Design Guidelines for Raleigh Historic Districts and Landmarks

Draft
995 Applications for COAs from RHDC Since 2009

- Infill 1.4%
- Large Additions 2%
- Small Additions 5.4%
- Other COAs 91%

907
What I heard ...

Wide range of concerns and opinions

Many self-identified middle grounders but also those taking a strong stance at either end of the pendulum on specific issues

Guidelines are disfunctional/guidelines need finetuning/find the guidelines to be quite good

Need more clarity and better communication

Balance between restrictions and incentive

Some suggestions and ideas fall outside the scope of my task. Many relate to other sections of the guidelines (garages, landscaping, lighting, maintenance, etc.)
What I heard ...

Looking for predictability and consistency

Ability to respond to density and growth intelligently

Appreciate ambiguity—open to interpretation

Value citizen input

Change is inevitable, we need to manage it

Compromise preserves harmony

No “Mr. Potato head house” of poorly designed compilation

Separate commercial and residential guidelines
What I heard ...

Shared values

BROAD support for preserving and protecting the historic character and livability of the historic districts.

- Good stewardship
- Good design
- Respect of context
- Living community, protect balance
- Economic stability, protect property values
- Preserve the neighborhood experience
What I heard ...

special character essays

BROAD support for use of the special character essays for the historic districts.

Concern that the special essays aren’t used in making decisions.

Concern that the essays need updating.

Concern that the district periods of significance may need to be expanded.
“In reviewing applications, the commission and staff consider the property itself, the street context within which it is located, and the special character of the entire historic district. The special character essays for each district are a critical part of the review process because each district is distinctly different. A brief description of the character of each district is provided along with a map in the appendixes. …”

— page v of the draft guidelines
What I recommend ... special character essays

- Update the special character essays on a regular cycle.
- Consider expanding the period of significance for districts.
What I heard ...

teardowns and overbuilding

Shared concern about teardowns and their impact on the districts.

RHDC only has the power to delay demolition up to 365 days.

Desire to de-incentivize teardowns.

Desire to limit the footprint or square footage of new construction and additions. Possibly spell out what % of increase or require same footprint.
What I recommend ...

teardowns and overbuilding

Explore possibilities to de-incentivize teardowns in the historic districts through ordinances and incentives.

Added text and images in the new construction text as well as images + two new guidelines.

Check out NTHP teardown toolkit:
What I recommend ... teardowns and overbuilding

Retain language in 4.2.11 and add 4.2.12 and 4.2.13:

4.2.11 It is not appropriate to construct an addition that significantly changes the proportion of original built mass to open space on the individual site.

4.2.12 It is not appropriate to construct an addition if the overall proportion of open space on the site will significantly vary from the surrounding buildings and sites that contribute to the special character of the historic district.

4.3.12 It is not appropriate to introduce new buildings whose proportion of built mass to open space on their site significantly varies from the surrounding buildings that contribute to the special character of the historic district.
What I heard ... compatible

Want clarity on meaning of “compatible”

Define “compatibility”

Define “compatible” in terms of historic development, materials, fenestrations, additions, and new construction

Substitute “congruous” for “compatible”

Replace with “compatible and consistent”
What I recommend ... compatible

- Add “compatible” to the guidelines glossary with the following definition:

  capable of existing together in harmony; consistent or congruous (usually followed by *with*)

Existing text for new construction and additions elaborates on what characteristics of an addition or new infill building should be considered in determining compatibility
What I heard ... architectural style

Widest pendulum swing on the use of architectural style in the guidelines for new construction and additions

“Design new construction to reflect a single architectural style within the period of significance of the district”
“Style evolves over time some interpretation is needed”
“Style should not be part of guidelines”
“Guidelines should be attentive to style”
“Explicitly forbid style from being a factor”
“Do not believe in style, good design and architecture is a result of place, culture, technology, and context”
“Guidelines allow for interpretation—traditional or less traditional? Do we have to pick one or the other?”
What I read ... architectural style

“Architectural style is characterized by the features that make a building or other structure notable and historically identifiable. A style may include such elements as form, method of construction, building materials, and regional character.” —Wikipedia
What I read ...
architectural style

1989 statewide enabling legislation 160A-400.9a in defining when a certificate of appropriateness is required:

For purposes of this Part, “exterior feature” shall include the architectural style, general design, and general arrangement of the exterior of a building or other structure, including the kind and texture of the building material, the size and scale of the building, and the type and style of all windows, doors, light fixtures, signs, and other appurtenant fixtures.
What I read ...

architectural style

1994 Handbook for Historic Preservation Commissions in North Carolina (joint publication of PNC and the NC SHPO)

On page 32 includes list exterior features from the 1989 enabling legislation to be covered by design guidelines

On page 34 states:
“The guidelines should not require particular architectural features or styles.”
What I read ... architectural style

National Park Service Brief #14 New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns (updated 2010)
In the section entitled *Design Guidance: Compatible New Additions to Historic Buildings*, the brief states:

“... A new addition to a historic building that meets the Standards can be any architectural style—traditional, contemporary or a simplified version of the historic building. However, there must be a balance between differentiation and compatibility in order to maintain the historic character of the building being enlarged. New additions that too closely resemble the historic building or are in extreme contrast to it fall short of this balance. ...”
What I recommend ... architectural style

Acknowledge that inclusion of architectural style is referenced in the enabling legislation.

Acknowledge that there is great diversity of community opinion on the application of architectural style to new construction and additions.

Include “architectural style” in the guidelines and glossary.

Take a both/and approach. Clarify that the style of new construction and additions can range from traditional to contemporary and, whatever the architectural style, differentiation and compatibility of new construction are key.
MAD MEN IN CONFLICT FOR POSSESSION OF THE INSIGNIFICANT THING.