

Newburyport Local Historic District Guidelines

Newburyport Local Historic District Study Committee

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Very few small cities in the United States have as much historic architecture as Newburyport with the Newburyport Local Historic District (NLDC) containing the core of the Newburyport National Register District. The aim of the NLHD is to preserve the historic materials and the character-defining elements of the district's structures and to keep their settings compatible. The purpose of these Guidelines is to provide guidance to property owners within the NLHD in planning appropriate exterior changes to their properties and to assist the Newburyport Local Historic District Commission (NLHDC) in reviewing proposed changes throughout the historic district.

The Guidelines are also intended to foster predictability and fairness in Commission actions. While the Commission considers each application on its own merits, applicants are encouraged to follow the guidelines to the greatest extent possible. The Recommendations point to best historic preservation practices but do not carry the weight of the Guidelines.

The Commission will work with the property owner to apply these guidelines to the individual project. Work sessions, pre-application discussions with the Commission, in particular are encouraged. The property owner is encouraged to learn about general historic preservation principles and practice by reading the Preservation Briefs published by the U.S. Department of the Interior, www.nps.gov and the other sources available through the Commission's website at cityofnewburyport.com

The NLHD understands property owners' concerns about energy efficiency and sustainability. The Guidelines and Recommendations in the Windows and Doors section show that preserving historic fabric and energy conservation are not mutually exclusive. Property owners are encouraged to consider the entire envelope including insulation when making renovation decisions and to remember that restoration of a building may be considered the ultimate recycling.

These guidelines are based on *The Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties With Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings* (Standards) by Kay D. Weeks and Anne E. Grimmer, published by the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1995 and updated in 2001, and *The Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties With Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, edited by Charles A. Birnbaum with Christine Capella Peters, published by the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1996, www.nps.gov.

2.0 EXCLUSIONS FROM REVIEW INCLUDE:

- a.** Buildings that are less than 75 years old.
- b.** Ordinary maintenance and repair of any exterior architectural features if such repair and maintenance does not involve a fundamental change in design and materials.
- c.** Temporary buildings, structures or signs, subject, however, to conditions pertaining to the duration of existence and use, location, lighting, removal and similar matters as the Commission may reasonably specify.
- d.** Terraces, walks, driveways, sidewalks and similar structures, provided that any such structure is substantially at grade level.
- e.** Storm windows, storm doors, screen windows, screen doors, and window air conditioners.
- f.** The color of exterior paint or the color of materials used on roofs.
- g.** Flagpoles, sculpture, mailboxes (freestanding or attached), window boxes, gutters, downspouts and leaders, house numbers, play equipment, and garden furniture.
- h.** Satellite antennae, heat and air vents or similar equipment, provided they are located to minimize visibility from a Public Way.
- i.** All public park and cemetery structures are exempt except buildings.
- j.** Structures less than one hundred square feet.

Only additions and features visible from a public way will be reviewed. The NLHD Commission, wishing to respect residents' privacy, does not regulate backyard features. It is anticipated, given the proximity of most buildings to the public way, that the NLHD Commission will review most additions.

3.0 ORIGINAL AND/OR HISTORIC VS. NON-CONTRIBUTING FEATURES

Character-defining elements display the building's history, architectural style, and craftsmanship and include the overall shape of the building, distinctive features such as front doorways and windows, and decorative details. These elements may be original to the structure or have been added later and have historic significance in their own right. Retention of these elements, when possible, or replacements in kind is a major goal for the NLHD Commission. The commission realizes that many properties in the district have been altered or remodeled to reflect current fashions or to eliminate maintenance issues. Any non-original or later feature on a building that was in existence at the time of the designation of the historic district may be retained as is, repaired, or replaced to match.

- Retain original and historic character-defining elements when possible, or replacements in kind. See below for discussion of specific elements.

Recommended Guideline:

- Although the replacement of non-contributing features existing at the time this NLDH was established is permitted, the property owner is encouraged to reverse earlier adverse alterations and restore original or later historic building material, if possible.

This Federal-era building has a later Greek Revival doorway that is historically significant.



4.0 DEMOLITION



View looking south along Summer St. from corner of Washington Street before and after - Historic American Buildings Survey, Arthur C. Haskell, Photographer. April, 1934.

Demolition of entire buildings is seldom approved in the NLHD because most were considered of sufficient importance to be listed as “contributing structures” to the Newburyport National Register District and therefore are considered historically significant. Rationale for permitting exceptions might include major loss of original or historic fabric since the NRD designation, a designation of “minor contributing” structure in the register nominations, severe structural instability, and removal of the structure to permit publicly-funded projects with appropriate mitigation. Demolition or removal of a structure or part of a structure requires demolition or removal permits from both the NLHD Commission and the Municipal Building Department. Demolition or partial demolition of later additions that are not historically significant might be permissible and are subject to review on a case-by-case basis.

If structural instability or deterioration is given as the rationale for demolition, the applicant might be required to provide a technical report prepared by an architect or engineer experienced in working with historic properties that details the nature and extent of the building’s problems. At the discretion of the Commission, the technical report will be submitted for peer review by a technical expert hired by the Commission and paid by the applicant.

Where a new structure will replace one to be demolished or removed, approval of the new structure is required as a condition of granting a certificate of demolition or removal. In addition to plans and specifications, the applicant will submit a timetable and such guarantees and assurances for the completion and replacement as the Commission might require. Documentation of a structure proposed to be demolished might be required, including photographs of elevations and details of specific architectural features. Nothing in these guidelines will be construed to prevent actions certified by a duly authorized public officer to be necessary for public safety to resolve an unsafe or dangerous condition.

5.0 CHANGES TO EXISTING BUILDING EXTERIORS

5.1 Masonry

The intent of these guidelines as they pertain to masonry is to preserve the historic appearance and to prevent accelerated deterioration of masonry construction. Modern techniques and materials used in masonry work today are damaging to the softer materials found in historic brick. Refer to the Newburyport Historical Commission's ADVISORY TO CONTRACTORS AND HOMEOWNERS ON MASONRY for further information on acceptable methods of cleaning and pointing historic brick.

- Use mortar compatible with historic masonry. DO NOT repoint a historic soft mortar with mortar containing primarily Portland cement. Mortar with Portland cement sets too hard and will cause the historic masonry to deteriorate.
- Clean only when it is necessary to halt deterioration and always with the gentlest method possible, such as low pressure water and soft natural bristle brushes. DO NOT SANDBLAST MASONRY UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. Submit cleaning specifications to the Commission for review prior to commencement of the work.
- Retain and repair historic chimneys, even if an interior fireplace is to be removed, because chimneys are an important architectural feature. The height and original or later historic pattern of decorative brickwork on chimneys shall be maintained.
- Do not paint unpainted masonry unless historical evidence proves otherwise.
- Repair or replace deteriorated historic materials, where necessary, with new materials that duplicate the old as closely as possible. Match carefully the replacement bricks' size, color, and composition to the original.
- Retain whenever possible without the application of any surface treatment. Sealants, waterproofing, or water repellent coatings are prohibited unless they have been proven not to block the masonry's water vapor permeability, or to contribute to its long-term deterioration.

Incompatible mortar can destroy historic masonry units by creating spalling (see below). The spalling exposes the softer interior brick and allows for deterioration.



5.2 Architectural Siding

The application or installation of synthetic siding can severely compromise the appearance and integrity of historic buildings, often obscuring and damaging original or later historic details and materials. While application of synthetic siding may cover a problem, it will not rectify it and may even accelerate existing causes of damage. For example, paint failure and clapboard damage are often caused by faulty gutters and downspouts. If this drainage system is not repaired before installation, runoff water may get trapped behind the siding, causing even more damage. In addition, synthetic siding may create its own moisture problems. Wood clapboards breath by allowing moisture created by differences in temperature between the inside and outside of the house to migrate to the exterior before condensation occurs in the walls. Unless an interior vapor barrier is installed, the impenetrable layer created by aluminum or vinyl siding will trap excess water vapor which condenses and not only damages wood but can also contribute to the formation and growth of mold.

- Retain original or historic siding material if possible. If residing is required, repair or replace with new materials that duplicate or match the original or later historic materials as closely as possible. The appropriate historic siding materials are clapboard, brick, and on certain historical building styles, wood shingles. Siding materials such as aluminum, vinyl, asphalt, mineral or synthetic that were unavailable when a building was originally constructed are not appropriate and their installation will not be approved.

Exception: Composite siding materials might be considered on a case by case basis.

Determining factors might include but not be limited to durability, application, and visibility of the material from a public way. Samples of composite siding materials must be submitted to the NLHDC for consideration.

Recommendations:

- The Commission strongly recommends the use of white or red cedar for replacement exterior siding and trim due to its decay resistance and long lasting properties. Back priming all exterior wood materials prior to installation is also encouraged.
- Removal of vinyl and aluminum siding is encouraged.

5.3 Trim



Quoins



Double brackets

Wood trim and ornament are character-defining features that help identify its style.

- Retain original trim when possible, and replace in kind to match original when necessary. Composite materials when used in custom design might be considered on a case by case basis. Medium-density fiberboard (MDF) is an approved material for the construction of architectural panels.

Recommendation:

- When proposing an addition or new construction, pay attention to neighboring historic structures and period styles to determine the appropriate application, scale, and proportions of trim. Refer to Section 11.0, New Construction Standards.

5.4 Windows

Generally, the repair and rehabilitation of original and later historic windows, including the installation of weather-stripping and good quality storm windows, can be accomplished at no greater cost than replacement with new insulating glass windows and will meet or exceed current energy code requirements for historic structures. If properly maintained, original and historic windows will last longer than many of today's replacement windows. It should be noted that methods exist for deleading historic windows. The NLHD Commission maintains a list of window restoration specialists available to applicants.

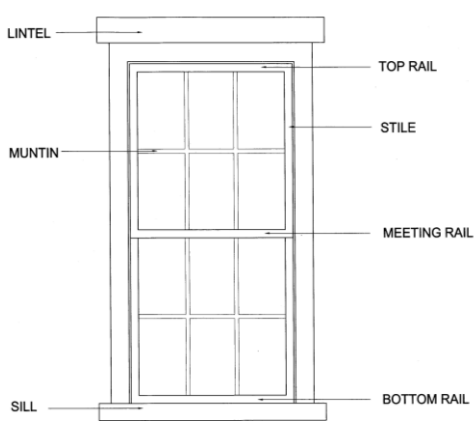


Illustration identifying parts of window.
6/6 double-hung sash shown.

- The NLHDC strongly urges property owners to repair and restore original or later historic windows. If an applicant believes that such windows cannot be repaired, the applicant's proposal for replacement will be reviewed by the Commission.
- If the Commission agrees that the proposed replacement is necessary, match the new windows to the original or later historic windows' pattern, proportions and scale, and be in character with the building's style. Match parts of the replacement windows (such as exterior molding and/or casing, exterior frame, and exterior sash members) to those of the original or existing historic windows.

- Match the muntins' thickness and profile to those of the original or later historic windows. Muntins, whether structural or applied, must have an exterior three-dimensional profile and a width appropriate to the building's style. New windows with interior applied or removable muntin bars are not acceptable.
- The Commission will review proposed new window opening(s) in the building façade to ensure new openings are consistent with the historically accurate arrangement of windows.
- Mirrored, tinted or heat-reflective glass or coatings cannot be used. Low e-coatings are acceptable.
- Retain original or later historic shutters if possible. Replacements will be wood or composite with overall design and hardware appropriate to the style and period of the building. The NLDHC will aid in selecting the appropriate styles.

The Commission will seldom approve removal of historic fanlights and sidelights.

Recommendations:

- Although storm windows are not reviewed by the Commission, provided that the installation of the storm windows does not alter the original and later historic windows, openings, or frames, it is encouraged that the meeting rail of the storm window be consistent with that to the window.

5.5 Entrances and Doors



Late Georgian period door surround.



Federal era period door surround.

- Repair, not replace, original and later historic doors and door openings, including transoms and sidelights.
- If replacement is necessary, choose replacement doors with a panel configuration, molding profile and materials appropriate to the style of the original building. The Commission will aid in determining the appropriate style. If part of the replacement door is glazed or has a window insert, choose one with true divided lights or simulated divided lights.
- Replacement doors will not incorporate leaded or stained glass except when replicating a feature original to the building.
- The Commission will review proposed new door opening(s) in the building façade to ensure new openings are consistent with the historically accurate arrangement of doors.

Recommendations:

- To improve energy efficiency, applicants may wish to install storm doors. The Commission recommends that the style contain the maximum amount of glazing so the main door is visible.
- Weatherstripping and interior door sweeps also improve energy efficiency.

5.6 Roofs and Dormers

- Retain the original or later historically significant roof shape(s) and roof pitch.
- All distinctive roof features, such as cornices, metalwork, and chimneys shall be retained.
- Retain and repair or restore original or later historic dormers. Expansion of existing dormers or adding new dormers might be approved on a case-by-case basis. New dormers will be permitted if they are consistent with the building form, proportions, and arrangement of existing windows, and are constructed in matching materials. If possible, place the new dormers not to be visible from a public way.
- Because of its rarity, retain the original slate roof when possible.

Recommendations:

- New balconies, towers, widow walks, roof decks and cupolas are generally inappropriate additions, particularly if visible from the public way. They might be approved on a case-by-case basis.
- Although gutters and downspouts are exempt from review, where gutters are a part of the eave molding or cornice (“built-in”), retain the gutters. Place the new gutters and downspouts in an architecturally sensitive manner.



Mansard roof typical of Victorian period with decorative slate roof.

5.7 Skylights, Satellite Dishes, Solar Collectors, and HVAC Equipment



Screened mechanical equipment.

- Do not place skylights on the roof of the primary elevation.
- Skylights will not be curved plastic or bubble form.
- Solar collectors will not permanently change or alter any architectural feature. Match the framing, piping and insulation, etc., with the roof surface with piping concealed from view.

Recommendation:

- Install outdoor mechanical equipment such as propane and other tanks, fuel tanks, generators, electric meters, gas meters, power vents, and HVAC systems, in locations which minimize the visual impact on the building, and which involve minimal alteration to the historical integrity of the original building.

5.8 Porches and Decks

- Retain historic porches and entrance porticos, including wooden railings, stairs, and ornamental details or replace with materials that duplicate the original or later historic elements as closely as possible. If new moldings are needed, match the shape, scale, period style, and materials of the original or later historic elements.

Recommendations:

- Avoid replacing original or later historic wood posts and railings with metal, plastic or pressure treated bare wood and wood porch decks with concrete.
- New balconies, widow walks, and roof decks are generally inappropriate additions, particularly if visible from the public way. They might be approved on a case-by-case basis.

Enclosing or glazing original and later historic entrances and porches may be considered by the commission.



Two-story Queen Anne porch and entrance.

6.0 ACCESSIBILITY AND LIFE SAFETY CONSIDERATION – PUBLIC BUILDINGS

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates that places of public accommodation (buildings that are open to and used by the public) be accessible to all users. Modifications may need to be made to a historic building so that it will be in compliance with current accessibility code requirements. Modifications to introduce or enhance access for persons with disabilities must comply with current provisions of 521 CMR – The Rules and Regulations of the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board. Buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places may be eligible for a variance if compliance is impracticable. Owners of historic properties open to and used by the public must comply with prevailing codes to the fullest extent feasible.

- Plan carefully so that the work does not threaten or destroy the historic character of the structure, or result in the loss of character-defining features, while at the same time providing the highest level of access. While access must be provided to the primary entrance, introduce the bulk of an accessible entrance ramp on a secondary elevation, if possible, or from grade at an existing walk or pathway to an existing porch or primary entrance to minimize the visual impact. Make handrails as unobtrusive as possible.



Well-designed accessible entrance ramp at City Hall.

7.0 FENCES, SITE WALLS, AND TREES



Well-proportioned modern fence.



Cast-iron fence.

- Because original and later historic fences and site walls are significant architectural features, repair or replace whenever possible with new materials that duplicate the original or later historic features.
- Preserve cast and wrought iron fences for their high historic significance and rarity.
- Do not place new fences and site walls to prevent or restrict views of buildings from a public way. Privacy fences at the side and back of the property are allowed.
- Make the design of fences appropriate in scale, materials, and architectural style to the building, its site and the surrounding properties.

Recommendation:

- Although the Commission does not regulate landscaping, it encourages the preservation of the existing natural contours and topography of the landscape. Keep mature trees that contribute to the overall character of the district.

8.0 BARNs AND OUTBUILDINGS

Outbuildings are integral to the historic character of many Newburyport buildings. Beyond their architectural value, these secondary structures contribute to the overall spatial and visual character of individual sites and the historic district as a whole. Typical outbuildings include barns or carriage houses or small residences built at the same time as the house.

- Make every effort to retain historic barns and other outbuildings, including original or later historic doors, windows, siding, and roofing materials. Replace in kind any portion of an outbuilding or garage that is damaged or deteriorated beyond repair. Match the original or later historic feature in design, material, dimension, sash or panel configuration, detail, texture, and color. Retain as much original or later historic fabric as possible.
- In conversions to other uses, respect character-defining features, such as window and door fenestration and architectural trim.



Carriage House.

9.0 COMMERCIAL STOREFRONTS

The intent of these guidelines as they pertain to commercial storefronts is to preserve the historic variety of storefronts that add interest and vitality to the commercial areas of Newburyport.

- Retain and preserve storefronts contributing to historic character of a commercial building including functional and decorative features and elements.
- If an original or historic entrance will no longer be used, leave the door in place and secure it. Make any alteration reversible so that the doorway can be used in the future with minimal work.

Recommendations:

- Reuse existing original hardware and locks if possible.



Streetscape of Newburyport commercial blocks.



Cast iron storefront with entry flanked by display windows.

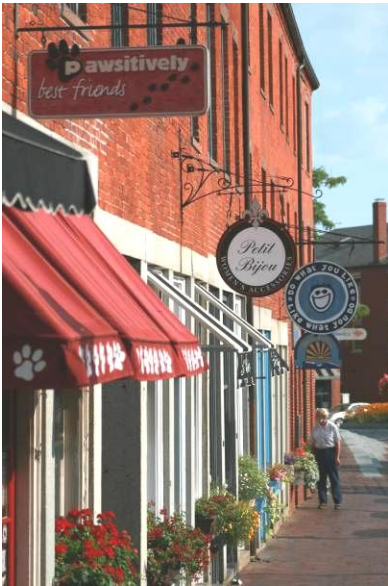
10.0 COMMERCIAL SIGNS

The following requirements are in addition to Newburyport's Signs Ordinance.

- 12 square feet maximum size for first floor projected hanging, window, and wall signs. Projected hanging, window, and wall signs are not allowed on upper floors. Door signs are allowed if no other access to an establishment not on the street level.
- The Commission will review directory signage (listings of two or more establishments), whether attached on wall or freestanding.
- Materials include painted wood, metal, and stone. Particle board, plastic, or highly reflective metallic signs are not allowed.
- Downlit signs with shielded bulbs to prevent light scatter. Internally lit signs are not permitted.
- All signage and brackets must be attached through the mortar and not the bricks or granite. Any adhesive used must be preservation quality.

Residential signs allowed under current zoning regulations will be allowed in the NLHDC.

The Commission will consider new installation of awnings on a case-by-case basis.



Typical signage in downtown Newburyport.

11.0 NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS

New Construction Standards

The intent of these guidelines is not to be overly specific or dictate designs, but to provide a general design framework for new construction. The goal is to encourage compatible construction while discouraging incompatible development. New construction or additions shall not substantially block views from public ways of existing structures.

11.1 Buildings

Recommendations:

- Pay particular attention to the block and streetscape so the new construction is sensitive to the area. Elements to be considered include:
 - Height
 - Roof form
 - Scale and massing
 - Proportion
 - Setback in relation to existing streetscape
- Design the proposed building to reflect its contemporary era while maintaining its sensitivity to its historic setting. The NLHDC does not approve only historical reproduction buildings but encourages compatible original design.

View northwest along High Street showing similar height, roof form, and massing along streetscape.



11.2 Additions

A sympathetically designed addition can provide needed living space with minimal alterations to the historic fabric of a structure.

- Design the addition to be recognizable apart from the main structure by means of massing, articulation of setbacks, trim, and/or ornamental detail. The elevations of the main structure will be clearly identifiable.
- In historic Newburyport architecture, additions in most cases were placed to the rear and/or side of the building. Raising the entire roofline to include an additional floor will seldom be approved.



New back addition relating to the older main structure.

11.3 Elements

When replacing missing/altered historic features such as storefronts, porches, or outbuildings, base the design upon accurate documentation of the original or later historic feature. If no such documentation exists, make the new design compatible in scale, proportions, material, and detail with the historic character of the building.

Glossary of Architectural Terms

Applied trim – decorative detail added to the surface of a structure.

Architectural integrity – the degree to which a structure retains its original or later historic style and details.

Bay - a major spatial division of a building marked by window and door openings or vertical supports such as pilasters.

Bracket – a projecting member, often decorative, that supports an overhang.

Casement – a window sash that opens its entire length on hinges.

Character-defining features – original or later historic architectural details of a building that give the building its unique character, such as clapboard siding, original or later historic windows or slate roofing material.

Column – a structural member, usually composed of a base, a shaft, and a capital, that supports a horizontal load, such as a porch.

Cornice – any molded projection that finishes a wall; also the upper portion of an entablature, resting on the frieze.

Conservation - action taken to prevent decay and preserve the historic fabric of a building.

Deteriorated – features of a structure, which have eroded, usually due to weathering or neglect.

Eaves – the projecting overhang at the lower edge of the roof.

Ell – an addition that extends from the rear or side of a building.

Elevation – one of the sides of a structure; also, referring to an architectural drawing of a particular side of a structure.

Façade – the primary elevation of a building, generally referring to the front.

Fenestration – the arrangement of windows on an elevation.

Historic – relating to time and age. In context of this local historic district, generally the structure and features must be seventy-five years or older.

Historic fabric – the original construction materials.

In-kind – material of the same color and composition as the original.

Lintel – the timber or stone that spans an opening and supports the weight above it.

Massing – the three dimensional form of a structure created by the boxlike forms that fit together to create the overall shape and footprint.

Muntin – a framing member to hold panes of glass in a window; also known as a mullion.

Original – at time of construction.

Pilaster – a column, usually with a capital and a base, that is attached to a building.

Preservation – basic maintenance required for a building to remain functional and in good repair for the current occupant.

Repair – in reference to historic materials, the method using the least degree of intervention possible to maintain architectural character and historic fabric, such as patching, piecing-in, splicing, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing according to recognized preservation methods.

Restoration – the return of a building to its appearance at a particular time in history, usually by the removal of later alterations.

Secondary elevation – any elevation other than the façade.

Sheathing – the exterior material of a building.

Signage -- Any device, structure, or object for visual communication that is used for the purpose of bringing the subject thereof to the attention of others.

Spalling - the chipping or scaling of a hardened concrete or masonry surface usually caused by freeze-thaw cycles.

Streetscape – a view incorporating several structures and their surroundings.