

General Guidelines for Design

Please Read: Historic District Regulations and Town of Bristol Regulations

The Historic District Zoning Ordinance is a subset of the Town of Bristol's Zoning Ordinance, and as a result there are some land use items that fall under the jurisdiction of both, in particular, signage and lighting. For instance, the size and number of signs on a property are regulated townwide — including within the Historic District — by the town's Zoning Ordinance. Within the Historic District, sign design is regulated by the Historic District Ordinance. Thus, in some cases, for certain changes made in the Historic District, approval is necessary from *both* the town's Historic District Commission (for the Historic District Ordinance) and the Planning Board (for the town's Zoning Ordinance).

For more information about this, please consult with the Town's Land Use Officer.

A. Signage

Appropriately designed signs are needed in the Historic District for communication and identifying goods and services available. They are a significant component of the environment. Signs affect the quality, image, and cohesiveness of the entire Historic District. Therefore, each sign should contribute to the visual character and harmony of the Historic District, be compatible in scale, and increase the efficiency of communication.

The Commission will review each sign application as a unique case.

1. Sign types

Preferred sign types:

- single-faced, flat signs affixed directly to a building façade
- projecting or other hanging signs, if they are designed to be compatible with the design of the façade. They should be double-faced. If there is more than one sign on the building the hanging sign should compliment the others.



Example: Single-faced, flat signs affixed directly to a building façade are preferred.

Other acceptable sign types:

- free-standing, raised lettering applied directly to a wall or signboard may also be appropriate, depending on size of type and placement.
- symbolic two- or three-dimensional signs, such as eye-glasses, barber poles or pawn-shop balls, may be permitted if they identify the product or service available at that location.
- free-standing signs may be approved if they are of a permanent nature and are used to identify public offices or other conveniences, or if they offer an alternative to multiple signs.

Sign quality is important in the review process. The Commission considers the quality of a sign as a mirror of the environmental and visual quality of the Historic District as a whole. Signs will be judged on the appropriateness of design, lettering size and style, shape of signboard, fabrication and manufacture, materials, installation, and lighting, if any.

2. Sign content

Signs must be directly related to businesses, services, or products offered within the premises. Signs unrelated to the property where they are to be located, with the exception of temporary signs, public information, emergency notices and other signs specifically identified in the zoning ordinance, will not be approved. Simplicity of a sign is important to its legibility and effectiveness. Therefore, the Commission will not approve supplementary advertising, redundant messages, or unnecessary slogans.

3. Sign location on a property

Signs in the Historic District should be positioned so that they appear as an integral design feature of the overall façade of a particular building. Signs should help define and enhance the architectural features of a building, rather than cover or disturb them. There are logical surfaces on virtually every building in the Historic District where signs may be located. Often these “signable areas” will include a continuous flat wall surface free of window or door openings or other architectural features — areas between the top of a store-



Example: Three-dimensional sign advertising a service



Example: Sign content related to services offered on the premises, and sign position integrated into front of building.



Example: Free-standing sign advertising services on premises

front and the sills of the second floor windows, sign boards designed for such use and already in place, panels at the top of show windows, and transoms over doors and windows. In some cases, a particular façade may offer more than one sign area, usually totaling more square footage than permitted under the Zoning Ordinance. Therefore, the applicant will be required to identify a specific location and size with any request for Certificate of Approval by the Commission. If requested by the applicant, the Commission will assist in identifying appropriate locations and sizes for a specific building façade.

4. Sign quantity, size, and shape

The allowable number, size, and square footage of signs in the Historic District is regulated by the Town of Bristol Zoning Ordinance — please consult the Zoning Ordinance for more information on sign dimensions.

The predetermined “signable areas” discussed in No. 3 above will in most cases dictate the preferred shape of a sign for that particular façade. Sign boards built into many storefronts are rectangular (or are a connected series of rectangles), as are transom lights over doors and the upper parts of show windows, and especially the wall surfaces between the first-floor shopfront and second-floor windows. Vertical wall areas between windows, doors, and the edges of a façade afford a variety of choices regarding the shape of a sign. While the Commission does not encourage the use of irregular shapes, it may approve free-form signs regarded by the Commission as having a definite relationship to the design of the façade of a particular building, to the architectural style or period of the structure, or to a specific use to which the sign is directed. For example, a Victorian sign may not be appropriate on a 1780 façade or on a 1930 building, but the same sign on a late 19th Century structure will almost surely contribute to the overall design and character of that façade. Conversely, a sign that derives its shape from 18th Century design precedents may not be appropriate on a simple, 19th, or 20th Century structure.



Example: Single-faced, flat signs affixed directly to a building façade are preferred.



Example: Free-form sign consistent with design and character of building.

5. Sign color and lettering

While the Commission has no direct control over the selection of colors for use in the Historic District, it does recommend that its use be restrained, perhaps limiting a sign to one or two colors applied to a neutral background of a third. The selection of particular sign colors should be governed by the colors of the façade to which the sign is to be attached, and by the use identified by the sign.

Lettering should be compatible with the use of the building as well as the design of the façade. The Commission does not insist on any particular typeface or style, and may approve any style of lettering selected by the applicant if it is legible. However, as most script styles are difficult to read when used at the scale of most signs, they are discouraged unless they are of overriding importance to the design concept of the sign. Italic or other decorative letter styles may be approved if they relate to the use of the building or to the design of the façade. *The primary consideration of the Commission regarding lettering style is that it be clearly legible, and that its use result in a sign that contributes to the visual quality of the Historic District.* The size of the lettering should be in proportion to the façade as well as to the sign itself. *A set of suggested typefaces is show in Appendix A.*

6. Sign lighting

All lighting in the Town of Bristol is overseen by the Planning Board — including the lighting of signage in the Historic District. The Historic District Commission can, however, give direction on the style and look of lighting fixtures.

7. Sign attachment

The appearance of sign supports and fixtures must be approved by the Commission, which will review the design of the supports, their configuration and their relationship to the façade to which the proposed sign is to be attached. As an example, a projecting sign that is not an integral feature of an overall façade design should be attached so that it appears as a separate entity, perhaps by providing space between the sign and the surface where it is to be mounted.



Example: Sign lettering can be decorative, but should still be clear and easy to read.



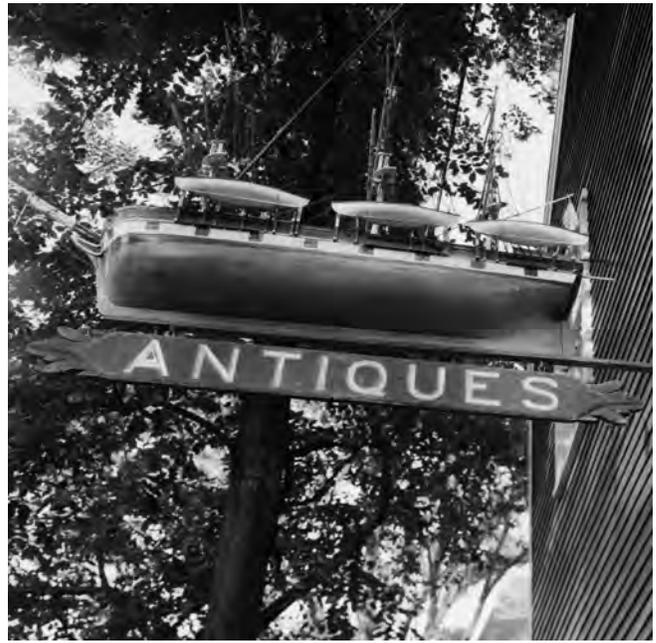
Example: Sign lettering that is in proportion to the sign and the building façade

8. Sign materials

The Commission considers the quality of the signage materials as they affect the image of the Historic District, and recommends simplicity in the selection of sign components (for example, use wood or natural materials). The Commission discourages the use of plastic or extruded metal sections, it may approve some synthetics (carved vinyl foam, for instance) if painted to appear as wood or natural materials.

9. Miscellaneous

The Commission discourages the use of erroneous or passe spelling, like “junque,” “olde,” or “shoppe,” or other devices to attract attention that are unrelated to the Historic District or are extraneous to the message of the sign. Similarly, while trademarks and logos can be an important component of a sign, the Commission is under no obligation to approve any graphic or graphic device considered inappropriate to the Historic District. While the Historic District Commission cannot require that signs be executed by a professional, the quality of the execution of a sign is important and is one of the criteria of approval.



Example: Projecting or other hanging signs should be double-faced.

B. New Structures and New Construction

The density of development within the Historic District does not allow much opportunity for new construction, but where feasible it must be considered with particular sensitivity to the character of the surrounding area. Clearly the three most critical factors to consider are the *location*, *scale*, and *massing* of the proposed project.

1. New structures

The *location* and *scale* will be dictated in part by the Town of Bristol's Zoning Ordinance which should be referenced carefully before proceeding with design. On occasion, the Historic District Commission may suggest setback and height requirements which may be more restrictive than that found in the Zoning Ordinance if the context of the abutting structures suggests that the appropriate response may differ from the broader mandate. Specifically, the front yard setback of neighboring structures should be maintained to preserve the "street wall" that is already in existence. Setting a structure back too far can be as destructive to the streetscape as one set too close. Side yard setbacks are not as critical to maintain, therefore the Zoning Ordinance will typically prevail. The scale of the structure should be appropriate to neighboring structures. Several factors contribute to scale: the height of the structure; the size of window and door openings; the presence of decorative trim or other architectural elements such as porches, bays, etc.; and the size of the building's footprint.

Massing, also referred to as architectural form, is the overall volumetric shape of a building. It is the manner in which a building is broken down into primary and secondary forms such as wings, ells, garages, or barns — each with its own distinctive but related form. Careful use of massing can reduce the apparent scale of a large structure, for instance, by articulating it into a composition of manageable pieces. With these concepts in mind, the owner is advised to consider the scale of neighboring structures and to relate to them on each of these levels as much as possible. Further, the applicant is advised to review the other relevant sections of these guidelines for specific information related to the features of the structure (ie: windows, doors, siding, roofs, etc.).



Example: In an historic district, massing is the single most important characteristic to consider in the evaluation of proposed additions and new construction. A large building (at right) set in a context of uniform-size historic building blocks is visually disruptive because the continuity of the historical pattern is broken.



Example: The complex massing of this building — with most of the structure situated at back — allows it to integrate within a set of traditional rowhouse facades.

The Commission does not suggest that new construction reproduce that which is found in the original historic structures within the districts, but rather that new construction not detract from the character of the place that they collectively create. New construction should reflect the era of its birth, as the older structures do theirs, while maintaining a sensitivity to the scale, proportioning, and materials of these “respected elders.”

Indeed, poorly rendered false reproductions of architectural styles not common to our era or location can diminish the value of authentic examples within the districts. The appropriate response to this is not the reproduction of the past but instead a sensitive approach to new construction which adheres to the principles of the past without mimicking the architectural styles that belong to it.

2. Additions

When approaching the addition to an existing structure within the district, the size of the addition relative to the original is a significant factor in determining the appropriate design. An addition is notably smaller than the original structure and should be designed, in most cases, to continue the existing use of materials, trim, windows, roofing etc. *(Please refer to the remainder of the guidelines for more specific information.)* The addition in this instance should be set back from the front plane of the original, either to the side or to the rear if possible. In no case should this addition be taller than the original and typically should be lower in height, leaving the original massing of the structure apparent. While it would be appropriate to simplify the architectural details found in the original, its proportioning and character should be maintained in the addition’s design. Larger additions, especially those that are significantly larger than the original structure, require greater creativity in their design. It would be most appropriate to set back a large addition from the main façade to preserve the massing of the original building. The materials and architectural expression of the addition should not overwhelm or diminish the original by reproducing it, and the massing of large additions should be articulated into forms of compatible scale and size to the original.



Example: Another example of massing, as illustrated with an addition at the rear of a structure. Because the addition is smaller than the main portion of the structure, it allows the expansion of the overall structure without creating a building that better integrates within the streetscape. Also note the consistency of materials, roofing, trim, etc. between the main portion of the structure and its addition.



Example: An addition (at left) is notably smaller than the original structure and should be designed, in most cases, to continue the existing use of materials, trim, windows, roofing etc.

As much as possible, the bulk of the addition should be screened from public view by utilizing landscaping and setbacks to the rear of the property. The materials, architectural detailing, proportioning and scale of openings should harmonize with but not necessarily match the original, establishing a clear delineation between “old” and “new” portions of the structure.

There will be occasions when additions are planned for existing structures which are themselves incongruous with the district either because of the presence of an inappropriate style or material. In this case the Commission would encourage the prospective applicant to consider alteration of the original structure to make it more compatible with the district while adding to its size.

The presence of an incompatible structure should not be construed as a license to increase its incompatibility, but rather as an opportunity to improve it.

3. Outbuildings

Some of the original buildings in the district had outbuildings associated with them; barns, carriage houses, garages and storage sheds were constructed to accommodate livestock and related equipment. Many of these early structures still exist and offer guidance in the design of their modern counterparts. Except for very large lots, the most appropriate location for a free-standing outbuilding is well to the rear of the original structure, screened as much as possible from the public way. The scale of the structure, other than a barn, should be kept significantly smaller than the principal structure on the site and simpler with regard to massing and detail. The style, form, and use of materials can be the same as the original structure on the site, but it is equally appropriate and not uncommon for an outbuilding to take on a more rustic, utilitarian appearance. This is especially true with regard to the siding and trim, which may be more humble and understated than that found on the main structure. More contemporary structures, such as prefabricated storage sheds, pool equipment sheds and above-ground pools



Example: The style, form, and use of materials for an outbuilding—like the attached shed, above, at left—can be the same as the original structure on the site. Note the building’s dormer, at the rear of the structure, the preferred location for a dormer.



Example: The style, form, and use of materials for an outbuilding—like the barn, above, at left—can be the same as the original structure on the site.

are all within the jurisdiction of the Commission and will be considered in the same manner as all other outbuildings.

4. Dormers and skylights

When added to an existing structure, dormers should, if possible, be kept on the rear portion of the roof. If placed in a visible location on a new or existing structure, dormers should be scaled appropriately to the house with either a gabled, hipped, or shed roof configuration — whichever is most suitable for its size and architectural style. Multiple small dormers are generally preferred to large single ones. Windows used in dormers should conform to the guidelines for windows and if possible match the size and configuration of existing ones. Windows in dormers appear most pleasing when aligned vertically with existing windows on the wall below. Roofing and siding materials, as well as the trim details, should also match that of the existing structure.

Skylights by their very nature are not appropriate to historic structures, as they were not used until relatively recently except on large-scaled institutional structures. Therefore, if used, they should be restricted only to those portions of the roof not visible from the public way. In a visible location, care should be taken in placement and scale, with preference given to flat low profile units with dark painted frames which blend with the roof color.



Example: Windows in dormers appear most pleasing when aligned vertically with existing windows on the wall below. Roofing and siding materials, as well as the trim details, should also match that of the existing structure.

C. Exterior Work and Maintenance

1. Doors

Original doors should be maintained when possible but if replaced should be made of wood. This is consistent with the Commission's overall preference for natural materials. Wood doors should be constructed in a manner consistent with their traditional manufacture: assembled of stiles and rails, with an infill of wood panels and/or glass lites. In most pre-20th century structures large sections of glass should be further divided with muntins into lites to maintain a scale consistent with the windows on the structure. Flush doors (without stiles and rails) are conspicuously modern and should be avoided. If the addition of a storm or screen door is desired, a commercially available wood unit is preferred. In addition, the owner should consider a design which divides the door into multiple panels not unlike the door behind it. Door hardware should be selected to compliment the door design and be appropriate to the period of the building. Stainless steel hardware or modern pulls detract from the harmonious appearance of the door and should be avoided if possible.



Example: Wood doors should be constructed in a manner consistent with their traditional manufacture: assembled of stiles and rails, with an infill of wood panels and/or glass lites.

2. Gutters

Gutters constructed of wood, seamless painted aluminum or other metal will be approved if their scale, contour, and detail are found to be compatible with the style of the building. Installation should not involve the removal of any historic detailing such as cornice moldings, brackets, etc. Gutters are inappropriate if constructed of short sections, visible brackets, heavy connectors and prominent end caps, all of which are incompatible with the appearance of the historic precedent.



Example: Gutters constructed of wood, seamless painted aluminum or other metal will be approved if their scale, contour, and detail are found to be compatible with the style of the building.

3. Lighting (other than Signage)

Bristol's historic district harkens to a rural small town past where exterior lighting was all but nonexistent. While it is a modern reality, its use should be limited.

For exterior lighting:

- keep light levels low, discreetly designed to harmonize with the structure or landscaping and shielded to prevent glare or overspill of the light off the property.
- do not use flood lights
- do not use fluorescent and sodium vapor fixtures
- the style and materials of light fixtures when visible from the public way should be appropriate to the historic character of the district. Otherwise, consideration should be given to concealing the lighting source with landscaping elements such as shrubbery.

Lighting for signage is addressed in Section A6 of these General Guidelines for Design.

4. Masonry

The most typical masonry used in the district is brick, while stone is more likely to be found on exposed foundation walls or in lintels and sills of brick structures. Concrete masonry units and glazed or extruded brick are not characteristic of the historic district and should be avoided. The brick of preference is molded, consistently red in color, and is not blended or painted. Mortar should be raked and gray or red in coloration. When repointing or rebuilding an existing chimney the owner should reuse the existing brick if possible or find a closely matching replacement. The chimney should be rebuilt to its original height and any corbeling or other decorative feature should be retained. Chimney caps are discouraged because they were not common historically, but if desired should be made of stone. If utilizing brick as a cladding material in new construction particular attention should be paid to its detailing to avoid the appearance of a thin non-load bearing veneer. Use of molded brick water-tables, arches and stone lintels or other decorative elements further enhance masonry's natural attributes.

5. Modern Equipment

Modern equipment such as satellite dishes, antennae, mechanical equipment, etc. are inherently inconsistent with the historic character of the districts and therefore should be screened or located so as not to be visible from the public



Example: The most typical masonry used in the district is brick, while stone is more likely to be found on exposed foundation walls or in lintels (like in the above) and sills of brick structures. Note, too, the absence of applied muntins on the windows; the windows use true divided lites.



Example: Chimney caps are discouraged because they were not common historically, but if desired should be made of stone.

way. While window air-conditioning units are not within the Commission's jurisdiction, permanently installed ground wall or roof-top mechanical equipment are and therefore, should be located where otherwise not visible from the public way. Planting, fences or rooftop enclosures are all appropriate screening devices that could be used when it is not possible to find such a location.

6. Paint

Paint and stain colors are not within the jurisdiction of Bristol's Historic District Commission. Paint however, may be specified by the Commission as a surface treatment to a feature or structure which would be otherwise inappropriate without a finish.

7. Porches

Existing porches should be maintained or replaced in kind. New porches should be integrated into the structure of a building so as to remain sensitive to the building's important architectural features.

Spacing:

- the spacing between posts and columns requires particular attention, generally never more than 1.5 times the height of the column.

Columns:

- porches should be supported by well-proportioned wood columns or posts, typically square in section, or turned if appropriate to the style of the structure, and dressed with trim at the base and top.
- the columns should support and be connected together by a continuous beam trimmed with painted wood in a design compatible to the fascia of the main structure.

Porch roof:

- the porch roof design and materials should mirror that of the main structure; shed, hipped, and occasionally gabled roofs being the most common in the districts.



Example: if an opening exists between the porch and grade it should be filled with masonry, painted wood siding, or lattice set within a painted wood frame.



Example: Porches should be supported by well-proportioned wood columns or posts, typically square in section, or turned if appropriate to the style of the structure, and dressed with trim at the base and top.



Example: Porch roof design and materials should mirror that of the main structure

Railings:

- new railings should match any that may exist. In general, railings should run column to column on the same centerline and be comprised of a painted wood top and bottom rail with square, round or turned painted wood balusters set between as required by code. The same design should be continued onto any abutting stair, and a newel post with decorative wood cap should be located at every corner or termination that does not otherwise occur at a column.

Decking and stairs:

- if an opening exists between the porch and grade it should be filled with masonry, painted wood siding, or lattice set within a painted wood frame panelized to mirror the column spacing of the porch above. Decking for the porch should in most cases be wood, and stairs should have treads to match with closed risers. In some instances stone steps with wrought iron rails are appropriate, but cast concrete steps are discouraged.

Screening:

- porches on the street side of structures within the district should not be enclosed with screening or glass. Seasonal installation of screen panels set behind the porch column and rails may be considered if no other option is available that is beyond the view of the public way.

8. Roofs

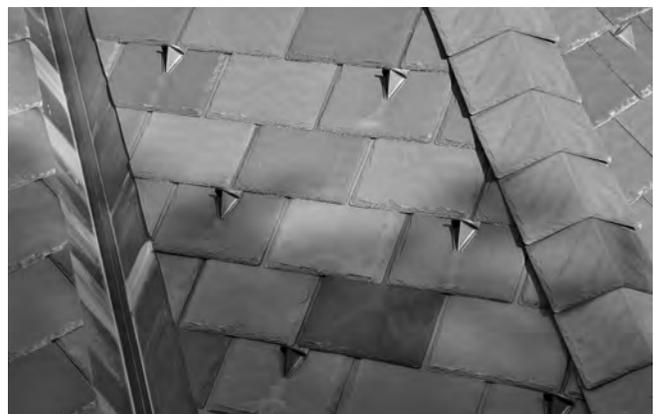
While most roofs were originally constructed of wood shingles or slate, the vast majority have since been replaced with asphalt shingles. Because of the expense of the original materials, this will continue to be an allowable practice. Where existing slate roofs are present, every effort should be made to preserve and repair the existing rather than considering replacement. If replacement of a slate roof must occur, consider use of synthetic slates instead of asphalt.



Example: Porches on the street side of structures within the district should not be enclosed with screening or glass



Example: Most roofs were originally constructed of wood shingles (as seen here in this archival photograph) or slate.



Example: Copper, lead, or painted aluminum flashing are preferred over those with a bright or mill finish. Note the synthetic slates.

The following guidelines should be observed:

- existing roof trim (ie. cornice trim, fascias and rake-boards) should be maintained or replaced in kind.
- painted aluminum drip edges are permitted but starter courses that match the roof material (shake, slate, shingle) are preferred.
- roof ventilation with a continuous low-profile ridge vent extended fully to the ends of the roof are recommended over box ventilators. Similarly, continuous painted soffit vents are preferred to a series of individual vents.
- copper, lead, or painted aluminum flashing are preferred over those with a bright or mill finish.
- in new construction roofs should harmonize with the older roofs in the district in both slope and material.
- asphalt shingles are common, and while not discouraged, should be dark and uniform in color.
- the most appropriate residential roof designs are gabled, hipped or in some later instances mansarded or gambreled.
- the roof slope should be kept uniform on all portions of the structure; the height and orientation of the roof should reflect the hierarchy of the structure covered, ie. ells should have a lower roof than the main body of the house.

9. Shutters and Awnings

Shutters:

- although little more than an embellishment to windows today rather than a functional device, existing shutters, nevertheless, should be maintained or replaced in kind. Many older structures were not furnished originally with shutters and new ones should not be installed in their absence, unless appropriate to the period of the building. When new or replacement shutters are required, wood louvered, or if appropriate, paneled shutters installed on shutter hinges with retaining “dogs” lag-bolted to the exterior wall are preferred. The size of the shutter should be equal to the height of the window opening and one-half its width,



Example: The height and orientation of the roof should reflect the hierarchy of the structure covered, ie. ells should have a lower roof than the main body of the house.



Example: Functioning shutters—wood louvered and paneled shutters, installed on shutter hinges with retaining “dogs” lag-bolted to the exterior wall. The size of the shutter should be equal to the height of the window opening and one-half its width.

with the blades sloping up and outward from the bottom. Shutters of synthetic materials, or those attached flat against the wall, are not acceptable.

Awnings:

- awnings can be an enhancement to a commercial storefront if designed in manner consistent with the style of the architecture. Historically, awnings were constructed of fabric, bracketed from the wall of the structure with a shed profile, and frequently retractable. All of those attributes would be considered appropriate in a contemporary design. RADIUS and domed awnings are discouraged, as are awnings made of metal or any coated fabrics with a glossy sheen. The size and placement of the awning should be carefully considered so as to not obscure important architectural features or overwhelm the scale of the structure.

10. Siding

The predominant material for siding in the district is painted wood clapboard; notable exceptions are the brick commercial structures. Accordingly, the commission strongly urges the use of natural siding materials.

Acceptable siding materials:

- wood clapboards;
- wood shingles, board and batten, shiplap or tongue and groove siding (appropriate dependent on the context);
- fiber-cement siding (designed to have the look and feel of wood and is manufactured with up to 15% recycled content). Fiber cement is available in every siding type and profile, including vertical and horizontal laps, shingles, trim planks, and soffit panels; and
- cladding with real stone or brick, if the goal is to replace or repair an existing wall or structure made of real stone or brick.



Example: Board and batten siding on a house



Example: Wood clapboards

Materials that are strongly discouraged:

- plastic, vinyl, or metal. The only instance in which its use is likely to be considered is in the case of an addition to a structure presently clad in the material; and
- imitation brick or stone siding.

11. Trim

Painted wood trim is found on nearly all historic structures within the districts and its continued use is strongly encouraged. Property owners considering rehabilitation or renovation should *preserve existing trim if possible, and replace it in kind if necessary*. In the case of additions and new construction, careful attention should be placed on neighboring historic structures in the vicinity to determine the appropriate application and proportioning of trim. The installation of architectural elements that confuse or falsify the date of a building is discouraged.

Acceptable trim materials:

- wood; and
- fiber-cement (designed to have the look and feel of wood and is manufactured with up to 15% recycled content). Fiber cement is available in a variety of trim shapes and sizes.

Materials that are strongly discouraged:

- plastic, vinyl, or metal.

12. Windows

Windows are one of the the most important architectural features on the exterior of a structure, critical in establishing the scale and rhythm of the façade. For that reason, serious consideration should be given to keeping original historic windows, rather than replacing them. (Recent studies indicate that it takes 40 years to recoup the investment of replacing an original window through energy savings—often longer than the lifespan of the replacement. See the article: “Windows” at www.preservationnation.org)



Example: Avoid the use of siding made of synthetics



Example: Painted wood trim

The following guidelines should be observed:

- *repair*, rather than replace, windows. If need be, retrofit the sashes with weather-stripping and/or insulated glass. If this is not possible, use replacement sashes and hardware within the original frames;
- if total replacement is necessary, use wood windows instead of vinyl or aluminum and maintain the original window size, location, material, trim, and type;
- use of replacement windows with applied muntins is discouraged. Instead, use a window with true divided lites. If an applied muntin must be used, make sure it is dimensional (not flat tape); and
- in new construction or additions the size, proportion, type and rhythm of windows should conform to those nearby in the district and appropriate to the style of construction. Greater license can be taken with windows located on walls not visible from the public way.

Storm windows are excluded from the jurisdiction of the Historic District Commission.



Example: A window with true divided lites

D. Exterior amendments

1. Decks, Terraces, and Landscaping

The Commission recommends that landscaping to the street side of the property be kept understated and low in height, which is consistent with Bristol's rural New England heritage.

The following guidelines should be observed:

- keep tall hedges and shrubs to the rear of the lot so as not to interrupt the public vista along the street;
- keep decks and raised terraces concealed from public view;
- if visible from the public way, decks on historic structures should be constructed of wood with painted railings, posts and balusters consistent with the style of the structure and/or to match original features of similar type if present;
- elevated decks should be furnished with a lattice skirt or other architectural device to visually anchor them to the ground and to integrate them as much as possible with the existing structure; and
- raised terraces should have stone or stone-clad retaining walls constructed in a manner consistent with the section on Fences and Walls (below). Concrete and treated wood timbers are generally not appropriate materials for a visible retaining wall.

2. Fences and Walls

Property owners wishing to install new fences or walls should give consideration to the material and style of those in the immediate area and the district, as well as the architectural style of their own property. Particular attention should be paid to wall terminations, gates, and openings as they represent important opportunities to break the rhythm of the fence or wall by introducing ornamentation.

The following guidelines should be observed:

- align new fences/walls with those on abutting properties or match the setback and height of those nearby;



Example: Variations of low wood picket-style fences are historically appropriate.



Example: Variations of decorative cast iron fencing are historically appropriate.



Example: A wall with mortar added for stability showing preferred deep raking of the mortar in the joints.

- tall wood privacy fences such as stockade fences should be restricted to the rear of the property, never closer to the street than the front of the house;
- fences constructed of chain link, metal wire, plastic, or other synthetic materials should be avoided in any location where the fence would be visible from the public way;
- dry-stacked stone walls should be constructed of native stones small enough to be lifted by an individual, and to a height of no more than three feet in most cases.
- granite walls requiring mortar for stability should have deeply raked mortar joints.



Example: Dry-stacked stone walls should be constructed of native stones small enough to be lifted by an individual, and to a height of no more than three feet in most cases.

E. Demolition

Demolition within the Historic District is discouraged unless the structure is so deteriorated that rehabilitation is not practical or the structure is of no historic value to the district. **Demolition of any structure or portion thereof within the historic district requires the approval of the Historic District Commission, except when ordered by an appropriate town officer or other safety officer for reasons of public health and safety. In cases of public health and safety, an appropriate town officer or other safety officer should notify the Historic District Commission of the impending demolition.**

If demolition is under consideration, the following guidelines should be observed:

- renovation and/or replacement in kind is preferred to the demolition of all or a portion of an historic structure;
- if the historical value of the structure is significant to the district, the Commission may require that a new structure replicating the original be built in the place of the demolished structure; and
- if an historic structure's location interferes with the owner's plans for the property, relocation to an appropriate site will be considered and is preferred to demolition.

Please refer to the Town's Zoning Ordinance for additional regulations regarding anything covered in these design guidelines.