Historic Design Standards

City of Austin
Adopted _____

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION

BRIEFING

NOVEMBER 16, 2020

Historic preservation is a tool to steward change.

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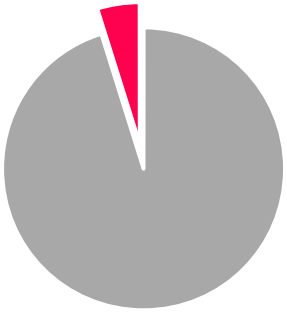
Design standards provide a clear, objective way to evaluate proposed changes.

WHY HISTORIC DESIGN STANDARDS?

1. Increase equity by reducing resources required for the historic district application.
2. Increase predictability for property owners in potential districts.
3. Take a common-sense approach to design standards by recognizing underlying principles.



WHY HISTORIC DESIGN STANDARDS?

4. Provide clearer standards for historic landmark owners and National Register district property owners.
5. Provide an educational tool for all historic property owners.
6. Provide consistent standards for project review by commissioners and staff.
7. Follow good practices in preservation.

SECRETARY'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

in short

SECRETARY'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

- Preserve buildings as they developed over time, especially the publicly visible parts.
- Maintain and repair historic materials, replacing in-kind only if necessary.
- New additions and new buildings should be compatible with and differentiated from historic buildings.

HISTORIC DESIGN STANDARDS

1 Introduction
2 When to Use the Design Standards
3 Modern Codes and Energy Efficiency
4 Repair and Alterations
5 Residential Additions
6 Residential New Construction
7 Commercial Additions
8 Commercial New Construction
9 Institutional Buildings
10 Sites and Streetscapes
11 Demolition and Relocation
12 Maintenance and Preservation of Historic Materials
13 Glossary

HISTORIC DESIGN STANDARDS

- Change over time
- Maintenance + repair
- Compatibility + differentiation

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EASY TO USE

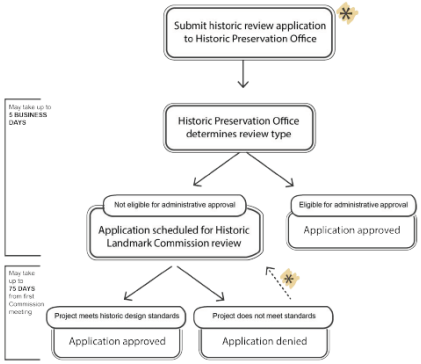
- Help people understand when the standards apply to projects

When the standards apply to repair and alterations

Three types of historic properties are regulated through the City of Austin historic review process.

	Do they need to follow these design standards?
Historic landmarks	✓
Historic districts	✓ Contributing properties ~ Noncontributing properties—recommended, not required
National Register districts	~ Recommended, not required

- Help people understand review process and levels of review



Proposed work	Applicable chapter in design standards	Administrative review	Commission review
Additions			
Construct a minimally visible one-story addition with an area less than 600 square feet	Residential Additions or Commercial Additions	x	
Construct a minimally visible two-story rear addition to a two-story building	Residential Additions or Commercial Additions	x	
Construct an addition that raises the height of the historic building (e.g., a third-story addition to a two-story building)	Residential Additions or Commercial Additions		x

- Accessible language, clear graphics, consistent symbols

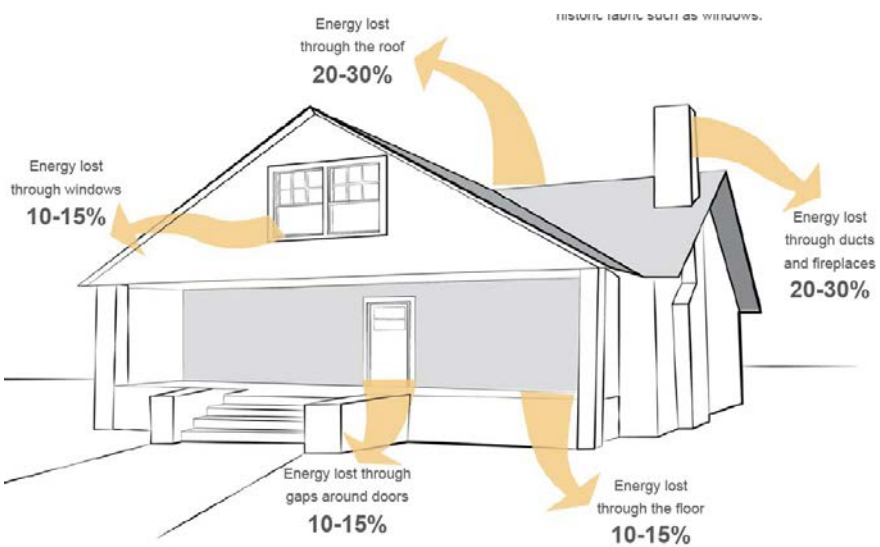
1.2 Always attempt repair first. Replacement should only be undertaken when absolutely necessary, and for the smallest area possible.

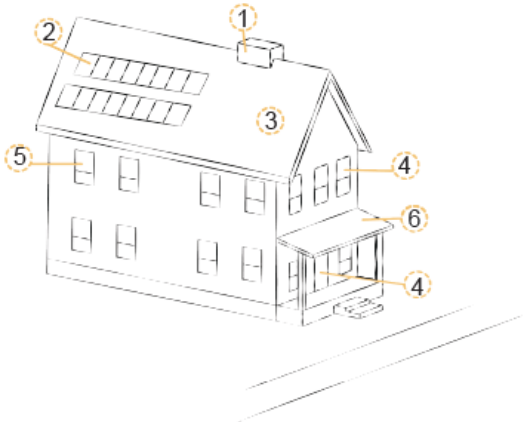
★ Additional standards for historic landmarks

- Navigation hyperlinks in PDF and to resource websites

MODERN CODES AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

- Acknowledge long-term sustainability benefits
- Focus on high-impact energy efficiency measures
- Special subsection on windows and energy conservation





For historic homes:

1 Install draft stopper in chimney

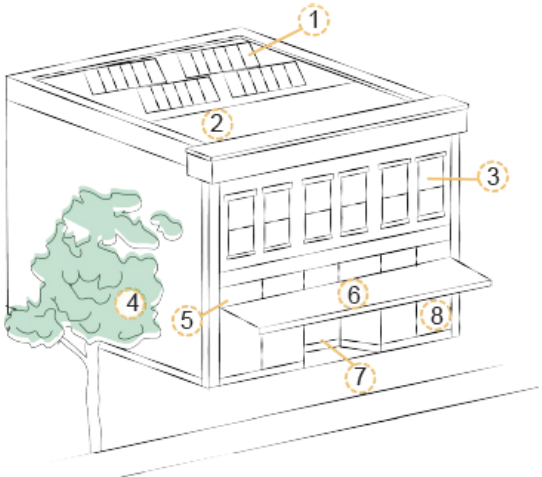
2 Install solar panels on rear or side of roof

3 Insulate attic

4 Repair and weather-strip historic windows and doors

5 Install interior storm windows

6 Maintain and repair shutters and porches



For historic commercial buildings:

1 Install solar panels, minimizing visibility from the street

2 Insulate attic

3 Install interior storm windows

4 Maintain street trees

5 Repair and weather-strip transom windows

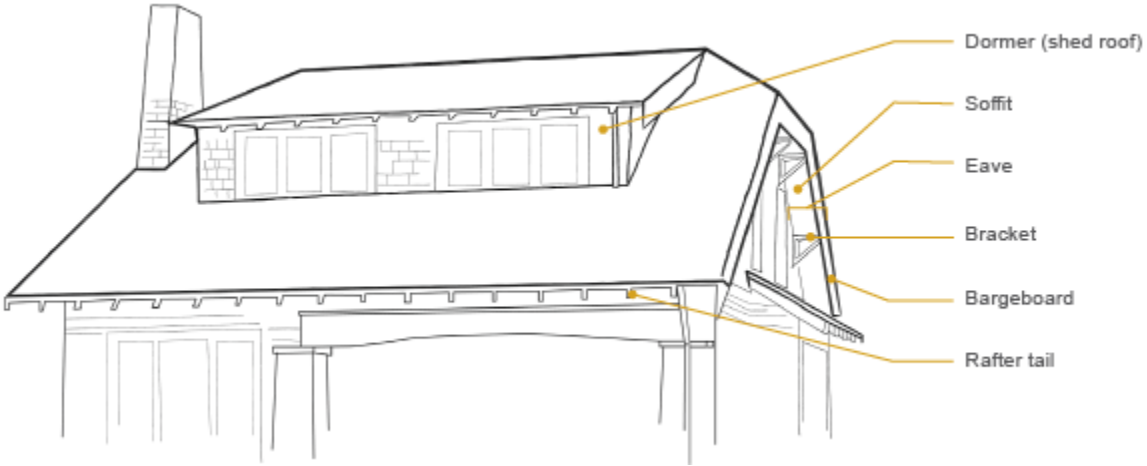
6 Install awnings and/or retain historic canopies

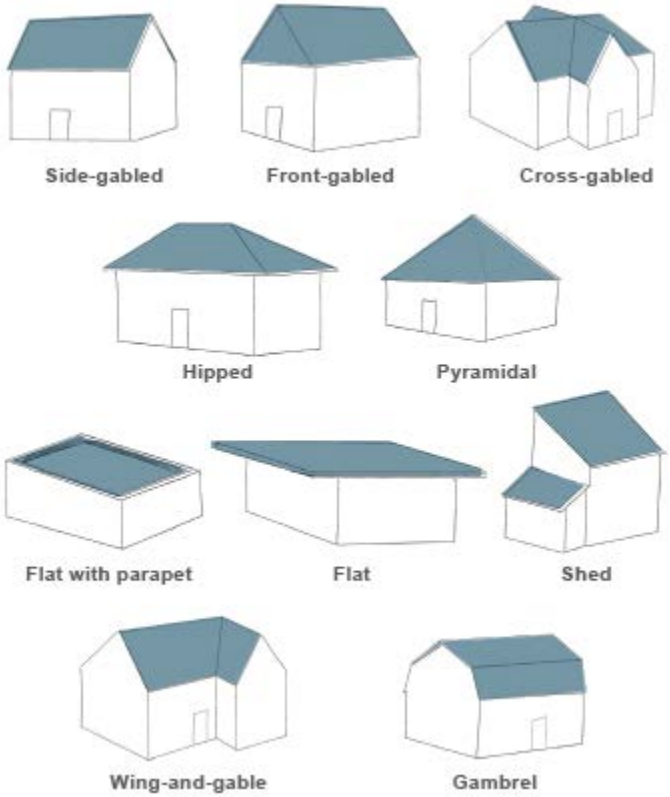
7 Repair and weather-strip historic doors

8 Repair and weather-strip historic windows

REPAIR AND ALTERATIONS

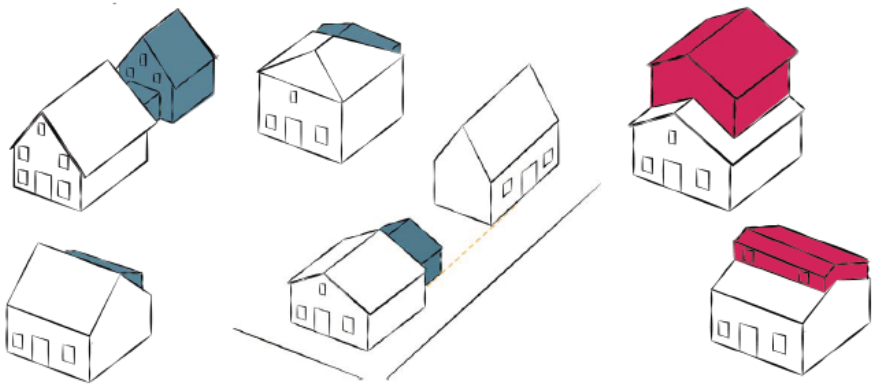
- Familiarize people with building components and materials
- Support proactive maintenance
- Provide diverse examples of buildings

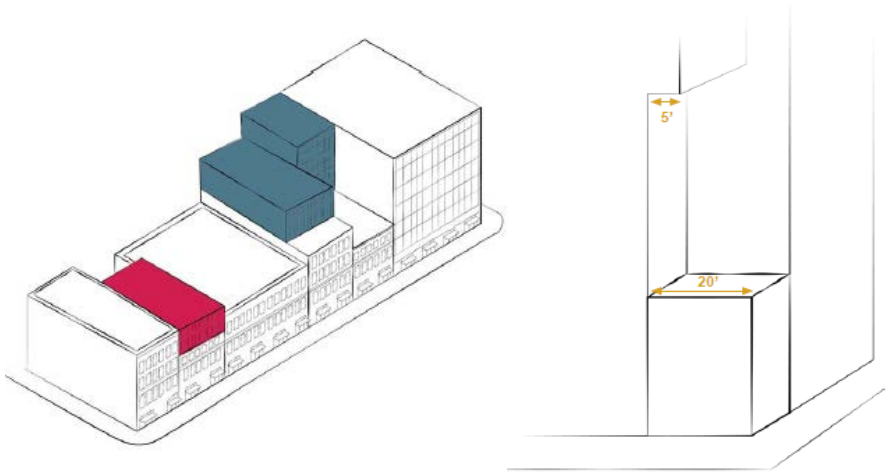




RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL ADDITIONS

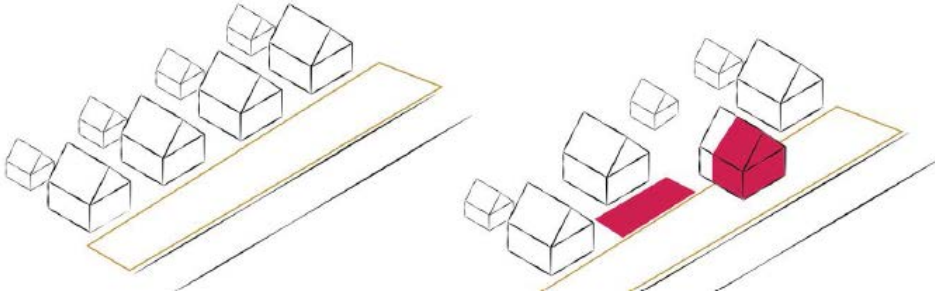
- Provide good examples in a variety of scales and styles
- Clearly illustrate standards

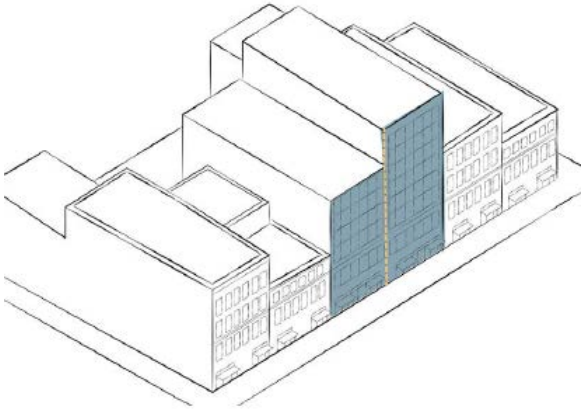




RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL NEW CONSTRUCTION

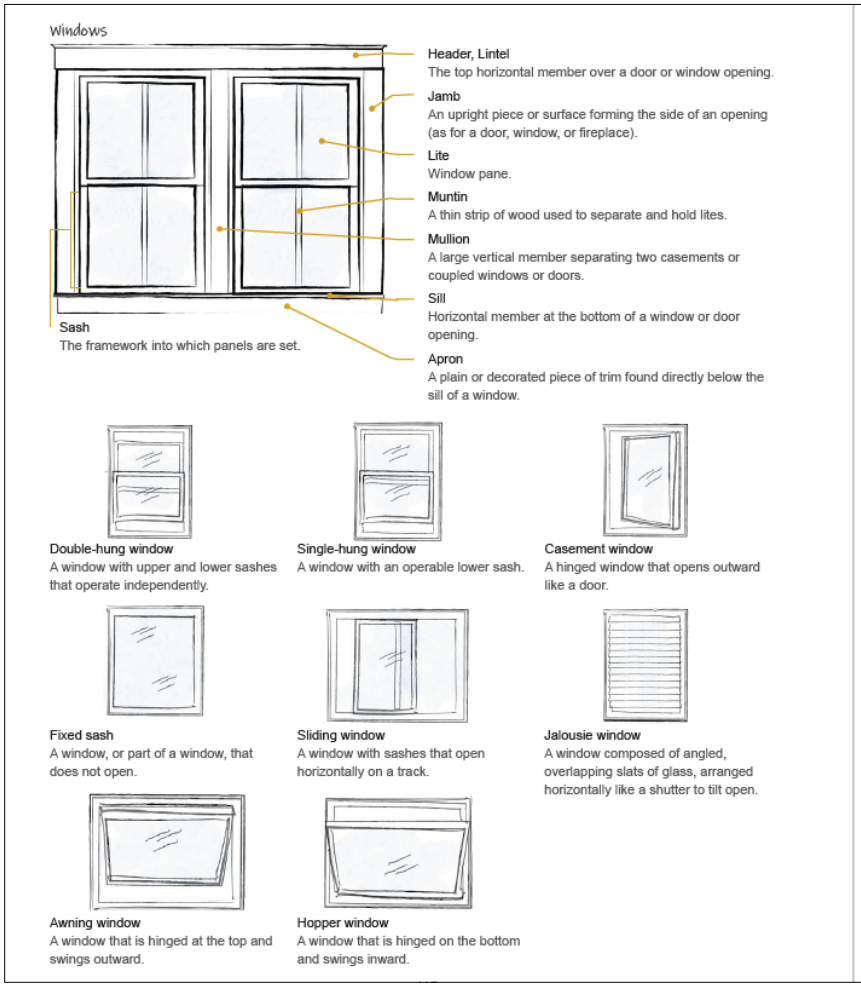
- Provide good examples in a variety of scales and styles
- Clearly illustrate standards
- Acknowledge market realities





GLOSSARY

- Illustrate key terms and concepts in the standards
- Encourage stewardship through greater understanding



Windows

Header, Lintel
The top horizontal member over a door or window opening.

Jamb
An upright piece or surface forming the side of an opening (as for a door, window, or fireplace).

Lite
Window pane.

Muntin
A thin strip of wood used to separate and hold lites.

Mullion
A large vertical member separating two casements or coupled windows or doors.

Sill
Horizontal member at the bottom of a window or door opening.

Apron
A plain or decorated piece of trim found directly below the sill of a window.

Sash
The framework into which panels are set.

Double-hung window
A window with upper and lower sashes that operate independently.

Single-hung window
A window with an operable lower sash.

Casement window
A hinged window that opens outward like a door.

Fixed sash
A window, or part of a window, that does not open.

Sliding window
A window with sashes that open horizontally on a track.

Jalousie window
A window composed of angled, overlapping slats of glass, arranged horizontally like a shutter to tilt open.

Awning window
A window that is hinged at the top and swings outward.

Hopper window
A window that is hinged on the bottom and swings inward.

Bay window
A projecting window with an angular plan.

Clerestory
Window in the upper portion of a wall toward the ceiling designed to admit light into the room.

Fanlight
An arched window with muntins that radiate like a fan; typically used as a transom.

Shutters
Solid blinds on either side of a window; may be plain or decorated, operative or purely ornamental.

Side light
A vertical window flanking a door.

Storm window
A secondary window installed to protect and/or reinforce the main window.

Transom
A horizontal window over a door or window; see Storefronts section.

Wood-sash window
Typically double-hung or fixed, with a deeper profile than other sash materials. Found in older buildings; can be repaired piece by piece.

Aluminum-sash window
Typically single-hung, casement, or sliding. Found as original windows in mid-century buildings or as replacements in older buildings.

Steel-sash window
Typically casement or fixed, with multiple lites.

Vinyl-sash window
Typically single-hung, casement, or fixed, with a flat profile. Inexpensive replacement for wood-sash windows, though with a shorter lifespan; cannot be repaired.

Clad-wood window
Wood frame clad in aluminum frame; mimics the appearance of wood-sash windows but with sharper manufactured edges.

Leaded glass window
A window composed of pieces of glass that are held in place with lead strips; the glass can be clear, colored, or stained.

PROCESS

SEPT. 2018 2019 **JUNE** 2020 **NOV.** **DEC.** **JAN.** 2021

Standards revised; graphics added

HLC forms Design Standards Working Group

UT graduate class surveys national best practices

Working group does deep dive, creates draft

Draft released for community review

Working group recommends Historic Design Standards; HLC hearing

Review and possible recommendation by:
-Design Commission
-Planning Commission
-Zoning and Platting Commission

Review and possible adoption by City Council

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