



## **M E M O R A N D U M**

To: Historic Landmark Commission members  
From: Cara Bertron, Deputy Historic Preservation Officer  
Subject: Recommended changes to Mary Street Historic District  
Date: February 23, 2018

Staff is recommending clarifying changes to the design standards as highlighted in the attached document.



# **Mary Street Historic District**

## **Design Standards**



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Austin, Texas

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## Purpose and Goals

Design standards help preserve and protect the character-defining features of historic areas. These design standards provide guidance for the repair, rehabilitation, preservation, and restoration of contributing buildings within the Mary Street Historic District; and will guide new construction to be compatible with the district's architectural character.

The goals of the design standards are to:

- Protect the eclectic and vibrant character of Mary Street by identifying and preserving the historic elements that contribute to these qualities while encouraging residents to invest in livable adaptations to their homes;
- Preserve the architectural heritage of the district through retention and preservation of historic buildings and landscape features;
- Prevent demolition of contributing buildings and discourage demolition of buildings easily restored to contributing status;
- Support preservation of historic buildings by providing guidance in building maintenance and repair;
- Ensure that alterations to contributing buildings are compatible with the character of the building and the district;
- Support sustainable design by providing guidance to improve energy efficiency and building performance; and
- Ensure that ground-up new construction will be compatible with the historic character of the district.

This document is a tool for property owners and architects who are planning projects covered by the standards, as well as for the Historic Landmark Commission as it evaluates each project.

## Design Review Process

### A. Certificate of Appropriateness

#### PURPOSE

The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) review process ensures that proposed projects and new construction within the district comply with these design standards. A COA must be granted before a building permit will be issued by the City, and may be required for work even if a building permit is not necessary.

Property owners are *not* required to make changes to their properties or restore buildings to their historic appearance. The design review process applies only when a property owner initiates a construction project that requires a COA.

#### WHEN A COA IS REQUIRED

A COA is required for ground-up new construction and the following changes to contributing properties if the proposed changes are visible from the street. Disregard hedges, fences, and other barriers when assessing visibility.

1. Exterior alterations to existing buildings, including but not limited to the construction of additions; the replacement of windows, doors, or roofing materials that do not qualify as ordinary repair and maintenance; or the relocation of windows or doors;
2. Demolition or relocation of an existing building;
3. New construction;
4. Major foundation or structural work that does not qualify as ordinary repair and maintenance; and
5. Major site work including but not limited to changes to or the construction of a deck, pool, outbuilding, walls, and fences.

A COA is not required for:

1. Interior work;
2. Routine maintenance projects, provided that work does not affect the historic character of the building or property, including but not limited to painting and repairs to masonry or the foundation;
3. Work not visible from the street; and
4. Projects on non-contributing buildings.

#### COA PROCESS

Submit a Certificate of Appropriateness application to the City Historic Preservation Office. Property owners should contact City staff in the early planning stages of a project for assistance in interpreting these standards, developing solutions to any issues, and understanding the review process. Staff can also provide on-site consultations and other technical assistance.

The Historic Preservation Officer may administratively grant COAs for the following projects:

- Accurate restoration or reconstruction of a documented missing historic architectural element of the structure or site;
- Changes that do not affect the appearance of the building from the principal street frontage, including but not limited to:
  - Demolition of garages, sheds, carports, or other outbuildings;
  - Construction of a ground-floor, one-story addition or outbuilding;
  - Two-story additions to the rear of two-story houses; or

- A pool, deck, fence, back porch enclosure, or other minor feature.

The Historic Landmark Commission will review all other COA applications.

The Historic Preservation Office or Historic Landmark Commission shall grant the COA if the application conforms to these design standards. The Commission also has the authority to grant exemptions to the standards if it determines that the proposed project will maintain the character-defining features of the property and/or district.

If the Historic Landmark Commission denies the COA, the applicant may revise and resubmit the application. The applicant also may appeal the denial to the appropriate land use commission and the City Council per City Code.

#### APPLICANT RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibility for demonstrating that the proposed project meets these design standards lies with the applicant. The applicant shall submit sufficient photographs and/or physical documentation to demonstrate that the proposed project meets these standards or otherwise maintains the character-defining features of the property and/or district.

#### B. Penalties for Violations

Any person or corporation who violates provisions of these design standards is subject to the same criminal misdemeanor and/or civil penalties that apply to any other violation of the City Code.

#### C. Periodic Review

These standards are not intended to be static, but subject to periodic review, revision, and amendment. The process for revising or amending the design standards shall follow the process set forth for neighborhood plans, as described in the Land Development Code:

*The director shall conduct a general review of a neighborhood plan not earlier than five years after the adoption of the plan and may recommend amendments of a plan to the Planning Commission and council. The director shall include neighborhood stakeholder input in the review process.*

## Design Standards

### A. Overview

#### WHEN TO USE THE DESIGN STANDARDS

All work requiring a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) shall follow these design standards (see p. 2 for a list). Non-contributing properties are encouraged to consider the design standards as advisory guidelines for compatible alterations and additions.

#### SECRETARY'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are national preservation standards that guide alterations, additions, and repair and replacement of deteriorated features. See the table on p. 5 for a general interpretation of each standard. The Secretary of the Interior also has Standards for Preservation, Restoration, and Reconstruction, which may be appropriate in some cases.

The rest of this document interprets the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation specifically for use in the Mary Street Historic District. If a proposed project or project component is not addressed by the design standards, the Secretary's Standards shall guide the project evaluation and COA decision.

#### ACCESSIBILITY

When increasing accessibility, design ramps, lifts, and entrances to avoid damage, removal, or obscuring historic fabric to the greatest extent possible. Contributing buildings may qualify for variances from the Texas Accessibility Standards.

#### ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Construction of any new buildings or alterations of existing buildings shall be done in such a way as to meet or exceed the intent and requirements of current energy codes as required by the City, except in cases where compliance would adversely impact the historic character of the property or district.

The City of Austin recognizes that protection of cultural heritage contributes to sustainable communities and preserves embodied energy used in a building's construction. Compliance with energy or building codes may never be used as a reason to remove historic features or demolish a contributing building.

#### *Definitions*

**CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES:** Visual aspects and physical features that characterize a building's appearance.

**CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES:** Buildings, structures, or sites that are at least 50 years old, were built during the district's period of significance, and retain a high degree of integrity.

**IN-KIND REPLACEMENT:** Replacing a current element (whether a single material or a whole feature) with a new element that has the same material, profile, dimension, and texture as the current or historic element; color may also be important to match. In-kind materials are not appropriate if they damage historic materials.

**INTEGRITY:** A property's ability to convey its historic significance. Seven aspects are used to evaluate integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

**NON-CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES:** Buildings, structures, or sites that are fewer than 50 years old, were not built during the district's period of significance, and do not retain integrity.

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** Span of time in which a property or district attained significance, usually when a substantial amount of construction took place.

| <i>Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <i>General Meaning</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | If a new use is necessary, prioritize a use that will allow preservation of a property's character-defining features.                                                                                                     |
| 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.                                                                                                                                                                           | Do not remove or change character-defining features such as building scale, massing, materials, and how parts of a property relate to each other.                                                                         |
| 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.                                                                                                                                        | Avoid false historicism with alterations and additions.                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Preserve historic-age elements if they are compatible with the historic building, even if they are not original to the property.                                                                                          |
| 5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Preserve character-defining architectural elements, materials, and finishes.                                                                                                                                              |
| 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.                                             | Repair first. Do not replace or alter historic-age elements unless they are deteriorated beyond repair, and then replace them in-kind to the greatest extent possible. Avoid conjecture when replacing a missing element. |
| 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Don't treat a building with materials and techniques that may damage historic materials.                                                                                                                                  |
| 8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | If site or foundation work is occurring, be mindful of archeological resources that may be present.                                                                                                                       |
| 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. | Ensure that alterations and additions do not damage or destroy character-defining features. Design new construction so that it is compatible with but differentiated from the historic-age property.                      |
| 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.                                                                                                                                                                 | Design new construction to minimally impact historic fabric. If possible, additions should be able to be reversed without major damage to the historic building.                                                          |

## B. Contributing Properties: Repair and Rehabilitation

### 1. FAÇADE

- a. Do not change the character, appearance, configuration, or materials of the primary façade, except to restore a building to its original appearance.
- b. Do not add conjectural architectural features to the primary façade.
- c. If original elements of the primary façade are missing *and* if sufficient documentation exists to ensure accuracy, those elements may be restored to their historic appearance.
- d. Minimize changes to historic-age secondary elevations of the building that are visible from the principal street frontage.

### 2. EXTERIOR WALL MATERIALS

- a. Repair damaged exterior wall materials, details, and ornamentation to the greatest extent possible, using treatments that do not damage historic materials. Replace only materials and wall sections that are deteriorated beyond repair, and prioritize in-kind replacement if possible.
- b. Fiber cement siding and other board siding that matches wood siding in profile, dimension, and texture may be used as replacement for wood siding that has deteriorated beyond repair, if the replacement material does not damage historic siding.
- c. Do not apply aluminum or vinyl siding as a replacement for or over historic siding. These siding types can cause irreparable damage to underlying materials and structural members.
- d. Do not paint masonry that has not already been painted. Moisture may become trapped between the paint and masonry, causing deterioration of the underlying materials and structural members.

### 3. PORCHES

- a. Retain the rails, posts, and brackets of an original front porch. If replacement is necessary, use in-kind materials. Wood porch floors may be replaced by a concrete slab on grade if the height, dimensions, and other character-defining features of the porch are unchanged.
- b. Do not enclose a front porch with any material other than screening. If a front porch is screened, install the screens in a way that is reversible, does not damage any historic fabric, and is compatible with the historic design.



*Damaged exterior wall materials can be repaired or replaced in-kind, as in the fascia board to the left.*



*Deteriorated wood porch elements can be repaired in place with epoxy consolidants and fillers.*

- c. Do not add conjectural elements to the porch that were not historically present.
- d. If original elements of the porch are missing *and* if sufficient documentation exists to ensure accuracy, those elements may be restored to their historic appearance.

#### 4. ROOFS

- a. Retain the shape and slope of the original roof as seen from the street, including original dormers.
- b. Maintain and repair original decorative roof elements such as exposed rafter ends, bargeboards, and cornices. Do not add decorative roof elements that were not historically present.
- c. Maintain and repair existing roof materials whenever possible. Replace damaged roofing materials in-kind (preferred) or with a compatible substitute material that gives a similar appearance to the existing or historic roof. Metal roofs are allowed under these design standards but should not be considered as the first choice for replacement.

#### 5. WINDOWS AND SCREENS

- a. Do not enlarge, move, or enclose original window openings.
- b. Maintain and repair original wood-sash windows. Wood-sash windows will last for many decades, whereas new windows have a shorter lifespan and typically must be replaced entirely, as opposed to repairing or replacing components as needed.
- c. Use interior or exterior storm windows and window inserts to provide increased energy efficiency and soundproofing without damaging historic windows. Install exterior storm windows in a way that does not damage historic fabric. Solar screens may also be used.
- d. If the original windows no longer exist *and* if no documentation can be found that shows the original windows, non-original windows may be replaced with windows that are appropriate in style, configuration, dimensions, and materials to the style of the building. If documentation showing the original windows can be found, the appearance of any replacement windows from the public right-of-way must closely resemble the original in size, configuration, profile, and finish. Vinyl windows are not appropriate replacement windows.



*Asphalt shingles are an incompatible replacement substitute for the original Spanish clay tiles.*



*Do not replace historic windows with new windows that do not convey the same appearance.*

- e. When replacing divided-lite windows, use windows with true divided lites or dimensional muntins placed on the outside of the glass, along with spacers on the inside of the glass that are an appropriate color, material, and thickness, so that the window appears to have true divided lites when viewed from all angles.

#### 6. DOORS

- a. Do not enlarge, move, or enclose original door openings.
- b. Retain original doors, door surrounds, sidelights, and transoms, unless deteriorated beyond repair.
- c. If a replacement door is necessary, replace in-kind or select a new style of door that is appropriate for the building age and style. Steel and hollow-wood doors are not appropriate for main entries.
- d. If a replacement door surround, sidelight, or transom is necessary, replace it in-kind.

#### 7. CHIMNEYS

- a. Retain original chimneys.

### C. Contributing Properties: Additions

Additions can be designed sensitively so that they do not visually overpower the existing building or compromise its historic character, but even well-designed additions can have a large impact. When possible, adapt the interior of existing buildings to meet needs, or consider a lower-impact alternative such as a basement conversion or dormers, which can create usable space with minimal visual impact.

#### 1. LOCATION

- a. Retain all character-defining features on historic-age exterior façades that are visible from the principal street frontage.
- b. Retain as much historic-age building fabric as possible by limiting the wall area where the addition connects to the existing building. Large additions may be constructed as separate buildings that connect to the existing building with a linking hallway or breezeway.
- c. Whenever possible, locate additions behind the existing building and design them to be neither taller nor wider than the existing building.
- d. Set additions back from the front façade at least 15 feet or one-third the depth of the building, whichever is greater.
- e. On buildings with a side-gabled, hipped, or pyramidal roof form, set back second-story additions behind the ridgeline of the original roof, in addition to the setback requirement in (e).
- f. Locate dormers on a side or rear elevation.

#### 2. HEIGHT

Do not exceed the height of the tallest contributing building on a similarly sized lot on the block.

#### 3. DESIGN AND STYLE

- a. Design additions to be inconspicuous and subordinate to the historic building.
- b. Design additions so that the existing building's overall shape appears relatively unaltered from the principal street frontage.
- c. Design additions to complement the scale, massing, materials, and fenestration patterns of the

original historic building. Design window-to-wall area ratios, floor-to-floor heights, window patterns, and bay divisions to be similar to the existing building.

- d. Differentiate the design of the addition so as not to be replicative or give a false sense of history. Additions do not need to mimic the architectural style of the original historic building, but they should be compatible in scale, design, and materials.
- e. If constructing dormers, match them to existing dormers in design and scale, or match the dormers on similar buildings in the district.



*This compatible side addition (to the left) is set back from the front of the original house.*



*This incompatible side addition is flush with the front of the original house.*



*This compatible rear addition is subordinate to the original house.*



*This incompatible rear addition dominates the original house.*



*The contemporary two-story addition behind this house is compatible because it is located in the rear of the property and is subordinate in scale to the original house.*



#### 4. EXTERIOR WALLS

- a. Use exterior wall materials that complement the existing building, as well as the collective character of the district.
- b. Differentiate an addition from the existing building by means of a hyphen or joint using a different material, varying trim boards, slightly varying dimension of materials, varying orientation of materials, or other means.

#### 5. PORCHES

- a. Do not add a front porch to a building that did not have a front porch historically.

#### 6. ROOFS

- a. Use a simple roof style and slope that complements the roof of the existing building.
- b. Use materials that match or are compatible with the roof materials on the existing building.

#### 7. WINDOWS AND SCREENS

- a. Use windows that complement the fenestration pattern, size, configuration, profile, and finish of windows on the existing building.
- b. Do not use false muntins attached to or inserted between the glass in windows.

#### 8. DOORS

- a. Use doors that are compatible with those on the existing building in terms of materials and lite configurations.

#### 9. CHIMNEYS

- a. Design chimneys to match existing chimneys in design, materials, and scale. If the existing building does not have a chimney, match chimneys on similar buildings in the district.

### D. Contributing Properties and New Construction: Site Features

#### 1. TOPOGRAPHY

- a. Maintain and repair the grade of the site as much as possible to preserve the historic grade. Do not otherwise alter the current grade of the site except to restore it back to its historic state. The current grade of the site shall not be artificially raised to gain additional building height.
- b. If a change in grading is necessary to improve drainage, minimize the impact to the site and any historic landscape features.

#### 2. DRIVEWAYS

- a. Configure driveways in a way that maintains the district's historic streetscape pattern.

#### 3. MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT

- a. Locate new mechanical or energy conservation equipment so that it does not obscure the view of the primary building from the principal street frontage.
- b. When mechanical equipment must be attached to an exterior wall of a contributing building, minimize damage to the historic wall material. For masonry walls, anchor attachments into the mortar rather than the masonry unit.

- c. Design roof systems to be on the same plane and scale as the roof, and choose panels in a color compatible with surrounding roof materials. For contributing properties, design photovoltaic and solar thermal installations to avoid or minimize damage to historic-age architectural features and materials.
- d. Locate photovoltaic, solar thermal, wind power systems, and satellite dishes on ancillary buildings or new additions to contributing properties to the maximum extent feasible. Locate solar panels on the rear of the roof whenever possible so that they are not visible from the street.
- e. For rainwater collection systems visible from the principal street frontage, prioritize the use of traditional materials such as metal and wood. If PVC containers or piping are used, paint them to resemble metal.

#### 4. GARAGES AND ACCESSORY BUILDINGS

- a. Attached garages are not compatible with the character of the district and are not permitted.
- b. Locate new detached garages and accessory buildings at the side or rear of properties.
- c. Design new garages and accessory buildings to be compatible in scale with and to have an appropriate site relation to the primary building, as well as surrounding buildings.
- d. When constructing new garages and accessory buildings or repairing existing garages and accessory buildings, use materials and finishes that are compatible with the primary building and the district. This includes garage doors.

#### 5. FENCES AND WALLS

- a. Do not construct new fences and walls that obscure the front elevation of the primary building. Fences along the principal street frontage shall not exceed four feet in height.
- b. When constructing new fences and walls or altering existing fences and walls, materials, scale, and finish shall be compatible with contributing properties.



*This compatible house from 2004 has a garage located at the rear of the property.*



*This incompatible house from 2006 has an attached garage at the front of the house.*

## E. New Construction

### 1. ORIENTATION AND SETBACKS

- a. Position new or moved structures on a lot to maintain the district's historic streetscape pattern.
- b. Use front and side yard setbacks that equal the prevalent setback of contributing buildings on the same side of the street. When the historic setback pattern is irregular, new construction may use the setbacks of an adjacent contributing property.

### 2. HEIGHT

- a. Design buildings to respond to the dimensions of the lot.
- b. Do not exceed the height of the tallest contributing building on a similarly sized lot on the block. If the tallest contributing building is two stories due to a second-story addition, set back the second story on new construction in conformance with the second-story setback requirements for additions to contributing buildings.

### 3. DESIGN AND STYLE

- a. Design new buildings so that they are compatible with the historic character of the district in terms of form, massing, and proportions; yet also differentiated from contributing buildings.
- b. Consider the building forms and architectural styles that historically existed within the district as a model for new construction.
- c. It may be appropriate to incorporate compatible architectural features found in contributing buildings, such as porch columns or transoms. Avoid using historical architectural features that do not appear on contributing buildings.

### 4. EXTERIOR WALLS

- b. Use exterior wall materials that are compatible with the character of the district in scale, type, size, finish, color, and texture.
- c. Use exterior materials that correspond with the new building's form and architectural style.

### 5. PORCHES

- a. Design front porches to reflect the width, height, and depth of porches on similarly scaled contributing buildings.



*This new multi-family development is compatible because each unit is a separate building facing the street. The units are compatible in scale and design.*



*This multi-family development is not compatible because it is a single large building facing an internal driveway instead of the public street.*

- b. Design front porch posts/columns, railings, and detailing to be compatible with contributing buildings.
- c. Do not add false historical architectural elements, such as brackets or gingerbread detailing, to a new porch.
- d. Locate new decks, balconies, and secondary porches at the rear of new residential buildings.

#### 6. ROOFS

- a. Design roofs to be simple in form, reflecting the character of the roofs on contributing buildings. Roof forms should also correspond to the new building's form and architectural style.
- b. Design roof features and details such as dormers, eave detailing, and bargeboards to correspond with the new building's form and architectural style.
- c. Use roof materials that reflect the character of the roofs on contributing buildings and also correspond with the new building's form and architectural style.

#### 7. WINDOWS AND SCREENS

- a. Design windows and screens to be compatible with the proportions, configuration, and patterns of windows and doors in contributing buildings.
- b. Design windows and doors to correspond with the new building's form and architectural style.
- c. Do not use windows with false muntins attached to or inserted between the glass.

#### 8. DOORS

- a. Locate front doors to face the principal street frontage.
- b. Match the style, proportions, materials, and finish of the door to the overall style and design of the building.

#### 9. CHIMNEYS

- a. Design chimneys to be compatible with the location and scale of chimneys in contributing buildings, and to correspond with the new building's form and architectural style.