



Section 4  
**Additions and  
New Construction**



## 4.1 Decks

The outdoor deck is a contemporary exterior feature frequently introduced in the residential historic districts. Essentially an uncovered, private version of a back porch, the deck can be compared functionally with a more traditional patio or terrace. To maintain a building's historic character, deck additions are generally located unobtrusively on the rear elevation. Decks are usually built on posts to align with the first-floor level of a residence and can consequently stand considerably above the ground. Like any addition to a historic building, a deck should be compatible with but differentiated from the building and constructed to be structurally independent so that it could be removed in the future without damage to the building. A deck should never be so large that it overpowers the building or the site. Insetting a deck at least 6 inches from a building corner also helps to diminish its impact and differentiate it from the existing building.



*Wooden decks like these, located on rear elevations with simple balustrades, skirtboards, and lattice infill panels between supports, are appropriate in the historic districts.*

### Things to Consider As You Plan

In locating a deck, property owners should always consider the proposed location's impact on the historic structure, the site, and the district. Locations that are visible from the street or that would damage or diminish significant architectural elements or significant site features, such as mature trees, should not be considered.

Because decks are exposed to the elements, decay-resistant woods, such as cypress or redwood, or pressure-treated lumber should be used. Decks may be painted or stained to protect them from water and sunlight and to make them more compatible with the colors of the historic structure. Some pressure-treated wood may require six to twelve months of weathering before primer and paint will bond well to it. Opaque stains are a good option for exposed decks since they do not peel; stains are not an applied film like paint, but rather are a protective treatment that is absorbed into the wood surface. Galvanized nails and fasteners should be used in deck construction to avoid rust stains. If a deck is elevated more than 30 inches above grade, the State Building Code requires a railing or a balustrade for safety.

To relate a deck visually to a historic building, the structural framing should be screened with traditional materials such as skirtboards, lattice, masonry panels, or dense evergreen plantings. Because a deck is a contemporary feature, detailing it to duplicate the architectural detailing of the historic building is usually unwise. Instead, simple balustrades and other elements that reflect the materials and the proportions of the building and the district are appropriate.



## 4.1 Decks: Guidelines

- .1 Locate and construct decks so that the historic fabric of the structure and its character-defining features and details are not damaged or obscured. Install decks so that they are structurally self-supporting and may be removed in the future without damage to the historic structure.
- .2 Introduce decks in inconspicuous locations, usually on the building's rear elevation and inset from the rear corners, where they are not visible from the street.
- .3 Design and detail decks and associated railings and steps to reflect the materials, scale, and proportions of the building.
- .4 In rare occasions where it is appropriate to site a deck in a location visible to the public right-of-way (i.e. the side of a building), it should be treated in a more formally architectural way. Careful attention should be paid to details and finishes, including painting or staining the deck's rails and structural support elements in colors compatible with the colors of the building.
- .5 Align decks generally with the height of the building's first-floor level. Visually tie the deck to the building by screening with compatible foundation materials such as skirtboards, lattice, masonry panels, and dense evergreen foundation plantings.
- .6 It is not appropriate to introduce a deck if doing so will require removal of a significant building element or site feature such as a porch or a mature tree.
- .7 It is not appropriate to introduce a deck if the deck will detract from the overall historic character of the building or the site.
- .8 It is not appropriate to construct a deck that significantly changes the proportion of built area to open space for a specific property.



*A carefully detailed deck stairway.*



## 4.2 Additions to Historic Buildings

Over the life of a building, its form may evolve as additional space is needed or new functions are accommodated. Many buildings in Raleigh Historic Districts reflect their history through the series of previous alterations and additions that they exhibit. Consequently, such changes are significant to the history of the building and the district. New additions within the historic districts are appropriate as long as they do not destroy historic features, materials, and spatial relationships that are significant to the original building and site. Further, new additions should be differentiated from the original building and constructed so that they can be removed in the future without damage to the building.



*A sensitively designed second-story addition to the front side elevation of this residence projects slightly beyond the screened porch over which it sits.*



*This contemporary rear addition with deck has been successfully differentiated from its principal structure, yet is compatible with the structure in design, materials, and details.*



*This upper floor attic addition echoes the design details of the original bungalow while respecting and retaining the original roof ridgeline and eaves.*

### Things to Consider As You Plan

New additions should never compromise the integrity of the original structure or site either directly through destruction of historic features and materials or indirectly through their location, size, height, or scale. The impact of an addition on the original building can be significantly diminished by locating it on the least-character-defining elevation and by keeping it deferential in volume. It should never overpower the original building through height or size. The form, design, relationship of openings, scale, and selection of materials, details, colors, and features of proposed new additions should be reviewed in terms of compatibility with the original building.

Although designed to be compatible with the original building, an addition should be discernible from it. For example, it can be differentiated from the original building through a break in roofline, cornice height, wall plane, materials, siding profile, or window type.

The impact of an addition on the building site must be considered as well. The addition should be designed and located so that significant site features, including mature trees, are not lost. The size of the addition should not overpower the site or dramatically alter its historic character.





## 4.2 Additions to Historic Buildings: Guidelines

- .1 Construct new additions so that there is the least possible loss of historic fabric and so that the character-defining features of the historic building are not destroyed, damaged, or obscured.
- .2 Design new additions so that the overall character of the site, site topography, character-defining site features, trees, and significant district vistas and views are retained.
- .3 Survey in advance and limit any disturbance to the site's terrain during construction to minimize the possibility of destroying unknown archaeological resources.
- .4 Protect large trees and other significant site features from immediate damage during construction and from delayed damage due to construction activities, such as loss of root area or compaction of the soil by equipment. It is especially critical to avoid compaction of the soil within the drip line of trees.
- .5 Locate a new addition on an inconspicuous elevation of the historic building, usually the rear one.
- .6 Limit the size and the scale of an addition in relationship to the historic building so that it does not diminish or visually overpower the building.
- .7 Design an addition to be compatible with the historic building in mass, materials, color, and relationship of solids to voids in the exterior walls, yet make the addition discernible from the original.
- .8 It is not appropriate to construct an addition if it will detract from the overall historic character of the principal building and the site, or if it will require the removal of a significant building element or site feature.
- .9 It is not appropriate to construct an addition that significantly changes the proportion of built mass to open space on the individual site.



*Site features should be considered an integral part of a project when planning additions to buildings.*



## 4.3 New Construction

New construction within a historic district can enhance the existing district character if the proposed design and its siting reflect an understanding of and a compatibility with the distinctive character of the district setting and buildings. In fact, the introduction of a compatible but contemporary new construction project can add depth and contribute interest to the district.

### Things to Consider As You Plan

The compatibility of new site development with the district setting depends on its compatibility with characteristic district features as well as the retention of the specific site's topography and character-defining site features. The descriptions and guidelines included in Section 2, Site and Setting, should be useful in determining the compatibility of proposed site development within a historic district. The guidelines for various site features, including driveways, fences, lighting, garages, and plantings, apply to both existing site features and proposed development. Because buildings within the historic districts generally display a clear consistency in setback, orientation, spacing, and distance between adjacent buildings, the compatibility of proposed new construction siting should be reviewed in those terms as well.

The success of new construction within a historic district does not depend on direct duplication of existing building forms, features, materials, and details. Rather, it relies on understanding what the distinctive architectural character of the district is. Infill buildings must be compatible with that character. Contemporary design generated from such understanding can enrich the architectural continuity of a historic district.

In considering the overall compatibility of a proposed structure, its height, form, massing, proportion, size, scale, and roof shape should first be reviewed. A careful analysis of buildings surrounding the site can be valuable in determining how consistent and, consequently, how significant each of these criteria is. The overall proportion of the building's front elevation is especially important to consider because it will have the most impact on the streetscape. For example, if the street facades of most nearby buildings are vertical in proportion, taller than they are wide, then maintaining the vertical orientation of the building facade will result in a more compatible design.

A similar study of materials, building features, and details typical of existing buildings along the streetscape, block, or square will provide a vocabulary to draw on in designing a compatible building. Beyond the obvious study of prominent building elements such as porches and storefronts, particular attention should be given to the spacing, placement, scale, orientation, and size of window and door openings as well as the design of the doors and the windows themselves. Compatibility at the building skin level is also critical. Certainly the selection of appropriate exterior materials and finishes depends on an understanding of the compatibility of proposed materials and finishes in composition, scale, module, pattern, texture, color, and sheen. Section 3, Changes to the Building Exterior, also provides pertinent information on traditional materials, features, and details found in the historic districts.



*This new residence achieves compatibility with its Oakwood neighbors through similarities in height, mass, proportion, and materials.*



*The compatible design of this new residence on a corner lot echoes the massing and the details of nearby Queen Anne-style structures.*



*Sensitive siting and massing of the condominium complex at New Bern Place make this large-scale project compatible with the scale and the character of its historic context.*



### 4.3 New Construction: Guidelines

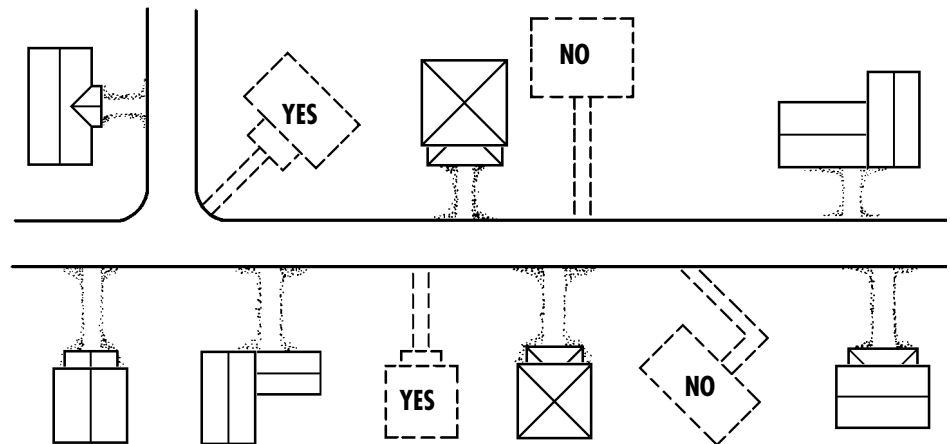
- .1 Site new construction to be compatible with surrounding buildings that contribute to the overall character of the historic district in terms of setback, orientation, spacing, and distance from adjacent buildings.
- .2 Design new construction so that the overall character of the site, site topography, character-defining site features, trees, and significant district vistas and views are retained.
- .3 Evaluate in advance and limit any disturbance to the site's terrain during construction to minimize the possibility of destroying unknown archaeological resources.
- .4 Protect large trees and other significant site features from immediate damage during construction and from delayed damage due to construction activities, such as loss of root area or compaction of the soil by equipment. It is especially critical to avoid compaction of the soil within the drip line of trees.
- .5 Conform to the design guidelines found in Section 2 regarding site and setting in developing a proposed site plan.
- .6 Design new buildings to be compatible with surrounding buildings that contribute to the overall character of the historic district in terms of height, form, size, scale, massing, proportion, and roof shape.
- .7 Design the proportion of the proposed new building's front facade to be compatible with the front facade proportion of surrounding historic buildings.
- .8 Design the spacing, placement, scale, orientation, proportion, and size of window and door openings in proposed new construction to be compatible with the surrounding buildings that contribute to the special character of the historic district.
- .9 Select windows and doors for proposed new buildings that are compatible in material, subdivision, proportion, pattern, and detail with the windows and doors of surrounding buildings that contribute to the special character of the historic district.
- .10 Select materials and finishes for proposed new buildings that are compatible with historic materials and finishes found in the surrounding buildings that contribute to the special character of the historic district in terms of composition, scale, module, pattern, detail, texture, finish, color, and sheen.
- .11 Design new buildings so that they are compatible with but discernible from historic buildings in the district.



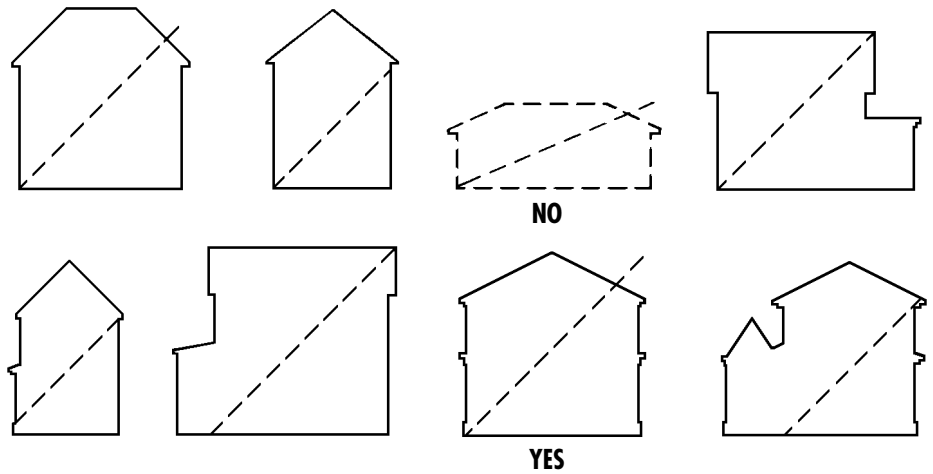
*Compatible contemporary infill.*



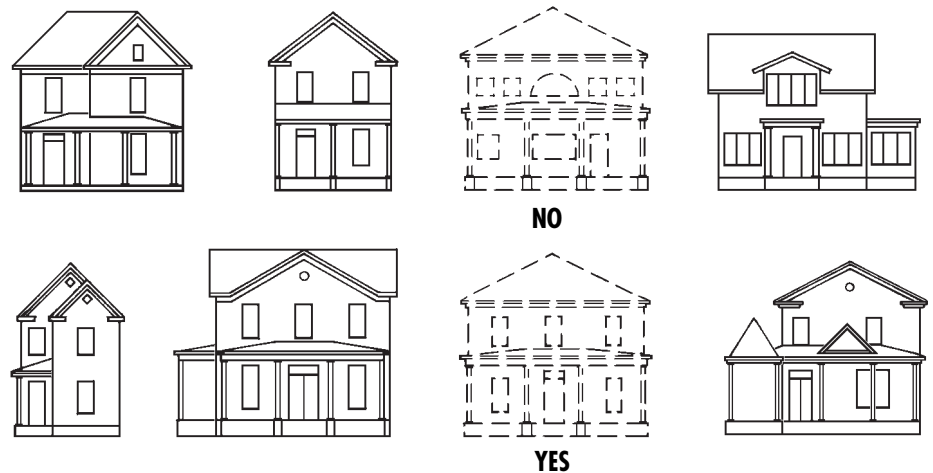
### 4.3 New Construction Continued from page 56



The proposed siting for new buildings should be compatible with the setback, orientation, and spacing of existing district buildings.



Proposed new buildings should be compatible in height and proportion of front elevation with surrounding buildings that contribute to the district character.



The windows and the doors for proposed new buildings should be compatible in proportion and pattern with the windows and the doors of surrounding buildings that contribute to the district character.