

GUIDELINES FOR PROPERTY OWNERS IN THE TOWN OF WINDHAM (CT) HISTORIC DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION

In 1993 by the overwhelming vote of the property owners, the Town of Windham Historic District in Windham Center was established to preserve and protect the architectural heritage of this beautiful Connecticut village. Established under the rules of the Connecticut Historic District statute (Connecticut General Statutes, Chapter 97a*, Section 7-147) and by Windham Town ordinance, the Windham Historic District Commission is responsible for ruling on the appropriateness of all proposed changes in the exterior appearance of any Historic District properties visible from a public street, way, or place. Besides changes to existing structures, the Commission reviews all proposals for new construction, demolition, or removal in the Historic District.

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist property owners in planning possible changes to their properties in the Historic District, to aid the Commission in judging the appropriateness of proposed architectural modifications, and to maintain consistency in the Commission's decisions over time. An underlying goal of the Historic District is to maintain the architectural character of the Historic District and its structures when preserving, restoring, rehabilitating, or reconstructing older structures or when constructing new structures.

Before any work to implement a change can begin, the Historic District Commission reviews all proposed plans for exterior alteration, erection, or demolition visible from a public road, way, or place, and determines whether to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness. A Certificate of Appropriateness must be granted before a building permit can be obtained.

Slight changes may not affect a building's character and integrity. However, a series of even small changes over the years can radically alter the appearance of a building. Therefore, the Commission tries to be sensitive both to the contemporary needs of homeowners and to the historic significance of the district as a whole. Each project and its context are unique. What is appropriate for one may not be appropriate for others. Some changes which might be appropriate in isolation may have damaging effects on neighboring properties.

Work involving modification, replacement, new construction, removal, or demolition requires a Certificate of Appropriateness. Painting (including color changes), maintenance, and repairs with no change in materials or appearance do not require a Certificate of Appropriateness. Before beginning work on any project, please ask the Commission whether a Certificate of Appropriateness is required.

GUIDELINES

A. Basic Standards

The Commission's decisions on appropriateness follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Structures. Our Guidelines have been developed to implement those standards. Detailed standards for Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction are presented and explained in the full document available from the National Park Service web site at http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/download/standards_guidelines.pdf .

SUMMARY OF THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR THE TREATMENT OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES

1. Every reasonable effort should be made to provide a compatible use for buildings which will require minimum alteration to the building and its environment.
2. Rehabilitation work should not destroy the distinguishing qualities or character of the property and its environment. The removal or alteration of any historic material or architectural features should be held to the minimum, consistent with the proposed use.
3. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, texture, and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplication of original features, substantiated by physical or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural features from other buildings.
4. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize older structures and often predate the mass production of building materials, should be treated with sensitivity.
5. Many changes to buildings and environments which have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history of the building and the neighborhood. These changes may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected.
6. All buildings should be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations to create an appearance inconsistent with the actual character of the building should be discouraged.
7. Contemporary design for new buildings in old neighborhoods and additions to existing buildings or landscaping should not be discouraged if such design is compatible with the size, scale, material, and character of the neighborhood, building, or its environment.
8. Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to buildings should be done in such a manner that if they were removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the original building would be unimpaired.

B. Design Elements

The Historic District Commission considers the following character-defining attributes in determining the appropriateness of proposed changes. This list is taken from the *Handbook for Historic District Commissions and Historic Property Commissions in Connecticut, 2010*, published by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism.

1. Height: the overall height of the building and its height in relation to surrounding buildings.
2. Scale: the size of units and architectural details as perceived from the public way and the size of units and details in relation to adjacent buildings and open spaces.
3. Massing: the configuration and arrangement of building masses or units of construction, frequently described as balanced (symmetrical) or unbalanced (asymmetrical).
4. Proportion: the relationship between the width and height of a building's elevation, or of its architectural features, such as windows or doors.
5. Roof shape: the form of the roof including eaves, overhangs, ridgelines, dormers, or other ornaments.
6. Arrangement: the pattern and positioning of architectural features such as windows, doors, and other details on the elevation of a building.
7. Setbacks: the open area between the building and the sidewalk, street, or adjacent structures.
8. Rhythm and Spacing: the pattern of recurrent building masses in relation to the spaces between them.
9. Materials: the composition and appearance of exterior architectural elements.
10. Texture: the tactile quality produced by particular building techniques or materials.
11. Surface Treatment: the condition of exterior surfaces (for example, painted or unpainted, finished or unfinished).
12. Architectural Details: any exterior element which visually identifies the building as belonging to a particular historical or architectural period.
13. Relationship of Dependencies: the size, location, and detailing of outbuildings in relation to the main structure.
14. Projections: the relationship of additions, porches, and other visible extensions to the main building.
15. Other Issues: parking, fences and walls, light fixtures, signs, renewable energy sources such as wind turbines and solar panels, satellite dishes and antennae, monuments and sculptures.

DETAILED GUIDELINES

The following Detailed Guidelines will assist homeowners in reviewing options to be considered or avoided in rehabilitation, restoration, or new construction. Property owners should read these guidelines as reflecting the Commission's approach to preservation issues, not as inflexible requirements. The Guidelines do not cover every situation or condition which may arise in the Historic District. Information for other situations can be found in the Bibliography at the end of the Guidelines and by asking for assistance from the Commission. The Commission cannot endorse particular products or contractors, but it tries to provide sufficient guidance to property owners in finding appropriate solutions.

C. Overall Design

1. New Construction in the Historic District

- a. *Scale and Form*: Keep all new construction consistent with the scale of the surrounding structures. Scale includes such factors as building height, width, and the proportion of height to width; proportion of solid to void elements, i.e., wall area to area of window and door openings; the size of the dominant elements of the building; and the massing of the building, i.e., the arrangement of the building's dominant elements which affect setbacks, overhangs, etc.
- b. *Character*: Carefully assess the character of the neighborhood where new construction is to take place and do not use new construction which by its form, texture, etc. is inconsistent with the character of the neighboring properties or the whole Historic District, even though all requirements for appropriate scale may be met.

2. Restoration and Rehabilitation

- a. *Replacement of Original Materials*: Re-use original materials to the greatest extent possible. Where original material is unavailable or deteriorated, use new materials in the same form and with the same method of installation as the original.
- b. *Use of New Materials*: Do not select new building materials which are out of scale, character, or otherwise present an appearance distinctly different from the original building. Likewise, if possible, do not use materials which were not available at the time of the building's construction.
- c. *Restoration*: Research thoroughly the history of the structure and restore it as nearly as can be determined to its original form.

Use the most current methods of restoration of partially deteriorated materials.

D. Exterior Architectural Elements

1. *Foundations*

- a. Maintain the original appearance of the foundation material. For stone foundations, do not patch with stones which are not generally the same shape and size as the original. With brick or stone, use mortar of the same color and strength as the original. Do not over-mortar joints or tool to a profile inconsistent with the original.

2. *Walls*

- a. *Frame Walls*. Retain and restore original materials whenever possible. Do not remove existing materials such as clapboards or shingles, since these form a major part of the building's texture. When deteriorated material must be replaced or repaired, use material that duplicates the old as nearly as possible. Note the use of different materials on a single building, such as a shingle gable over a clapboard first story, and replace or repair with similar materials.

Do not resurface frame buildings with material which changes the textural appearance of the original building or which was not available at the time of construction.

- b. *Masonry Walls*. Retain the original masonry and mortar without the application of surface treatment. Do not apply water repellent. These materials are often unnecessary and can, in fact, hasten deterioration by trapping moisture in the masonry.

If repointing is necessary, duplicate the original mortar joint in color, texture, size, and profile. Do not repoint with mortar of high Portland cement content which can create a bond stronger than the original material. This can result in differing rates of expansion and cause cracking of existing joints.

Clean masonry, when necessary, using the gentlest method available, such as soft brushes and low-pressure water. Do not sandblast or use harsh chemicals which may react with masonry. These methods destroy the material's natural ability to repel water.

Repair or replace deteriorated masonry with materials that match the original. Avoid indiscriminate removal of paint from masonry surfaces since this may have been originally applied for aesthetic or practical reasons. Do not use artificial materials such as simulated brick or stone siding since these may not have been available at the time of construction and will give the structure an artificial appearance.

- c. *Low Maintenance Siding*

Low maintenance siding, such as aluminum or vinyl clapboards, asbestos or asphalt shingles, are products of the mid-20th century, and, as such, are by nature inappropriate for use on most historically significant buildings. Despite the efforts of the manufacturers to duplicate the appearance of other building materials, these products nearly always have a glossy uniformity which reveals their true nature. In addition, even though these products are sold to reduce maintenance, they may, in fact, create new maintenance problems.

Use siding which duplicates the width of existing clapboards. Do not use a clapboard type siding over existing shingles or other materials bearing no resemblance to clapboard. Use corner boards and other flat trim pieces of the same width and appearance as the original. Do not use artificial material to clad trim pieces such as balusters, brackets, cornices, moldings, posts, and columns. Do not clad all wall surfaces with the same type of siding irrespective of their original appearance. For example, a shingled gable should not be clad in the same way as the clapboard body of the house.

Do not use highly textured or synthetic wood grain patterns, since these rarely bear any resemblance to the original material. Do not use artificial decorations, such as shutters, scrolls, grilles, etc., since these rarely have the appearance of original materials if, in fact, the building originally had such decorations at all.

d. *Sandblasting and Hydroblasting*

Sandblasting, hydroblasting, and strong power-washing should not be used because they can damage siding and other architectural features.

3. *Trim and Decorative Features*

- a. *Cornices, Brackets, Columns, Posts, Balusters, etc.* Retain such decorations and trim, since they are usually an essential part of the building's character and appearance. When severe deterioration requires, replace or reconstruct such features as nearly as possible to their original form. Do not remove or clad these important elements, since this would significantly alter the appearance of the building.
- b. *Ornamental Metal Work.* Clean, repair, and restore decorative metal work such as railings, fences, and other trim. On ironwork, clean areas of rust and halt further rusting by repainting to match the original color. Do not paint non-ferrous metals such as brass or copper. Brass should be cleaned of oxidation when possible, and copper should be left to oxidize naturally.
- c. *Door and Window Trim.* Retain and restore door and window trim, such as lintels, sills, architraves, pediments, hoods, etc. to their original form. Do not clad door and window trim, especially when ornamental or decorative.
- d. *Shutters.* Research the original design of the structure to determine if shutters were actually used. If so, restore the originals or replace them with shutters which match the originals in form and material. Do not install pre-fabricated or mass-produced shutters or materials such as aluminum or vinyl.

4. *Doors*

- a. *Primary Doors.* Respect the main entrance to the building and its relationship to the site of the building form. Do not relocate or introduce new doors into the principal elevations of the building. Retain original door design including panels, lights, and hardware, and, if replacement is required, duplicate the original design in form and material.
- b. *Secondary Doors.* While less important visually than primary doors, secondary doors such as back or side doors, basement doors and hatches, etc.,

should be retained or replaced in a way that respects their original form. If new secondary doors must be introduced, do not locate these in a way that destroys the original composition or symmetry of the facade.

- c. *Storm Doors.* Although pre-20th century buildings were not usually equipped with storm doors or windows, the energy conscious property owner of today often finds these to be essential to reducing heat loss. When used, storm doors should be selected to compete as little as possible with the design of the main door. Use wood frame storm doors. If metal storm doors must be used, select a frame color which is the same as the door trim. Do not use bright aluminum colored frames. Select a design and arrangement of windows which complements rather than detracts from the design of the door. Do not use decorative grilles or scrolls which may be inappropriate to the design or character of the building.
5. *Windows*
- a. *In Walls.* Retain existing window sash whenever possible. If replacement is required, respect the stylistic period of the building by selecting sash design and arrangement of panes which reflect the building's original form. Do not create new window openings which destroy the original composition or symmetry of the facade.
 - b. *In Dormers.* Do not create dormers in roofs where their form would be inappropriate to the historical integrity of the building. Retain all dormer windows in their original style including the arrangement of lights and the sash detail.
 - c. *Storm Windows.* The early storm windows were wood framed single units which covered the entire window opening. They were used in place of the window screens in winter, and, like the screens, hooked onto clips at the top piece of window trim. When installing storm windows on buildings of the early 20th century style or older, use this type of wood frame window. If metal storm windows must be used, select a color which is close to that of the existing trim. Do not use bright aluminum colored frames where the color would be inappropriate to the character of the house.
6. *Porches and Steps*
- a. Retain porches and steps in their original form. Remember that porches and steps which were added later often reflect evolving architectural styles, and are important to the building's historical integrity. Do not strip porches of original material or features such as handrails, balusters, columns, brackets, or decorations of wood, metal, tile, or masonry. Repair or replace deteriorated architectural features with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Do not enclose porches and steps in a manner that destroys their intended appearance. If it is essential to enclose a porch, do this inside the columns and railings, and do so in a way which preserves the original form and character of the building.

7. *Roofs*

- a. *Form and Features.* Retain the original roof form including gables and eaves, hips, dormers, etc. Do not introduce forms inappropriate to the original form of the roof, such as oversized dormers, skylights, etc. Retain or replace the original architectural features which give the roof its essential character, such as dormers, cupolas, cornices, brackets, cresting, and weathervanes.
- b. *Roofing Material.* Replace deteriorated roofing material with the same material originally used. If new material must be substituted, select one which matches the old in composition, texture, size, shape, and color. Do not use roofing material which is so light or bright in color or tone that it detracts from the character of the building or the continuity of the neighborhood.
- c. *Gutters and Downspouts.* Retain original gutters and downspouts. If replacement is necessary, use materials which are similar in form and color to the original. Remember that gutters and downspouts can be strong visual elements, and avoid introducing new ones in locations where they will detract from the original composition or symmetry of the building.
- d. *Roof-top Equipment.* Place rooftop equipment such as antennas, satellite dishes, air conditioners, exhaust fans, vents, and solar collectors in locations where they cannot be seen from the street. Where solar collectors must face the street (south) for efficiency, mount them in a way which minimizes their profile and makes them as inconspicuous as possible.

8. *Chimneys*

- a. Retain the original height and form, number, and location of the chimney(s), since these are critical links with the historical development of the structure. Do not add new chimneys, especially false ones, which give the building an appearance it never had.

9. *Outbuildings*

- a. *Garages, Carriage Houses, Barns.* Buildings such as these often contribute significantly to the historical or architectural interest of the property. Because of this, they should be treated with no less respect than the major structure itself. Follow the procedures for the particular features and types of construction covered elsewhere in these guidelines. Retain and repair as needed these buildings and their features which are important to the historical integrity of the property. When modification or rehabilitation is required, such as installing new garage type doors on a garage or carriage house, select materials of the same design and character as the original. Avoid hasty demolition of deteriorated outbuildings before studying them for rehabilitation. When constructing new outbuildings, keep the design compatible with that of the major structure and its site.

10. *Exterior Lighting*

- a. *Exterior lighting* should be kept to a minimum. No bright sodium or similar lights should be used. Spot light fixtures should be installed so that they are not visible. Buildings should not be illuminated. Lamps over

entryways and on lampposts should be in keeping with the style of the structure.

11. *Signs*

- a. *Signs* should be simple, black on white, of a minimum size. No lighting of signs in any manner is permitted. If the sign is freestanding, it should be on a plain post or simple iron bracket in keeping with the style and period of the structure.

12. *Walls and Fencing*

- a. *Stone walls* should be of natural fieldstone only and of dry wall construction. The removal of or modification of a stone wall requires Commission approval. *Fences* should be in keeping with the style and period of the structure. Fences can be wood or metal, depending on the style. No fences or other obstacles such as berms can be installed which block the structure from public view. Fences around pools and hot tubs are required by law. They should be of a style and period appropriate to the structure, while meeting safety requirements. Plastic, chain link, and stockade fencing are generally not acceptable.

13. *Swimming Pools and Hot Tubs*

- a. Swimming pools and hot tubs must comply with all State and Town regulations. Fencing and decking around pools and hot tubs should be of a style appropriate to the other structures on the property while meeting safety requirements. Plastic, chain link, and stockade fencing are generally not acceptable. Swimming pools and hot tubs should be placed in the least visible location possible on the property.

14. *Paving of Driveways and Sidewalks*

- a. Black asphalt driveways and sidewalks are generally not acceptable, depending on the style and period of the structure. The use of brick, stone dust, crushed stone, Belgium block (cobblestone), and gravel asphalt (tar and chip) are generally acceptable, but plans must be submitted for review by the Commission prior to installation.

AS A REMINDER: Plans for all proposed changes in appearance or material, either by addition, modification, or removal, must be submitted for review by the Historic District Commission before any work is begun.

E. Helpful Books and Web Sites.
[to be prepared]