

# GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

The following concepts and criteria were prepared to assist those persons planning new construction in the historic area. These guidelines are used by the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission (IHPC) for review of applications for Certificates of Appropriateness. IHPC approval is required before a building permit is issued.

**PLEASE NOTE!** Those proposing new construction are strongly recommended to consult as early as possible in the design process with:

- IHPC staff, and
- Affected neighborhood organizations (contacts are available from the IHPC office).

Experience has proven that design development, project review and IHPC approval is smoother when all the interested parties have been consulted early.

## FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

The purpose of new construction guidelines is to present concepts, alternatives, and approaches that will produce design solutions that recognize the characteristics of the Irvington Historic Area and bring harmony between new and existing buildings. The guidelines are not meant to restrict creativity, but to set up a framework within which sympathetic design will occur. It should be noted that within an appropriate framework there can be many different design solutions that may be appropriate. While guidelines can create an acceptable framework, they cannot ensure any particular result. Consequently people may hold a wide range of opinions about the resultant designs since those designs are largely a factor of the designer's ability.

- Irvington is an historic area unique to Indianapolis and represents a specific period in the development of the City. Attempts to design new construction modeled after other historic communities, such as Georgetown, Savannah, Williamsburg, or New Harmony, are not appropriate.
- New construction should reflect the design trends and concepts of the period in which it is created. New structures should be in harmony with the old, yet at the same time be distinguishable from the old, so the evolution of the historic area can be interpreted properly. The architectural design of any period reflects the technology, construction methods, and materials available at the time. Therefore, today's architecture should reflect the design approaches, technology, and materials currently accessible. Imitation of "period" styles in buildings of new construction is not appropriate in any historic area. Mimicking the traditional design characteristics of an area will dilute the quality of the existing structures and will threaten the integrity of the district.

- Newly designed buildings should not detract from the character of the historic area. Form, scale, mass, and texture are all elements that allow classification of a particular building into type and/or style categories. The concentration of a certain style of building, and/or the mixture of types and styles, are the ingredients that give the area its quality. New construction must relate the elements of the new building to the characteristics of the historic district and its individual components.
- New construction should clearly indicate, through its design and construction, the period of its integration within the district.
- Universal access to all persons is encouraged in new construction.

## NEW CONSTRUCTION GUIDELINES: CONTEXT

Guidelines serve as aids in designing new construction that reacts sensitively to the existing context in a manner generally believed to be appropriate. Therefore, the most important first step in designing new construction in any historic district is to determine just what the context is to which the designer is expected to be sensitive.

Every site will possess a unique context. This will be comprised of the buildings immediately adjacent, the nearby area (often the surrounding block), a unique subarea within the district, and the district as a whole.

Generally, new construction will occur on sites that fall into the following categories. For each one described below, there is an indication of the context to which new construction must be primarily related.

- 1. DEVELOPED SITE.** This is usually a site upon which there already exists a primary structure. New construction usually involves an addition to an existing building or the construction of an accessory building such as a garage.  
*Context.* New construction must use the existing building as its most important, perhaps only, context.
- 2. ISOLATED LOT.** This is usually a single vacant lot (sometimes two very small lots combined) that exists in a highly developed area with very few if any other vacant lots in view.  
*Context.* The existing buildings immediately adjacent and in the same block, and the facing block provide a very strong context to which any new construction must primarily relate.
- 3. LARGE SITE.** This is usually a combination of several vacant lots, often the result of previous demolition.  
*Context.* Since this type of site was usually created as a result of relatively extensive demolition, its surrounding context has been weakened by its very existence. However, context is still of primary concern. In such case, a somewhat larger area than the

immediate environment must also be looked to for context, especially if other vacant land exists in the immediate area.

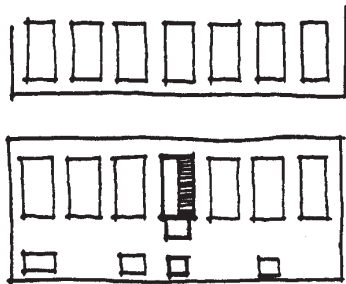
4. **EXPANSIVE SITE.** This site may consist of a half block or more of vacant land or the site may be a smaller one surrounded by many other vacant sites. Often there is much vacant land surrounding the site.

*Context.* The context of adjacent buildings is often very weak or non-existent. In this case, the surrounding area provides the primary context to the extent that it exists. Beyond that, the entire historic area is the available context for determining character. This type of site often offers the greatest design flexibility. Where the strength of the context varies at different points around a site, new design should be responsive to the varying degrees of contextual influence.

## NEW PRIMARY STRUCTURES

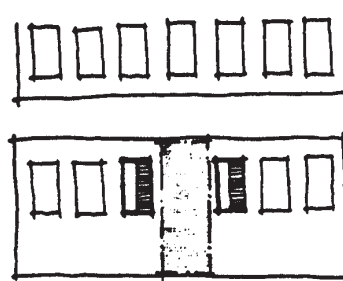
The first step to take in designing new construction is to define the context within which it will exist. Once the context is understood, the following guidelines are meant to assist in finding a compatible design response. Setbacks, orientation, spacing, heights, outline, and mass are elements that generally relate to a building's fit within its surrounding street and alley character. Style, fenestration, foundation, entry, and materials are elements that generally describe the architectural compatibility of a new building to its existing neighbors.

DEVELOPED SITE  
ADDITION TO EXISTING BUILDING



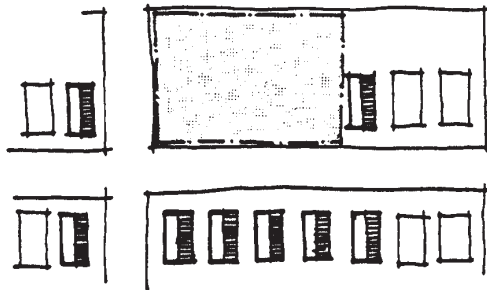
USE EXISTING BUILDING IN DETERMINING  
PRIMARY DESIGN OF ADDITION

ISOLATED SITE  
NEW BUILDING ON SINGLE LOT



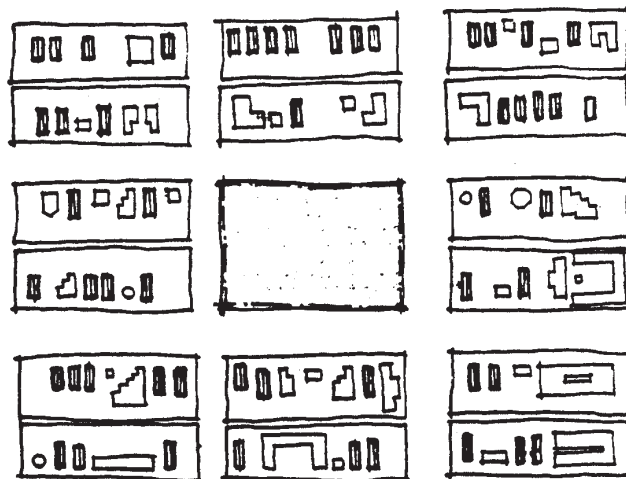
USE EXISTING BUILDINGS SURROUNDING  
THE SITE IN DETERMINING DESIGN OF  
NEW BUILDING

LARGE SITE  
NEW BUILDING ON SEVERAL SITES



USE EXISTING BUILDINGS SURROUNDING  
THE SITE IN DETERMINING DESIGN OF  
NEW BUILDING

EXPANSIVE SITE  
NEW BUILDINGS ON LARGE SITE



USE EXISTING BUILDINGS THROUGHOUT  
THE AREA IN DETERMINING DESIGN OF  
NEW BUILDING

## ACCESSIBILITY

The City of Indianapolis – Marion County recognizes the need to accommodate and include persons with disabilities to the greatest extent possible. With regards to historic areas, the goal is to facilitate universal access for all persons. When designing new structures, the below listed guidelines should be followed.

### RECOMMENDED:

1. Building elements and site design intended to provide accessibility should be designed as integral parts of the building and/or site. This is best accomplished if such elements receive the same level of design consideration as all other elements of the building. Such elements should:
  - be integrated into the architectural design and expression of the building,
  - reflect the same attention to detail and finish as the rest of the building, and
  - be constructed of the same quality and type of materials as the rest of the building.
2. Innovative design is encouraged as a way to achieve accessibility in new construction. Accessibility may be a challenge when it conflicts with established, traditional design principles. An example is a street where all the historic houses and porches are many steps above ground level. However, new construction allows the ability to design from scratch using innovative methods to achieve visual compatibility with the surroundings and also provide practical, first-class accessibility.

### NOT RECOMMENDED:

Site development and building design for accessibility should not result in the appearance that accessibility is simply “accommodated” rather than consciously designed in an integrated manner. Such elements should not appear to be “after-thoughts.” To accomplish this, the following should be avoided:

- materials that are a poorer quality than those used elsewhere in the building,
- design that visually conflicts with the site and the building,
- accessible paths and entrances that are awkward, not readily useable or add excessive travel time to use.

**PLEASE NOTE!** The IHPC is not responsible for ensuring that applicants meet federal, state and local accessibility requirements. The recommendations in this plan are guidelines and are not descriptions of legal requirements regarding accessibility. Consult the local building code and state and federal laws and regulations to determine legal requirements for accessibility.

## BUILDING ENTRY

**DEFINITION:** The actual and visually perceived approach and entrance to a building.

RECOMMENDED:

1. Entrances may characteristically be formal or friendly, recessed or flush, grand or commonplace, narrow or wide. New buildings should reflect a similar sense of entry to that expressed by surrounding historic buildings.
2. Not all of the 19th century and early 20th century houses in Irvington had front porches. However, the majority of them did. Incorporating front porch elements in the design of new houses is encouraged.
3. Accessibility for all new buildings is encouraged (see “Accessibility” in Guidelines for New Construction).

NOT RECOMMENDED:

1. Entrances that are hidden, obscured, ambiguous, or missing.
2. Designing approaches to buildings that are uncharacteristic within the area.
3. Creating a primary entrance to a commercial/public building that is not accessible for persons with disabilities.

## BUILDING HEIGHTS

**DEFINITION:** The actual height of buildings and their various components as measured from the ground.

### RECOMMENDED:

1. Generally, the height of a new building should fall within a range set by the highest and lowest contiguous buildings if the block has uniform heights. Uncharacteristically high or low buildings should not be considered when determining the appropriate range. If the pattern of the block is characterized by a variety of heights, then the height of new construction can vary from the lowest to highest on the block.
2. Cornice heights can be as important as overall building heights and where there is uniformity, should conform with contiguous buildings in a similar manner.
3. New construction at the end of a block should take into account building heights on adjacent blocks.
4. If the area immediately contiguous to new construction does not offer adequate context to establish an appropriate new building height, the larger historic area context should be assessed.
5. Porch height can have an impact on the height relationships between buildings and should align with contiguous porch foundation and roof heights in a similar manner to building heights.
6. Foundation and floor line heights should be consistent with contiguous properties.

### NOT RECOMMENDED:

1. Any building height that appears either diminutive or overscale in relation to its context.

**PLEASE NOTE!** In areas governed by this plan, building heights should be determined using these guidelines. A zoning variance may be required to accommodate an appropriate height.

**PLEASE NOTE!** Consideration may be given to structures that historically occupied the site.

## FENESTRATION

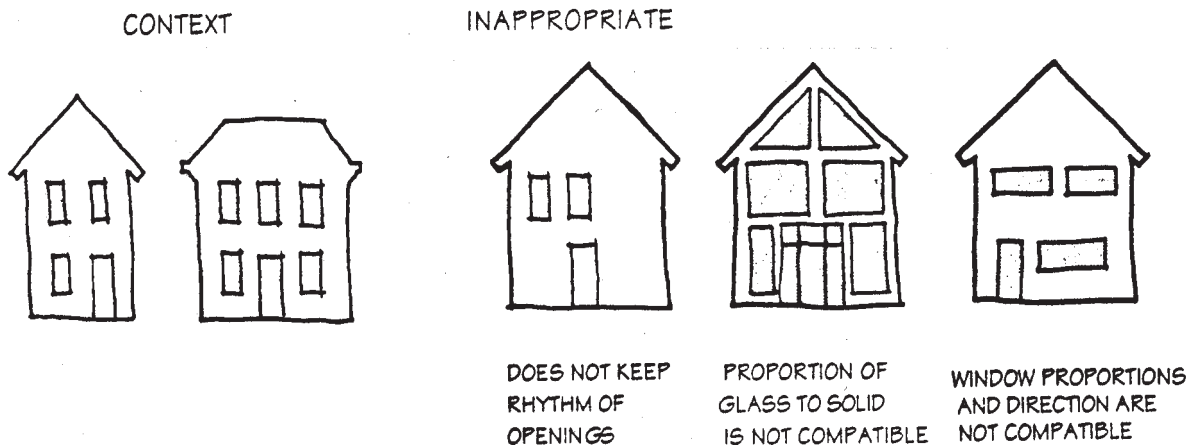
**DEFINITION:** The arrangement, proportioning, and design of windows, doors and openings.

### RECOMMENDED:

1. Creative expression with fenestration is not precluded provided the result does not conflict with or draw attention from surrounding historic buildings.
2. Windows and doors should be arranged on the building so as not to conflict with the basic fenestration pattern in the area.
3. The basic proportions of glass to solid which is found on surrounding buildings should be reflected in new construction.

### NOT RECOMMENDED:

1. Window openings that conflict with the proportions and directionality of those typically found on surrounding historic buildings.
2. Window sash configurations that conflict with those on surrounding buildings.





## FOUNDATION

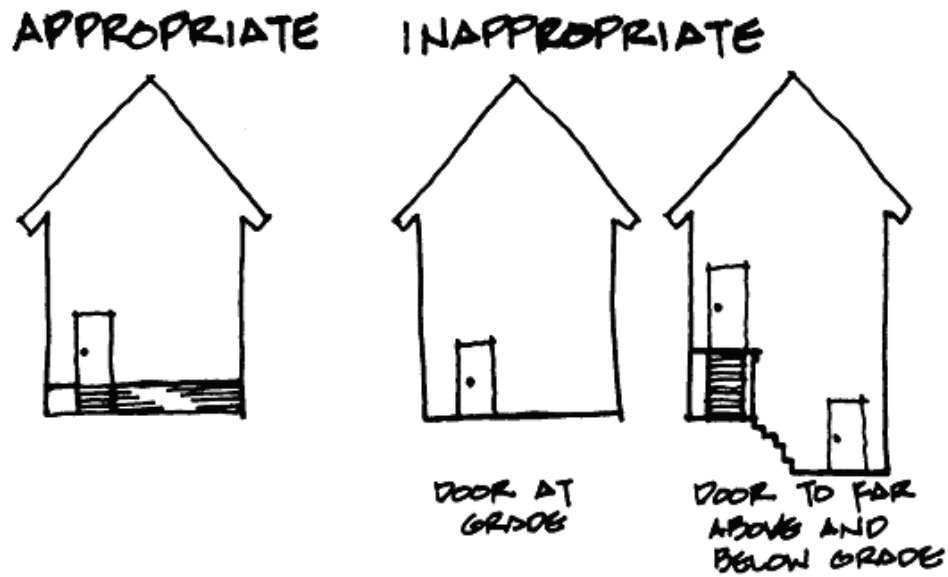
**DEFINITION:** The support base upon which a building sits.

RECOMMENDED:

1. New construction should reflect the prevailing sense of foundation height on contiguous buildings.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

1. High, raised entrances if surrounding buildings are raised only two or three steps off the ground.
2. Designs that appear to hug the ground if surrounding buildings are raised on high foundations.



## MASS

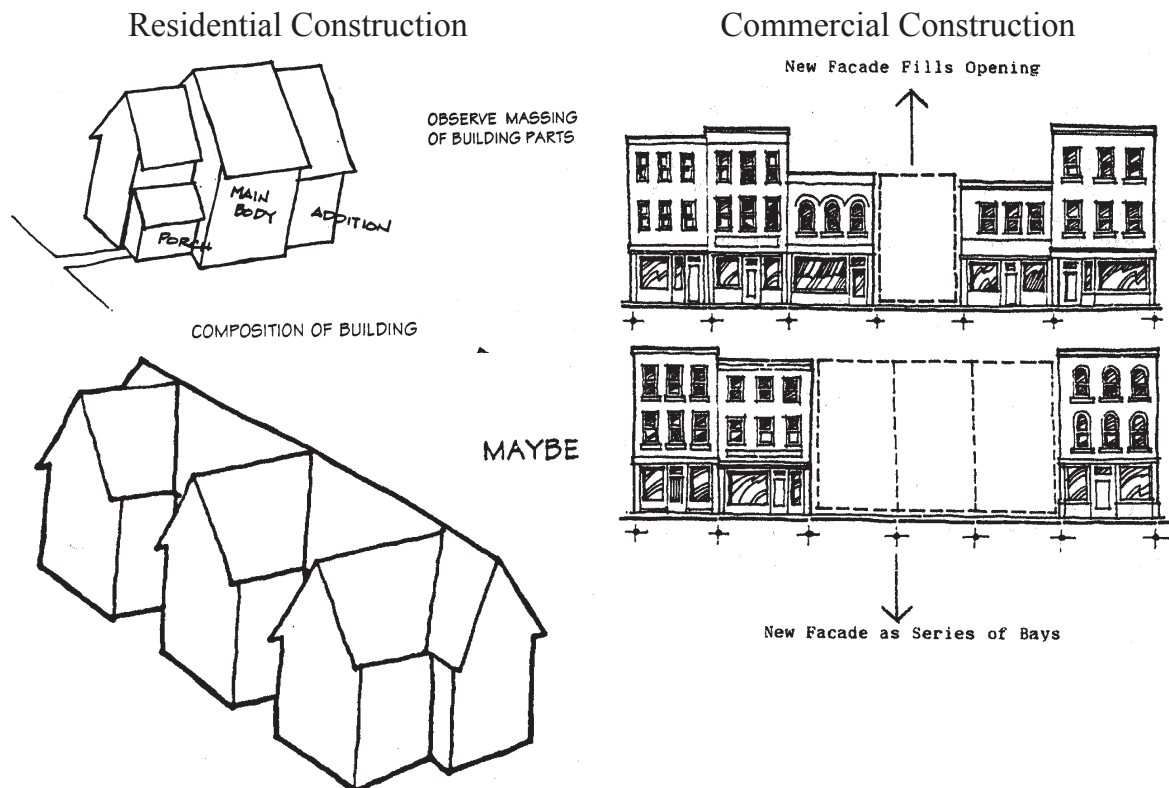
**DEFINITION:** The three dimensional outline of a building.

RECOMMENDED:

1. The total mass of a new building should be compatible with surrounding buildings.
2. The massing of the various parts of a new building should be characteristic of surrounding buildings.
3. If the context suggests a building with a large mass but the desire is for a smaller space, consider more than one unit as a means to increase the size of the building.
4. A larger than typical mass might be appropriate if it is broken into elements that are visually compatible with the mass of the surrounding buildings.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

1. Near total coverage of a site unless doing so is compatible with the surrounding context.



## MATERIALS

**DEFINITION:** The visual, structural, and performance characteristics of the materials visible on a building exterior.

### RECOMMENDED:

1. Textures, patterns and dimensions of building materials should be compatible with those found on historic buildings in the area.
2. Natural materials are preferred, although modern materials may be considered provided they appear and perform like natural materials.

### NOT RECOMMENDED:

1. The application of salvaged brick, old clapboard siding, barnsiding or any other recycled materials on the exterior of new construction. The use of new compatible material is preferable.
2. Brick as the primary material on a building when its use will result in a significant alteration of the traditional relationship of brick to wood buildings in an area. New construction should reflect this historic distribution of building material.
3. Materials for chimneys that are, or have the appearance of being, combustible.

#### TYPICAL SIDING ON HISTORIC BUILDINGS



#### MAY BE APPROPRIATE ON NEW CONSTRUCTION



#### INAPPROPRIATE



TOO WIDE

WRONG DIRECTION

DIAGONAL

TOO RUSTIC/GRAINY

## ORIENTATION

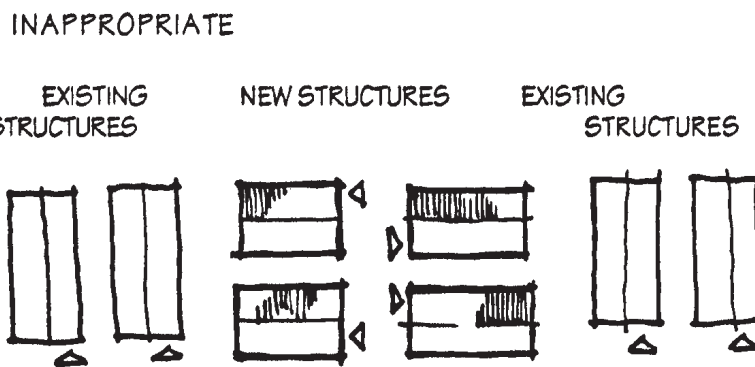
**DEFINITION:** The direction that a building faces.

RECOMMENDED:

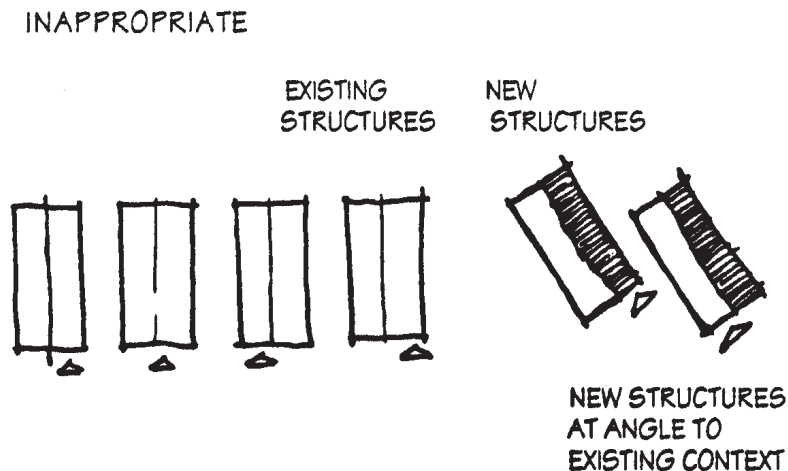
1. New buildings oriented toward the street.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

2. New buildings at angles to the street that are not characteristic within the building or neighborhood context.
3. Buildings or building groupings that turn away from the street and give the appearance that the street facade is not the front facade.



NEW STRUCTURES DO NOT FACE THE STREET AS EXISTING STRUCTURES



NEW STRUCTURES AT ANGLE TO EXISTING CONTEXT

## OUTLINE

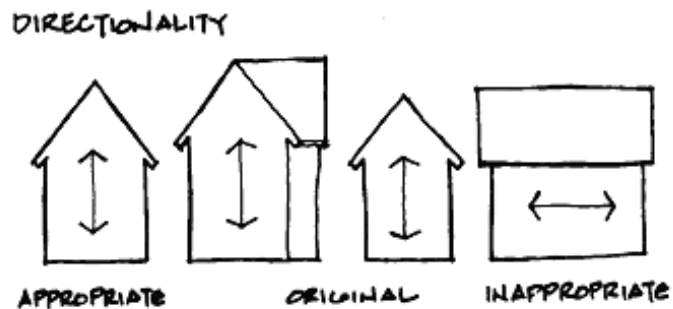
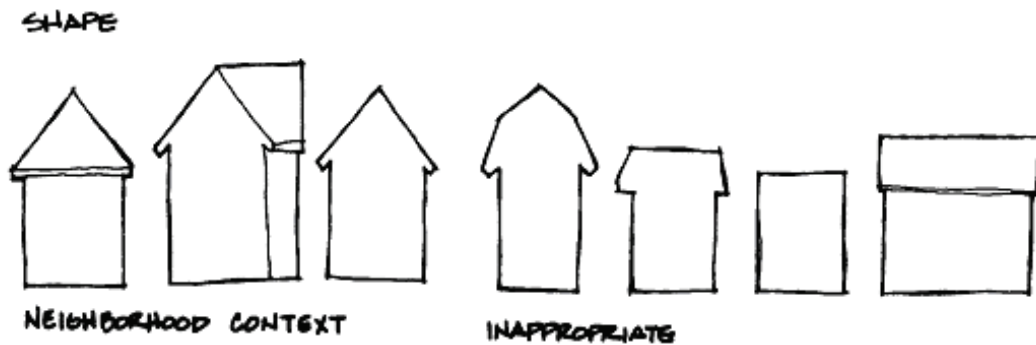
**DEFINITION:** The silhouette of a building as seen from the street.

RECOMMENDED:

1. The basic outline of a new building should reflect building outlines typical of the area.
2. The outline of new construction should reflect the directional orientations characteristic of the existing buildings in its context.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

1. Roof shapes that create uncharacteristic shapes, slopes and patterns.



## SETBACK

**DEFINITION:** The distance a structure is set back from a street or alley.

### RECOMMENDED:

#### *General*

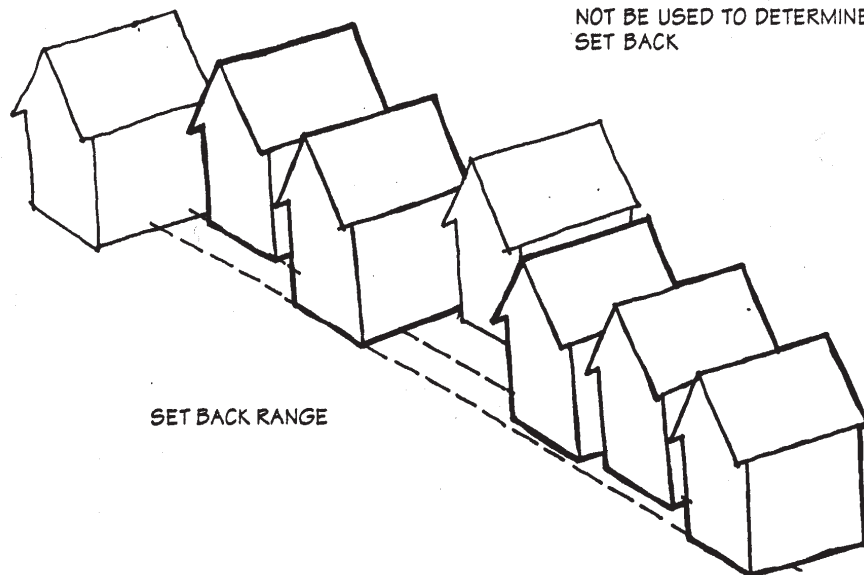
1. A new building's setback should relate to the setback pattern established by the existing block context rather than the setbacks of building footprints that no longer exist. If the development standards for the particular zoning district do not allow appropriate setbacks, a variance may be needed.
2. If setbacks are varied, new construction can be located within a setback that falls within an "envelope" formed by the greatest and least setback distances.
3. If setbacks are uniform, new construction must conform.
4. On corner sites, the setbacks from both streets must reflect the context.

#### *Commercial Buildings*

5. New commercial construction should reestablish the historic "building wall" whenever one historically existed.

CLOSER TO STREET THAN MOST  
AND SHOULD NOT BE USED TO  
DETERMINE SETBACK

SET BACK MUCH MORE  
THAN MOST AND SHOULD  
NOT BE USED TO DETERMINE  
SET BACK



## SPACING

**DEFINITION:** The distance between contiguous buildings along a blockface.

RECOMMENDED:

1. New construction that reflects and reinforces the spacing found in its block. New construction should maintain the perceived regularity or lack of regularity of spacing on the block.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

1. The creation of large open spaces where none existed historically. Such spacing is uncharacteristic and establishes holes in the traditional pattern and rhythm of the street.

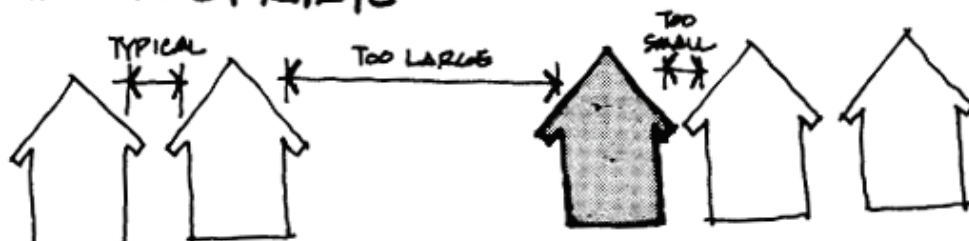
**APPROPRIATE**

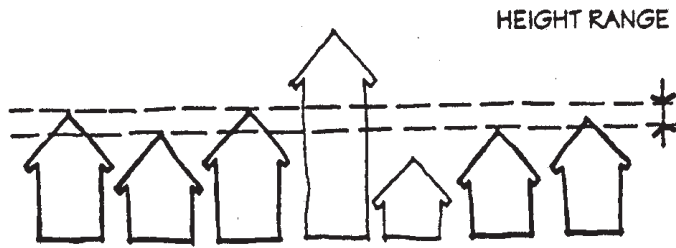


**MAYBE**

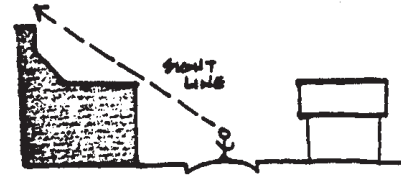


**INAPPROPRIATE**





UNUSUALLY TALL OR SHORT STRUCTURES  
SHOULD NOT BE USED TO DETERMINE HEIGHT RANGE



STEPPED BACK  
NEW CONSTRUCTION



## STYLE AND DESIGN

**DEFINITION:** The creative and aesthetic expression of the designer.

### RECOMMENDED:

#### *General*

1. No specific styles are recommended. Creativity and original design are encouraged. A wide range of styles is theoretically possible and may include designs that vary in complexity from simple to decorated.
2. Surrounding buildings should be studied for their characteristic design elements. The relationship of those elements to the character of the area should then be assessed. Significant elements define compatibility. Look for characteristic ways in which buildings are roofed, entered, divided into stories and set on foundations. Look for character-defining elements such as chimneys, dormers, gables, overhanging eaves, and porches.

#### *Commercial Buildings*

3. For commercial buildings, examine typical façade components such as storefront elements (kickplates, transoms, display windows, and entrances), ornamentation, signage and awnings.

### NOT RECOMMENDED:

1. The imitation of historic styles. A district is historic because of actual historic buildings, not because it has been made to “look” historic. New construction will eventually be seen as part of the district’s history and will need to be read as a product of its own time.
2. The adoption of, or borrowing from styles, motifs or details of a period earlier than that of the historic district or which are more typical of other areas or cities (Georgetown, Savannah, Williamsburg, New Harmony, etc.).
3. Non-functional or false architectural elements, such as inoperable shutters, non-functional chimneys, false muntins in windows, etc.

## NEW ADDITIONS & ACCESSORY BUILDINGS

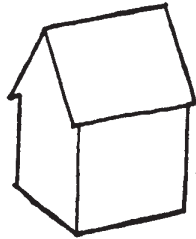
When designing a new addition to an historic building or a new accessory building such as a garage or storage building, the context to which the designer must relate is usually very narrowly defined by the existing buildings on the site. For the most part, the guidelines pertaining to new construction of primary structures (see previous section) are applicable to additions and accessory buildings as long as it is remembered that there is always a closer and more direct relationship with an existing building in this case. The following guidelines are specific to additions and accessory buildings and are particularly important when undertaking such a project.

### RECOMMENDED:

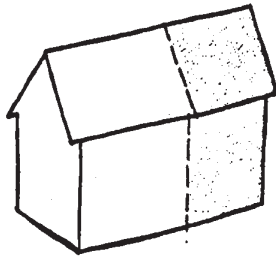
1. Accessory buildings should be located behind the existing historic building unless there is an historic precedent otherwise. Generally, accessory buildings should be of a secondary nature and garages should be oriented to alleys.
2. Additions should be located at the rear, away from the front facade.
3. The scale, height, size, and mass of an addition should relate to the existing building and not overpower it. The mass and form of the original building should be discernible, even after an addition has been constructed.
4. Additions and accessory buildings should be discernible as a product of their own time.

### NOT RECOMMENDED:

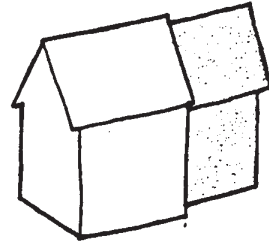
1. Obscuring significant architectural detailing with new additions.
2. Altering the roof line of an historic building in a manner which affects its character.
3. Additions that look as though they were a part of the original house. Additions should be differentiated from the original buildings.
4. Additions near the front facade and at the side.
5. Imitating historic styles and details, although they may be adapted and reflected.



ORIGINAL  
STRUCTURE

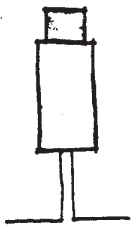


ADDITION  
ADDITION NOT  
DISTINGUISHABLE  
FROM ORIGINAL STRUCTURE

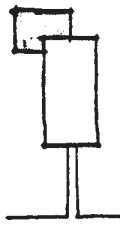


ADDITION  
ADDITION LOOKS  
ADDED TO ORIGINAL  
STRUCTURE

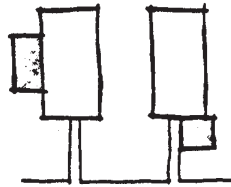
NEW ADDITIONS



APPROPRIATE



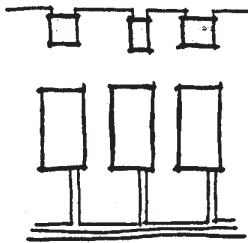
MAYBE



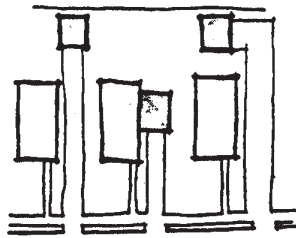
INAPPROPRIATE

INAPPROPRIATE  
OUT BUILDINGS TO BE  
IN SCALE WITH HOUSE

NEW GARAGES



APPROPRIATE



INAPPROPRIATE

