





























## PRESERVATION DESIGN GUIDELINES



**Shingle Style (1885-1903)** The Shingle Style evolved from the Queen Anne Revival but has been stripped of excess decoration. The overall effect is simpler, with more horizontal emphasis and less variety in color and materials. Windows are small paned and form horizontal bands. Frank Lloyd Wright further developed this feature in the Prairie-style home. Other characteristics include rambling roofs with a more moderate pitch than Queen Anne, and broad gable ends. The exterior walls of the upper story (and sometimes the ground floor) have a uniform covering of shingles stretched smooth over roof lines and around corners in a kind of contoured envelope.



**Romanesque Revival (1875-1900)** The Romanesque Revival style features massive construction, utilizing round stone building materials, and towers and turrets with conical roofs. The Romanesque style uses arched doorways, irregularly shaped and deeply set windows and doors, squat dwarf columns, eye brow dormers, and densely carved decoration with interlaced motifs. Also known as Richardsonian Romanesque, Henry Hobson Richardson revised the 1850's Romanesque to create this different and uniquely American style.



**Georgian Revival (1890-1915)** Georgian Revival is basically rectangular in shape and symmetrical in form. The placement of windows, doors, and chimneys add to the symmetry. Classical details such as columns, pilasters, and cornices all contribute to the stately effect. A hip roof with central flat deck surrounded by a railing is frequently found. Spanish Colonial Revival, English Cottage (Tudor), as well as Georgian Revival showed allegiance to one or another design heritage. Consequently, the general term “period house” can describe them—indicating that, although differing in style, all period houses identified with the decorative vocabulary of an earlier period.



**Colonial Revival (1870-1950)** This style, which borrowed heavily from early American architecture—particularly Georgian and Federal buildings—was largely an outgrowth of a new pride in America's past and a rapidly growing interest in historic preservation. Colonial Revival architecture featured a balanced facade, decorative door crowns and pediments, sidelights, fanlights, and porticos to emphasize the front entrance, multiple-paned glass in double-hung windows, and string courses or decorative cornices.



**Neo-Classical (1890-1930)** Neo-Classical architecture was a style characterized by a two-story, pedimented portico or porch supported by colossal columns, a centrally located doorway, and symmetrically placed windows. This flat-roofed Neo-Classical house was subdued and dignified, with clear glass against solid expanses of stone, and punctuated by rhythmic rows of columns, windows, and French doors. A grand two-story portico often emphasized the centrality of the design.

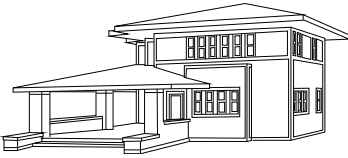
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**The American Foursquare (1895-1930)** Hallmarks of the American Foursquare were: boxy shape, hipped roof, wide porch, large windows, and the use of simplified Arts and Crafts, Prairie, or Colonial motifs. The Foursquare house normally had four rooms on the first floor (hall, parlor, dining room, and kitchen) and four bedrooms plus a bath upstairs. Built-ins such as bookcases, china closets, and window seats were popular.



**Bungalow (1890-1940)** The Bungalow was a house reduced to simple forms with low, broad proportions, and a lack of ornamentation. The house was constructed of local materials to blend with the surrounding landscape. The interior plan was direct and functional. Front doors opened into living rooms which usually flowed into the dining rooms. Fireplaces, beamed ceilings, natural woodwork, dormer windows, and glass doors leading to porches or terraces were common features of the Bungalow.



**Prairie Style (1900-1920)** The Prairie Style was an architectural style characterized by a horizontal emphasis, usually achieved through the use of bands of casement windows, long balconies or terraces, flanking wings, low-pitched roofs with overhangs, and darkly-colored bands on the exterior walls. It was conceived as a practical, cohesive whole down to the landscaping, built-in furniture, and fixtures. It traditionally uses natural textures on a horizontal profile with an open floor plan defined by screens and panels radiating from a central living space.

**Art Deco (1920-1940)** Art Deco forms were a curious blend of Modernism, history, and fantasy, all the while being influenced by the speed-infused aesthetic of the Italian Futurists and the mystical images of Mayan, Assyrian, and Moorish cultures. These were then expressed by the richest of materials such as marble, colored terrazzo, chrome, and ebony. Ornamentation consisted of low-relief geometrical designs such as zigzags, chevrons, lozenges and volutes, and vertical projections above the roof line. Doorways, in particular, showed off the stylized forms and tropical motifs.

### Non-Contributing Structures

Non-Contributing buildings are those buildings within the districts categorized as NOT enhancing the history and architecture of the district. For general study purposes, typically buildings 50 years or newer are considered non-contributing buildings unless they are noted as holding architectural or historical merit that surpasses age. Most Non-Contributing Buildings in Decatur's Historic Districts are buildings constructed after 1950. Occasionally variations on setbacks, architecture, and design occur within the districts that may not be appropriate in keeping the spirit of the neighborhood. These variations are changes that the historic district guidelines discourage in new construction. All new construction is considered non-contributing but their design and location can drastically impact the character of the district and should be considered in great detail. All new construction should follow the guidelines outlined in Chapter 5 of the Design Guidelines.

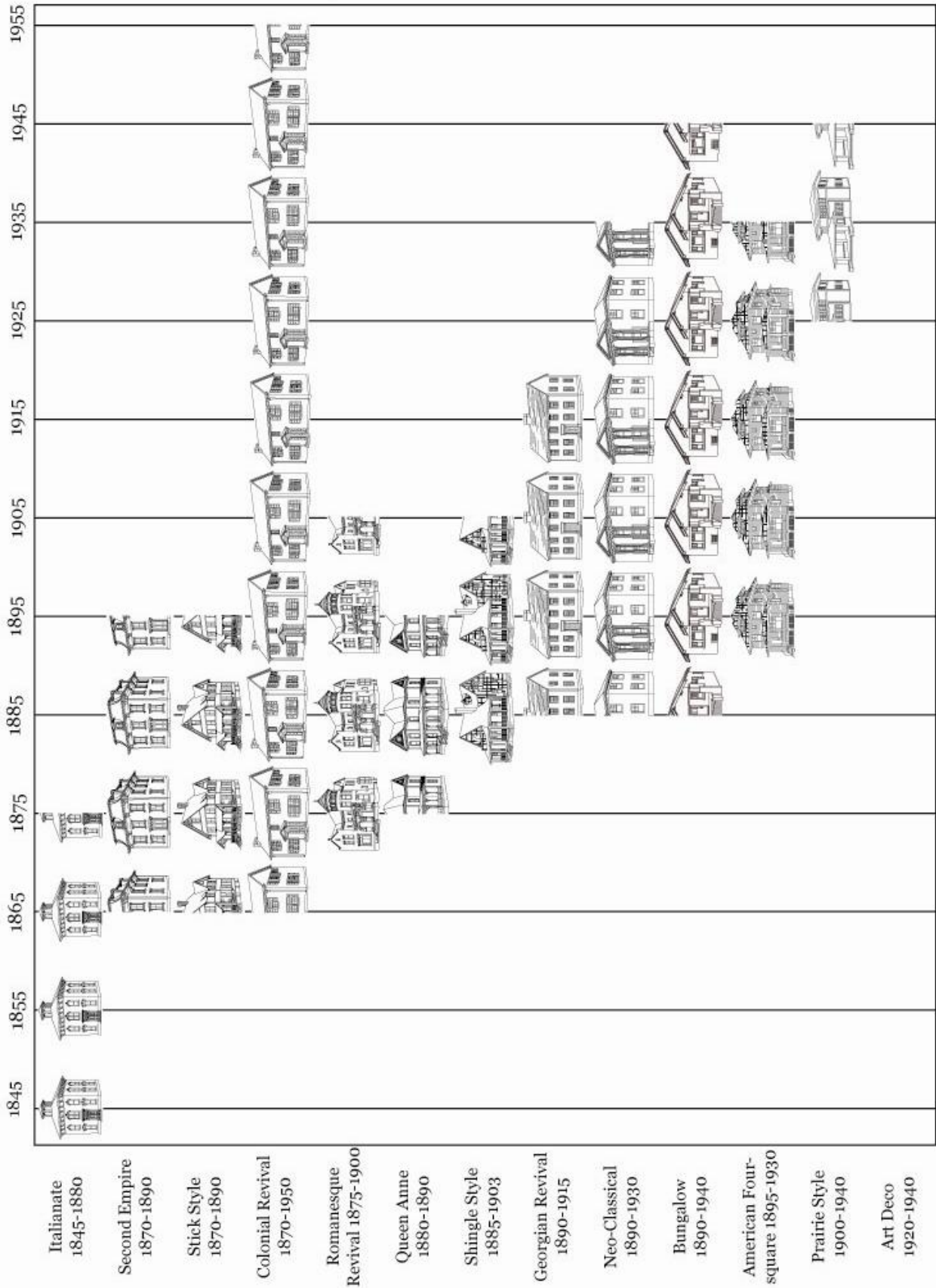
For Decatur's historic districts, non-contributing properties should follow the same guidelines. The original architecture and style of the building should be evaluated for

## **PRESERVATION DESIGN GUIDELINES**

merit and when architectural quality is noted, changes should strive to respect the character and features of the original structure. When making changes to the buildings themselves, guidelines in this document pertaining to Exterior Changes should be followed. However, considerable flexibility is warranted when making changes to non-contributing buildings. Decisions that make practical and aesthetic sense that may be contrary to specific guidelines are welcome when they uphold the overall intent of the guidelines.



# Architectural Styles Timeline of Decatur Residences



## Neighborhood Setting

*"The strength of a nation is derived from the integrity of its homes."  
--Confucius--*

Neighborhoods are an essential part to a person's and a city's well-being. How a neighborhood looks, feels, and functions affects the lives of its inhabitants in relation to their health, safety, welfare, happiness, and surrounding environment. The pleasing aesthetics created by using design guidelines help to enhance these positive feelings making historic neighborhoods great places to live, work, and play for residents of all ages.

### Trees and Landscaping

Typical of the historic districts are grassy front lawns with substantial plantings, shade trees, ground covers, hedges, and other border plantings. Canopies of mature trees line many streets and provide one of the most appreciated characteristics of Decatur's Historic Districts. Large trees, such as Oak and Elm, provide shade that protects roofing materials and promote energy efficiency. Trees can also be used as windbreakers and screens and can line the edge of your property beautifully. The preservation of Decatur's mature tree canopy is of special concern to the Historical and Architectural Sites Commission and the decision to remove healthy trees should be reviewed thoroughly.

Original features such as gardens, garden paths, trellises, arbors, and fishponds are unique elements that add character to historic landscaping. When choosing locations for new trees and plant materials, select locations that will not interfere with utility lines, block walkways and sidewalks, or obstruct the vision of motorists at street intersections. City staff is available in helping to determine the appropriate plant and tree species for your project. Common edging materials for landscaping in early 1900's neighborhoods were slate, brick, and stone.

#### The following projects **DO NOT** require a COA:

- Tree pruning, clearing of overgrown bushes, vines, saplings, etc.
- Tree removal (less than 4" in diameter at breast height (dbh))
- Planting new trees, shrubs, ground cover, etc.
- Landscape edging

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- Flower, vegetable and rock gardens
- Landscape lighting
- Flower pots, planters, window boxes, birdbaths, bird houses etc.

### Commonly requested projects that require a COA:

- Tree removal
- Commission: Healthy, over 4" diameter at breast height (dbh) with replacement tree species selected in consultation with city staff
- Staff: Diseased, damaged, or causing structural damage (with staff review and statement by certified arborist)

Guidelines for Trees and Landscaping:

1. Retain mature trees that contribute to the character of the historic district.
2. When replacing trees that are causing structural problems carefully consider the new location so that the tree will be able to mature in a healthy manner.
3. Maintain the property's natural topography and avoid grading that adversely affects drainage and soil stability or could negatively impact existing trees.
4. Retain historic landscape materials such as brick or river rock. Crushed stone, "pea" gravel, or brick chips are examples of inappropriate materials for ground cover.
5. Replace mature trees with similar canopy and in the same location when they are damaged or diseased. When same site location is not practical, select locations for replacement trees that would enhance the appearance and character of the historic streetscape.
6. Take all precautions to protect existing trees during new construction, paving and any site work. Refer to Tree Protection Guide in the appendix on this document for specific precautions and requirements.

### *Application Requirements*

- Project description
- Site plan showing location of major landscaping changes
- Site plan showing location of existing trees, trees to be removed and replacement trees
- If needed, a report from a tree service or other professional on the condition of any large trees proposed to be removed

### **Fences, Walls, and Site Features**

Other features of the historic setting of a neighborhood and the properties within include site features. Historic Site features that may exist on a property include fences, walls, fish pools, trellises, arbors, terraces, patios, and gardens. Many original site features have been lost over the years and every effort should be made to preserve those that remain.

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Fences and walls are the most abundant type of site feature existing in the historic districts. The repetition of fences and walls often provides a sense of continuity and rhythm along a street. Wood, cast iron, and woven wire are traditional materials for fences. Stone, brick, and concrete are common wall materials. The selection of fence or wall material and design often relates to the architectural style of the house.

Historically, open picket fences, low walls, hedges, and some decorative wire fences were the most typical front yard enclosures. Simple utilitarian fences were commonly used around back yards. Fences usually followed the property line perimeter and did not abut the house. Fountains and fish pools constructed of stone and aggregated concrete were typical historic garden features. Historically, front yard fences were low, not exceeding 36 inches in height.

### **The Following items DO NOT require a COA:**

- Tree houses (back yards only)
- Benches and other outdoor furniture and accessories
- Trellises, sculptures, and other outdoor artwork

### **Commonly requested projects that require a COA:**

- Changes to walls and other historic site features
- New fences and walls
- Pools, patios, etc.
- New dumpsters and dumpster pads

Guidelines for Fences,  
Walls, and Site Features

1. Introduce miscellaneous items such as swimming pools, playground equipment, concrete pads and basketball goals, tree houses, dumpsters and trash receptacles, only in areas such as rear yards where they are not visible from the street.
2. Trash receptacle and dumpster areas must be adequately screened from view of the public right-of-way and adjoining residences with shrubs and/or fencing.
3. Retain fences and walls that contribute to the historic character of the property and the district where possible. If replacement is necessary, replace only the deteriorated element to match the original in dimension, proportion, material, texture, and detail.
4. Introduce new retaining walls constructed of brick, stone, or concrete in a design consistent with the property and the neighborhood. It is not appropriate to construct retaining walls of inappropriate materials such as landscape timbers, railroad ties or concrete blocks where visible from the street.
5. Introduce new fences and walls compatible in material, design, scale, location, and size with original fences and walls within the historic district.

- a) Low picket fences of an open design, constructed of wood, vinyl,

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or metal and finished in white or another color/stain compatible with the building, and low walls and hedges are appropriate for front and rear yard use. Front yard fences and walls should usually not exceed 48" in height.

- b) Install utilitarian fences of woven wire or chain link in rear yards only. Where they are visible from the street, screen with climbing vines, ivy or shrubbery. (If chain link fencing is needed, coated chain link is preferable to raw aluminum.)
- c) Introduce privacy fences or privacy walls in rear yards only and that do not exceed 72" in height. (Note: fences may not be higher than 42" within twenty-five feet of a property line that abuts a street, by City of Decatur Zoning Ordinance)
- d) Fences for vacant properties will be reviewed on an individual basis.

### *Application Requirements*

- Project description
- Site plan showing location of proposed fences or walls
- Drawing, illustration, photo showing design, and dimensions of proposed fences or walls
- Finishing technique (paint/stain)

### **Walkways, Driveways, and Parking Areas**

Since the historic districts predate widespread use of the automobile, many lots do not include driveways, while others share a driveway with the adjoining lot. Alleys provide access to the rear of lots on some streets. Most driveways are relatively narrow and lead directly to a rear parking area or garage. Originally, most driveways were surfaced with gravel or cinders. A paved driveway usually consisted of two parallel concrete runners with a grassy strip in between. A paved walkway typically leads directly from the public sidewalk to the front steps of most houses in the historic district. Curved or serpentine walkways are found only occasionally. Maintaining the historic configuration of driveways and walkways is essential to preserving the character of the districts.

Consider removing unused paved areas to provide additional green space. Remove deteriorated pavement before installing new paving materials to ensure that the walk will be flush with the grade of the yard and public sidewalk. The City of Decatur Zoning Ordinance prohibits parking in front yards in historic districts unless it is in a driveway.

### **The following projects DO NOT require a COA:**

- Adding gravel/crushed stone to existing driveways (established prior to 2002)

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- Patching deteriorated concrete or asphalt pavement, walks, steps, etc.

### Commonly requested projects that require a COA:

- New or expanded parking areas/lots
- New and expanded driveways and walkways
- Commercial access/Service drives

Guidelines for Walkways,  
Driveways, and Parking  
Areas

1. Retain historic driveways and walkways, including steps and sidewalks, in their original locations. When deteriorated, repair with materials that match or are compatible to the original.
2. Select appropriate paving materials for new walkways including concrete, brick, and stone.
3. Residential Driveways, Walkways, and Parking Areas (Residential refers to the original intended use of the building-NOT the current use): When needed, introduce new driveways and walkways that are compatible with existing driveways and walkways in terms of width, location, materials, and design.
4. Construct new driveways and walkways in locations that require a minimum of alteration to historic site features such as landscaping, retaining walls, curbs, and sidewalks. Usually driveways should lead directly to the rear of buildings, and walkways should lead directly to the front steps of the house.
5. Select appropriate materials for new driveways including concrete tracks (narrow strips), macadam, brick and crushed stone. Conceal edging materials used for gravel driveways. Keep new driveway aprons and curb cuts to the minimum width possible.
6. Parking areas for residential properties should be well screened and at the rear of the property. Parking areas in front yards are not appropriate. New parking areas should be designed to have a minimal effect on the neighborhood environment and meet the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.
7. Commercial and/or Institutional Parking Lots /Areas (Commercial and/or Institutional refers to those buildings whose original and intended use was other than residential. This includes institutions, commercial, industrial etc.): Design new parking areas to minimize their effect upon the neighborhood environment. Locate them to the rear of buildings and screen them from view with landscaping and/or fencing. The Commission may consider alternate locations when properly screened and landscaped and meet the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.
8. Grading for new parking areas should not dramatically change the topography of the site or increase water runoff onto adjoining properties.
9. Divide large expanses of pavement into smaller components with planting areas. Incorporate existing large trees and shrubs into the landscaping for new parking areas according to the Zoning Ordinance.

10. Select appropriate materials for surfacing such parking areas. All parking surfaces must be paved.

***Application Requirements***

- Project description
- Scaled site plan prepared by a licensed civil engineer showing location and dimensions of proposed walkways, driveways, and parking areas
- Landscape plan and lighting plan for proposed parking areas

**Lighting**

The selection and placement of exterior lighting can be especially important in Historic Districts because lots are generally very narrow and houses closely spaced. Lighting on one property can easily affect neighboring properties. Lighting of a relatively low height and low or moderate intensity is typically most suited for the historic districts. Retain and preserve the fixtures original to the dwelling. If replacement of original fixtures is needed, consider selecting a style that is similar or complements that of the original fixtures. Typically, fixtures attached to a building were mounted on porch ceilings or adjacent to entrances.

**The following projects DO NOT require a COA:**

- Porch light fixtures
- Decorative exterior light fixtures
- Light posts less than a total height of six (6) feet
- Landscape lighting with 10watt-level projection
- Motion lights and spot lights in rear yards

**Commonly requested projects that require a COA:**

- Utility Power security lights
- Freestanding light fixtures more than six (6) feet in height

Guidelines for Lighting

**For Residential Buildings:**

1. Select lighting fixtures and poles that are compatible in scale, design, and materials with the individual property and the neighborhood.
2. Carefully locate low level or directional lighting that does not invade surrounding properties. Indiscriminate area lighting is not appropriate.

**For Commercial and/or Institutional Buildings:**

1. Site lighting should be designed and located to minimize the impact on surrounding properties.
2. All lighting should meet the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance and be full cut-off lighting.
3. Locate utility poles for security lights at the rear of the site when possible and place electrical service lines underground if feasible.

*Application Requirements*

- Site Plan showing location of proposed lighting fixtures
- Drawing, photo, or illustration showing design and dimensions of proposed lighting
- Photometric Plan

**Signs**

Over time, the original use of some buildings in the historic district has changed and in some areas residential buildings have been converted to other uses. Often these changes require signage to help with identification. In order to maintain the historic context of the neighborhood, it is important to install signage that will not detract from the pedestrian scale of the neighborhood or the original function and purpose of a building.

Traditionally, signs in the historic districts were relatively small, of simple, rectangular shapes, with straightforward and legible lettering. They were usually constructed of wood or metal with a smooth, painted sign face. Signs in residential locations were often located beside the front walk near the public sidewalk. Commercial buildings usually had a sign frieze or other location intended for a sign.

When designing new signage keep in mind the scale of the building it will identify. Signs should be consistently oriented to the pedestrian and be compatible with the residential environment. Signs whose purpose is to attract the attention of passing motorists are usually too large to be compatible with the pedestrian character of the historic districts. The best location for a sign is next to the front walk near the public sidewalk.

**The following projects DO NOT require a COA:**

- Real estate signs
- Home security signs
- "No parking" and "Tow Away" signs
- Temporary signs and banners

**Commonly requested projects that require a COA:**

- All new building/business identification signage
- Replacement signs that differ in dimension, design, material or location from the existing

Guidelines for Signs

1. Introduce unobtrusive, simple signage in the historic districts according to the requirements of the Decatur Zoning Ordinance.
2. Home occupations are permitted to erect a single, non-illuminated wall



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sign not exceeding two square feet in area mounted flush to the wall of the structure.

3. Uses other than one or two-family are allowed one free standing sign with the sign area based on site frontage (not to exceed 50 square feet) located a minimum of five (5) feet from the property line and not to exceed five (5) feet in height. An appropriate location for a freestanding sign in a residential area is close to the front walk and near the public sidewalk.
4. Select traditional materials for new signs including wood, metal, stone, and masonry.
5. Billboards (outdoor advertising signs) and other tall freestanding signs, portable signs, flashing or lighted message signs, plastic signs, and signs with internally illuminated letters are not appropriate in the historic districts.
6. It is not appropriate to attach signs to a building in any manner that conceals, damages, or causes the removal of architectural features or details.
7. Signage should be compatible with the original use of a building.
  - a) It is not historically appropriate to install signs directly on facades or porch roofs of residential buildings and those buildings originally intended for residential use. The installation of a freestanding sign is most appropriate as it is less likely to detract from the architecture of the building.
  - b) Place signs for historic commercial buildings in locations originally intended for signage such as at the top of the storefront or on windows, doors, or awnings.
  - c) Signage for new commercial buildings should reflect similar placement to that of historic commercial buildings in the neighborhood.

### *Application Requirements*

- Scaled drawing of proposed sign
- Site plan showing proposed location on the property
- Elevation drawing for signs attached to facades of buildings
- Description on materials, colors, etc

### **Garages and Accessory Structures**

A number of early garages and other outbuildings, including a few carriage barns, survive in the historic districts. These structures provide a glimpse of life during a bygone era and add to the character and charm of the neighborhoods. The earliest true garages were simple frame structures with no floor, which could accommodate a single automobile and little else. Gradually they became more substantial structures and sometimes provided living quarters for servants. Accessory structures could be distinctive, often matching the architecture of the house. A surprising number of

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original garages and even a few carriage barns survive in the historic districts and provide models for new accessory structures and garages.

### The following projects **DO NOT** require a COA:

- Maintenance repairs to garages and accessory buildings when there is no change in design and material

### Commonly requested projects that require a COA:

- Exterior changes to garages and accessory structures
- The construction of new garages and accessory structures (including those less than 100 square feet)
- Demolition of accessory structures and garages

Guidelines for Garages and  
Accessory Structures

1. Retain the original materials and features of historic garages and outbuildings including windows, doors, siding, trim, and lattice work. If replacement of an element is necessary, match the original in design.
2. Design new garages and outbuildings to be compatible with the main structure on the lot in material and design using existing historic outbuildings in the districts as an example.
3. Limit the size and scale of garages and accessory structures so that the integrity of the original structure or the size of the existing lot is not compromised or significantly diminished.
4. New garages and accessory buildings should be located in rear yards.
5. Prefabricated wooden accessory structures are appropriate when they are designed to be compatible with the principal structure on the site and with other outbuildings in the district.

### *Application Requirements*

- Project description including materials specifications
- Site plan showing footprint of proposed structure and distances to property lines
- Scaled elevation drawings of all sides of the proposed structure or manufacturer's drawing with dimensions

### **Patios and Decks**

Patios and decks are popular additions to houses for outside leisure activity and can act as an enhancement to landscaping. While terraces and patios may be more compatible with the character of a historic structure, decks are acceptable when they are of a compatible design and hidden from street view. When designing a deck or patio, keep in mind the overall size of the rear yard and the impact it may have on reduction in green space. Choose materials for patios that are found elsewhere on the property, for example a new brick patio would complement an original brick walkway.

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### The following projects **DO NOT** Require a COA:

- Repairs to deteriorated wood decks
- Replacement of deteriorated/missing pavers

### Commonly requested projects that require a COA:

- Expansion of existing patios and decks
- New patios and decks when visible from the street

Guidelines for Patios and  
Decks

1. Locate decks at the rear of the structure or in a location not readily visible from the street. Decks that are visible from the street should be screened with shrubbery or other landscaping materials.
2. Decks should be of wood construction and of dimensions that do not monopolize the rear elevation or significantly detract from the architecture of the building.
3. It is not appropriate to install decks that require the removal of historic materials or otherwise damage or obscure architectural features. Design and construct decks so that they may be removed in the future without damage to the historic structure.
4. Select appropriate paving materials for patios including concrete, brick, and stone. If feasible, remove deteriorated pavement before installing new paving materials to ensure that the walk will be flush with the grade of the yard and public sidewalk.

### *Application Requirements*

- List of materials
- Site plan
- Design drawings (decks)
- Product sample or brochure (pavers)

## Changes to the Building Exterior

*“You too proceed! Make falling arts your care, Erect new wonders, and the old repair”  
--Alexander Pope--*

**B**uilding exteriors are the most visible aspect of a historic district. It is the exterior of a building that brings some of the most importance and identity to a neighborhood. Uniformity amongst exteriors aids in the aesthetics and attraction of an area and helps form the sense of place that attracts so many residents to a historic district. Careful thought and consideration should be taken in any decisions to alter, add, demolish, or rehabilitate the exterior of buildings in a historic district. This will help preserve the character and feeling that is appreciated and come to be expected from a historic district.

### Exterior Wall Materials and Finishes

The form, materials, and details of exterior walls help to define the architectural character of historic structures. Polygonal bays and turrets, recessed balconies, and changes in wall material add stylistic variety and interest to the historic districts. The pattern, texture, and detail of exterior wall materials provide character and scale to buildings in the historic district. These details are further emphasized by paint color and other exterior finishes.

Typical historic wall materials found within the districts include wood clapboard siding, wood shingles in both uniform and patterned shapes, stucco, brick, and stone. Over the years, many clapboard houses in the historic districts were covered over with asphalt shingles and aluminum or asbestos siding. Due to the loss of both historic character and original materials in the application of these synthetic materials, the practice is not appropriate in the historic districts. Additionally, the danger of undetected insect infestation and moisture damage make synthetic siding undesirable. Consequently, the removal of previously installed synthetic siding within the historic districts is always encouraged.

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In some instances, synthetic siding such as asbestos siding and asphalt shingles may actually be the original siding material. In situations where the replacement of these materials is necessary, the Historical and Architectural Sites Commission will review proposed substitute materials on a case-by-case basis.

For exterior wood surfaces, paint and stains provide opportunities for accentuating the character defining elements and details of historic buildings. Appropriate variations in paint schemes contribute to the diversity and richness of the district streetscape. The preparation of wood siding prior to painting plays an important role in the appearance of wood siding. Scraping and sanding is the required preparation method as harsh methods of paint removal such as sandblasting and high pressure washing will actually facilitate the deterioration of wood siding.

Painting wooden details such as corner boards, brackets, fascias, soffits, and decorative moldings helps to highlight these elements and emphasize the architectural character of a building. Victorian homes were usually painted in multiple shades with contrasting colors on intricate details and molding. Craftsman style homes were often shingle sided and stained. When painted, these homes tended to display dark earthen colors. Many Colonial Revival style homes were finished in brick or painted white. To retain architectural unity, avoid very strong color contrasts and excessive highlighting of small details. Change color on architectural details at the point in which the detail takes on a new form. Paint previously painted foundations in darker colors that generally reflect the color of masonry or stone.

Many houses and apartments built before 1978 have paint that contains lead (lead-based paint). Lead from paint, chips and dust can pose serious health hazards to children and adults. When selecting new replacement wood siding, although more expensive, clear grade lumber provides the best finish.

### **The following projects DO NOT require a COA:**

- Painting
- Replacing original deteriorated siding and trim in the course of ordinary maintenance or repair that does not involve a change in design, material, or appearance thereof.

### **Commonly requested projects that require a COA:**

- Replacing original siding or replacing siding with new siding that is not the same in material or design.
- Removal of aluminum, vinyl, asbestos, and asphalt siding
- Exterior alterations to principal elevations of buildings

1. Preserve original form, materials, and details of exterior walls. If replacement is necessary, replace only the deteriorated material with new material to match the historic material in composition, size, shape, texture, pattern, and detail. The appropriateness of substitute materials is reviewed

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based on the size, shape, texture, pattern, and detail as compared to the original material and, when available, past performance of the material in documented cases.

2. Preserve historic architectural features of exterior walls such as cornices, brackets, bays, turrets, fascias, and decorative moldings. It is not appropriate to remove these features rather than repair or replace with matching.
3. Locate vents or mechanical connections through walls that are non character-defining walls or inconspicuously on rear or side walls of the structure where they are not visible from the street.
4. It is not appropriate to cover or replace historic materials with substitute materials such as aluminum, vinyl, or plywood panels.
5. It is not appropriate to apply paint or other coatings to unpainted wall materials and materials that were left unpainted historically. Traditional masonry materials such as brick, slate, and stone should remain unpainted as well as stained shingles.
6. It is not appropriate to use abrasive techniques such as sandblasting, high pressure water blasting, or other methods that may damage the surface; for cleaning or removing paint from exterior walls and trim within the historic districts.
7. It is not appropriate to introduce new features such as vents, bays, windows, or door openings in exterior walls if they diminish the historic character of the structure.

### *Application Requirements*

- List of materials
- Elevation Drawings
- Product Samples/Brochure
- Photos
- Preparation Method

### **Masonry and Stone: Foundations and Chimneys**

Some of the structures in the historic districts have some form of masonry material as part of their construction. Brick, brick veneer, and stone construction can make up the exterior walls of a building and are almost always the material chosen to construct chimneys and foundations. Chimneys are often significant architectural features of a historic structure and the foundation anchors the historic structure to its building site raising the body of the building above ground level. Consequently, their preservation is essential to retaining the character of the building's exterior. Proper maintenance of chimneys, foundations, and other masonry/stone surfaces may include re-laying of any loose brick or stone, careful re-pointing of deteriorated mortar joints, and proper replacement of metal flashing where the chimney meets the roof or wall. The most important goal in masonry/stone preservation is to keep out water. Techniques such

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as sand blasting and high pressure washing erodes the brick exterior causing moisture to get inside; water proof coatings such as a silicone-based sealant will actually trap moisture inside. These techniques should be avoided. The best preventive measure to take is to provide regular maintenance and select a good mortar when re-pointing.

Water-repellent coatings are the recommended treatment for protecting masonry surfaces as they are different from water-proof coatings and are formulated to be vapor permeable, or "breathable." They do not seal the surface but act as a barrier that continues to allow the appropriate level of moisture to pass through the surface. Low pressure cleaning at garden hose pressure using water or detergents is the best way to clean brick and stone. Allow for proper ventilation in foundations, as covering vents can trap moisture and lead to deterioration. Previously painted foundations should be painted in darker colors that reflect the colors of masonry or stone. Re-pointing is filling in the gaps that already exist in masonry joints with mortar to match the original. Tuck Pointing is the process of cleaning out crumbling and deteriorated mortar and then "tucking" new mortar into the cleaned joints.

### **The following projects DO NOT require a COA:**

- Re-pointing masonry and stone surfaces
- Installation/removal of metal chimney caps

### **Commonly requested projects that require a COA:**

- Tuck pointing masonry and stone surfaces
- Chimney removal
- Rebuilding original foundation
- Removal of original chimney caps

Guidelines for Masonry and  
Stone

1. Preserve the shape, size, materials, and details of character-defining chimneys and foundations and other masonry/stone features. Significant chimney details include features such as brick corbelling, terra cotta chimney pots, and decorative caps. Decorative grilles and vents, water tables, lattice panels, access doors, and steps are character defining features of foundations that should be preserved as well.
2. Clean soiled, discolored or painted masonry, and stone surfaces using the gentlest methods possible to avoid damage to the brick and mortar. It is not appropriate to use high pressure cleaning methods such as sandblasting.
3. Maintain the integrity of masonry/stone features by re-laying loose bricks or stones and repairing deteriorated mortar joints as necessary. When re-pointing or tuck-pointing masonry surfaces, match the dimension, composition, color, profile, and design of the old mortar joints as closely as possible.
4. Painting or applying coatings such as cement or stucco to exposed

## PRESERVATION DESIGN GUIDELINES

masonry/stone is not appropriate because it will change the historic appearance of the masonry/stone feature and can accelerate deterioration. Previously painted surfaces may remain painted.

5. It is not appropriate to introduce features such as access doors and vents in locations that diminish the original design or materials of a buildings foundation.
6. It is not appropriate to shorten or remove original chimneys when they become deteriorated. Chimneys and furnace stacks that are not essential to the character of the structure or that were added later may be removed if it will not diminish the original design of the roof or destroy historic details.
7. Construct new or replacement chimneys and foundations of historically appropriate materials such as brick or stone. It is not appropriate to use substitute materials that simulate brick or stone.
8. If metal chimney caps or other covers are necessary, install them so they do not diminish the original design of the chimney or damage historic materials.

### *Application Requirements*

- List of materials
- Product sample
- Photo
- Drawings where appropriate

## Roofs

The roof is often a distinguishing feature of a historic structure, helping to define its architectural character and the building's overall form. The interplay of roof forms, materials and details help to give the historic districts their unique character. Changes and additions to a historic building over time are often revealed through variations in the form, pitch, materials, overhang, and detailing of the roof.

Where exposed gutters and downspouts are to be replaced or installed, install them so that no architectural features or details like crown moldings are damaged or removed. Gutters and downspouts should be painted or finished in a baked enamel unless they are made of copper. Half-round style gutters are most desirable when used so as not to destroy crown molding.

### **The following projects DO NOT require a COA:**

- Installation of gutters and downspouts when original features are not altered or removed
- Replacement of existing asphalt composition roofing shingles when no original features will be removed or damaged

### **Commonly requested projects that require a COA:**



## PRESERVATION DESIGN GUIDELINES

### Guidelines for Roofs

- Change in roofing material including the removal and replacement of slate, terra cotta, tile, and standing flat seamed metal roofing materials
  - Removal or replacement of built-in gutter systems
  - Installation of solar panels, ventilators, and skylights, etc.
1. Retain and preserve original roof form, pitch, overhang, and significant features such as chimneys, dormers, turrets, cornices, balustrades, and widow's walks.
  2. Preserve and maintain historic roofing materials that are essential in defining the architecture of a historic structure, such as clay tiles or patterned slate. If replacement is necessary, replace only the deteriorated material with new material to match the original.
  3. Retain historic roofing materials such as asbestos shingles, metal shingles, and standing flat seamed metal roofing. If replacement is necessary due to deterioration, substitute appropriate roofing materials.
  4. Preserve and maintain original roof details such as decorative rafter tails, crown molding, soffit boards, or cresting. If replacement is necessary, the new detail should match the original.
  5. Maintain traditional gutter and downspout systems. For example, repair concealed or built-in gutters rather than replacing them with exposed gutters.

### *Application Requirements*

- Materials Listing Product Sample
- Product Brochure

### Windows and Doors

Windows and doors are prominent visual elements of historic structures and often reflect the architectural style or period of construction. The pattern, arrangement, location, size and shape of windows and doors contribute significantly to a building's historic character.

Windows in the historic districts are primarily double-hung wooden sash windows with a variety of muntin arrangements. Casement windows and a variety of other types are found on some houses in addition to double-hung windows. The number of lights (panes) in the sash varies with the style and period of the house. Most Victorian buildings have windows which are tall and narrow. Colonial Revival windows have multiple light divisions, with either six-over-six or six-over-one patterns. Bungalows and American Foursquares often have long narrow lights in the upper sash and a solid pane in the lower sash. Smaller fixed windows with a border of small panes can be found in the gable ends of Queen Anne and

## PRESERVATION DESIGN GUIDELINES

Craftsman style architecture. Often the entrance door will have this same treatment.

The front door is usually the focal point of the house and a key architectural feature. Original doors found in historic districts typically are wood panel doors with a fixed pane of glass often with a muntin pattern similar to that of the windows. Solid wood doors are also seen in the districts and usually have sidelights and fanlights with fixed panes of clear, beveled, or stained glass surrounding the doorframe.

Because of their strong link to and indication of the architecture and style of a building, original windows and doors should be maintained, repaired when necessary, and preserved as one of the defining elements of a historic structure. Studies have shown that repair of original windows is typically less expensive than replacement, and the proper installation of storm windows and doors ensures energy efficiency. Studies by the Energy Research and Development Administration show that the buildings with the poorest energy efficiency are those built between 1940 and 1975.

A "muntin" is the thin strip of wood used to hold the panes of glass within a window. Often the muntin arrangement is an indicator of the architectural style of a building.

Inspect sash locks for optimal performance as their role is to securely hold the windows in place and will help to resist air infiltration when tightly sealed. Windows can be made weather tight by re-caulking, replacing broken glass, and installing weather stripping.

Adding storm windows, especially if they are weather stripped, will improve thermal efficiency and protect the windows from the elements.

With routine maintenance and repair, original windows and doors can be preserved. Preserving original windows and doors is always more desirable and generally less expensive than replacing them. Frequently, repair or replacement of only the damaged portion of the frame, sash, sill, threshold or jamb will eliminate common problems with a window or door. Add integrated weather stripping to windows and doors to improve energy efficiency. Replace deteriorated caulking and glazing putty to prevent air or water infiltration around glass. Inspect window sills and door thresholds to make sure water does not collect and cause deterioration. Regularly inspect windows and doors to make sure the paint film is in sound condition.

When considering replacement windows (only if historic windows are beyond repair), determine the original window material, window pattern and configuration, dimensions, design, and any key detailing that is unique to the window and use this information to assist you when selecting a window that will meet the intent of the guidelines.

**The following projects DO NOT require a COA:**

- Re-glazing of windows
- Broken window pane replacement
- Repairs to original wood windows and doors when there is no change in appearance and materials
- Painting of windows
- Installation of full view (glazed) storm windows and doors. (Either wood or aluminum with baked enamel or painted finish is acceptable.)

**Commonly requested projects that require a COA:**

- Replacement of original windows
- Removal or addition of a window or door opening
- Exposing a previously covered window unit with replacement according to guideline #3 below

Guidelines for Windows and  
Doors

1. Retain and preserve the pattern, arrangement, and dimensions of window and door openings on principal elevations. Often the placement of windows is an indicator of a particular architectural style and therefore, contributes to the building's significance. If necessary for technical reasons, locate new window or door openings on secondary elevations and introduce units that are compatible in proportion, location, shape, pattern, size, materials, and details to existing units. For commercial and/or institutional buildings in need of a utility entrance on secondary elevations, select a location that meets the functions of the building but is least visible from the street and causes the least amount of alteration to the building. It is not appropriate to introduce new window and/or door openings into the principal elevations of a contributing historic structure.
2. Retain and preserve original windows and doors, including such elements as sash, glass, sills, lintels, casings, muntins, trim, frames, thresholds, hardware, and shutters. If repair of an original window or door element is necessary, repair only the deteriorated element to match the original in size, composition, material, dimension, and detail by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing the deteriorated section. The removal of historic materials shall be avoided.
3. When repair is not feasible, as determined by city staff, true divided light wood windows are an appropriate replacement product for original wood windows when designed to match the original in appearance, detail, material, profile and overall size as closely as possible. Double-paned glass may be considered when they are true divided and can accurately resemble the original window design.
  - a. It is not appropriate to replace true divided light windows with vinyl windows or windows with snap-in muntins.

## PRESERVATION DESIGN GUIDELINES

- b. Window products will be reviewed on an individual basis using the following criteria:
  - 1) Kind and texture of materials
  - 2) Architectural and historical compatibility
  - 3) Comparison to original window profile
  - 4) Level of significance of original windows to the architectural style of the building
  - 5) Existence of lead paint or other safety hazards
  - 6) Material performance and durability
4. For commercial and institutional buildings requesting the replacement of steel casement windows (and city staff has determined that it is not feasible to repair the windows) select replacement products that are compatible in proportion, location, shape, pattern, size, and details to the original window component using the criteria as stated in #3b above.
5. Select exterior storm windows and doors that are wood or painted/coated with a baked enamel finish and that do not damage or obscure the original windows and doors when installed. Select storm doors with full glazing to maximize the view of the door. Unfinished aluminum windows and doors are inappropriate for the historic districts.
6. Where historically appropriate, install fabric awnings so that they do not damage or conceal architectural details or historic materials. It is not appropriate to install aluminum awnings over windows, doors, or porches on residential structures. Metal awnings may be appropriate for commercial and/or institutional properties when historically compatible with the architecture of the building.
7. Window shutters should be wood and designed to fit the window opening and attached to the window casing. Shutters should be introduced only when historically appropriate to the architecture of the building or when it is documented that shutters are original to the building. Aluminum or vinyl shutters that are attached to the side of a building are inappropriate for the historic districts.

### *Application Requirements*

- Project description
- Scaled elevation drawings of existing windows and proposed replacement windows
- Scaled elevation drawings of proposed changes to windows and door openings
- Photos
- Illustrations, sample of proposed replacement units

**Porches,  
Entrances, and  
Balconies**

Porches and entrances are important features of houses in the historic districts. Often they are the most prominent stylistic feature of a historic structure. Covered under this section of the guidelines are front, back and side porches, mudrooms, porticos, sleeping porches, balconies, pergolas, terraces, and entrances. Components of porches include steps, balustrades, columns, trellises, skirt boards, fascias, brackets, and various ornamental details. Porches are exposed to the weather and can deteriorate rapidly if not properly maintained. Because of their architectural significance, porches should be preserved in their original form and detail.

Before replacing deteriorated porch flooring, allow new wood to dry thoroughly to prevent gaps between floor boards. Give kiln-dried lumber time to adjust to ambient moisture conditions. Avoid pressure treated lumber. Prime all surfaces of new tongue-and-groove flooring before installing so that it can be painted immediately afterwards. Apply two coats of oil based deck enamel. Install a trim piece on the exposed edges of the floor boards and caulk well. Most porch floor damage is through water wicking up from the ends. Ensure that there is adequate ventilation beneath the porch floor to avoid moisture buildup and buckling of floor boards.

**The following projects DO NOT require a COA:**

- Minor repairs to materials and features when repaired to match the original
- Repairs to porch flooring and ceilings, trim boards, railings, brackets, and similar projects when there is no change

**Commonly requested projects that require a COA:**

- Replacement of deteriorated trim boards, flooring, ceiling, steps, railings, cheek walls, and similar projects
- The removal of or additions to porches
- Screening of front or side porches according to guidelines
- Enclosure of porches

Guidelines for Porches,  
Entrances, and Balconies

1. Preserve and maintain historic porches, porticos, balconies, pergolas, terraces and entrances.
2. Preserve and maintain historic materials and features of historic porches such as tongue-and-groove flooring, beaded board ceiling boards, trim, railings, lattice, entablatures, columns, steps, balustrades, brackets, soffits, fascia boards, and decorative trim. If a porch element or detail is deteriorated and requires replacement, replace only the deteriorated element to match the original in material, size, scale, texture, and detail. It is not appropriate to replace deteriorated porch elements with incompatible materials such as metal supports and railings for wooden columns and rails or concrete for wooden steps.

## PRESERVATION DESIGN GUIDELINES

3. If a deteriorated porch must be removed or is completely missing, replace it either with a reconstruction based on accurate documentation or a new design that is appropriate for the structure in terms of materials, roof form, detailing, scale, size, and ornamentation.
4. It is not appropriate to add elements or details to porches to create a false historical appearance.
5. The addition of new entrances, porches, pergolas, balconies, and other entryway features to primary elevations should be studied in depth and based on architectural precedence for the style and design of the building.
6. Screening a porch may be appropriate when it is installed and designed in a way that does not alter or detract from the details of the original porch and uses compatible materials to the original structure. For example, porches may be screened if the framing is recessed, the screening placed behind columns or balustrades and the framing can be removed in the future without damaging historic elements of the porch.
7. Because of their character-defining role, it is not appropriate to enclose front porches. Side and rear porches may be enclosed to create sunrooms if the design of the enclosure is compatible with the architecture of the structure and does not result in a loss of historic fabric or architectural details.

### *Application Requirements*

- Project description
- Photos of architectural features proposed to be replaced
- Scaled elevation drawings for addition of missing porches, balconies, and similar projects
- Construction details for addition or replacement of porch columns, railings, and similar projects

### **Changes to Non-Contributing Structures**

While these structures may be considered "non-historic" or "non-contributing," they are still part of the fabric of the historic district. The goal of the design guidelines is to ensure that changes to non-contributing structures "do no harm" to the special character of the building and the district.

Non-contributing structures should follow the guidelines under Neighborhood Setting to preserve and contribute to the character of the neighborhood. For projects pertaining to the building itself, the guidelines under Changes to the Building Exterior should be used, following the below guidelines for direction in their level of interpretation.

A COA and the appropriate documentation are required for projects as outlined in each chapter of this document.

## PRESERVATION DESIGN GUIDELINES

### Guidelines for Non-Contributing Structures

1. Every effort should be made to maintain the architectural integrity of non-contributing structures. Replacement materials should be carefully evaluated to ensure that they maintain the character of the building and the district. For example, covering of wood trim with vinyl on a brick building is not recommended.
2. It is not appropriate to add historic ornamentation to create the illusion of a historic structure.
3. For additions and alterations, choose materials and treatments that maintain the character of the building's architectural style.
4. Retain features that are characteristic of the architectural style of non-contributing buildings. It is not appropriate to simply remove deteriorated architectural features rather than replacing them in kind.

### Building Relocation

Relocation is sometimes the only alternative to demolition of historic buildings. It should be undertaken only after all other preservation options have been exhausted because it often results in a loss of integrity of the building setting.

**A Certificate of Appropriateness is required** for the removal or relocation of a building within the historic district.

### Guidelines for Relocation

1. Review site selection for compatibility of the relocated building to the architectural styles, materials, and scale of existing historic buildings along the street.
2. Review the compatibility of site selection and the proposed site for a relocated building in terms of building spacing, setback, orientation, height, scale, and massing according to pertinent new construction guidelines.
3. Review proposed site landscaping and site features according to pertinent design guidelines.
4. Retain important architectural features when relocating a building within the historic district.
5. If possible retain important site features including large trees when relocating a building within the historic district.

### *Application Requirements*

- Project description
- Site plan showing building footprint
- Photographs and site plan of proposed new location

### Demolition

The demolition or removal of any structure in a historic district requires a Certificate of Appropriateness. The commission may not deny an application for demolition, but it

## PRESERVATION DESIGN GUIDELINES

may delay the effective date of the Certificate for up to four (4) months in the case of a structure that contributes to the character of the historic district (During the period of continuance, if required by the Commission, the owner of the landmark or historic district property must place the property on the open market for sale, but said owner is under no obligation to accept any offer to purchase received during this period; however, refusal to accept an offer may be considered by the Commission as evidence regarding the economic loss of hardship to the owner). Since the action cannot be reversed, the decision to demolish a historic structure should be carefully considered and all alternatives to demolition should be explored. During the delay period, the Commission should negotiate with the owner or other interested parties including state and local preservation organizations and seek answers to the following questions:

- Is there a well-developed proposal for the use of the site necessitating demolition?
- Could another site serve the purpose just as well?
- Could the existing structure be adapted to suit the owner's needs?
- Could the property be sold to someone willing to preserve the building?
- As a last resort, could the building be moved to another location?
- Does the site have known or potential archaeological significance?
- Is the structure of national, state or local significance?

Guidelines for Demolition

- If alternatives to demolition are exhausted and approval for demolition is granted:
1. Record the structure thoroughly with photographs and other documentation including identifying and recording any special architectural features of the building, important landscape features, structures, and archeological significance of the site.
  2. Protect any large trees or other important landscape features during demolition.
  3. If the site is to remain vacant for more than 60 days, it should be cleared of debris, reseeded and maintained in a manner consistent with other properties in the historic district.

### *Application Requirements*

- Project description including reason for demolition
- Site plan showing building footprint
- Item from #1 above



## New Construction

*“...let us, while waiting for new monument, preserve the ancient monuments”  
--Victor Hugo--*

The underlying principal for new construction in a historic district in Decatur is to be designed in harmony with the predominant architectural character of the surrounding neighborhood. While diverse, Decatur’s neighborhoods generally have a pattern of compatibility and continuity. Quality design is expected in all new construction. However, these guidelines do not encourage, in fact discourage, the recreation of architectural styles. A new construction should have primary design elements that fit in with the ambiance of the surrounding area and should be similar in temperament in regards to size, scale, massing height, rhythm, setback, material, site design, and building elements.

### Additions

Compatible additions that do not compromise the character of the historic building or destroy significant architectural features are appropriate within the historic district. Additions should reflect the point in time of their construction but respect the architectural character and fabric of the historic building and its surroundings.

While these guidelines apply to the building itself, proposals for additions should also rely on the guidelines in this document pertaining to *Trees and Landscaping* and *Fences, Walls, and Site Features* in order to avoid any adverse effects on significant features of the site. Additions that radically change the proportion of built area to green area on the site are not appropriate. Consider the possibility of archaeological resources when grading property. Brick, stone, wood, and stucco exterior siding are acceptable materials. Fiber-cement siding (such as Hardi Plank Siding) is an acceptable material for new construction additions when it holds a similar texture, appearance and reveal dimension to wood siding.

Because of the significance of additions and its impact on the character of the historic structure, a **Certificate of Appropriateness is required for all additions.**

## PRESERVATION DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. In terms of material, style, and detail, design additions should be compatible with the original structure rather than duplicating it exactly.
2. Distinguish additions from the original structure through change in roof line, wall plane, detailing, and/or material.
3. Locate, design and construct additions so that the character-defining features of the historic structure are not obscured, destroyed, damaged or radically changed.
4. Limit the size and scale of additions so that the integrity of the original structure is not compromised.
5. Changes in height that alter the character and scale of the existing building to accommodate an addition are not appropriate.
6. Minimize site disturbance for construction of additions to reduce the possibility of destroying site features and/or existing trees.

### *Application Requirements*

- Project description
- Site plan showing building footprint with the proposed addition and measurements to property lines
- Scaled elevation drawings showing all sides of the addition and relationship to original structure
- Material specifications

### **New Construction Buildings**

New Construction in historic district should contribute to and emphasize the characteristics that make the neighborhood unique. The guidelines are written to ensure that new construction complements and never detracts from the historic character and features of the district. The guidelines are written to allow for design creativity by providing framework that will allow for new architecture using criteria based on the compatibility of the new building's setback, scale, massing, and material. When planning and designing for new construction projects, there are seven (7) key principles that should be considered:

**Site Planning:** Regular setbacks and spacing of houses creates a strong rhythm of building to open space along streets in the historic districts. New buildings should maintain this rhythm with similar setbacks, spacing, and lot coverage which approximates the ratio of building to open space generally found in the neighborhood. Principle facades of new buildings should maintain the directional expression of nearby buildings. Buildings should not be sited at unusual angles with respect to the street, or with sidewalls facing the street.

**Building Shape and Massing:** New buildings should echo the massing of nearby structures. Mass is the overall bulk of a building and footprint is the land area it covers. The mass and footprint of a building are directly related to a building's height, width, and scale. The historic districts contain buildings of varying forms

## PRESERVATION DESIGN GUIDELINES

and shapes and studying the context of the site in order to determine the proper relationship between new and existing buildings is critical. Using compatible roof forms and shapes is another way to relate new and old buildings.

**Scale:** The size of an object in relation to other objects in close proximity. In the historic districts, scale is primarily the relationship between building size and human beings. The scale of new buildings should be consistent with nearby historic buildings in order to achieve a "human" scale.

**Height:** The height of new buildings should approximate the height of nearby buildings. Houses in the historic districts are generally taller than their modern counterparts. Most are built on raised foundations and ceiling heights can be nine to ten feet tall. Some variance in height is acceptable since most block faces contain a mixture of one and two story structures, with an occasional three story building.

**Fenestration:** Fenestration refers to the pattern and arrangement of openings on the facade of a building. While windows and doors on new buildings do not have to duplicate historic windows, the dimensions and placement on the building should be similar. Blank walls should be avoided. The main entrance is usually the most prominent feature of structures in the historic districts, and should be emphasized in new construction as well.

**Landscaping:** Landscaping can be the key to a successful construction project. This is especially true in the historic districts where vegetation is well established. Heavy landscaping is essential if new buildings are to blend in with their surroundings. The site plan for new construction projects should identify existing trees, walls, walks, or other features which could be incorporated into the landscape design, and every effort should be made to save existing trees, shrubbery, and hedges. Those that can be saved should be protected with some type of barricade during construction. The landscape plan for the building should include new shade trees along street frontages.

**Parking:** Parking areas should be planned according to the Decatur Zoning Ordinance with an approved landscaping plan.

Proposals for new construction should also rely on the guidelines in this document pertaining to Neighborhood Setting. The sections within Neighborhood Setting will give guidance in the areas of Trees and Landscaping, Fences, Walls and Yard Features, Walkways, Driveways and Parking Areas, Lighting, and Signs. Brick, stone, wood, and stucco exterior siding are acceptable materials. Fiber-cement siding (such as Hardi Plank Siding) is an acceptable material for new construction additions when it holds a similar texture, appearance and reveal dimension to wood siding.

## PRESERVATION DESIGN GUIDELINES

Because of the significance of new construction and its impact on the character of the historic districts, a **Certificate of Appropriateness is required for all new construction projects.**

Guidelines for New  
Construction

1. Site new buildings so that the setback, spacing and orientation to the street are consistent with historic buildings within the district.
2. New construction should have a similar height and width of existing buildings within a block or street.
3. Relate the roof form, pitch, and overhang of new construction buildings to historic roofs within the district.
4. Design the spacing, pattern, proportion, size, and detailing of windows, doors, and vents to be compatible with existing historic examples within the district.
5. Incorporate architectural elements and details that provide human scale to proposed new buildings. Design new buildings using exterior materials typical of historic buildings in the districts including brick, wood, stucco, and stone. Materials such as steel, cast stone, fiber cement, and concrete are appropriate for new construction if they are used in a manner compatible with construction techniques and finishes used for historic buildings in the district. It is not appropriate to substitute vinyl or aluminum siding in place of traditional materials typical of the district.
6. Incorporate existing large trees and historic landscape features, such as retaining walls and gardens, into the proposed site plan. During construction, protect trees, and site features to be retained by temporary fencing, and do not disturb or contaminate the soil or store construction materials within the root zone of trees to be saved.

### *Application Requirements*

- Project Description
- Scaled architectural drawings showing all sides of the building
- Site plan showing: building footprint with distances to property lines, utilities, lighting, mechanical equipment and all trees
- Materials specifications, samples, illustrations, etc.
- All other documentation as required for projects falling under Neighborhood Setting



## Glossary of Terms

**Adaptive use:** rehabilitation of a historic structure for use other than its original use such as a residence converted into offices.

**Addition:** new construction added to an existing building or structure.

**Aesthetic:** relating to appreciation of the beautiful pleasing appearance.

**Alteration:** any act or process that changes one or more of the exterior architectural features of a structure, including, but not limited to the erection, construction, reconstruction, addition, sand blasting, water blasting, chemical cleaning, chemical stopping, or removal of any structure, but not including changes to the color of exterior paint.

**Apex:** the highest point or peak in the gable front.

**Arch:** a curved construction which spans an opening and supports the weight above it.

**Baluster:** one of a series of short, vertical, often vase-shaped members used to support a stair or porch handrail, forming a balustrade; a banister.

**Balustrade:** a row of balusters supported by a rail.

**Bay:** a compartment projecting from an exterior wall containing a window or set of windows.

**Belvedere:** a rooftop gazebo, pavilion, or tower used to take advantage of “the view”.

**Bracket:** projecting support placed under eaves or other overhangs.

**Building:** a structure used to house human activity such as a dwelling or garage.

**Building Permit:** legal document obtained prior to any new construction.

**Capital:** the head of a column or pilaster

**Casement window:** a window with one or two sashes which are hinged at the sides and usually open outward.

**Certificate of Appropriateness (COA):** resolution of approval required by the Historical and Architectural Sites Commission for exterior changes to landmark properties or properties in designated local historic districts.

**Character:** the qualities and attributes of any structure, site, street, or district.

**Colossal column:** a column that reaches more than one story in height.

**Column:** a circular or square vertical structural member; a pillar.

**Commission:** The Decatur Historical and Architectural Sites Commission.

**Compatible:** in harmony with location and surroundings.

## PRESERVATION DESIGN GUIDELINES

**Context:** the setting in which a historic element, site, street, or district exists.

**Cornice:** the decorative horizontal projecting part crowning the wall of a building.

**Cresting:** an ornamental top border on a roof.

**Crown:** an uppermost or terminal feature in architecture.

**Cupola:** a small domed structure crowning a roof or tower.

**Dormer:** a roofed projection built into the slope of a roof, usually containing a window.

**Double-hung:** a window with two sashes, one sliding vertically over the other.

**Dwarf columns:** a circular or square vertical structural member that is less than a full story in height; a pillar.

**Eaves:** the edge of a roof that projects beyond the face of a wall

**Element:** a material part or detail of a site, structure, street, or district.

**Eye brow dormer:** a vertical window projecting from the slope of a roof with an arched roof that gives it the appearance of an eyelid.

**Façade:** any one of the external faces or elevations of a building.

**Fanlight:** a semi-circular window usually over a door with radiating dividers suggesting a fan.

**French doorway/window:** characterized by having glass panes throughout, or nearly throughout, its entire length; usually found in pairs.

**Gable:** the triangular end of an exterior wall in a building under a pitched roof.

**Gable roof:** a sloping roof that terminates at one or both ends in a gable.

**Height:** the distance from the bottom to the top of a building or structure.

**Hipped roof:** a roof with uniform slopes on all sides

**Historical and Architectural Sites Commission (HASC):** the official body of eleven (11) Commissioners charged with and responsible for ensuring that changes in a historic district or to a landmark reflect the intent of the Design Guidelines as well as the original use of the property.

**Historic district:** an area designated as a “historic district” by ordinance of a city council and which may contain within definable geographic boundaries one or more landmarks and which may have within its boundaries other proportions or structures that, while not a such historic or architectural significance to be designated as landmarks, nevertheless contribute to the overall historic or architectural characteristics of the historic district.

**Hood molding:** a projecting, protective and often decorative cover situated above doors or windows originally designed to direct water away from the opening; a drip mold.

**Infill:** a structure placed on a vacant lot within a neighborhood

**Integrity:** adherence to a high level of historical, architectural, accuracy and relatively unchanged since originally constructed.

**Landmark:** a property, structure, or natural object designated as a “landmark” by the Decatur Historical and Architectural Sites Commission, pursuant to procedures prescribed in this title, that is worthy of rehabilitation, restoration, and presentation because of its historic or architectural significance to the city.

**Mansard roof:** a roof with a double slope on all four sides, with the lower slope being almost vertical and the upper almost horizontal.

## PRESERVATION DESIGN GUIDELINES

**Material change:** a change that will affect either the exterior architectural or environmental features of a historic property or any structure, site, or work of art within a historic district.

**Minor work:** exterior repairs where there is little or no change in appearance, such as installing a rear yard fence or repairing a rotted porch floor.

**Multi-light window:** a window sash composed of more than one pane of glass.

**Neighborhood setting:** refers to the overall character of the neighborhood.

**New construction:** construction which is characterized by the introduction of new elements, sites, buildings, structures, or additions to existing buildings and structures in historic areas and districts.

**Non-contributing:** buildings categorized as not contributing architecturally in relation to the history and architecture of the district.

**Pavilion:** a structure that is usually detached from the principal building and is used for entertainment or as a summer house; a projecting element on an exterior wall, usually at the center or at each end of a building that suggests a tower, or the like.

**Pediment:** a triangular crowning element forming the gable of a roof; any similar triangular element used over windows, doors, mantels, niches, etc.

**Pilaster:** a square pillar attached, but projecting from a wall, resembling a classical column.

**Pitch:** the degree of the slope of a roof.

**Portico:** a roofed space, open or partly enclosed, forming the entrance and centerpiece of the façade of a building, often with columns and a pediment.

**Preservation:** generally, saving from destruction or deterioration old and historic buildings, sites, structures, and objects and providing for their continued use by means of restoration, rehabilitation, or adaptive use.

**Recommended:** suggested, but not mandatory actions summarized in the guidelines.

**Reconstruction:** the act or process of reproducing by new construction the exact form and detail of a vanished building, structure, or object, or a part thereof, as it appeared at a specific period of time.

**Rehabilitation:** the process of returning a property to a state of utility, through repair or alteration, which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural, and cultural values.

**Replication:** constructing a building so that it is an exact replica or imitation of a historic architectural style or period.

**Restoration:** the act or process of accurately taking a building's appearance back to a specific period of time by removing later work and by replacing missing earlier features to match the original.

**Retain:** to keep secure and intact. In the guidelines, "retain" and "maintain" describe the act of keeping an element, detail, or structure and continuing the same level of repair to aid in the preservation of elements, sites, and structures.

**Re-use:** the use again. An element, detail, or structure might be reused in historic districts.

## PRESERVATION DESIGN GUIDELINES

**Rhythm:** regular occurrence of elements or features such as spacing between buildings.

**Sandblast:** sand blown by air, steam, or water for cleaning stone and brick; considered extremely harsh for the finish of most masonry and leads to quick deterioration.

**Scale:** proportional elements that demonstrates the size, materials, and style of buildings.

**Setback:** the placement of a structure on a parcel in relationship to the lot lines and other elements such as the street and other buildings`.

**Setting:** the sum of attributes of a locality, neighborhood, or property that defines its character.

**Sidelight:** a vertical, fixed sash situated along a door or window sometimes found in pairs.

**Site:** a property parcel; location.

**Spindle:** slender, elaborately turned wood dowel or rod often used in screens and porch trim.

**Streetscape:** the distinguishing character of a particular street as created by its width, degree of curvature, paving materials, design of the street furniture, and forms of surrounding buildings.

**Truss:** a wooden framework formed into a triangle by spanning structural members between two load-bearing walls.

**Turret:** a small slender tower

**Veranda:** a covered porch or balcony on a building's exterior.



