



State Historic Preservation Office

South Carolina Department of Archives and History
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Design Guidelines

Design guidelines are both written and graphic standards for preservation commissions, and property owners to use when dealing with alterations, additions, demolitions, and new construction. They help the local board of architectural review and property owners understand what changes are appropriate for your local historic district(s). Design guidelines are key support materials for administering the preservation overlay zoning ordinance. Guidelines may also be created and used on a voluntary basis, before local historic districts and design review are in place.

Design guidelines DO:

- Help protect the distinct historic character and integrity of the district(s)
- Provide guidance to property owners and design professionals
- Identify important review concerns and recommend appropriate design approaches provide an objective basis for review, assuring consistency and fairness
- Increase public awareness of the district and its significant characteristics
- Help protect property owners' investments by encouraging compatible changes to neighboring properties

Design guidelines DO NOT:

- Limit growth or development within the district -- they only address the visual aspects of growth
- Control how space is used within a building -- only the publicly visible portion of a building or site is governed by guidelines
- Dictate stylistic design approaches, which are based on individual preference
- Restrict creative design solutions

Helpful Hints for Successful Guidelines:

- Guidelines are community specific
- Borrow ideas, concepts from other towns, but make sure your guidelines deal with your unique buildings and design needs
- Well-illustrated with photos and drawings of both appropriate and inappropriate changes
- Text should be clear and concise, and free from jargon. A glossary of terms can be helpful
- Develop guidelines with public participation and input
- Balance importance of total streetscape with individual buildings (includes sections on landscape and site features, such as fences, vegetation, driveways, etc.)

For More Information:

[Online Design Guidelines](#) are available from the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions.

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