



*HISTORIC REVIEW COMMISSION OF PITTSBURGH*

**DESIGN GUIDELINES:**  
**DEUSCHTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT**

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## **DESIGN GUIDELINES: DEUTSCHTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The following guidelines were prepared by the Historic Review Commission and made available to property owners in the proposed Deutschtown Historic District (and to other interested parties), for their review and comments. The Commission at a public hearing on December 13, 1996 reviewed the proposed guidelines. They were then submitted to City Council for incorporation in the designation of the historic district, which became effective on February 14, 1997.

The Historic Review Commission uses guidelines when it reviews the appropriateness of proposed exterior alterations in designated historic districts. The guidelines can also assist property owners in the formulation of plans for the preservation, rehabilitation, and continued use of historic buildings. They apply to all repairs, renovations, construction, and demolition on the exteriors of all buildings in historic districts.

### **B. BASIC PRINCIPLES**

1. The removal or alteration of original building materials or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible, especially if they are important in defining the overall historic or visual character of a building. If the materials and features are original and in serviceable repair, they should be kept as is.
2. Deteriorated materials and architectural features should be repaired, rather than replaced, whenever possible.
3. Materials and architectural features that are too deteriorated to repair should be replaced in kind or with a visually compatible substitute material (if replacement in kind is not technically or economically feasible). The appearance of the replacement should match the appearance (in design, color, and texture) of the original material or feature.
4. New features that are designed and installed to replace original features that are completely missing should either be an accurate restoration of the original features (based on photographs, drawings, or physical evidence), or new designs that may be contemporary in character and detailing while they are compatible with the scale, material, and color of the historic building.

### C. GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. The Historic Review Commission does not require, initiate, or propose any work on a building. The review process begins only after the owner proposes exterior (not interior) work that is visible from a public street or way.
2. All buildings and structures are products of their own time. Alterations that attempt to make a building look older (or younger) than it is, or that change the architectural style of the building, should be avoided.
3. The surface cleaning of structures should be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other abrasive techniques shall not be used to clean the exterior of a building, because they will damage the original building materials.
4. Original openings (for windows, doors, etc.) should not be altered on the principal facade(s) of a building, because enlarging, reducing the size, or eliminating openings can dramatically alter the appearance and character of a building.
5. Original building materials and architectural features should not be covered by other materials.
6. Any non-original material or 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. The Historic Review Commission shall not require the removal or alteration of any material or features that existed at the time of designation.
7. The rears of many of the buildings in the proposed district have been altered significantly. If the rear of a building is visible from a street or alley and it does not retain most of the original design and materials, then proposals for work on the rear should be reviewed for their compatibility with the altered character of the rear elevation.
8. Concurrent Reviews: When an owner intends to make use of Federal or State funds for the rehabilitation or alteration of a building in this National Register-listed historic district, he or she is required to submit the proposal to the Pennsylvania Bureau for Historic Preservation for review (or the City of Pittsburgh, acting for the State in some cases), in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The Commission shall work with the owner, the Bureau, and the City to ensure that the reviews are concurrent and that the Commission, the Bureau, and the City concur in their approvals.

## D. BUILDING REHABILITATION AND ALTERATION

1. **Masonry Exteriors:** Most of the exterior surfaces of the buildings in the district are masonry (brick and stone). If replacement of deteriorated or missing bricks or stones is necessary, the replacements should be new or recycled materials that match the appearance of the originals as closely as possible (including these characteristics: color, texture, shape, size, placement, detailing, and type of joint). Masonry surfaces should be cleaned, if necessary, by the gentlest means possible (water with detergent, or a mild acid or alkaline cleaner, with low-pressure water wash not to exceed 600 psi); sandblasting and other abrasive cleaning methods shall not be used (except in extraordinary circumstances). Repointing of masonry should be done with a mortar that matches the original as closely as possible in terms of lime and cement content (to avoid damaging the masonry; hard Portland cement mortars may damage older bricks), color, and type of joint (to match the appearance). Waterproof and water-repellent coatings should not be used on masonry unless there is actual water penetration through the masonry. Artificial sidings and stucco (or synthetic stucco) should not be applied over masonry, except on a case-by-case basis when the masonry has been damaged. Unpainted masonry and architectural metals should not be painted, while painted masonry can be cleaned or repainted..
2. **Wood or Siding Exteriors:** If the facade of a building has wood siding or shingles, the wood siding or shingles should be repaired or replaced to match. All wooden trim, including window casings, cornices, and brackets, should be retained and repaired, or replaced to match, if necessary. No artificial siding (aluminum or vinyl siding, insulbrick, etc.), shingles, or stucco should be installed over existing wood siding on the front facades of buildings in the district. Aluminum or vinyl siding of the proper size and profile may be used on the sides and rears of buildings (except the sides of corner buildings).
3. **Windows and Doors:** The windows and doors of a building are essential elements of the overall design and architectural style of the building. Original window and door openings should not be altered or filled in, particularly on the principal facade(s) of the building. Original windows and doors should be retained and repaired, wherever possible. If they must be replaced, the new ones should match the originals in size, style, operation, and appearance (including arrangement of glass panes) as closely as possible. New window and door openings may be installed only where they will not disrupt the character of the building, which usually means on side and rear building elevations.

Wood windows should be used as replacement windows on the front facades of buildings in the district. Aluminum or vinyl replacement windows may be used in the sides and rears of buildings (except in the sides of a corner building); all metal windows should be

anodized or painted, avoiding a metallic "mill" finish, and should fit the window openings exactly. Window glass may be double-glazed (although it may not be possible to obtain double glazing with true divided light [multi-paned] windows), but reflective and opaque glass, and artificial muntin grids, should be avoided. Glass block may be used only in basement window openings if they can not be seen from the street; it should not be used in other window or door openings. Storm windows can be installed, but they should be installed so as to be inconspicuous: if they are on the exterior, they should be colored to match the window frames, sized to fit the openings, and divided like the windows that are being covered. Window shutters may be installed, if they are proper to the style of the building, and they should be operable or mounted to look as if they are operable (with all hardware). Simple burglar bars may be installed over first-floor windows and basement windows.

Paneled wood doors, with the appropriate arrangement of panels depending on the style of the building, should be used as replacement doors on the front facades of buildings in the district. Metal replacement doors may be used in the sides and rears of buildings (except in the sides of a corner building); all metal doors should be paneled (embossed) if visible from a public street or way. Storm doors should be installed so as to be inconspicuous: colored to match the door frames, sized to fit the openings, and with as much glass as possible ("full view" storm doors are preferred).

4. **Roofs:** The existing roofline and architectural features that help to give a building its character, such as roof shapes, towers, dormers, cornices, brackets, and chimneys, should be retained. New dormers in the style of the building may be constructed on the roof of the building, but non-traditional new features, such as vents, skylights, and rooftop utilities, should be placed out of view from the main street, although slate mansard roofs should be retained and maintained wherever possible, and since they are such prominent features, should be repaired or replaced with new slate or artificial slate. Otherwise, replacement roofing materials should maintain the visual character of the original materials; this means that a standard slate roof could be replaced with black or dark gray asphalt shingles. Built-in (box) gutters on the visible parts of the roof should be retained and repaired, not replaced with hung gutters. Aluminum or vinyl soffit and fascia may be used on the sides and rears of buildings (except on a corner building). Downspouts should be metal, and should be painted to match the color of the building. Flat or low-pitched roofs, if they are not visible from the street, shall not be reviewed by the Historic Review Commission.
5. **Porches:** Front porches are important elements in the design of houses that have them. Front porches and their architectural elements should be retained and repaired, or replaced if necessary. If it is impossible, then judicious substitutions of materials may be made, as long as (in the judgment of the Commission) the overall character of the porch is

retained. The use of brick piers and screens and treated lumber in stock forms (such as 2-by-4s), shall not be approved for use on front porches. Front stoops and steps may be constructed of stone, brick, or poured concrete, and ornamental metal handrails may be installed.

6. Ornamentation: Significant architectural and ornamental features should be retained and maintained.
7. Mechanical Systems: Utility and mechanical systems should be placed inconspicuously, and screened if necessary, so that they are not visible on the principal facade(s) of the building as seen from public streets; they should also be screened from adjoining houses. Features that must be added to meet safety and code requirements, such as stairs and elevators, should be designed to be as inconspicuous as possible, and should not alter significant architectural features of the building. Features that must be added to make a building accessible to persons with disabilities should be designed and installed without damaging the historic character of the building. The Commission encourages placement of such features on secondary facades when placement on primary facades cannot be done without damage to historic fabric.
8. Painting: The Historic Review Commission urges the use of original color schemes in the painting of wood and metal elements, but will not prescribe paint colors. Extreme colors and color combinations, which are designed simply to attract attention, should not be used. Unpainted masonry and architectural metals should not be painted.
9. Accessories: The Historic Review Commission will usually approve all signs that conform in size and material to the sign regulations of the Zoning Ordinance. Signs should not be installed in such a way as to obscure architectural features of the building. Awnings should be sloping and triangular in section, in most cases (arched or curved awnings should be used only over arched openings); they should be made of canvas or canvas-like materials; and they should not be internally illuminated. Simple burglar bars may be installed over windows. Exterior lighting fixtures should be simple in design and mounted in an inconspicuous and non-destructive manner.

#### E. NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

1. Additions and alterations to, and rehabilitation of, non-contributing buildings in the district should either be compatible with the current style and character of each building, or cause the building to become more compatible with the district.
2. The HRC shall not require that alterations to non-contributing buildings be made so as to make the buildings appear to be older than they are, or designed in a different style.

3. The HRC shall allow the demolition of non-contributing buildings in the district if the demolition will not adversely affect the character of the district.

## F. ADDITIONS

1. In general, additions should follow the following guidelines for compatibility of new construction:

(a) The **general aim** of the guidelines for new construction is to encourage the visual compatibility of new construction with the character and quality of the nineteenth-century buildings that give the district its historic architectural significance and visual character. This does not require, although it also does not forbid, replication of the styles of the existing buildings in the district.

(b) **Materials:** Materials should be of a similar color, texture, and scale to building materials in the district.

(c) **Scale, Massing, and Rhythm:** The scale, massing, and rhythm of an addition and its individual elements (e.g., windows, doors, roof, and ornamentation) should be compatible with the forms found among the buildings in the district. The ratio of wall surface to openings, and the proportions and orientation of the door and window openings, should be consistent with those of neighboring buildings.

(d) **Detailing:** The detailing of additions should correspond to the kinds of detailing found on neighboring buildings in the district. This does not require replication of the degree of ornamentation found in those buildings but should generally include the following: a cornice or other definition of the roofline; a distinctive storefront or main door surround; window sills and lintels, or other distinctive detailing at the openings; and ornamental features such as moldings.

2. The design of an addition should respond specifically to the architecture of the building to which it is being added. It should be sympathetic to and compatible with the appearance of the original building, but this does not mean that the addition needs to replicate the design of the existing building.
3. An addition should be designed so that it is secondary to the existing building, and does not "overpower" it visually. It should not be located on the principal facade(s) of the building.
4. The connection of the addition to the original building should be designed so that it does not detract from either structure. Significant architectural features of the original building should not be destroyed, removed, or obscured by the addition.

5. Additions to the roof of a building (such as additional floors, elevator housings, decks, terraces, dormers, and skylights) should be designed so that they are inconspicuous from the public streets and do not damage or obscure character-defining elements of the building.

## G. DEMOLITIONS

1. The Historic Review Commission shall take all of the following factors into consideration when it considers a proposal for the demolition of a structure in the historic district:
  - a) the historic or architectural significance of the structure;
  - b) the contribution of the structure to the character of the district;
  - c) the structural condition of the building;
  - d) the feasibility of renovation and continued use of the building;
  - e) the character of the new construction proposed to replace the demolished structure;
  - f) the ability of the owner to obtain a reasonable economic return from the use of all or part of the building (if a profit-making venture) or the marketability of the building to another individual or organization;
  - g) the ability of the owner to use the structure in a manner compatible with its organizational purposes (if a non-profit organization or corporation) or the marketability of the building to another individual or organization.
2. The Commission shall allow the demolition of an inappropriate addition to a structure in the district.
3. The Commission shall allow the demolition of a non-significant portion of a building, as long as the demolition does not adversely affect significant elements of the building.

## H. SITE IMPROVEMENTS AND ALTERATIONS

1. The Historic Review Commission will review all construction on building lots within the historic district that are visible from a public street or way. This shall include paving, light standards, walls, fences, and landscaping.
2. Significant existing site features, such as steps, walks, and fences, which contribute to the character of the property, should be retained and maintained. When that is not possible, judicious substitution of materials may be allowed.
3. New site features should either replicate the original features or be compatible in design.

4. New fences should be solid vertical-board wood fences or ornamental metal fences, with their maximum height determined by the Zoning Ordinance. New chain-link fences should be avoided. Brick and stone walls, or brick and stone piers in fences, are also appropriate.

## I. NEW GARAGES

1. Zoning variances: Because of the sizes of the lots in Pittsburgh's historic districts, it may be necessary to obtain a zoning variance from the Zoning Board of Adjustment before a new garage may be constructed. This variance, if needed, should be obtained prior to filing an application for the review and approval of the Historic Review Commission. To determine if you must seek such a variance, please call the Zoning Office at 412- 255-2246. If it is needed, you can call the Zoning Board of Adjustment application counter at 412-255-2658 for information.
2. Location: Garages should be located at the rear of a building lot, opening into the alley, if possible.
3. Form: Freestanding garages should be simple rectangular boxes. If a garage has a flat roof, then the exterior walls should rise above the roofline to form a parapet. If the roof is pitched (with the ridge of the roof running either from front to back, or from side to side) or hipped, then the roof should end in projecting eaves. The eaves can be open, with exposed rafter ends, or closed, with a soffit and fascia; both should be equipped with gutters and downspouts.
4. Size: Early garages were 10 to 12 feet wide by 18 to 24 feet deep, with an eight-by- eight-foot doorway. Wider garages were built in multiples of the 10-to-12-foot bay widths, with separate garage doors for each bay.
5. Materials:

For the **body** of the garage - The walls facing a street or alley should be faced with brick, stucco, horizontal wood siding, smooth (not wood-grained) horizontal aluminum or vinyl siding (with four- or five-inch exposures), vertical tongue-and-groove wood board siding (not grooved plywood or T-1-11), or vertical board-and-batten siding. On the sides that are less visible, the garage walls may be built with concrete block, as long as the block is painted.

For the **gables** - The walls in the gables should be faced with horizontal siding, if they are not masonry.

For the **soffit and fascia** of the eaves - The soffit and fascia should be constructed with wood boards. The gutters should be half-round in profile, although K-style gutters are often acceptable. The downspouts should be round.

For the **roof** - If the roof is flat, then it is not visible from the street or alley and is therefore not under the jurisdiction of the Historic Review Commission. If it is sloped, then the roof should be covered with black or dark gray asphalt shingles or better: clay tiles, slates, or standing-seam metal.

For the **windows** - Simple one-over-one-light double-hung windows are appropriate for use in the side walls of garages.

For the **doors** - Paneled metal or wood doors are preferred (and required if replacements in a historic garage), although flush doors are acceptable. All garage doors should be painted. Pedestrian doors should be paneled only. Doors with glass panels or sections are preferable to doors without glass.

6. Painting: Unpainted brick should not be painted, but most other materials should be painted. Raw, unpainted concrete block and wood should never be left unpainted. Paint colors should be subdued, and blend in with the colors in the general vicinity.
7. Carports: Carports (open-sided shelters for automobiles) are acceptable as long as they are hidden behind a fence or gate, so that the visible segments appear like a full garage, or a pergola or other traditional yard structure. The corners should be sturdy-looking built-up supports (box columns or wall segments), and not single wood posts. The roof should conform to the garage roof guidelines, with siding in the gables, and siding extending down the sides of the carport as far as they are visible.

## J. REVIEW PROCEDURES

1. The Historic Review Commission shall authorize its staff to review and approve all applications to repair or replace exterior building elements to match existing elements and designs, all applications that meet the guidelines for exterior rehabilitation and alterations as described above, and all applications to restore the exterior of a building to a documented original condition. The staff shall conduct its review and issue its approval or rejection of the application within ten (10) days of receipt of the completed application.
2. The Historic Review Commission shall review all applications for new construction and additions, for demolitions, for major alterations to existing buildings, and for changes in

materials. The Commission shall review each application and vote to approve or deny the application within sixty (60) days following receipt of the application.

3. The time limit for consideration of an application may be extended with the consent of the applicant.

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