city code of ordinances. Norhill mainly consists of small one-story single-family residences, with some two-story four-square buildings primarily on corner lots. Most homes in Norhill followed designs from pattern books such as E.L. Crain's *Crain Ready-Cut Houses*, rather than being architect-designed. A defining feature of the historic Norhill neighborhood is the widespread use of kit and pattern houses built during the same period, resulting in a highly cohesive neighborhood in terms of architectural elements and building scale. The Norhill neighborhood is a deed restricted community overseen by the Norhill Neighborhood Association (NNA). This is a separate and unrelated entity from the City of Houston. The NNA deed restrictions are outside the scope of regulation and enforcement authority of the City of Houston.

## 1.1.b. Work Authorization

As with all historic districts in Houston, approval must be given from the HOP for exterior alterations to a structure visible from the street in the Norhill Historic District. Approval comes in the form of a COA.

The NNA's architectural review board may separately approve work in the district, per the neighborhood's existing deed restrictions. These two review processes are conducted by separate and unrelated entities. Obtaining approval from HOP and NNA is the sole responsibility of the individual property owner prior to undertaking alterations to an existing historic building.

These guidelines remove the administrative approvals of shall approve additions (also known as mandatory approvals) provided in subsection (a) of section 33-241.1, as allowed per sec. 33-241.1. (g). The HAHC must review any proposed addition including rear, side, or partial two-story additions of any kind in accordance with the provisions of this document.

# 1.2. DEFINITIONS

**Accessory Building or Structure:** A secondary building or structure, such as a shed or gazebo, which contains no living space and the use of which is associated with the principal building on a property.

**Alteration:** Any change to the exterior of a building, structure, object or site. Alteration shall include, but is not limited to, replacing historic material; changing to a different kind, type or size of roofing or siding materials or foundation; changing, eliminating, or adding exterior doors, door frames, windows, window frames, shutters, railings, columns, beams, walls, porches, steps, porte-cocheres, balconies, signs attached to the exterior of a building, or ornamentation; or the dismantling, moving or removing of any exterior feature. Alteration includes expanding an existing structure or the construction of an addition to an existing structure. Alteration includes the painting of unpainted masonry surfaces. Alteration does not include ordinary maintenance and repair, or the addition or replacement of fences that are not otherwise regulated by the Historic Preservation ordinance or these guidelines.

**Balustrade:** A railing supported by balusters, especially an ornamental parapet on a balcony, porch, bridge, or terrace.

**Building Lot Coverage:** The maximum Building Lot Coverage (BLC) includes the living area (as defined in this section) as well as porches and all other structures such as garages, carports, port-cochères, and outbuildings (Refer to Section 2).

**Carport:** A structure that is either free-standing or attached to a garage intended to provide covered parking (Refer to Section 2).

**Certificate of Appropriateness:** A current and valid permit issued by the HAHC or the Director, as applicable, authorizing the issuance of a building permit for construction, alteration, rehabilitation, restoration, relocation or demolition required by the historic preservation ordinance (Refer to Section 3).

**Certificate of Remediation:** A current and valid permit issued by the HAHC authorizing the issuance of a building permit for construction, alteration, rehabilitation, restoration, relocation or demolition intended to correct action taken contrary to the requirements of the historic preservation ordinance, and shall serve as a COA for the enforcement and violation of this article, and is granted by the same standards that a COA is granted.

**Conditioned Space:** Space within a building which is heated or cooled.

**Context Area:** For interior lots, the context area shall be interior lots in the entire Norhill Historic District neighborhood. This is due to the area having a high rate of architectural uniformity. For corner lots, the context area shall be other corner lots within the Norhill Historic District (Refer to Section 3).

**Contributing Structure:** A building, structure, object or site that reinforces, or that has conditions, which, if reversed, would reinforce, the cultural, architectural or historical significance of the historic district in which it is located, and that is identified as contributing upon the designation of the historic district in which it is located. The term also includes any structure that was identified as "potentially contributing" in any historic district.

**Dutchman Repair:** A technique for replacing a damaged section of material with a matching piece. It is used in many fields, including woodworking, masonry, and historic building preservation.

**Grade:** The average elevation as it exists on a lot prior to development and unaffected by construction techniques such as berming, fill, and landscaping.

**HAHC**: The Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission.

**HCAD:** Harris County Appraisal District.

**HPAB:** Houston Preservation Appeals Board.

**In-kind:** Of the same type, design, and material.

**Inset and Recessed:** Set inside a frame, set back or indented by 1-3/4" from the surface of the exterior casing. Recessed elements can add visual interest and complexity to a building's design. For example, recessed windows, doorways, and other features can create depth and shadow. See the window diagram in Section 5.3.b for details.

**Living Area:** The living area includes all portions of a property that are conditioned, part of, or attached to the primary residence. Living area contributes to the overall massing and visual compatibility of the site. Its square footage is measured from the outside face of an exterior wall to the outside face of an exterior wall and includes the thickness of the exterior wall. If there is a second floor living space above a first-floor porch the first-floor porch square footage will be counted as part of the living area (Refer to Section 2).

**Mass (Massing):** A combination of building volume (height x width x depth) and the arrangement of shapes/forms that make up the building. Each dimension also contributes individually to the overall visual effect of the building.

**National Park Service (NPS):** The government agency central to historic preservation in the U.S. Its many roles include administering federal grant programs, setting standards for preservation, and listing properties to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) to protect cultural resources nationwide. The NPS also manages nationally significant historic sites, the documentation of historic cultural resources through programs like HABS/HALS/HAER, and the provision of technical expertise and guidance to state and local preservation offices and tribes.

**National Register of Historic Places (NRHP):** The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, NPS's NRHP is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.

**Non-Contributing Structure:** A building, structure, object or site that does not reinforce the cultural, architectural, or historical significance of the historic district in which it is located and is identified as noncontributing upon the designation of the historic district in which it is located.

**Outbuilding:** Any detached or subordinate building that is located on the same property as the main building (does not include garages) (Refer to Section 2).

**Ordinary Maintenance and Repair:** Any work to correct or prevent deterioration, decay or damage to a building, structure, object or site (or any part thereof), provided that the work does not change the design, character, texture or material of any exterior feature or constitute an 'alteration' as defined above. Ordinary maintenance and repair do not include replacement of historic material. Ordinary maintenance and repair do include the leveling of a foundation in a way that does not raise or lower the foundation (Refer to Section 5).

**Period of Significance:** According to the NPS and the NRHP, the "period of significance" is the specific span of time during which a property was associated with important historical events, people, or unique characteristics that qualified it for listing. The Norhill neighborhood was initially developed in 1920. Per HCAD records, 93.4% of existing residential structures were built by 1930, apart from a few structures constructed in the

1940s. The period of significance for all residential properties is from 1920-1930. The period of significance for commercial properties is 1920 – 1950 (50 years from the Norhill Historic District designation date).

**Porte-Cochère:** A structure that is a minimum of 80% open on three sides and is attached to the side of a house that allows a vehicle to be able to pass through. The structure must be integrated into the design of the house, and it must be one story. No addition may be added above a porte-cochère at any time (Refer to Section 2).

**Repoint:** The process of removing deteriorated or damaged mortar from the joints between bricks or stones and replacing it with new mortar to restore the wall's integrity and appearance.

**Ridge Height:** The vertical distance from the ground to the highest point on a building's roof, as measured from existing natural grade relative to a fixed point in the right-of-way, such as the crown of the street or a manhole cover. The "overall height" of a building is based on ridge height and does not include architectural features such as chimneys or decorative roof features such as crests or finials.

**Scale:** The relationship between two or more objects, such as the size of windows, doors, and porches in relation to people ("human scale"), or the size of a new building as compared to its neighbors.

**Setback:** The distance from the property line to the front or side walls, porches, and exterior features of a building or structure.

**Shall-Approve Addition:** *Also known as Mandatory Approvals for Additions.* The City of Houston's historic preservation ordinance provides that the Planning Director shall issue a COA for the construction of any one, but not a combination, of the following additions to a contributing structure in a historic district: rear addition, partial second-story addition, or side addition. This has been referred to in the past as "shall approve" criteria, which is a different set of criteria conditions from City of Houston Code of Ordinances 33-241: Exterior Alteration, Rehabilitation, and Restoration of Historic Properties. In order to qualify for mandatory approval, your project must meet all the conditions for one of these types of additions.

**Shiplap:** Wooden boards with overlapping joints, often used for walls and ceilings, that also serve as a structural component, particularly in older homes with ballon framing.

# SECTION 2: MEASUREABLE STANDARDS

The purpose of this section is to provide a clear set of directions for Norhill homeowners who wish to alter their homes while maintaining and embracing the existing character of the neighborhood. These aim to preserve the historical integrity, neighborhood livability, and long-term sustainability of individual homes and the neighborhood at large. Projects reviewed under this section must comply with the measurable standards to be considered for approval.

# 2.1. INTRODUCTION

Additions and renovations must be compatible with the neighborhood's historic infrastructure. To that end, additions and modifications to an existing home should be supportive of and subordinate to (i.e. appear secondary to) the original historic home. Measurable standards may help promote compatibility in terms of setbacks, height, scale, and proportions. It is important to retain the character of the historic houses, and this generally means not removing distinctive elements such as chimneys, decorative venting, and dormers.

Not all characteristics in this section apply to commercial properties. Most properties in the Norhill Historic District are residential; therefore, commercial properties will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For more information on commercial property reviews and considerations, please refer to section 4.2.k.

The measurable standards apply to the construction of additions and new buildings. These requirements generally must be met to obtain a COA.

# 2.2. SIZE

## 2.2.a. Residences

Maximum ratios of the **living area** (see definition section) within the house to the lot size are listed in the table below and are expressed as FAR (floor-to-area ratio). These ratios allow for growth while still preserving the historic character and scale of the neighborhood. Norhill is comprised of 855 lots ranging from 5,000 to 6,240 sq ft in size. Based on HCAD information, the most common lot size in Norhill is 100' x 50', which is 5,000 sq ft (63.2% of total lots). This is followed by 104' x 50', which is 5,200 sq ft (11.8% of total lots). To determine the maximum sq ft allowed for your lot, multiply the area of the lot by the FAR percentage shown in the table below.

*Example:*

- (5,000 sq ft lot x 0.460 FAR) = 2,300 sq ft max. living area for the entire lot.
- (5,200 sq ft lot x 0.455 FAR) = 2,364 sq ft max. living area for the entire lot.
- (5,512 sq ft lot x 0.444 FAR) = 2,450 sq ft max. living area for the entire lot.

| Based on HCAD Lot Sizes | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Dimension | Lot Size | # of Lots | % of Lots | Living Area * | FAR |
| Standard Lot | 100' x 50' | 5000 sf | 540 | 63% | 2300 sf | 0.460 |
| | 104' x 50' | 5200 sf | 101 | 12% | 2364 sf | 0.455 |
| | 104' x 53' | 5512 sf | 56 | 7% | 2450 sf | 0.444 |
| | 104' x 54' | 5616 sf | 48 | 6% | 2493 sf | 0.444 |
| | 104' x 60' | 6240 sf | 20 | 2% | 2700 sf | 0.433 |
| | sub total | | 765 | 89% | | |
| Non-standard | Varies | <5000 sf | 6 | 1% | 2000 sf | 0.400 |
| | Varies | 5250-5450 | 20 | 2% | 2334-2421 sf | 0.444 |
| | Varies | 5550-5600 | 4 | 0% | 2464-2486 sf | 0.444 |
| | Varies | 5650-6157 | 23 | 3% | 2480-2698 sf | 0.438 |
| | Varies | >6750 sf | 37 | 4% | 2800+ sf | 0.415 |
| | sub total | | 90 | 11% | | |
| | TOTAL | | 855 | 100% | | |

* Living Area: All portions of a property that are conditioned or finished.

**Included in FAR Calculations:**

- Primary structures (house or main building).
- Sunrooms or enclosed porches with walls and windows.
- First-floor open or screened-in porches with conditioned space above it.
- Attics or garage structures that are finished as well as conditioned.
- Conditioned space that is part of the primary structure or contributes to the overall massing of the property, including (but not limited to) conditioned attics, conditioned attached or detached garages, and conditioned accessory structures of any kind.

**Excluded from FAR Calculations:**

- Open or screened-in porches with no conditioned space above it.
- Uncovered decks or patios.
- Roof overhangs.
- Attics or garage structures that are finished only but not conditioned.
- Unconditioned space that is part of the primary structure but does not contribute to the overall massing of the property, including (but not limited to) unconditioned attics, carports, detached unconditioned garages, or other unconditioned accessory structures.

## 2.2.b. Porches

Porches are not counted as part of conditioned space *unless* the total square footage for all porches is larger than 240 sq ft in which case the amount of square footage above 240 sq ft is included in the FAR. If there is living space above a porch, the living space and the porch beneath are included in the total living area. Front porches shall be excluded from FAR, so long as they remain unconditioned with typical proportions as seen throughout the contributing context area. Porte-cochères and carports are not included in the 240 sq ft limit. No addition may be added above a porte-cochère or front porch at any time.

## 2.2.c. Detached Garages, Enclosed Storage, and Other Outbuildings

Detached garages and outbuildings must be located on the rear of a lot subject to the 60 ft front setback outlined in 2.3.g. When the combined square footage of the existing and proposed detached buildings exceeds 585 sq ft, the excess square footage shall be included in the living area and count towards calculating the maximum living area.

*Example:* The proposed footprint of a new detached garage is 600 sq ft. Considering the proposed building exceeds 585 sq ft, the remaining 15 sq ft will count towards the maximum living area calculation (FAR) of the property (600-585 = 15 sq ft).
The square footage of carports attached to a garage is not included in the Living Area calculation. The roof of such a carport cannot project forward of a garage by more than 20 ft or be wider than 21 ft.

# 2.3. SETBACKS

Typical homes in Norhill have a 15 ft front setback. All homes must be 15 ft from the front property line (front setback).

Roof overhangs need to be in the scale and character of the original house. Roof overhangs for additions, outbuildings, and garages must be a minimum of 2 ft from any property line. Any addition, outbuilding, or garage that is 3 ft from the property line must meet the overhang minimum rather than match the original house.

No accessory structures may be in the front 15 ft setback line.

Porches may extend over the front building setback line by no more than 6 ft. However, in no case may a porch be forward of the prevailing porch setback of the contributing neighboring properties on either side of the lot in question.

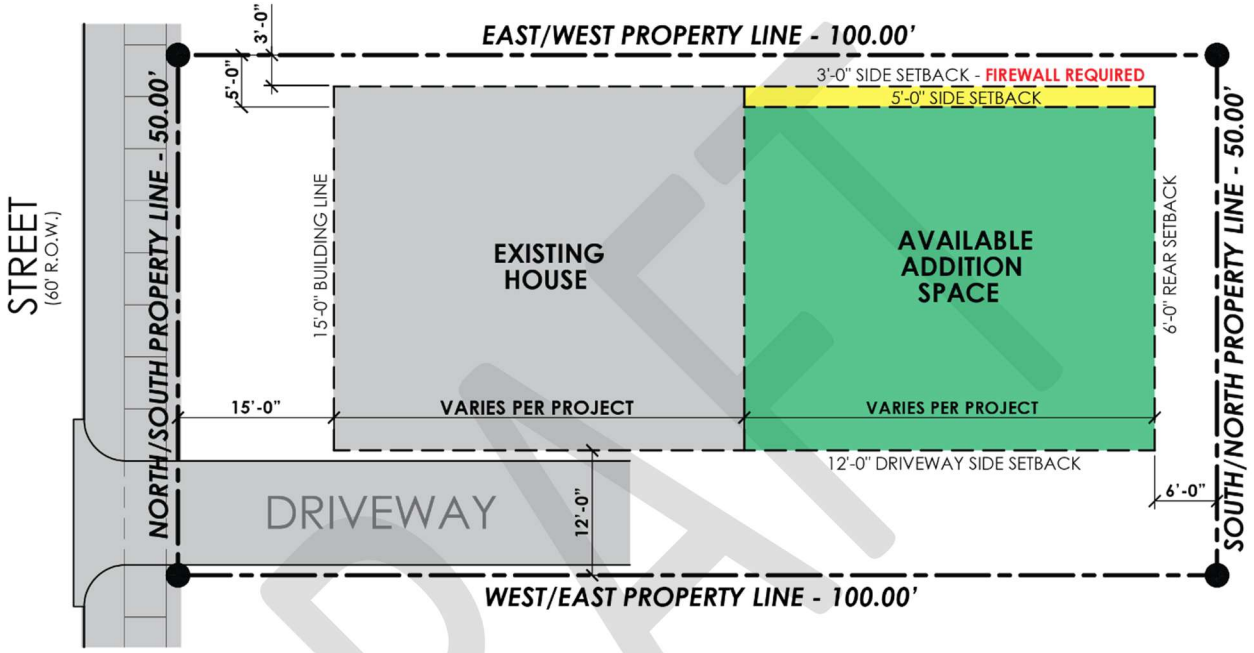
Current City of Houston code allows for a 3 ft side setback so long as the wall is fire-rated and has 25% or less glazing. Otherwise, a 5 ft setback is required.

****NOTE** - All diagrams featured in section 2.3 are representations only and are meant to serve as an aid to the reader. Each project is unique to the individual property and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.**

## 2.3.a. Interior Lot One-Story Rear Addition

Additions shall be complementary to the existing house.

- 3 ft minimum side setback with a fire rated wall and 25% or less glazing, otherwise, 5 ft.
- 12 ft minimum side setback on the driveway side.
- 6 ft rear setback.




## 2.3.b. Interior Lot One-Story Side Addition

- 35 ft minimum front setback.
- 3 ft minimum side setback on non-driveway side with a fire-rated wall and 25% or less glazing, otherwise 5 ft.
- 12 ft minimum side setback on the driveway side.

**Only one side addition allowed.

** A projecting bay window can be forward of the minimum front setback.

** A projecting bay window can extend a maximum of 3 ft from the side addition.

** A projecting bay window must be less than 8 ft wide.

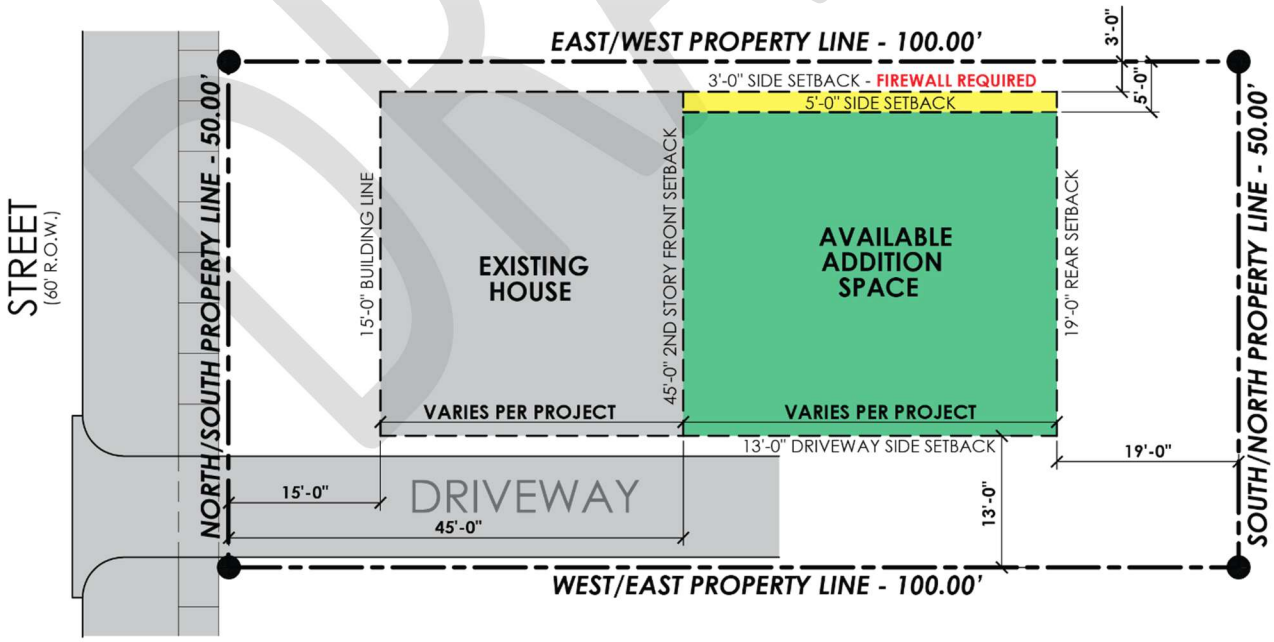
## 2.3.c. Interior Lot Two-Story Rear Addition

The addition shall be subordinate to the existing house and in keeping with the scale and overall massing of the original structure. The owner is encouraged to limit the addition's width, parallel to the street, to reduce the visual impact and massing to maintain the compatibility of the structure to contributing structures. No two-story addition shall extend past the sides of the original structure, nor shall they extend forward more than 50% of the depth of the original structure.

- 45 ft minimum front setback from the property line.
- 3 ft minimum side setback non-driveway side with a fire-rated wall and 25% or less glazing, otherwise 5 ft.
- 13 ft minimum side setback on the driveway side.
- 19 ft minimum rear setback from back property line (assuming a 15 ft front setback).

The minimum rear setback may be offset by the same linear footage if the front setback is deeper than 15 ft.

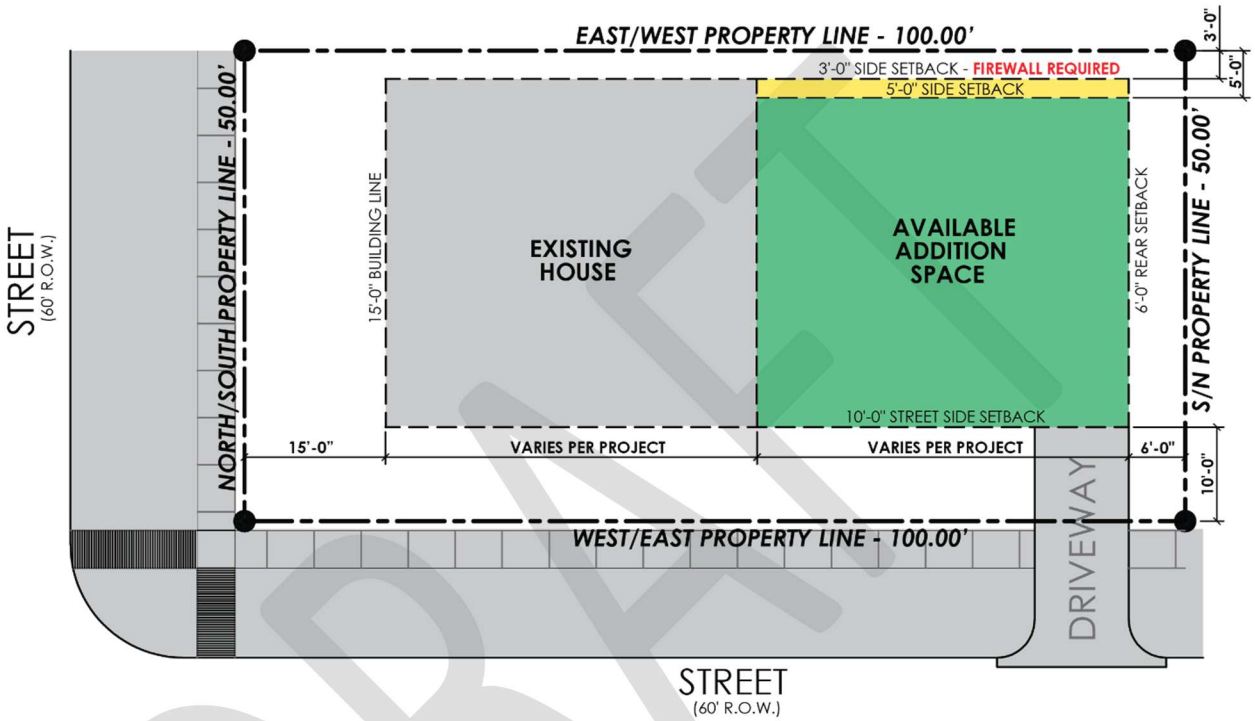
*Example:* A front setback of 18 ft would result in a minimum rear setback of 16 ft. Second-story balconies will be considered within the context of the neighboring properties and on a case-by-case basis. These types of balconies are discouraged unless modest and compatible with the existing contributing structures. No second-story balcony can be built within 19 ft of the rear property line.



## 2.3.d. Corner Lot One-Story Rear Addition

All homes must be 15 ft from the front property line (front setback).

- 3 ft minimum side setback with a fire-rated wall and 25% or less glazing, otherwise 5 ft.
- 10 ft minimum side setback on the side street face.
- 6 ft rear setback




## 2.3.e. Corner Lot One-Story Side Addition

(Atypical lots may require individual consideration)

- 35 ft minimum front setback.
- 3 ft minimum side setback on non-driveway side with a fire-rated wall and 25% glazing, otherwise 5 ft.
- 12 ft minimum side setback on the driveway side.

** Only one side addition is allowed.

** A projecting bay window can be forward of the minimum front setback.

** A projecting bay window can extend a maximum of 3 ft from the side addition.

** A projecting bay window must be less than 8 ft wide.

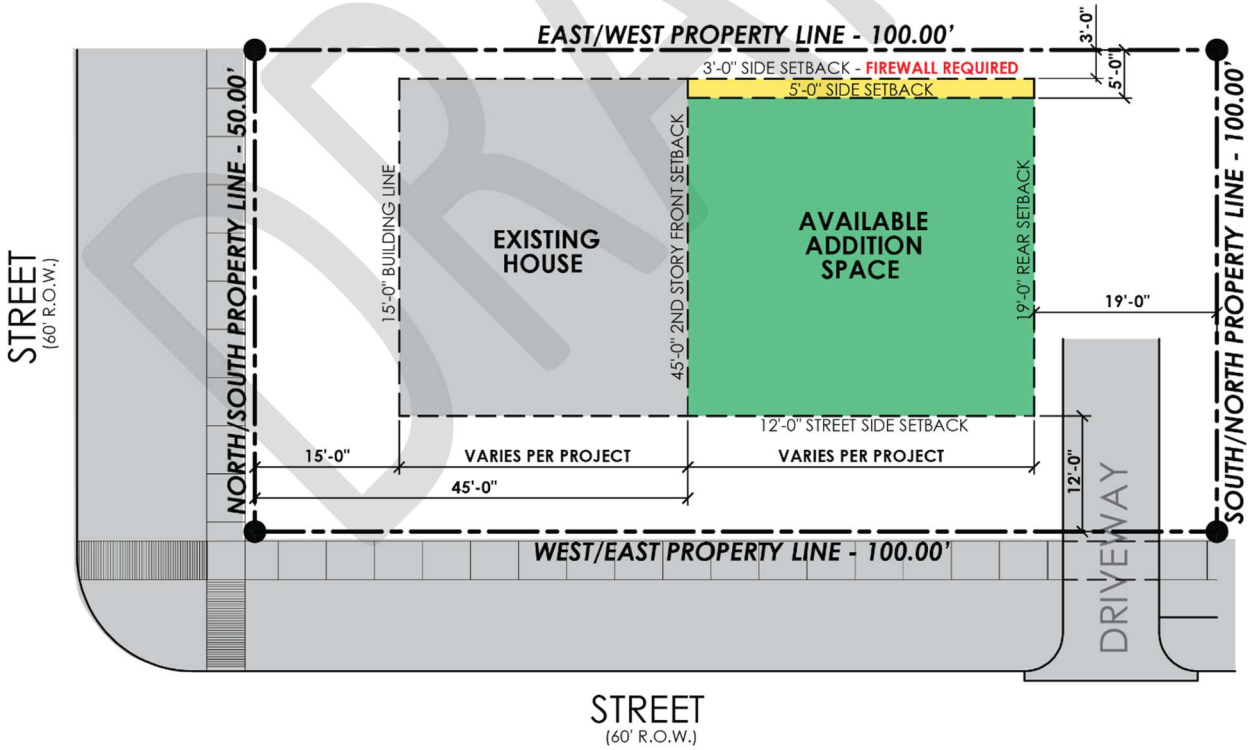
## 2.3.f. Corner Lot Two-Story Rear Addition

The addition shall be subordinate to the existing house and in keeping with the scale and overall massing of the original structure. The owner is encouraged to limit the addition's width, parallel to the street, to reduce the visual impact and massing to maintain compatibility with contributing structures. No two-story addition shall extend past the sides of the original structure, nor shall they extend forward more than 50% of the depth of the original structure.

- 45 ft minimum front setback from the property line.
- 3 ft minimum side setback with a fire rated wall and 25% or less glazing, otherwise 5 ft.
- 12 ft minimum side setback on the side street face.
- 19 ft minimum rear setback from back property line.

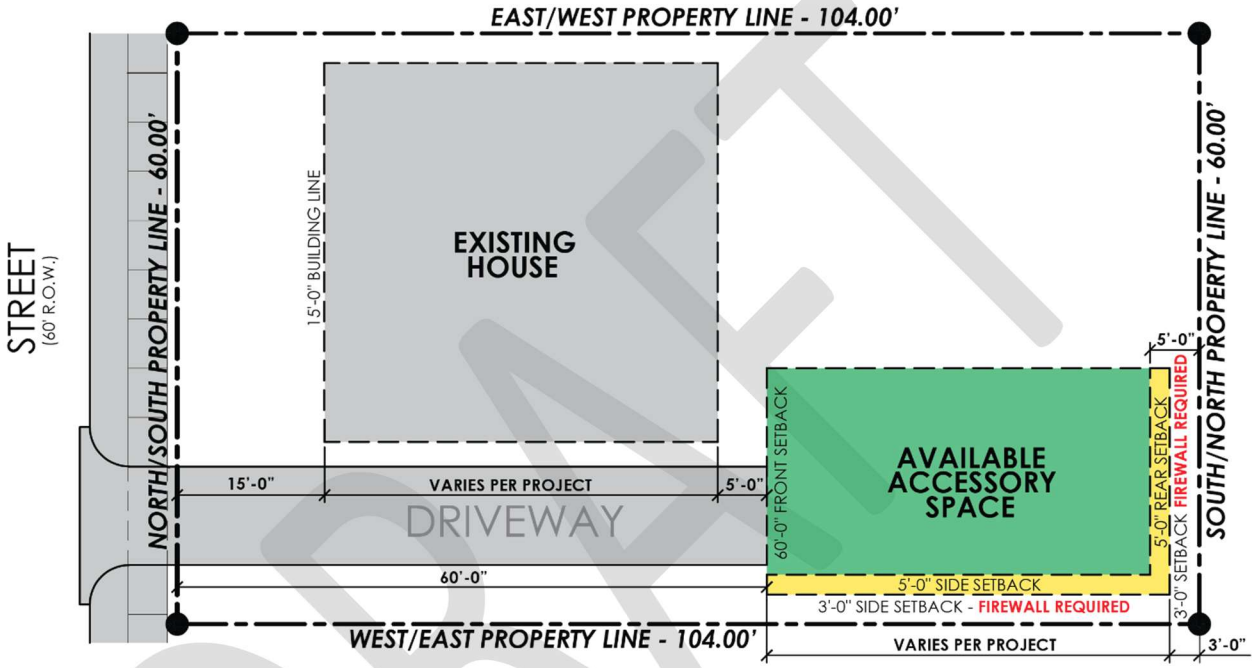
The minimum rear setback may be offset by the same linear footage if the front setback is deeper than 15 ft.

*Example:* A front setback of 18 ft would result in a minimum rear setback of 16 ft. Second-story balconies on the rear or street side of a lot will be considered within the context of the neighboring properties and on a case-by-case basis. These types of balconies are discouraged unless modest and compatible with existing contributing structures. No second-story balcony can be built within 19 ft of the rear property line.



## 2.3.g. Interior Lot Porte-Cochère, Carports, Auxiliary Buildings, and Garage Construction/Addition

- 60 ft minimum front setback from the front property line to any garage or outbuilding (carports included).
- 3 ft minimum side setback with a fire rated wall and 25% or less glazing, otherwise 5 ft.
- 5 ft minimum between exterior walls of garage and house.
- 3 - 5 ft minimum rear setback as per city code.




** The width of a garage parallel to the rear property line is limited to 23 ft in width if the rear wall is set back 3 - 5 ft from the rear property line.

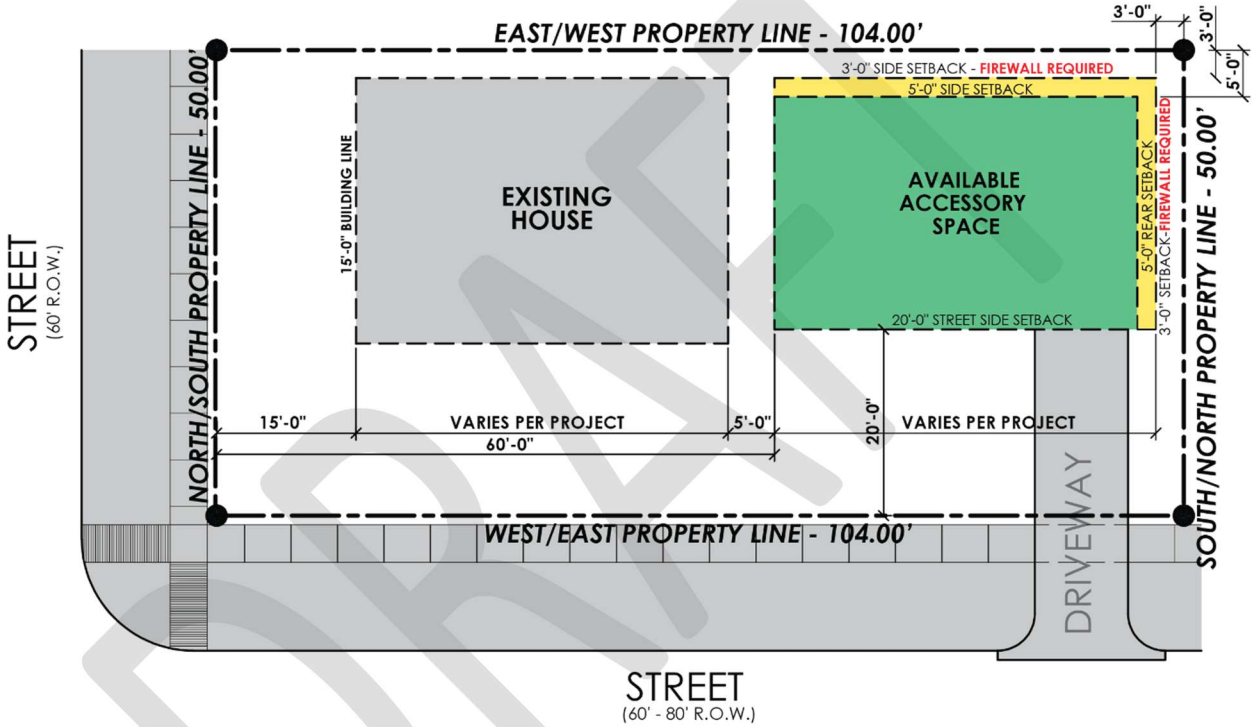
** The width of the garage parallel to the rear property line can be greater than 23 ft in width if it is 6 ft or greater from the rear property line.

** No secondary outbuilding structures (garage or carport) may have a combined solid wall exceeding 25 ft in length along the side property line.

A breezeway can attach the house to the garage. The width of the breezeway is limited to not more than 8 ft in width from outside of stud to outside of stud. The plate height of the breezeway shall not exceed a 9 ft plate. A porte-cochère must be a minimum of 35 ft from the front property line and no more than 20 ft deep. The outside face of the support columns should be a minimum of 5 ft from the side property line. A porte-cochère cannot have a second-floor addition above it. A residence can only have a carport or a porte-cochère, but it cannot have both.

## 2.3.h. Corner Lot Porte-Cochère, Carports, Auxiliary Buildings, and Garage Construction/Addition

- 60 ft minimum front setback from the front property line to an outbuilding.
    - The roof of such a carport cannot project forward of a garage by more than 20 ft or be wider than 21 ft.
- 20 ft minimum side setback from street side property line to an outbuilding.
- 3 ft minimum side setback on the interior lot side of the property with a fire rated wall and 25% or less glazing, otherwise 5 ft.
- 5 ft minimum between exterior walls of garage and house.
- 3 - 5 ft minimum rear setback as per city code.




** The width of a garage parallel to the rear property line is limited to 23 ft in width if the rear wall is set back 3 - 5 ft from the rear property line.

** The width of the garage parallel to the rear property line can be greater than 23 ft in width if it is 6 ft or greater from the rear property line.

** No secondary outbuilding structures (e.g., garage and/or carport) may have a combined solid wall exceeding 25 ft in length along the side property line.

Garages on corner lots are limited to 585 sq ft. Carports cannot extend past the side face of the house, and they cannot be attached to the house. A breezeway can attach the house to the garage. The width of the breezeway is limited to 8 ft in width from outside of stud to outside of stud. A connection made between the house and garage can be enclosed and conditioned at a minimum of 5 ft in length, no more than 9ft in length. This space must be set back from the house and the garage to appear subordinate. Plate height of the breezeway or connection shall not exceed 9 ft.

# 2.4. HEIGHT

## 2.4.a. Roof Pitch

Roofs are required to have a roof slope between 5-over-12 and 7-over-12. Carports attached to a garage can have a flat roof. An 8-over-12 roof slope will be considered on a case-by-case basis if the existing slope of the house is 8-over-12. A steeper roof pitch may be considered when mimicking original architectural details.

## 2.4.b. One-Story Addition

The new construction is limited to a maximum height of 11'- 6" from existing grade (ground/dirt) to top of first floor plate to match the existing house plate height.

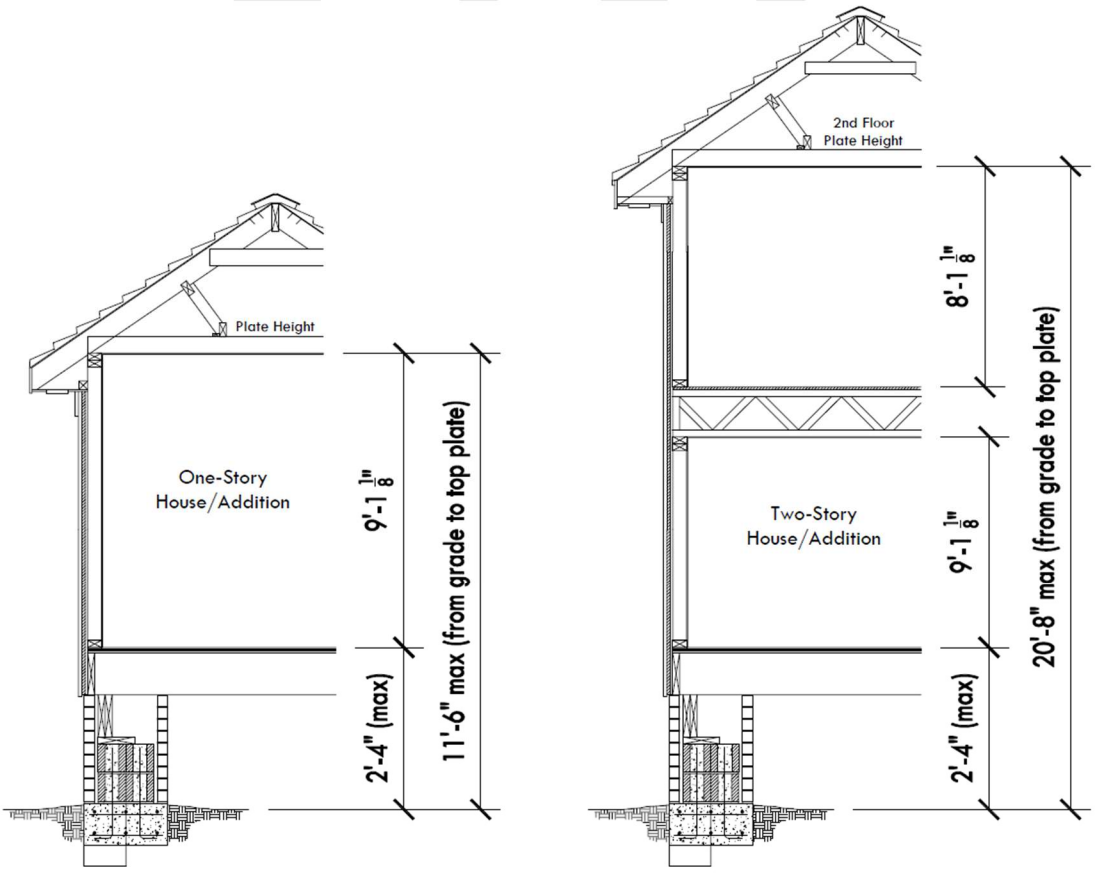
New addition/construction plate height cannot be greater than 9'- 1 1/8". If the existing house has a plate height higher than 9 ft, an exception will be considered.

## 2.4.c. Two-Story Addition

Distance from grade to the top of the second-floor plate cannot exceed 20'- 8".

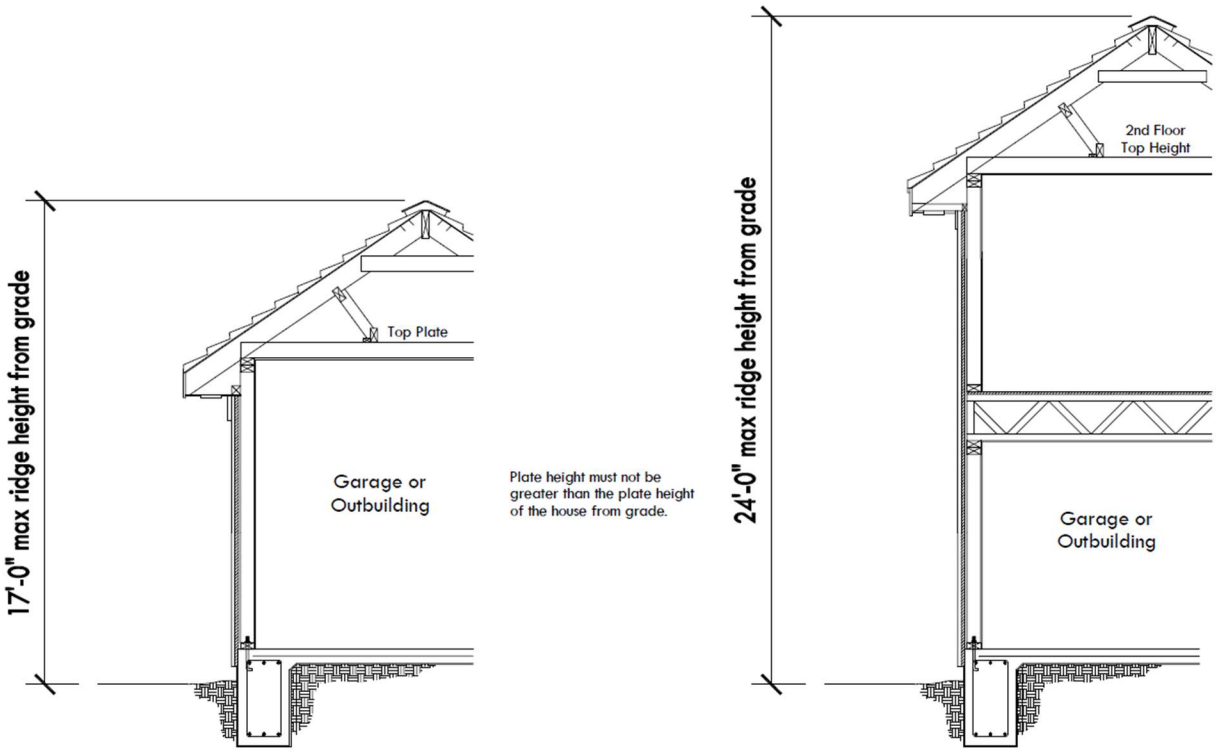
The maximum ridge height from grade for any residence is 28'.

The roof of a two-story addition can be either a hip or a gable.



## 2.4.d. Garage, Porte-Cochère, Carport Construction/Addition

The plate height for a new garage cannot exceed a 9 ft stud height but also must be less than or equal to the plate height of the house from grade. The ridge height of a one-story garage may not be taller than 17 ft above grade. A two-story garage may not exceed 24 ft above grade. Existing two-story garages may be considered on a case-by-case basis.




Please note that while the HAHC may grant approval of a new two-story garage under its authority in conjunction with these guidelines, an applicant must still satisfy their valid neighborhood deed restrictions or risk liability for noncompliance. An applicant's deed restrictions and the City's preservation ordinance operate independently of each other and are not enforced by the Houston Office of Preservation. Proposals for two-story garages will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Garage roof pitch is to be less than or equal to the pitch of the existing contributing home and/or it's addition; a steeper pitch will be considered on a case-by-case basis depending on the slope of the house's roof. Neither garages nor porte-cochères may have a flat roof. Carports may have a flat roof. A carport should be designed with the same integrity as the primary structure on the lot.

A porte-cochère must be one story and have a hip roof or gable. The porte-cochère must be subordinate in height to the first story of the main house.

# 2.5. NEW RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION

Any new construction must follow all existing setback lines and size limitations established in this document. These guidelines provide that a new construction with two stories must match the width, height, overall massing, and scale of the components typical of the historic district. The size of a new construction is also limited by lot size as defined by the FAR chart in section 2.2.a. The style of new construction must be compatible with the architectural styles (Craftsman, Bungalows, Prairie, American Four Square, Tudor Revival Cottage, etc.), found in Norhill.

# 2.6. MATERIALS AND DESIGN

## 2.6.a. Character and Style

Norhill has maintained a style consistent with the original homes constructed between the 1920 and 1930, apart from a few structures constructed shortly after this time frame in the 1940s. Homeowners should ensure any additions are sympathetic to the historic design aesthetic. Elements in an addition at the rear that cannot be seen from the street may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Any addition should be compatible and appropriate to the exterior features of the existing, contributing house. For example, the new siding may match that of the existing house, although minor differences are encouraged to differentiate the existing structure from the new construction (refer to Section 5: Stewardship and Maintenance for more information).

## 2.6.b. Doors and Windows

Every effort should be made to retain the style and appearance of the original doors and windows. If the doors and/or windows are damaged, all efforts must be made to match the stylistic appearance and quality of the original. Windows must be inset and recessed, wood or wood clad, of the same style, proportion, and character as the original windows of a house (if remodeling) as well as the homes in the context area. This includes matching the window depth in the wall as well as surrounding trim work. Alternative window materials will be considered on a case-by-case basis depending on the proposed window location, manufacturer's design and their compatibility with the originals.

This includes the placement of sashes which are set in the wall and not flush to the exterior (refer to Section 5: Stewardship and Maintenance in window Section 5.3.b. for more information on the proper installation for inset and recessed window profiles).

No vinyl windows are to be used on the contributing/non-contributing structure, per the 2025 HOP Window Policy

### 2.6.c. Roofs and Eaves

Roof eaves (roof overhangs) should match the design and depth of the existing house where possible. Roof material should be shingle, primarily asphalt/composite, with other materials considered on a case-by-case basis. Skylights should be located towards the back half of the building and on additions only with limited visibility from the street.

### 2.6.d. Dormers

No dormers may be added to the front elevation. Dormers are subordinate in scale and character to the primary roof. Where they are already present, historic dormers should be preserved. If a new dormer is desired, it must be compatible with the character of the historic building and subordinate to the primary roof.

- Dormers must be functional — to create additional living space or allow light to enter an attic space — not merely decorative. Use a simple design that can be distinguished from, but is compatible with, any historic dormers.
- The style of a new dormer should be in keeping with the style of the house.
- Locate a new single dormer in a location that is toward the rear of the house and on the side of the roof that is as close to the middle of the lot as possible. Do not locate a new dormer on a front-facing roof. Do not extend the dormer over the eave of the roof; set it back from the eave.
- If two dormers are desired on the same side of the roof, they may be arranged with a historically appropriate spacing between them and do not necessarily need to be located toward the rear of the building.
- If two dormers are desired and they will be on opposite sides of the roof, they may not extend to or cover the ridge of the roof, and they must be located on the rear half of the roof.

### 2.6.e. Painting of Historic Brick

No new, existing, or restored masonry on any structure may be painted. Only previously painted masonry may be repainted.

## 2.7. SITE PLAN ELEMENTS

### 2.7.a. Impervious Coverage

Lots may have a maximum of 65% impervious lot coverage. Lot coverage includes the residence, porches or decks, garage, outbuildings, driveways, walkways, and swimming pool surrounds. This is exempt from historic regulation and does not require a COA.

### 2.7.b. Fences

Fences do not require a COA and are not regulated by HOP, however, the NNA desires that all fences be consistent. For more information, contact the NNA and City of Houston Permitting Center for code enforcement details.

# SECTION 3: CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS PROCESS (COA) & ORDINANCES

# 3.1. HOUSTON'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

The City designates historic districts, and manages changes to properties within those districts, through its historic preservation ordinance (Ch. 33, Article 7 of the City of Houston Code of Ordinances). This ordinance is a local law that establishes the City's authority and responsibilities regarding historic landmarks and districts. It also establishes the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission (HAHC), a group of professionals who are appointed by the Mayor and City Council to interpret and administer the historic preservation ordinance. These Norhill design guidelines are subject to any future updates to the historic preservation ordinance (Ch. 33, Article 7) or any other applicable city ordinance.

In addition, the Director of the Planning and Development Department has the authority to institute policy revisions to the design guidelines that further define or clarify specific items or sections. However, any proposed policy revisions must seek and consider the views of the public in a manner that reflects and represents the Norhill Historic District residents prior to any policy revision being adopted.

The Houston City Council designated the Norhill neighborhood as a City of Houston historic district on June 14, 2000. An inventory of buildings within each historic district is submitted with each application for historic district designation. That inventory classifies each building as a contributing or potentially contributing structure to the historic character of the historic district or a non-contributing structure. Potentially contributing structures include structures from the period of significance that have been significantly altered over time, but prior to the historic district designation date. Because of their age, these structures could be renovated back to their original state, thereby making them contributing structures, although there is no requirement for that level of renovation in the ordinance.

The ordinance requires property owners to receive approval from the City before making certain changes to buildings in a historic district. To get the City's approval to make any of these changes, a property owner must apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). The Planning staff in the Office of Preservation can help property owners with their application, which is processed through that office. A property owner must obtain a COA before beginning any work that is regulated under the historic preservation ordinance. Additional city building permits may be required.

Some changes, as well as ordinary maintenance and repair, are exempt from this requirement and do not require a COA. Other changes require a COA application but can be approved administratively by the Planning Director without going before HAHC. All other changes require a COA application to be considered in a public hearing before the HAHC; this includes most alterations to the exterior of a building, additions, new construction, relocation of a building into or out of a historic district, and demolition. Each month, the HAHC considers and makes decisions about COA applications at a public hearing. HOP staff base their recommendations, and the HAHC members base their decisions on the criteria for evaluating COA applications as listed in the ordinance. A summary of those criteria is provided in this section, for your reference.

Please note that while the HAHC may grant approval of any proposed alterations under its authority in conjunction with these guidelines, an applicant must still satisfy their valid neighborhood deed restrictions or risk liability for noncompliance. An applicant's deed restrictions and the City's preservation ordinance operate independently of each other and are not enforced by the Houston Office of Preservation. Proposals will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

# 3.2. PLAN SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

**Per the City code, the entire planned project should be presented in the COA application.** Applicants who hold back "future phases" of a project to gain approval for initial work may find that subsequent proposals will not be approved if the cumulative effect of all proposed changes is too great and collectively diminishes the integrity of the building.

Plans must show accurate area calculations for conditioned spaces, porches, garages, outbuildings, carports and porte-cochères. Impervious area calculations for the lot should also be accurately calculated and depicted. The calculation for the primary house square footage should be from the exterior face of masonry or framing and include all interior spaces not only living areas but also storage, staircases, etc.

The City of Houston does not preclude someone from beginning the permitting process prior to obtaining a COA; however, such an application will eventually be held up if a COA is required and has not been obtained.

**Submission packets shall include, but are not limited to:**

1. Site plan:
    a. Property lines and dimensioned building setbacks.
    b. Roof plan.
    c. Dimension of house to all property lines.
    d. Square footage of all impervious coverage.
2. Floor plans (Existing floor plans and proposed):
    a. Square footage calculations for living space, porches, garage and other outbuildings.
3. Elevation drawings:
    a. Existing and proposed views.
    b. Exterior finish details, existing and proposed.
    c. Building height dimensions referencing from grade to finished floor, and to plate and ridge heights. If a second floor is proposed, dimension first floor and second floor plate heights.

**Submittals are encouraged to include:**

1. Photos of existing elevations and any additional photos for architectural details (e.g., doors, windows, trim, columns, and overhangs columns).
2. 3D renderings of proposed additions.

# 3.3. CONTEXT AREA

For interior lots, the context area shall be other interior lots in the Norhill Historic District due to its high rate of architectural compatibility. For new construction, only those contributing structures on interior lots can be used as the basis for establishing comparative standards. For corner lots, the context area shall be other corner lots within the Norhill Historic District.

When a property owner applies for a COA, the HOP staff will make a recommendation to the HAHC whether the proposed changes are compatible with the surrounding context area and historic district.

# 3.4. EXEMPTIONS (NO COA REQUIRED)

The following types of work do not require a COA.

- Ordinary maintenance and repair. This generally means the least amount of work necessary to preserve the historic materials and features of a building, and in-kind repairs. In-kind means using the same material type, design, dimensions, texture, detailing, and exterior appearance.
    - Note: Replacement of historic materials (even in-kind) is an alteration and may require a COA. Please contact HOP staff if you are unsure if a COA is required for your project.
- Re-roofing with in-kind materials with no change to the structure, shape, or pitch of the roof (ex: composition shingles for composition shingles).
- Installation or removal of:
    - Gutters and downspouts
    - Window screens and screen doors
    - Temporary emergency weather protection, such as plywood coverings over windows
    - Porch ceiling fans
    - Light fixtures
    - HVAC units
    - Landscaping
    - Removal of non-historic (aluminum, vinyl) siding to reveal historic siding underneath. If no historic siding is present under non-historic siding, new replacement siding requires a COA but may be approved administratively; see Section 3.5.
    - Removal of storm windows and storm doors
    - Removal of burglar bars
    - Removal of accessibility ramps or lifts
    - Removal of solar panels
    - Removal of satellite dishes or antennae
    - Installation of satellite dishes, antennae, or other roof equipment on the rear half of the roof
    - Per Texas state law, municipalities do not regulate the installation of solar devices
    - Installation or removal of free-standing signs

- Painting non-masonry surfaces
- Repainting previously painted masonry surfaces (unpainted masonry on a structure in a historic district may not be done without a COA)
- Reconstructing a contributing or noncontributing structure that was completely or partially destroyed by a fire, natural disaster, or other damage not intentionally caused by the owner of the structure. This only applies if the reconstruction is built within the same footprint and has the same exterior features as the damaged or destroyed contributing structure.
- Demolition of non-contributing non-residential structures.
- Fences

# 3.5. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS

The following types of work require a COA, which may be approved administratively, per Section Sec. 33-241.1 of the Code of Ordinances. The list of what may be administratively approved is amended by the adoption of these design guidelines and the list follows:

***Removal of:***

• A window or door that was not original to the contributing structure and replacing it with a window or door that meets all the following conditions:
  • It is appropriate to the historic significance of the structure.
  • It does not change the size, shape, or location of the opening from which the window or door elements are to be removed.
  • It does not change the trim, molding, or other features associated with the opening.
- Exterior wall cladding that was not an original feature or characteristic of the structure and replacing it with appropriate cladding.
- Non-historic additions, including attached garages or carports
- Non-historic decorative elements, such as shutters or eave brackets
- Non-historic, low-profile skylights
- Canopies or awnings
- Signs attached to the building

***Replacement of:***

• Historic materials that are damaged beyond repair with materials of the same size, shape, material, and pattern. For example, if a small amount of siding is damaged beyond repair, it may be replaced with new material that matches exactly. See next page for more administrative approvals. Section 1: Introduction 1-11.

***Installation of:***

• Burglar bars
• Accessibility ramps or lifts
• Low-profile skylights, antennae, satellite dishes, or other roof equipment on the front half of the roof
• Shutters
• Awnings or canopies

• Architectural details (including porch elements) that have been partially lost or removed, if you can provide proof that they used to exist, either through existing elements that are still in place or by historical documentation, such as architectural plans or photographs
• Signs attached to the exterior of the building that meet all of the following conditions:
    • It does not compromise historic exterior features on the structure, such as siding or trim, porch elements, etc.
    - It is 25 square feet or less in total area.
    - It is installed without damage to significant historic material

***Construction of:***

- Free-standing (detached) garages, free-standing carports, and other secondary structures, so long as they have a footprint of 600 square feet or less and are located at the rear of the lot.
- A rear porch that is not taller than the existing structure and does not extend beyond the existing side walls of the structure.

***Repair or reconstruction of internal structural elements (such as interior shiplap) that are essential to support the building envelope to which they are attached. The following conditions must be met:***

- You must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Director that the structural repair or reconstruction can be accomplished without harming those exterior features of the structure that are visible from the right-of-way.
- You must provide a written statement from a structural engineer, licensed by the State of Texas, that the proposed repair or reconstruction can be accomplished without harming the exterior features of the structure that are visible from the right-of-way.

# 3.6. CITY OF HOUSTON CODE OF ORDINANCES

## 3.6.a. City of Houston Historic Preservation Ordinance

*Chapter 33 (Planning and Development), Article VII (Historic Preservation), et al.*
ARTICLE VII. - HISTORIC PRESERVATION | Code of Ordinances | Houston, TX | Municode Library

## 3.6.b. City of Houston Code of Ordinances 33-241: Exterior Alteration, Rehabilitation, and Restoration of Historic Properties

*Chapter 33 (Planning and Development), Article VII (Historic Preservation), Division 4 (Certificates of Appropriateness), Section 241*
https://library.municode.com/tx/houston/codes/code_of_ordinances/312514?nodeId=COOR_CH33PLDE_ARTVIIHIPR_DIV4CEAP_S33-241SAXTALREREAD

## 3.6.c. City of Houston Code of Ordinances 33-242: New Construction in Historic Districts

*Chapter 33 (Planning and Development), Article VII (Historic Preservation), Division 4 (Certificates of Appropriateness), Section 242*
https://library.municode.com/tx/houston/codes/code_of_ordinances/312514?nodeId=COOR_CH33PLDE_ARTVIIHIPR_DIV4CEAP_S33-242SAEWCOHIDI

**** These design guidelines are subject to any future updates to City of Houston Code of Ordinances.**

# 3.7. RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

## 3.7.a. City of Houston Office of Preservation

The City of Houston Historic Preservation Division is within the Planning and Development Department. The Houston Office of Preservation (HOP) staff can assist in the early phases of project development and guide applicants through the review process to ensure proposed alterations are made appropriately.

**Phone:** 832-393-6556
**Email:** historicpreservation@houstontx.gov

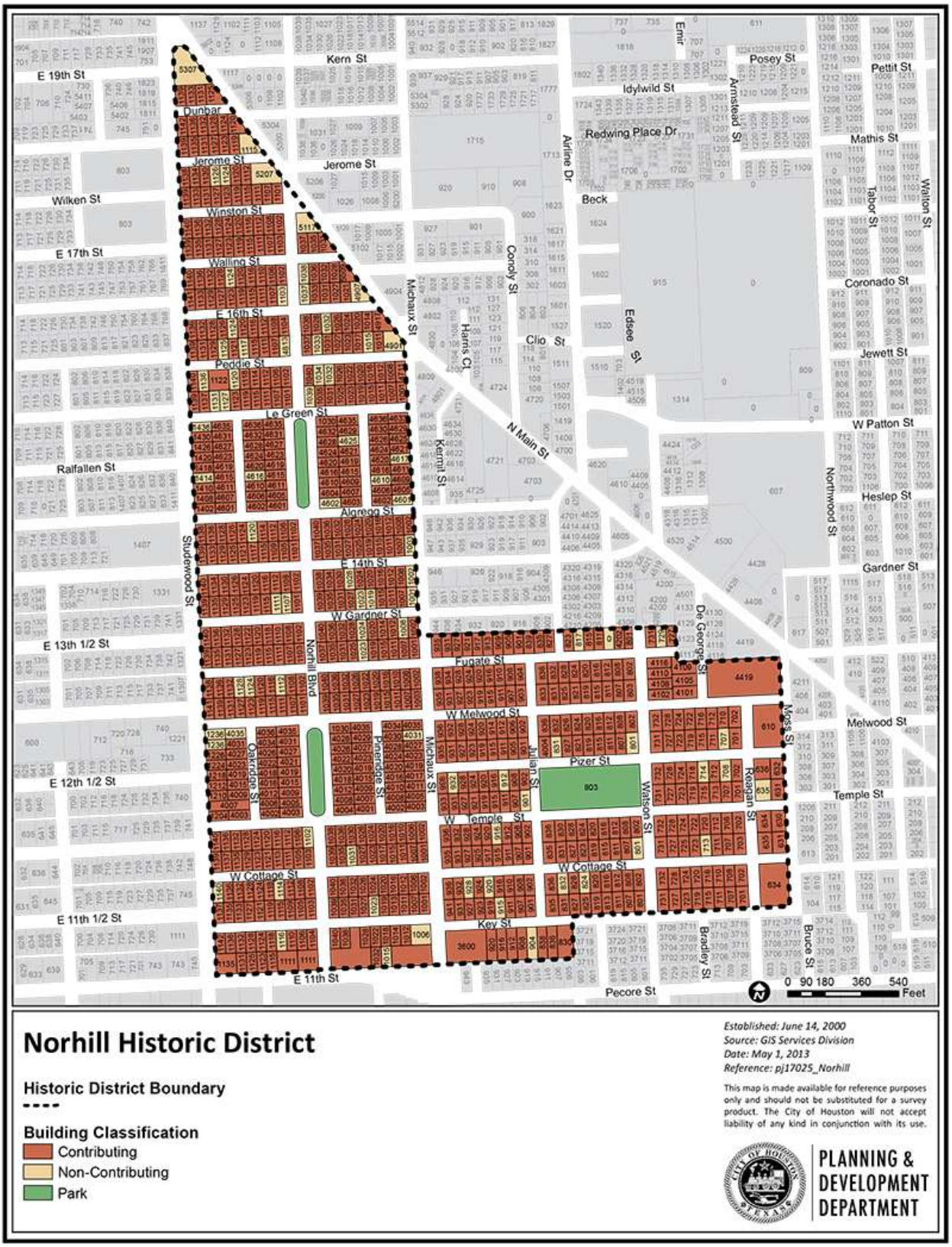
## 3.7.b. Mayor's Office of Economic Development

Properties located within a historic district may be eligible to receive property tax exemptions. Inquire through the Mayor's Office of Economic Development.

**Phone:** 713-837-7963
**EcoDev Contact Us Form:** Nintex Automation Cloud (workflowcloud.com)
**Website:** https://www.houstontx.gov/ecodev/historic_site_tax_exemption.html

# SECTION 4: ABOUT THE HISTORIC DISTRICT

This section describes the history of Norhill, the character of the district, the architectural styles, and significant buildings contained within it. Although strictly informational, this material will help property owners and design professionals understand what makes the historic district significant, as well as how to identify character-defining features of historic buildings and prioritize those features for preservation during a project.




# Norhill Historic District

**Historic District Boundary**

**Building Classification**

- Contributing
- Non-Contributing
- Park

*Established: June 14, 2000*
*Source: GIS Services Division*
*Date: May 1, 2013*
*Reference: pj17025_Norhill*



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

# 4.1. THE HISTORY OF NORHILL

The Norhill subdivision north of downtown was a planned community for working-class families. Houston businessman William C. "Will" Hogg developed the neighborhood in the 1920s. Most of the buildings in the neighborhood are small two bedroom/one bath Craftsman dwellings. The Norhill Historic District includes two of the three sections of the original neighborhood and contained 858 total lots when the district was designated in 2000. The North and East subdivision sections (north of 11th Street) are inside the district boundaries, while the South section (south of 11th Street) is not included.

By the end of World War I, Houston had one of the strongest economies in the South. It was a railroad center and a shipping center, thanks to the Houston Ship Channel and Port of Houston. The city's population boomed between 1900 and 1925. New residential developments sprang up all over Houston to meet the demand for housing. No one played a more important role in meeting that demand than Will Hogg.

Will Hogg was a member of one of Texas' most wealthy and influential families. In 1920, Hogg organized a group to develop a master planned community for working-class families, Norhill. Norhill was built with streets, curbs, sidewalks, and water and sewer lines. Norhill Boulevard was the main thoroughfare in North Norhill; it runs the entire length of the neighborhood. The boulevard contains esplanades that provided green space and a park-like quality to the neighborhood.

The developers also planned space for schools, parks, and commercial activity. Norhill's commercial center was located along 11th Street, between Studewood and Pecore Streets. That commercial corridor separated North and East Norhill from South Norhill. Proctor Plaza Park is in the East Norhill area. Several churches also moved to the neighborhood, providing additional opportunities to build a sense of community that was family centric.

Norhill was only a short ride from downtown by the existing Studewood streetcar line or automobile and the entire Norhill subdivision developed very quickly. Lots sold for between $650 and $1,000. Buyers could make a 2% down payment, then pay 2% per month at 7% interest. The lots started selling in 1923. By August 1924, more than 700 lots had been sold, and many residences had already been constructed.

Deed restrictions were established to protect the value of the neighborhood. Specifically, they required that all houses cost at least three times as much as the lot on which they were built; that the homes be set back from the street by a certain distance, and no garages could be used for living quarters. Lots surrounding Proctor Plaza came with additional requirements for the homes to have brick veneer on the exterior.

Over time, Norhill experienced the same ups and downs as other historic neighborhoods. Today, Norhill has transitioned from a predominantly working-class resident base to a more professional class of residents, attracting those who desire an established community atmosphere. The challenge is balancing the desire for more space to accommodate growing families while maintaining the historic integrity of the overall neighborhood.


*A copy of a portion of the "East Norhill" addition plat. City of Houston, Texas; June 16, 1924.*

# 4.2. ARCHITECTURAL STYLES IN THE DISTRICT

Most of the buildings in Norhill are one-story. The neighborhood also contains a few two-story residences and some commercial structures. The most common type of house is a wood-framed Craftsman bungalow, with various other styles from the early-mid 20th century.

## 4.2.a. Craftsman

One-story Craftsman houses were very popular in Houston between 1905–1925. Characteristic Craftsman details include prominent front porches, low-pitched roofs, wide eaves with exposed rafters, and ganged (or "ribbons") of windows. Roofs may be gabled or hipped, or a combination of the two.

## 4.2.b. English Bungalow

A single or one-and-a-half-story home with a low-pitched roof, wide verandas, and a horizontal design that emphasizes its connection to the ground. This style of home typically has deep eaves.

## 4.2.c. Pediment Bungalow

A home with a triangular or semicircular decorative element, typically placed over the door or window. The Pediment Bungalow includes flat, engaged columns with a based and capital on each side of the entrance.


## 4.2.d. Tudor Revival

The most dominant features of this typical Revival style are the false or ornamental half-timbering which covers the upper story, and the steeply picturesque roof. Exterior texture using brick, stone, or stucco together with the half-timbering and asymmetrical massing, gives a Tudor Revival style building a picturesque/storybook look. This style of building was common during the early 20th century.


## 4.2.e. Transitional Architecture

During the early 20th century, builders often combined the Queen Anne style, which was beginning to go out of fashion, with the newly popular Craftsman style. This was not uncommon, and the practice continued through the 20th century. As a result, it is not unusual to see buildings that historically combined details from different architectural styles.

## 4.2.f. Folk National

Sometimes referred to as "Vernacular or Folk Houses," these relatively small, modest houses are common in Houston. Many of the examples in this neighborhood have a front-gabled roof or a hipped roof with an inset porch (as shown in the photograph below). Full-width porches are also common.

Folk National Houses were constructed from the mid-1850s through the 1920s. As a result, they may include or combine architectural details typical of other styles that were popular at the time, such as Craftsman style bracketed eaves or Queen Anne-style turned porch supports.

## 4.2.g. Minimal Traditional

During the early 1940s, a small number of Minimal Traditional homes were built generally as small, one-story homes, very loosely based on the Tudor Revival style home. The typical front facing gable, or a gable covered entry point, echo the Tudor features. With a slightly lower pitched roof than the Tudor predecessor, the Minimal Traditional roof pitch was intermediate with closed eaves. With simple façade features other than the decorative shutters, typical wall features include cement asbestos shingles, brick, or wood siding. The Minimal Traditional typically is boxy in appearance with a centered main entrance with windows flanking on both sides.


## 4.2.h. Duplex

Residential buildings that share a common wall, typically in the center of the structure. They are often Colonial, Victorian, Craftsman, and/or Tudor Revival architectural styles.


## 4.2.i. American Four-Square

American Four-Square houses are two rooms wide and two rooms deep. In other words, each floor has four rooms in a square shape. They were originally designed as multi-family dwellings. These houses may be one or two stories tall. In Houston, these are usually two-story houses with decorative details from the Craftsman, Prairie, or Colonial Revival styles. They were originally only built on some corner lots in Norhill and did not exist on interior lots. The context area shall be other corner lots within the Norhill Historic District.

## 4.2.j. Mid-Century

A small number of houses continued to be built into the 1940's and 1950's. These houses reflect elements and scaling of their earlier counterparts but also can reflect more mid-century elements. These houses typically diverge from earlier houses in porch design.

## 4.2.k. Early 20th Century Vernacular Commercial Storefront

The Vernacular Commercial Storefront of the early 20th century appears in neighborhoods throughout the country. This building is divided into two distinct bands. The first floor is more commonly transparent so goods can be displayed while the upper floor(s) are usually reserved for offices, residential and storage functions. The commercial buildings along 11th Street include both one- and two-story examples with simple cornice lines. A few cornices have a Mission style influence.

Considering most properties located within the Norhill Historic District are single-family residential, all commercial properties will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. How a building conforms to the overall scale, massing, and historic character of the neighborhood will determine the extent of proposed alterations permitted by the HOP and the HAHC. The historical character of all commercial properties should be retained, and all alterations (including painting of non-painted masonry) must go through the COA process.

Commercial properties within historic districts qualify for certain parking variances and signage. A 40% parking reduction is allowed for redeveloping a designated historic building. The building must be a protected landmark or a contributing structure with an approved COA, per Sec. 26-498 of the City of Houston code.

# SECTION 5: STEWARDSHIP AND MAINTENANCE

Good stewardship involves the responsible use and management of historic properties, protecting them for future generations. This is best practiced by maintaining the features that define the character of individual historic buildings, structures, sites, and objects of historic significance. When individual historic resources are appropriately maintained, the historic district — the collection of those resources — will be preserved as well. By taking the time to learn about character-defining features and how to treat them sensitively, we can serve as good stewards for properties in historic districts while they are in our care.

Since non-contributing buildings already do not support the historic qualities of the district, the criteria for making changes to them are less strict than those for contributing structures. However, the visual qualities of non-contributing structures still have an impact on the character of the historic district, so any changes to them must be managed appropriately. Please note: If a historic building, which was classified as non-contributing due to alterations, is restored, it may be reclassified as contributing, making the owner potentially eligible for tax incentives and other benefits.

***Disclaimer**: **This section is meant to serve as a general preservation guide and is not intended to be a requirement for approval, except for items that fall under regulation of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Please refer to Section 3 of this document or contact the HOP for more information**.*

# 5.1. HISTORIC PRESERVATION RESOURCES

For more information, a variety of resources are available to assist property owners and design professionals as they plan building projects in historic districts.

**City of Houston**
Complete information about the City of Houston's historic preservation programs and design review process are available online at https://www.houstontx.gov/planning/HistoricPres/.

**Texas Historical Commission (THC)**
State-specific information about the National Register of Historic Places and preservation programs, including the Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit program, is available at www.thc.texas.gov.

**National Park Service (NPS)**
Publications from the NPS include preservation briefs, which include technical information about the repair and maintenance of historic building materials and systems. These resources are available at https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/preservation-briefs.htm. NPS also publishes The Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, available online at www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm.

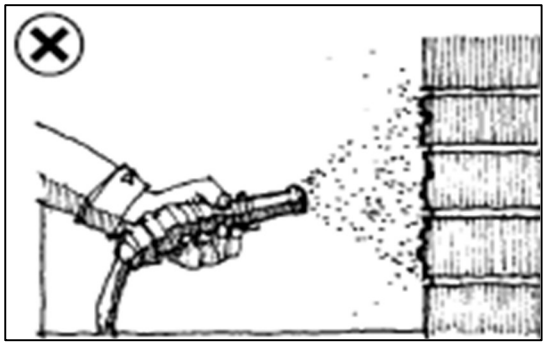
# 5.2. BUILDING MATERIAL MAINTENANCE

These design guidelines apply to all materials that are original to the building, including wood, stone, brick, metal, stucco, plaster, and concrete. Historic building materials should be preserved in place, as much as possible, and repaired when necessary. Only replace material that is damaged and use replacement material that matches the style and appearance of original. Removing original material diminishes the integrity of a historic building; retaining the original material is aways preferred.

If historic materials have been covered, consider removing the covering; do this carefully so that the underlying original building material is not damaged, and repair the original material as needed once it is exposed.

**Keep historic building materials clean:**

- If building materials become dirty, use gentle cleaning products and methods rather than harsh chemicals or abrasive treatments.
- A low-pressure water wash is preferred; avoid high-pressure or abrasive methods, which can damage historic building material.
- Mild chemicals should be tested in an inconspicuous location before using them in larger areas.



*Harsh cleaning methods, such as sandblasting, can damage historic materials, changing their appearance. Such procedures are inappropriate.*

*Brick showing damage from inappropriate cleaning (photo courtesy of Heritage Ohio).*

**Preserve historic building materials:**

- Do not remove original material that is in good condition.
- Do not cover or obscure historic building materials.
- Consider removing nonoriginal materials that are inappropriate.
- Repair historic building materials.
- Use storm drains, flashing, coping, gutters, etc. to provide proper drainage away from historic materials and minimize damage to them.

**Regularly inspect materials, so that damage can be caught and repaired early:**

- Repair deteriorated historic building materials by patching, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing the material.

**Replace historic materials in kind:**

- Remove and replace only the material which is deteriorated or damaged beyond reasonable repair. For example, if a few pieces of siding are damaged beyond repair, replace only those boards, not the entire wall.
- Use replacement material that matches the original profile, shape, finish, and size.
- Consider relocating historic material from a less visible area to replace damaged building material in a key location.
- An alternative material may be considered for a location that is not critical to the integrity of the property, such as a rear wall.

**Use care when cleaning or repairing an architectural element:**

- Patch, piece-in, splice, consolidate, or otherwise address deteriorated elements using recognized preservation methods.
- Minimize damage to historic architectural elements when repairs are necessary. Use the gentlest means possible when cleaning or repairing an architectural feature.
- Before removing the architectural element, document its location with photographs and sketches so it can be reinstalled correctly.
- If an architectural element must be removed for repair, use methods that minimize damage to surrounding materials and that will make the item easy to reinstall.

**If repair is impossible, replicate an architectural element accurately:**

- When an architectural element is too deteriorated to repair, it may be replaced with an accurate replica of that element or an identical one.
- If exact replication is not possible, use a design that is substantiated by physical or pictorial evidence to avoid creating a misrepresentation of the building's history. Use the same kind of material as the original detail, when feasible.
- A substitute material may be acceptable if the size, shape, texture, and finish convey the visual appearance of the original. Alternative materials are usually more acceptable in locations that are less visible or where they are unlikely to receive direct physical contact, such as a cornice at the top of a wall.
- Avoid adding architectural details such as decorative millwork or other ornaments that were not part of the original structure; doing so can create a false sense of history.

***Do not cover or obscure historic building materials.***

***Consider removing later covering materials that have not achieved historic significance. Once the non-historic siding is removed, repair the original underlying material.***

## 5.2.a. Wood

Early woodwork includes siding, wall corner boards, window sashes and frames, doors, trim around window and door openings, foundation skirting, and soffits. When properly maintained, original wood building elements can last for many years.

**Maintain a coat of paint on wood surfaces; repaint as needed to prevent deterioration:**

- Paint is used to protect wood surfaces, but it tends to weather over time. The NPS recommends re-painting every 5–8 years, after properly preparing the painted surface.
- Do not use paints or sealants that are described as being water-repellent or waterproof; these can trap moisture within the wood and cause damage.
- Prime and coat all sides and edges of new wood, including cut ends, to block moisture and extend service life.

***Distinctive stylistic features and other examples of skilled craftsmanship are character defining features of a historic building and should be preserved.***

***If repair is not possible, replace only the damaged wood.***

***Historic materials should maintain protective coatings such as paint to prolong the life of the material.***

**Repair, rather than replace, damaged wood whenever possible:**

- No matter how well wood building materials are maintained, sometimes exposure to moisture results in small areas of rot or other damage.
- Small areas of damage can often be easily repaired using an epoxy wood consolidant. These consolidants are available as liquids or putties, and are also formulated to be flexible, so that they do not crack as wood shrinks or swells with changes in humidity. Unlike wood fillers, epoxy can be shaped, carved, sanded, and painted just like wood.
- If a patch or dutchman repair is appropriate, remove the least amount of material needed to properly execute the repair. Use wood as close to the original material as possible (species, grain pattern, and color).

- Identify the source of the moisture or damage and take steps to prevent further damage.
- When the repair is complete and the wood has been appropriately shaped and sanded, paint it to protect the rest of the original wood, as well as the repair.
- Regularly inspect for and address any ongoing problems.

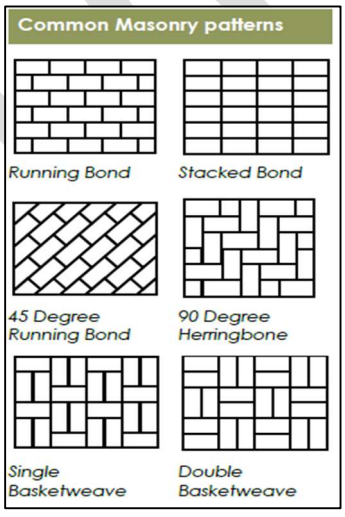
**If repair is not possible, replace only the damaged section of wood:**

- Do not replace undamaged wood or a larger area than necessary.
- Use hand tools and take care to avoid damaging adjacent wood during removal.
- Replace the damaged boards with siding of the same species.
- Use stainless steel nails to prevent corrosion and staining from rust.

## 5.2.b. Historic Masonry

Masonry is a type of construction that uses individual building units, such as bricks or stones, and binds them together with a mortar. Mortar is usually made by mixing sand, water, and a binder; historically, lime was used as a binder, but it was replaced by Portland cement, which began to be manufactured in the United States in 1875 and became widely used by the early 1900s. The spaces between masonry units, which are filled with mortar, are called *mortar joints*. These joints can be struck or tooled (shaped) to give a variety of appearances and to channel water away from the surface of the masonry wall. Brick is probably the most common masonry material used in Norhill, along with stucco.

Masonry construction is designed to allow moisture to move from the inside of a wall or building to the outside, through evaporation or weep holes. If moisture is a problem, address the source of the leak or infiltration directly; avoid paint, coatings, or sealers which can trap moisture inside a building or masonry wall and cause damage and deterioration.




***Preserve and maintain the traditional patterns of historic masonry.***

**Preserve original masonry materials:**

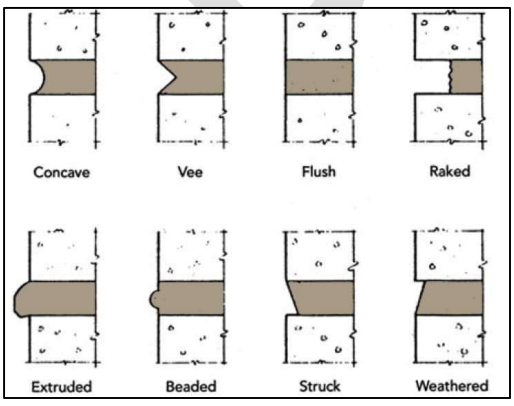
- Preserve significant masonry features, including cornices, pediments, steps, and foundations.
- Avoid dismantling and rebuilding a masonry wall (or a portion of it) if the wall can be repaired or repointed instead. Consult a qualified mason.
- Repainting previously painted masonry surfaces is allowed. Do not paint unpainted masonry surfaces as this is inappropriate and shall result in a red tag until paint is removed.
- Clean masonry materials using gentle products designed for that specific material or type of stone. Graffiti may be removed with a poultice (see Preservation Brief No. 1 by NPS).
- Do not use high-pressure methods, including power washers, sandblasting, or abrasive material of any kind; do not scrub with a wire brush. Abrasion from any of these sources can damage the face of masonry units (particularly bricks) and strip mortar from joints.

**Repoint a deteriorated mortar joint:**

- Duplicate the original mortar in strength, composition, color, and texture. Mortar color-matching and composition analysis can be provided by a qualified laboratory for a relatively small fee.
- Avoid using mortar with a high Portland cement content if a softer mortar was used originally. Mortars must be softer than the masonry units, so that any cracks that occur will spread through the mortar, rather than the bricks.
- Match the original mortar joint in depth, width, and profile. A qualified mason can appropriately clean, repoint, and strike mortar joints.

**Replace damaged masonry units only as a last resort:**

- Match a replacement masonry unit to the rest of the historic masonry in the building. For example, salvaged, reclaimed, or color-matched historical bricks are available from suppliers.
- If a large masonry feature, such as a cornice or column, is too damaged to repair, replicate it in either the same kind of material or a compatible alternative material. Consult HOP staff for technical assistance, as a COA may be required.




*Typical mortar joint profiles.*

*Repoint mortar joints where there is evidence of deterioration.*

## 5.2.c. Alternative Materials

An alternative material is one which is different from that used originally for a specific application. Such materials may also be called "substitute," "replacement," "synthetic," or "imitation". A common example is cementitious siding for wood siding.

These materials may sometimes be used to replace historic architectural features, such as a metal clad wood window used in place of a wood window. Alternative materials may be considered by the HAHC on a case-by-case basis as replacement materials or for use on a new addition or new building in a historic district. In evaluating alternative materials, HAHC will consider:

- **Potential impact of historic significance:** Because removing original material diminishes the integrity of a historic building, retaining the original material is always preferred. If this is not possible, an alternative material may be considered if it conveys the character of the original—including detail and finish—to the extent that is feasible.
- **Durability:** An alternative material should have proven durability in similar applications.
- **Appearance:** An alternative material should have a similar profile, texture, and finish to the original. For example, some synthetic siding has an exaggerated rusticated finish that is an inaccurate representation of original clapboard; many vinyl products have a glossy sheen that is out of character with painted wood or metal.
- **Cost:** Some alternative materials are promoted because their initial costs appear to be less than repairing or maintaining the original material. The lifecycle of a new material, and its long-term costs, should be considered.

# 5.3. GOOD PRACTICES

## 5.3.a. Siding

Siding is often identified by its profile, or the shape of the cut end of a board. Some particularly distinctive shapes are beveled, drop, and shiplap siding. The 117 and 105 profiles are particularly common in many of Houston's historic districts. The size of the reveal (the portion of the siding board that is visible after installation) and the finish of the siding (must be smooth rather than textured) also contribute to the overall visual impact of siding. The most common types of siding found on historic houses in the Norhill Historic District are wood siding and decorative shingles (on gables).

In modern construction, siding usually covers a framed structural system. Shiplap siding, used in some early types of construction methods, may also serve as part of the structure of a building. As a result, interior structural shiplap siding must not be removed unless you have taken precautions to protect the structural integrity of the building. Please consult with the HOP staff if you are unsure whether this applies to your project.

*Typical siding profiles in Norhill: (left) 105 and (right) 117. The most common type of siding found on historic houses in the Norhill Historic District is wood siding.*

## Wood Siding

Wood is the most common type of material used for siding on residences in Norhill. The size and finish of the siding is important for the visual impact and integrity of the house.

**Preserve and maintain wood siding in good condition:**

- Keep the siding painted or stained to provide a protective coating against the weather.
- Regularly inspect siding for damage, and re-attach loose siding to prevent water intrusion into the wall.

**Replace wood siding in kind:**

- Any siding beyond repair that needs replacement requires a COA.
- Match the original siding in size, profile, and thickness.
- Choose a durable and sustainable species of wood, such as cedar, cypress, or Douglas fir.
- Changing to a synthetic material such as smooth cementitious siding will be considered on a case-by-case basis so long as the size, profile, and thickness are the same as the siding being replaced. Any proposed material change will require a COA to review accordingly.

**Determine whether siding components are damaged beyond repair:**

- Individual pieces of siding may be replaced in-kind, per the ordinance. If more than 50% of siding on one wall/elevation is damaged beyond repair, it may be replaced with siding of the same material, profile, and finish. Smooth cementitious siding will be considered on a case-by-case basis. This requires a COA. Please contact the Historic Preservation Office staff for information about the documentation required to substantiate this level of damage.

## Asbestos Siding

Asbestos-cement siding was made by combining Portland cement with asbestos fibers. Asbestos siding was popular between 1900 and 1950 for its durability and resistance to fire, termites, and rot. This siding can be painted but should be handled with caution.

**Do not attempt to remove or cover asbestos siding yourself. Contact a qualified professional:**

- Asbestos siding does not need to be removed; if left alone, it is not dangerous. However, breaking, cutting, sanding, or otherwise destroying any material containing asbestos is dangerous and creates a health hazard by releasing asbestos fibers into the air. Do not clean asbestos siding with a pressure washer, which can break it.

## Decorative Shingles

Decorative shingles are used to create a textured wall surface. They often are used on front gables. Fish-scale, dog-ear (octagonal), sawtooth, diamond, square, and rectangular shapes are common, and these may be combined and painted to create patterns and designs. Decorative shingles are often made of cedar, which is moisture resistant but not "waterproof." Shingles should be kept painted, stained, or sealed with an appropriate coating for best protection against weathering. Cedar shingles may crack or deteriorate over time, and broken shingles should be replaced as needed.

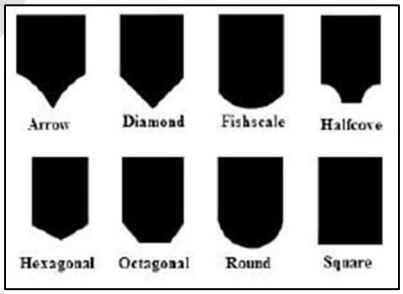
**Preserve and maintain decorative wood shingles in good condition:**

- Keep shingles painted or stained to provide a protective coating against the weather.
- Regularly inspect shingles for damage and to ensure that they are still nailed securely. Re-attach loose shingles to prevent water intrusion into the wall.

**Replace decorative shingles in-kind:**

- Replace the fewest shingles necessary.
- Match the original shingles in size, shape, and thickness.
- Choose a durable and sustainable species of wood, such as cedar or Douglas fir.
- Back prime and paint all surfaces before installation.

*Example of a decorative shingle pattern.*




*Typical shapes for decorative wood shingles.*

*Example of a decorative shingle pattern.*

## 5.3.b. Windows

Most windows are considered character-defining features and can help with the identification of architectural styles. This information applies to all types of windows, as well as window-like wall openings, such as gable vents, which provide ventilation for attic spaces. The proportion, profile, lite pattern, material, and location of windows all contribute to the character of a window. All windows must be inset and recessed a minimum of 1 ¾" depth from the exterior casing to the face of the window unit. See the historic window standard diagram for clarification.

Most windows in historic buildings were made of wood. Metal windows are also found in historic buildings; steel windows were common in industrial settings, and aluminum windows became popular in residential construction in the mid-20th century.

### Wood Windows

Historic wood windows that were built before 1940 are likely to have been constructed with old-growth timber, which grew slowly and naturally, resulting in strong wood with a tight grain. Lumber available today is farmed to grow quickly, resulting in a product that is not as hard, strong, or stable. The quality of historic wood windows is typically superior to a new wood window, and historic windows should be preserved and repaired, not replaced. In many cases, a historic window that is damaged or deteriorated can be repaired by re-glazing, patching, and splicing wood elements. A homeowner with a few hand tools can complete most window repairs.

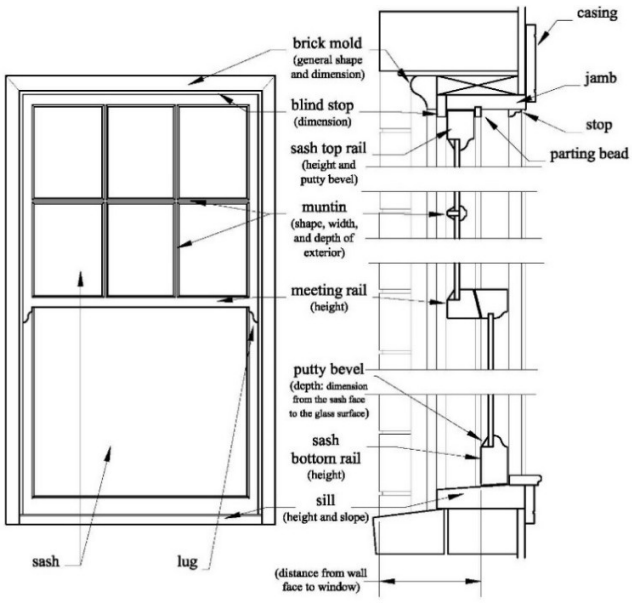
Although studies have shown that 90% of energy loss from a building is through attics, doors, and floors—not windows—historic windows can be made more energy efficient. Repair and weatherization are usually less expensive than replacement. If an original window has been damaged, its replacement should be in keeping with the character of the historic building and be either wood or wood clad.

**Preserve the proportions of historic window openings:**

- Preserve the original size and shape of a window opening.
- Restore altered window openings on primary facades to their original configuration, when feasible.
- Do not increase or decrease the number of window openings on a primary facade as it will negatively affect the character of the structure.

**Preserve historic window components:**

- Preserve the original size, position, number, and arrangement of historic windows in the wall of a building.
- Preserve historic window components, including the frame, sash, panes, muntin, glazing, sills, header, jambs, moldings, operation, and groupings of windows.




**Repair, rather than replace, frames, sashes, and other features:**

- Windows that have been painted shut are not considered damaged. Use hand tools, such as a putty knife or five-in-one tool, to cut carefully through paint around the window sash without damaging it. Gently pry the window open, using a small pry bar, if necessary. Avoid painting windows shut.
- Brittle or missing glazing putty or glazing strips can be replaced; do not use caulk instead of appropriate glazing material.
- Small areas of rot or similar damage are most likely to be found at the windowsill, where water may pool or splash onto the lower edge of the sash. Consider using a wood consolidant in these locations to preserve the original wood.
- If a patch or Dutchman repair is appropriate, remove the least amount of material needed to properly execute the repair. Use wood as close to the original material as possible (same species, grain pattern, and color) for a less visible result.
- Typical windows in Norhill are one-over-one windows.

***Example of intact historic one-over-one wood windows.***

**Determine whether window components are damaged beyond repair:**

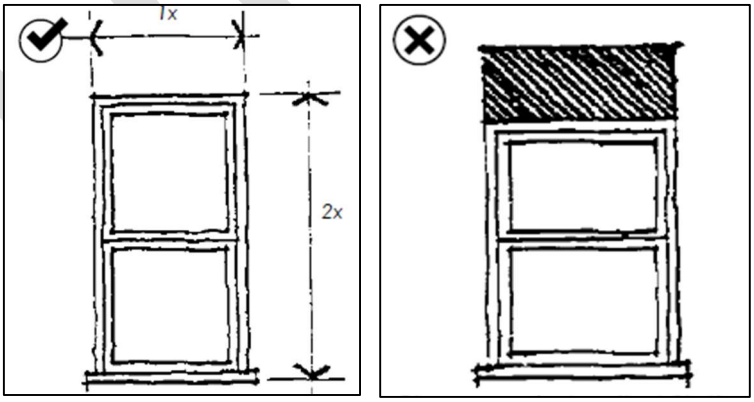
- Damage beyond repair is determined on a case-by-case basis. Discuss with HOP staff regarding application requirements and resources.

**Enhance energy efficiency of existing historic windows rather than replacement:**

- Add weatherstripping and caulking around the window frame.
- Install a storm window or insulated window shade. Interior storm windows are available and easy to install and remove. Exterior storm windows may be considered if there is a wood frame, and they match the historic windows.

**If replacement cannot be avoided, match a new window to the original:**

- Do not replace the entire window if new components, such as sash packs, are available. Replace the frame as a last resort.
- Match the original sash configuration: single-hung, double hung, casement, etc. with wood or wood clad windows.
- If damage is confined to one sash, look for a historic salvaged replacement sash.
- Select a similar profile and depth of trim, as well as the arrangement and number of layers of trim from the frame to the glass (no flat boards). All new windows must be recessed.
- If the original window had divided panes (lites), select a replacement window that is made with genuine muntins, with panes of glass set between them. Do not choose a window with strips of material located between large panes of glass to simulate muntins.
- Use the same material as the original window, when feasible.
- Although the City does not regulate glass, consider using clear window glass (glazing) to convey the visual appearance of historic glass. Visible differences in the reflectivity of new vs. historic glass can have a negative impact. If transparent low-E glass is used, ensure that the low-E glass is the outermost surface to avoid damaging a storm window.




***Choose a window that fits the existing opening. Do not use a smaller window and fill in above it. Windows should be inset and recessed from the exterior casing to the face of the window unit (upper sash).***

## Altering an Existing Window Opening

Although preserving all historic windows is recommended, a change in the size and shape of an original window opening may be considered:

**(a)** in a location that is not highly visible from the street, such as on a side wall toward the rear of the building, and

**(b)** when the existing window is not a key character-defining feature. Do not alter a window opening on or near the front of a building.

## Installing a Window in a New Location

Occasionally, a new window may be needed in a location that did not have one historically. This may be considered where:

**(a)** the new window would not be in a highly visible location, and

**(b)** creating the opening would not destroy any key character-defining features, such as on a side wall toward the rear of the building.

Do not create a new window opening at the front of a building. Be aware that shiplap is a structural element of an exterior wall, so installing a window in a new location may not be a simple task.

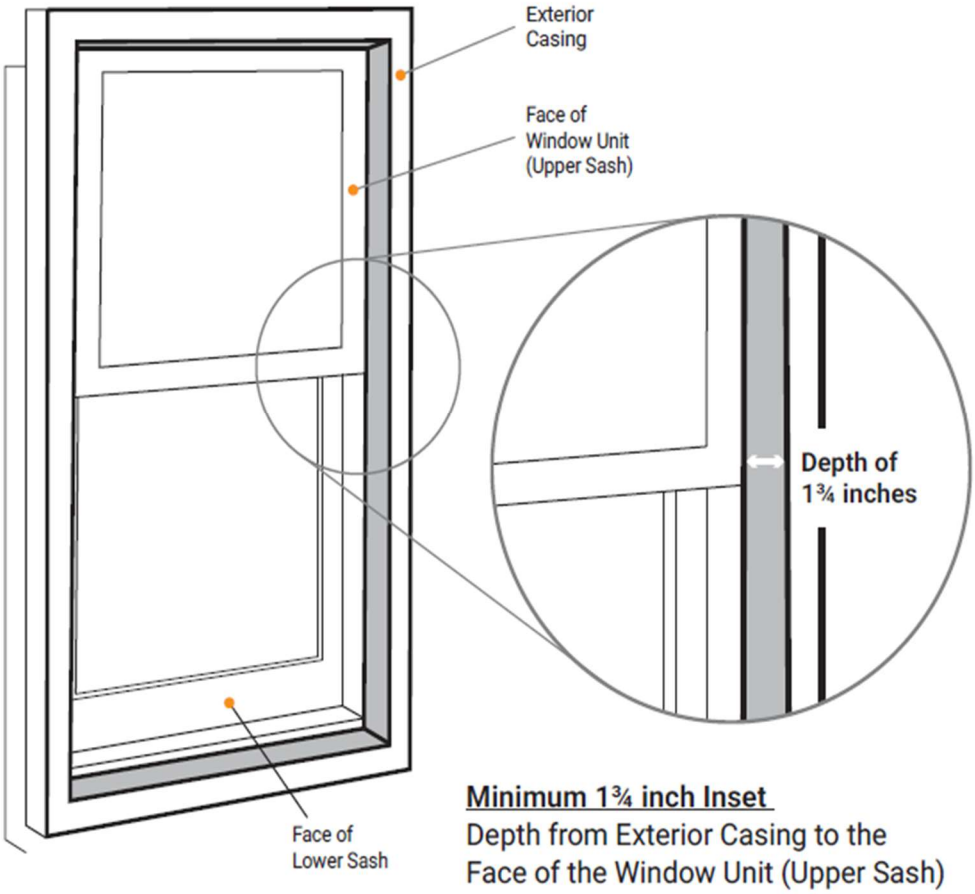
**Reuse the original window to replace another that is beyond repair; move to another location, when feasible; or store it:**

- If a window opening is to be altered, resulting in the removal of an original window, consider using that window to replace another that is beyond repair.
- Store an original window in a location where it will be protected from damage and weather.
- Store the window upright and elevated on plastic-covered blocks to keep moisture from wicking from the ground to the window. Do not store a window in a flat orientation where glass is more likely to be broken, or stack windows on top of one another.

**Design a new window to be compatible with the historic building:**

- Use a simple shape for the window with a profile that is simple in character to identify the window as being new.
- More flexibility in window design, including size and detailing, may be considered farther back on the side wall of a building.
- Reglazing with frosted glass may be permitted if privacy is a concern.
- Properly detailed trim around openings should mimic a structure: the jambs should appear to rest on the sill and to support the lintel. The lintel should be deeper than the jamb width. Avoid mitered corners.

# Historic Window Standard: New Construction & Replacement




**Minimum 1¾ inch Inset**
Depth from Exterior Casing to the Face of the Window Unit (Upper Sash)

Windows must be 1-over-1 (equally horizontally divided)

1¾ inch minimum inset for Fixed Window

**For more information contact:**
Houston Office of Preservation
832-393-6556
historicpreservation@houstontx.gov

City of Houston | Planning and Development | Houston Office of Preservation

## 5.3.c. Doors

Many types and styles of front doors can be found in historic Houston buildings. Some are solid wood with decorative panels, while others are wood with glass lites; some have sidelights and transoms. The door is often one of the primary character-defining features of a historic building, and a door's character is based on its design, materials, and location. When a new door is needed, it should be in character with the building, especially when it is the primary entrance.

**Preserve the proportions of a historic door and its opening:**

- Preserve a door's character-defining features, including its location, size, frame, panels, panes, muntins, glazing, thresholds, and moldings.
- Keep doors appropriately painted or stained to protect the wood from the weather.
- Do not alter the original size and shape of a historic door opening that is located in a highly visible location.
- When possible, restore a previously altered door opening in a highly visible location.

**Repair, rather than replace, a historic door:**

- For information about repairing the window or lites in a door, see information about repairing historic wood windows.
- For small areas of damage, consider using a wood consolidant to preserve the original wood.
- If a patch or Dutchman repair is appropriate, remove the least amount of material needed to properly execute the repair. Use wood as close to the original material as possible (same species, grain pattern, and color) for a less visible result.

If security is a concern, install long-throw deadbolt locks with reinforced deadbolt and lockset strike plates. Use extra-long (3") screws to attach strike plates through the doorjamb and into the studs. For energy efficiency, apply caulk around the interior door frame and maintain or install weatherstripping. Historic solid and paneled wood doors have good thermal properties.

**If a door cannot be repaired, match its replacement to the original:**

- If a similar door in the same building is available to be moved from a less prominent location, this option is preferred.
- If an existing replacement door is not available, match the new replacement door to the original door's design. For example, the number, size, and arrangement of panels and lites should be the same.
- Match the material of the original door or choose a material that will look similar after it is painted.
- If the original door design is unknown, use a design that is appropriate to the architectural style of the house.

## Altering an Existing Door Opening

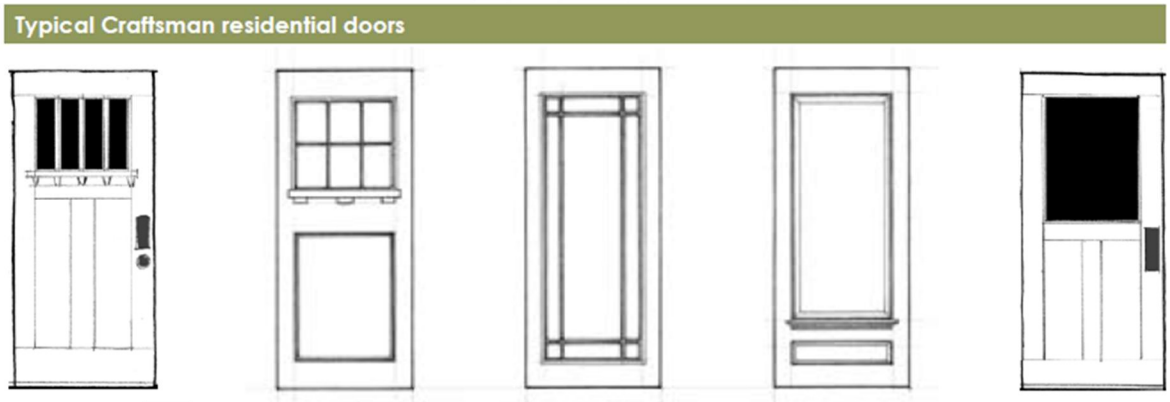
A change in the size and shape of an original door opening may be considered if (a) the door is not highly visible from the street, such as on a side wall toward the rear of the building, and (b) the existing door is not a character-defining feature of the building and, therefore, may be altered without substantially affecting the integrity of the historic building. Do not alter a historic door opening on the front of a building, unless:

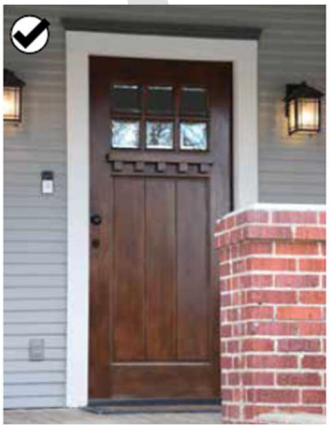
**Design the new door to be compatible with the historic building:**

- Use a design that matches the architectural style and is also compatible with the contributing structures in the context area.
- There are less restrictions to a door design that is further back on the side wall.

**Reuse the original door in another location, if possible, or consider storing it for future use:**

- If the door opening is to be altered, consider using the original door to replace another door in a more prominent location that is beyond repair.
- Store a historic door in a location where it will be protected from weather and moisture. If storing a historic door in a garage, keep it in an upright position and elevate it above the floor on blocks covered in plastic, to prevent moisture wicking up from the ground.



*If a door cannot be repaired, match its replacement to the original.*


*Design the new door to be compatible with the historic building.*

## A Structure with Two Front Doors

The presence of two front doors is a very common detail on many residences in Norhill. Duplexes are often found in war era neighborhoods to address the housing shortage or be an extra source of income. While some have since been converted into single-family residences, others still function as traditional duplexes.

**For a structure that has two front doors, the following are acceptable alterations that must be approved or decided by the HAHC on a case-by-case basis:**

- Retain both front doors to give the appearance the building was historically a duplex; one door may be made inoperable.
- Alternatively, one of the door openings may be replaced with a single window, and the other door must remain as is.
- All projects shall be reviewed and determined on a case-by-case basis.

**A previously altered front entry may be restored:**

- If a building was converted from single-family use to a duplex, and historical evidence for a single front entry door is available, you may restore the front entry to its original configuration.

## Installing a Door in a New Location

In some cases, a new door may be needed in a location that did not have one historically. This may be considered where:

**(a)** the new door would not be highly visible from the street, and
**(b)** creating the opening would not destroy any other key character-defining features.

**Design the new door to be compatible with the historic building:**

- Use a design that matches the architectural style and is also compatible with the contributing structures in the context area.
- There are less restrictions to a door design that is further back on the side wall.

## 5.3.d. Porches

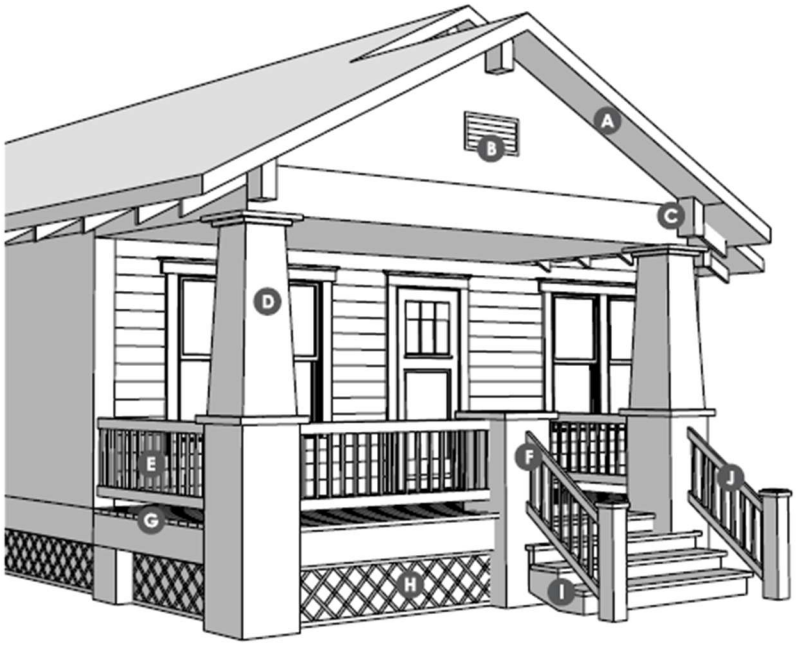
Porches are one of the most important character-defining features for houses in the Norhill Historic District. Front porches frame and shelter primary entrances, and they often include distinctive decorative details which help to define an architectural style. Front porches often establish a consistent one-story line along a block face. Some porches extend out to the side of a house.

Porches typically consist of the following parts: a hipped, gabled, or shed roof, which is supported by posts or columns and finished with a ceiling; a balustrade between the posts, which includes top and bottom rails, with balusters in between; a floor deck; and steps from the ground to the porch, which may be flanked on either side by posts or piers and sometimes handrails.

Porches are such important visual elements that inappropriate changes can have a negative impact on the entire house. For example, original porch materials may have been replaced with inappropriate designs, porch components or details may be missing, or a porch may have been partially or completely enclosed. Most of these alterations are, fortunately, reversible. A property owner who wishes to restore a porch should refer to historic photographs of the property and consult with HOP staff, who can provide helpful guidance.

*Note: Please refer to the Houston Building Code for additional requirements for guardrails and handrails.*

**Typical porch features**




| KEY: | |
|---|---|
| A | Porch Eave |
| B | Gable Vent |
| C | Decorative Roof Beam/ Triangular Knee Brace |
| D | Column |
| E | Balustrade |
| F | Raised Pier |
| G | Porch Deck |
| H | Skirting/Screening |
| I | Stringer |
| J | Handrail |

*Front porches often establish a consistent one-story line along the block-face.*


*Some porches extend out to the side of a house. This is a unique feature on some of the Craftsman/Bungalow buildings in Norhill.*


*Some porches extend out to the side of the house with brick column features. This is also a common feature of the Craftsman/Bungalow homes in Norhill.*

*Other porches in Norhill extend almost the entire length of the home, with the steps centered, creating a very welcoming sitting area. These are common features in homes in Norhill.*

## Existing Porches

Front porches establish a consistent one-story line along a block face which contributes to the historic integrity of the neighborhood, as well as help define architectural styles.

**Preserve an original porch, including its form, materials, and details:**

- Keep wooden porch elements painted.
- Maintain the height and pitch of a porch roof.
- Do not enclose a front porch in a way that alters its open character.
- When screening a porch, do not damage or remove the entire existing porch or porch elements, such as posts and railings.
- Maintain the original location of front porch steps.
- Preserve the front-facing gable vent. Do not remove or cover up.

**Repair, rather than replace, damaged portions of a porch:**

- For small areas of damage, consider using a wood consolidate to preserve the original wood.
- If a patch or Dutchman repair is appropriate, remove the least amount of material needed to properly execute the repair. Use wood as close to the original material as possible (same species, grain pattern, and color) for a less visible result.

**If repair is not possible, replace only those elements of the porch which are not repairable:**

- Replace a historic porch element to match the original (in kind).
- Use materials that match the style, texture, finish, composition, and proportion of the original.
- Match the balustrade of a historic porch in scale.
- Replace wooden porch steps with the same size material and profile. Substitute materials, such as composites, may be appropriate if their appearance matches that of the original material.

**Replace porch decking with similar materials:**

- When replacing deck boards, use the same size material and profile (such as tongue-and-groove). Substitute materials, such as composites, may be appropriate for porch decking.
- Do not replace undamaged deck boards.
- Do not replace a wooden porch deck with concrete.
- Do not cover porch decking with tiles.

***(Left) Before Repair: A deteriorated post and handrail.***

***(Center) After Repair: Post and handrail are reconstructed.***

***(Right) Replacement porch elements match the original.***

## Adding a New Porch to an Existing Building

A new porch may be added in a location where it will not affect the integrity of the contributing building, such as at the rear of the building or toward the rear on a side wall. A new porch can also be included as part of a larger addition, particularly when the porch helps to reduce the perceived mass and scale of the addition. A new front porch may be added to a noncontributing building where one did not originally exist.

**Design a new porch to be compatible with the existing building:**

- Keep the scale, proportion, and character of the new porch compatible with the historic structure and compatible with the contributing structures in the context area.
- Match the finished floor height of the new porch to the existing building.
- The eave height of a new porch can match the eave height of an existing front porch or be lower.
- Use materials that are similar in scale, proportion, texture, and finish to an existing front porch
- The front setback of a new porch must not exceed the front setback of porches on the neighboring properties (on both sides of the house).

**If a porch element or the entire porch is to be reconstructed, base the new design on historical evidence:**

- Where an entire original porch is missing, base the replacement design on physical evidence (such as ghosting of post profiles remaining on wood surfaces) or on photographic evidence. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps can show the location of the previous porch and whether it was full or partial width. If no photographic evidence exists, look at houses of the same style in your context area and design the porch using simplified versions of those porch elements.
- Size columns and posts appropriately for the porch roof they are supporting and for the bases on which they rest. For example, slender posts will be visually out of balance with large roofs and massive bases.
- Select columns and posts that are appropriate for the architectural style of the house.
- Do not use metal columns or railings unless there is clear evidence that they were used historically.
- Use a brick base beneath a wood column only for a Craftsman house and where evidence is available that this previously existed. Stone is not appropriate in the Norhill Historic District.
- Choose a railing that is in character with the style of the building, and not more elaborate or more simplistic than what existed historically.
- If a one-story porch has its own roof, the height of the porch roof should be lower than the main roof.
- The roof of the porch may be hipped, gabled, or shed. It is not required to match the main roof of the house.

## 5.3.e. Accessibility

If accessibility solutions, such as ramps or lifts, are needed, owners of historic properties should fully comply possible with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Texas Accessibility Design Guidelines (TAS) provisions, while also preserving the integrity of the character-defining features of their buildings and sites. Design accessibility solutions to minimize impacts on a historic structure.

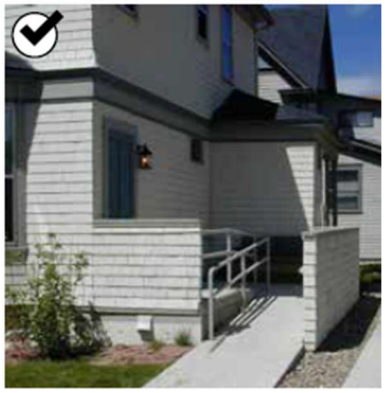
Installation of accessibility ramps and lifts requires a COA but can be approved administratively by the Planning Director. The removal of ramps and lifts does not require a COA.

**Adapt historic doorways to make them accessible:**

- Instead of widening an existing door opening, install offset or "swing wide" door hinges to increase the usable size of a door opening by two inches.
- Consider replacing door thresholds with beveled alternatives, no higher than ¾ inch, to allow wheelchairs and scooters to maneuver over them easily.
- If historic door hardware is removed for replacement with accessible alternatives, such as lever handles, store the original hardware in a secure location where it will be protected from weather, so that it may be reinstalled at some point in the future.

**Add ramps or lifts to provide access to at least one door:**

- The Americans with Disabilities Act recommends that a ramp to be used by someone in a wheelchair or scooter should have no more than a 1:12 slope; that is, for every one inch in height between the starting point and ending point, the ramp should be one foot long.
- If porch components must be removed in order to create access for a ramp or lift, take photographs to document the original condition of the porch. Use hand tools and take care that the components to be removed are not damaged. Store the original components in a secure location, away from weather, with a copy of the photo documentation (also protected from weather). Additional notes about the project may help someone to re-install the removed porch elements in the future.



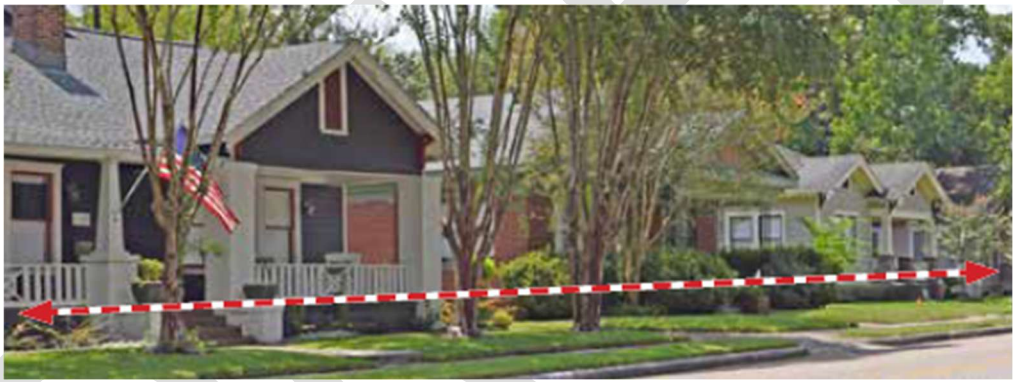
***Avoid altering character-defining features when adding a ramp. For example, these ramps are set to the side, which maintains the character of the front steps.***

## 5.3.f. Building Foundations

Every building sits on a foundation, which transfers the weight of the building to the ground. Historically, many buildings (regardless of size) were constructed on pier-and-beam foundations. Piers were usually built using bricks or stone blocks, laid together with mortar to create a load-bearing column. Later, piers were built using concrete blocks or poured concrete and sometimes covered in brick or stone veneer. (When wooden posts were used instead of masonry piers, that is a post-and-beam foundation.)

To construct a pier-and-beam foundation, piers were placed at the corners of the building, then equally spaced around the perimeter and across the interior of the foundation. Heavy beams were laid across the piers, with floor joists resting on the beams, and the floor atop the joists. The house was then built on that platform. Pier-and-beam foundations have many benefits, including good ventilation and drainage, easy access to plumbing and other utilities within the crawlspace under the building, and the ability to move with Houston's heavy clay soils as they swell and shrink.

The design of a building's foundation, including the materials used, height of the finished floor, and screening details (where present), are character-defining features.



***Maintain the historic height of the finished floor above natural grade, if possible. This is a key feature of the building and the context.***

**Maintain the historic height of the finished floor above natural grade, if possible:**

- Foundation height should not be changed unless required to preserve the integrity of the foundation, such as problems that can occur with insufficient space between the ground and the structure. Changing the height of a foundation may damage porch piers and chimneys, which also must be raised.
- Have piers adjusted or shimmed, if needed, to keep the house level. Consult a qualified foundation professional for more information.

**Maintain (or add, if desired) screening between piers:**
To keep animals out of the crawlspace area, it was and is common for homeowners to install skirting or screening between foundation piers, particularly under the porch. Historically, this consisted of framed lattice panels, sawn wood balusters, or horizontal wood siding. Because these materials are in contact with the ground, maintenance is essential, and they may need to be repaired or replaced at regular intervals.

- Repair foundation components that are damaged or deteriorated.
- Keep screening materials painted and secured to the piers.
- Periodically inspect and repair any damage to wooden screening material.
- Repoint any eroded mortar joints, to prevent moisture infiltration and damage.

**New screening panels may be installed between piers:**

- Choose a screening design that is consistent with the architectural style of the house. Diagonal or square lattice is a good choice for most houses.
- Create panels by setting wood lattice, siding, or balusters into a frame. Do not use unframed materials. Do not use paneling that gives the appearance of stone or brick or fill the space between piers with concrete blocks or other masonry.
- If using lattice, choose a pressure-treated wood product rather than plastic "garden" lattice, which has very large holes that are likely to admit animals into the crawlspace.
- If you build your own lattice, you may wish to use wooden slats and are arranged with a 1-inch x 1-inch space between, for a historically authentic appearance that will keep animals out.
- If using square (vertical-horizontal) lattice, install so that the vertical pieces are toward the outside.
- Inset the screening panels from the face of the foundation piers. Do not lean or attach panels against the outside of the house or piers or cover the lower portion of a wall.
- Secure screening panels in a way that does not damage historic materials; for example, attach to mortar joints, rather than drilling into brick.

## 5.3.g. Roofs

A roof is a prominent character-defining feature of a historic building. The shape, pitch, complexity, materials, and treatment of eaves and soffits are all key characteristics of a roof.

Many roofs on older residential buildings have one of the following shapes: gabled, hipped, pyramidal, hip-on-gable, gable-on-hip, or some combination. Roof shapes may be simple or complex; they may be sloped with a steep pitch or a low pitch. Craftsman roofs typically have a 5-over-12 or 6-over-12 pitch.

"Flat" (flat appearing, but still slightly pitched) roofs are found in many commercial buildings. Along with a roof's shape, its complexity and pitch can help identify a building's architectural style.

Eaves may be boxed with soffits, or open with exposed rafter tails. They may be wide or narrow and may be ornamented with brackets or braces. All these character-defining details are stylistically distinctive.

While slate, metal, and tile roofing materials should be preserved, composition shingles are designed to have a limited-service life. When replacing roofing materials, that new material should be similar in size, shape, and texture with what was used historically, if that is known. If documentation is not available, examples from similar buildings may be considered. A COA is not required for re-roofing with in-kind materials, if there is no change to the structure, shape, or pitch of the roof.

*A front gabled roof.*

*A hipped roof.*

*A clipped gabled roof.*

*A flat roof with a parapet (commercial storefronts).*

**Preserve the original form and details of a historic roof:**

- Maintain the perceived ridge line, eave line, and orientation of the roof, as seen from the street.
- Maintain the size, shape, and pitch of the historic roof (as well as dormers, when present).
- Do not alter the pitch of a historic roof.

**Preserve the original eave depth and design:**

- Maintain traditional overhangs; these contribute to the building's historic character.
- Do not cut back soffits or exposed roof rafters.

**Repair, rather than replace, historic roofing materials and details, if possible:**

- Reattach loose shingles or other materials.
- Fix any roof leaks or damage immediately.
- When roof materials such as glazed clay tile or slate need repair, consult with a qualified roofing company that specializes in these materials on historic buildings.
- Patch and replace only those areas that are damaged, rather than replacing the entire roof.

***Do not cut back a roof eave so it is flush with the wall.***

***Preserve the original eave depth and design. While the eave depth and design are intact, the building is still in need of some maintenance to protect these features.***

**Apply new roof materials that convey a scale and texture similar to historic materials:**

- Use materials that appear similar in texture, pattern, and finish to the original roof material.
- An asphalt or asphalt-fiberglass composition shingle is appropriate for most styles and periods.
- If new roof decking is needed, consider using a material with a reflective coating on the underside for better energy efficiency.
- A clay tile or slate roof is only appropriate where documentation indicates that it was used historically.

## 5.3.h. Dormers

A dormer is a small structure that projects from (sticks out of) the roof and has its own roof, window(s), and walls. Dormers were often used, historically, to house a window so that light could enter an attic space. In some cases, dormers were used to create headroom in upper floors and finished attics, creating additional livable space. Dormers may be found singly or in pairs; sometimes their roofs are the same style (gabled, hipped, etc.) or a shed is provided.

In all cases, the roof dormer retains a low profile and does not overwhelm the scale of the building. Traditionally, dormers can be found on some houses, but they are not a common feature in Norhill. Dormers are subordinate in scale and character to the primary roof. Where they are already present, historic dormers should be preserved. New dormers, if desired, should be compatible with the character of the historic building and subordinate to the primary roof.

**Preserve and maintain a historic dormer:**

- Maintain the original size and shape of a dormer.
- Original dormers which are located on a front-facing roof should be preserved.
- Repair, rather than replace, deteriorated elements of a dormer
- If repair is not possible, only replace elements that are beyond repair.

## 5.3.i. Chimneys

Chimneys appear on many historic buildings. In addition to being functional, chimneys are distinctive character defining features which accent rooflines and often include unique decorative patterns. They should be preserved when feasible. In Houston, exterior chimneys historically were located on any side of a building. Interior chimneys are also found in historic buildings.

Common chimney problems include blockages from creosote and other materials, cracks or other damage to the chimney flue, cracks or deteriorated mortar in the brickwork, and issues with the chimney cap or crown, which protects the top of the chimney opening from weather and pests.

**Preserve a historic chimney:**

- Do not cover a historic brick chimney with any other material.
- For more information about cleaning, maintaining, and preserving historic masonry, please consult the NPS preservation briefs.

**Repair a historic chimney that has deteriorated:**

- Consult with a qualified chimney professional to regularly inspect and repair a chimney, as needed. A mason can help with brick, mortar, or stucco damage.

**Construct a new chimney to be in character with the style of the house:**

- Brick or stucco are appropriate materials. Stone is not allowed.
- Do not cover a chimney with siding or leave a metal chimney pipe exposed.
- If there is already a historic chimney, locate any new chimney in a less visible location.

***Street facing chimney with character defining brick pattern.***

***Chimneys are also commonly found on the side elevations of houses in Norhill.***