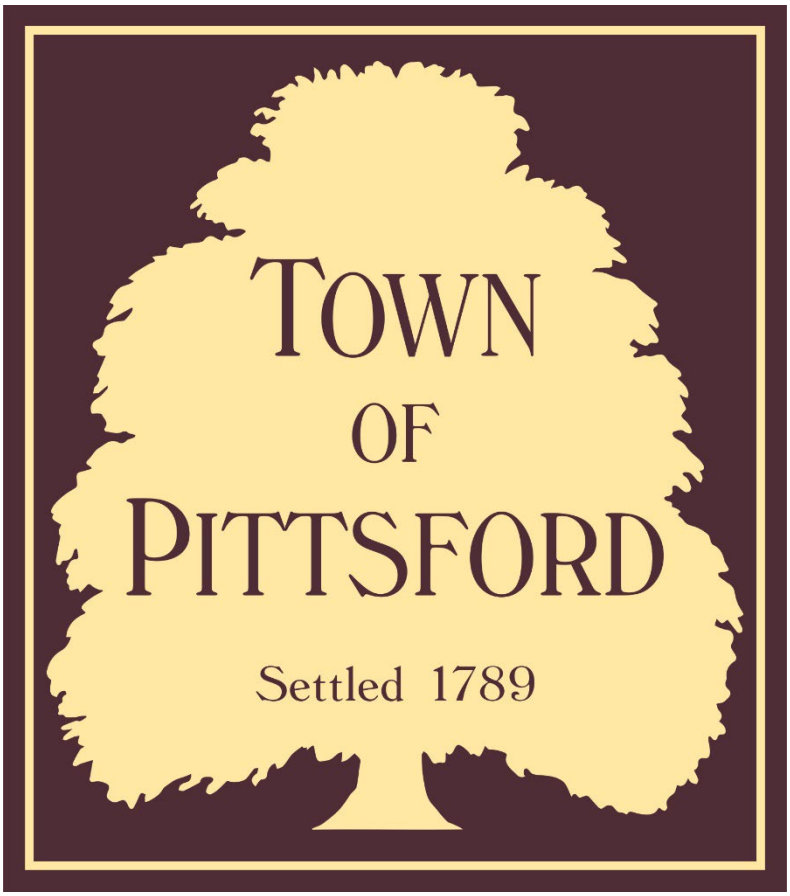
Residential Design Standards & Guidelines



Dated: November 18, 2011
Adopted by Town Board: December 7, 2011
Amended by Town Board: September 18, 2012
Amended by Town Board: March 27, 2025

I. General Procedures & Considerations

1) In reviewing proposals for residential structures in existing neighborhoods involving new construction, alterations and/or additions, the Design Review and Historic Preservation Board shall consider the surrounding neighborhood context to determine what is appropriate for maintaining the character of the area. The Board shall also, as appropriate, refer to the Town's "Residential Styles Guide", dated November 18, 2011, as amended and supplemented, for additional guidance.

2) To further the goals of the Town's Comprehensive Plan, the Design Review and Historic Preservation Board shall consider the type of neighborhood and architecture contemplated in the Planning Board's subdivision/development approval process, specifically allowing for a wider variety of home styles for new developments, for which the Design Review and Historic Preservation Board is authorized and encouraged to exercise greater flexibility in applying these guidelines and standards.

3) If a proposal involves a residential structure that is located contiguous to a designated landmark or an inventoried structure the Design Review and Historic Preservation Board shall take such circumstance into consideration in making its determination.

4) If the proposal involves an inventoried structure, the Design Review and Historic Preservation Board shall, in making its determination, take into consideration the "Standards and Guidelines for Certificates of Appropriateness", dated November 18, 2011, as amended and supplemented, as well as any and all distinguishing character-defining features identified at the time such structure was inventoried.

II. Building Orientation

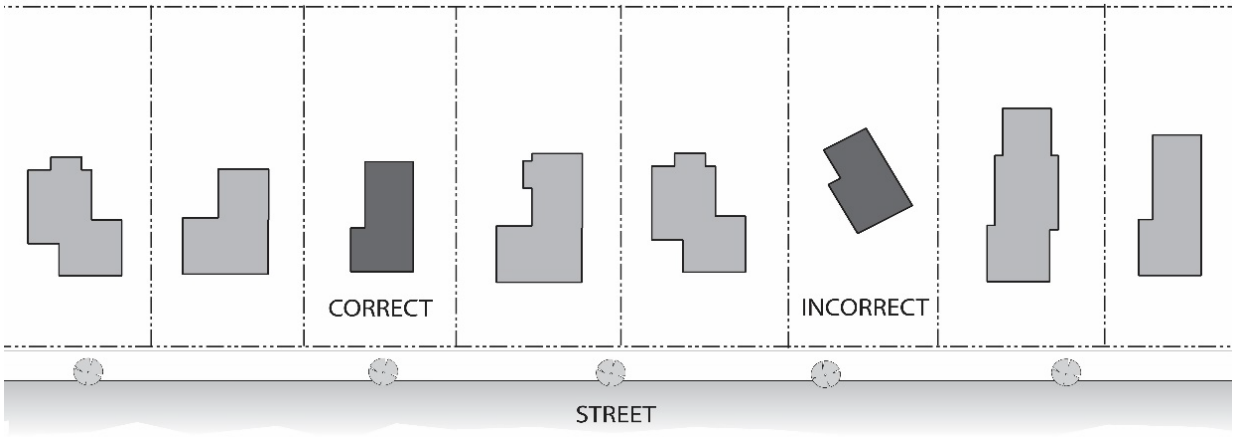
Building orientation describes how a building relates to the street and its neighbors.

1) New structures and additions should be compatible with the site arrangement, setback distance and orientation of neighboring houses to reinforce the existing character of the street. ***[Figure 1]***

2) The front of the house should face the public street, with the front entry readily visible and identifiable.

3) Front entry walks are encouraged to connect to existing sidewalks, if present.

FIGURE 1 - ORIENTATION, ARRANGEMENT AND SETBACK



III. Garages and Driveways

1) Attached garages are encouraged to be consistent with the existing neighborhood or new development in which they are located. Where practical, garages with two or more car bays are encouraged to not face the street, and should instead be oriented to the side of the lot where space conditions permit. ***[Figure 2]*** Side yard facing garages may be required to provide adequate landscaping or screening from the neighboring property.

2) Garages with bay doors facing the street should be set back behind the plane of the front facade.

3) Detached garages should be located behind the house and set back from the road so as to appear secondary to the primary structure.

4) Garages may be located partially or fully in front of the main structure, provided that the garage does not represent the dominant architectural feature. By way of example, side loaded garages or garages that are incorporated into a courtyard layout, similar to the examples below, meet the intent of these provisions. ***[Figures 3, 4]***

5) Driveways should only be as wide as necessary for egress in and out of the property – typically no wider than 20' at the curb cut. The width of the driveway however may get wider toward the house if necessary to accommodate required area for garage access or turning. ***[Figure 5]***.

FIGURE 2 - SIDE GARAGE

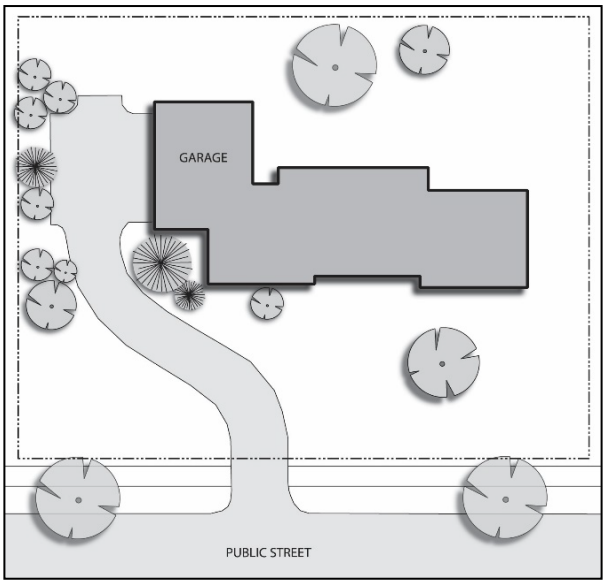


FIGURE 3 - ENTRY COURTYARD EXAMPLE

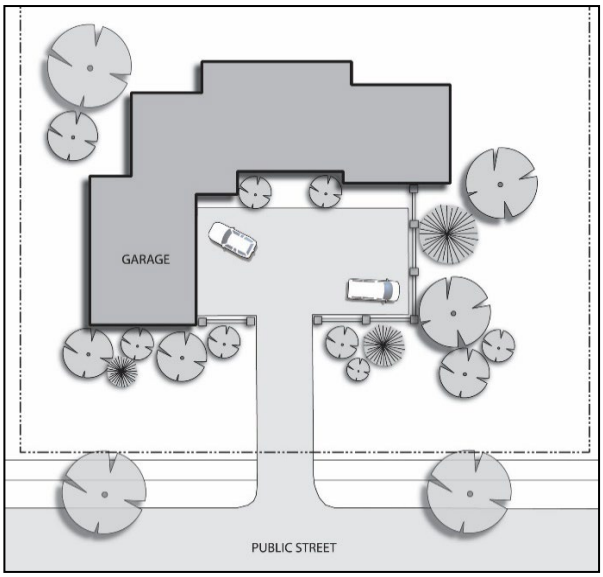
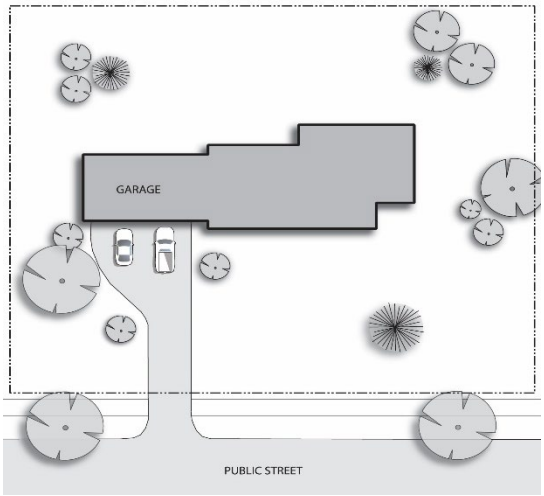


FIGURE 4 - ENTRY COURTYARD EXAMPLE

The formal "entry court" on this house provides an attractive entry wile screening the garage and parking area from the street.

FIGURE 5 - DRIVEWAY WIDTH



IV. Scale & Massing

Scale is the relative size of the building and its elements (such as individual windows or materials) compared to other structures around it. Massing is the overall volumetric size of the structure and its parts compared to other structures around it.

1) The overall size, scale and massing of new structures or additions should be compatible with the size, scale and massing of neighboring houses. ***[Figure 6 & 7]*** New construction, including infill construction, reconstruction, and homes built on lots that are larger than neighboring lots shall not be significantly larger in size and scale relative to neighboring houses. ***[Figure 7]***

2) The permitted height of a structure or addition should minimize the visual impact on neighboring back yards and limit the loss of privacy of residents of neighboring lots.

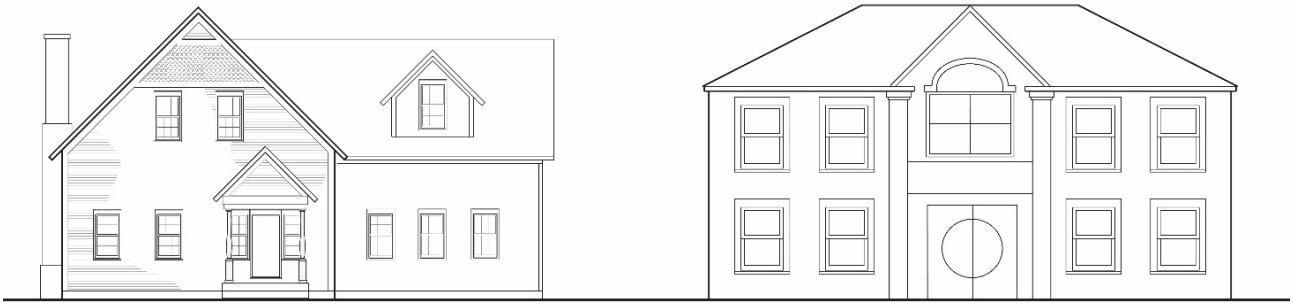
3) The scale of a new addition should be generally similar with the scale of the original structure.

4) The massing of a new addition should generally be subordinate in size and placement to the original structure. ***[Figure 8]***

5) New construction should avoid creating overly complicated massing in a neighborhood where the typical character of nearby houses has much simpler forms.

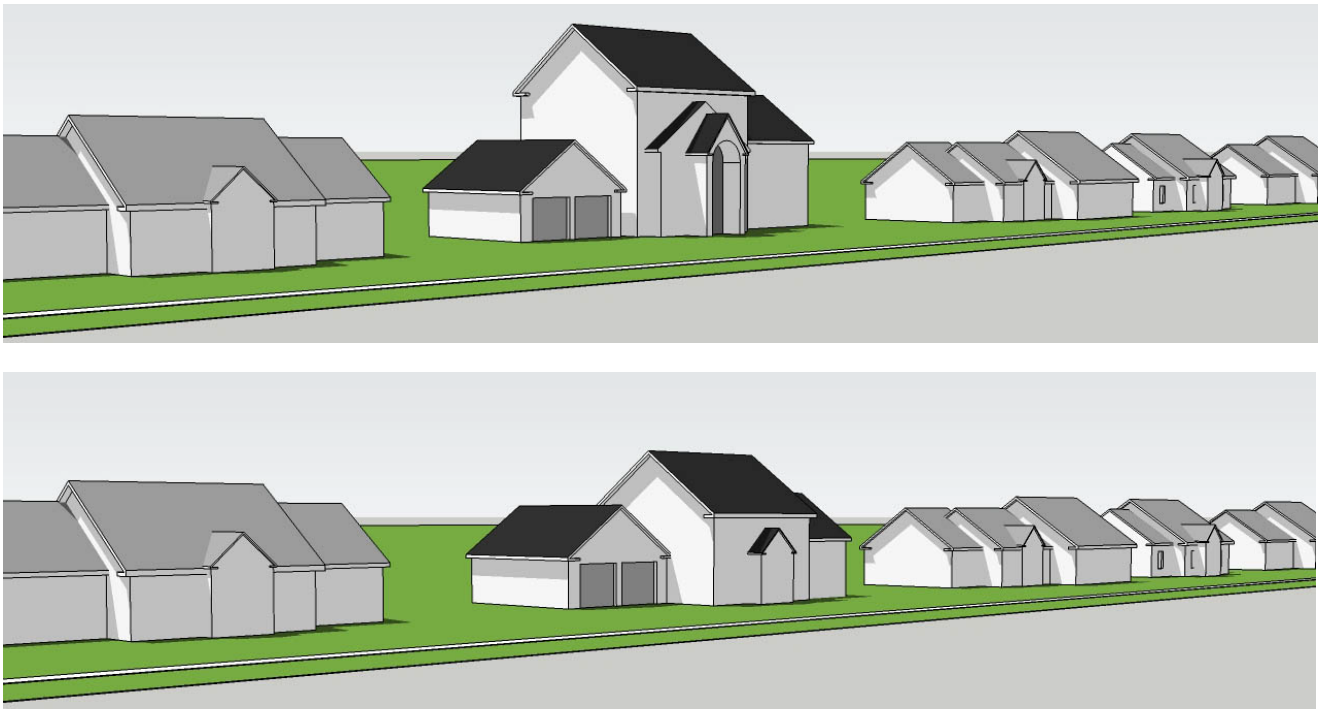
6) New construction should avoid creating "faux massing" facades, such as those with multiple gables within gables. Such horizontal facade projections or changes in massing should instead extend a minimum of several feet out from the plane of the facade in order to create a distinctly different mass, especially in older neighborhoods. ***[Figure 9]***

FIGURE 6 - SCALE AND MASSING



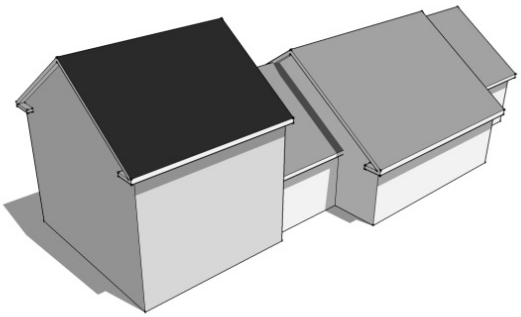
Although these two houses above are roughly the same size, they are different in terms of scale and massing. The building on the left has smaller scale appearance with the use of smaller design elements, more intricate details and materials. Its massing also appears smaller because it has been broken up into two wings, has an entry porch and roof dormer. The building on the right creates a larger scale appearance with larger, bolder features, and a larger mass as a single block. The scale and massing of these two buildings are generally not compatible with each other.

FIGURE 7 - SCALE AND MASSING - NEW CONSTRUCTION

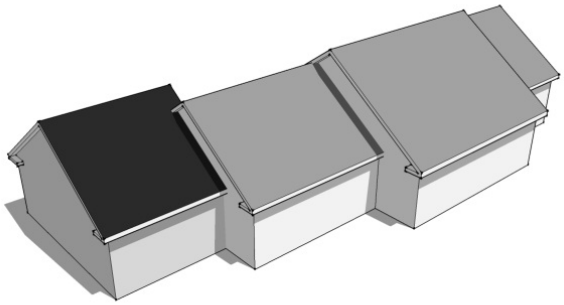


Top (Incorrect): *The size and scale of the house in the middle is not compatible with the surrounding houses.*
Bottom (Correct): *The size and scale of the house in the middle is more compatible with the surrounding houses.*

FIGURE 8 - SCALE AND MASSING OF ADDITIONS

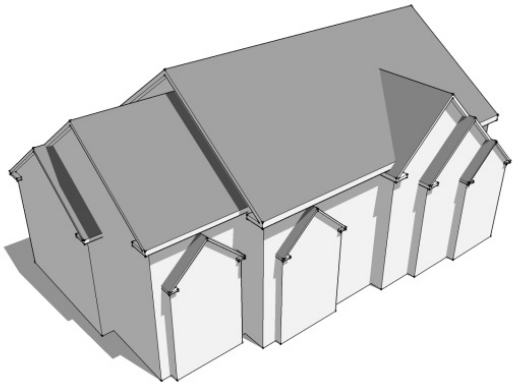


***Incorrect**. The massing and placement of this new addition overwhelms the original house next to it.*

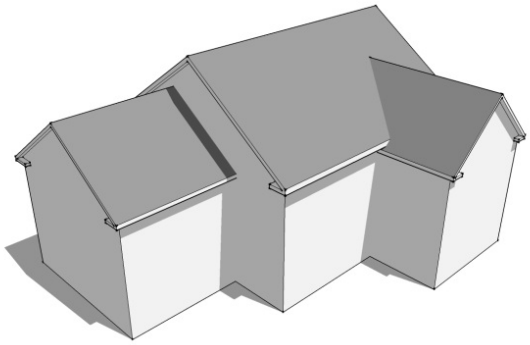


***Correct.** The new addition here is keeping with the scale and massing of the original structure, and steps back slightly from the road to let the original house remain the primary focus.*

FIGURE 9 - MASSING



***Incorrect.** Faux massing façade design such as this - commonly found in more contemporary subdivisions - may look good in drawings but do little to break up the massing when viewed in reality. The "gables nested inside gables" act as a façade decoration and to not extend out from each other to create distinct masses. Such designs are often not appropriate in older neighborhoods where the massing is typically more simplified.*



***Correct.** The different forms and massing seen here extend out from each other significantly, reflecting the actual living space inside them and creating distinct masses which are easily identifiable. This simpler massing style is more appropriate for older neighborhoods.*

V. Roof Design

Covers the overall style, slope and shape of individual roof elements.

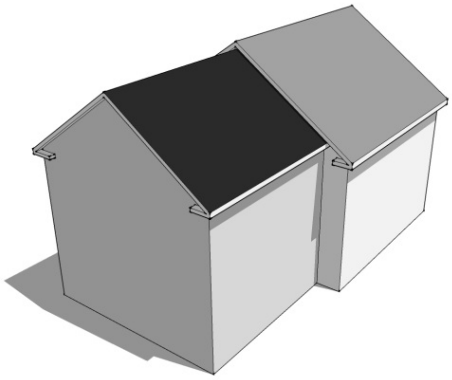
1) Additions should match the roof style and roof pitch of the original structure.

2) Additions should match the roofing materials of the original structure, except in cases where the new roof is a very minor element to the overall design, such as roofing over a new bay window or entry vestibule.

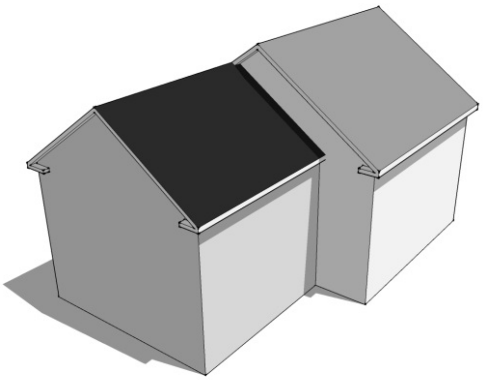
3) Any vertical steps or fluctuations in the roof ridge should be a minimum of a few feet in difference. Minor variations in roof heights are discouraged. ***[Figure 10]***

4) Roofs should be designed to divert the fall of rain and snow away from entry areas.

FIGURE 10 - ROOF TRANSITIONS



Incorrect. *The transition from one roof ridge to the other here is very minor. Such transitions do little to help break up the roof areas of a house and sometimes cause water problems.*



Correct. *The transition on this roof is much more noticeable and helps break up the roof area.*

VI. Fenestration

Includes openings in the facade for windows and doors.

1) Additions and renovations should maintain the general style, size and materials of the original window and door openings.

2) The style and proportion of window and door opening in new construction should generally match those found on houses in the neighborhood. ***[Figure 11]***

3) The style and proportion of windows should be generally consistent across all facades of the structure. Exceptions to this can be made however for the occasional specialty or decorative window as a design accent in the facade.

4) The size and design of components (sash rails and muntins) should match the original design.

5) Replacement windows should match the overall dimensions (width and height) as the windows they replace.

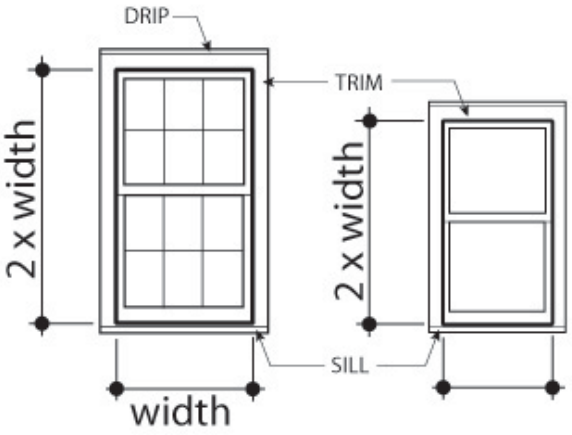
6) Window and door openings, especially in masonry facades, should express a lintel or arch above the opening to reflect how it is supporting the weight above. Such lintels used either structurally or as decorative trim, should always extend beyond the width of the opening. ***[Figure 12]***

7) The arrangement of windows on a facade facing the road should generally align with each other in a regular pattern or readily apparent organization. Windows which appear to be randomly arranged on the facade are discouraged.

8) Large areas of blank wall are strongly discouraged along all facades of the house.

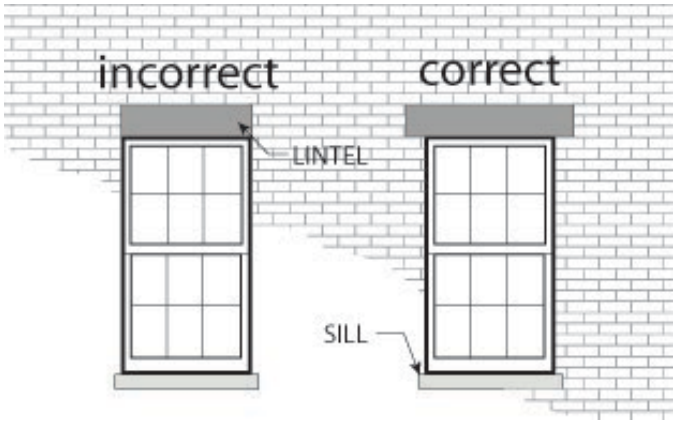
9) Sliding glass doors are prohibited on the front façade.

FIGURE 11 - WINDOW PROPORTION AND STYLE



Although these two windows are different sizes and designs, they have the same general proportions (twice as tall as they are wide) and are the same basic style (double hung).

FIGURE 12 - WINDOW LINTELS ON MASONRY BUILDINGS



Lintels expresses over window openings should extend beyond the width of the window.

VII. Front Porches & Entry Areas

1) Existing open-air porches should not be enclosed or walled in. If an existing porch must be enclosed, it should be done in a manner which retains the existing columns, railings in an exposed fashion and maintains an open-air appearance. ***[Figure 13]*** This treatment however should be reserved for porches which are on the side or less visible areas of the house, and not the front.

2) New front porches added to an existing structure may not always be appropriate for the architectural style or neighborhood context, and may be discouraged in these cases.

3) New front porches should be constructed of materials which are compatible with the materials, architectural style and design of the original structure.

4) Uncovered wood decks or porches which do not include a permanent roof overhead are prohibited along the front facade. Uncovered masonry patios or entranceways are permitted, but may not be appropriate on some homes of certain styles and periods.

5) The proportion of columns or posts along a front porch or facade should appear appropriate to the amount of weight they appear to be carrying. Columns which are too thin or too thick for their height are discouraged. Alterations should be designed to match the architectural style and proportion of existing exterior columns and the beams or entablature they support.

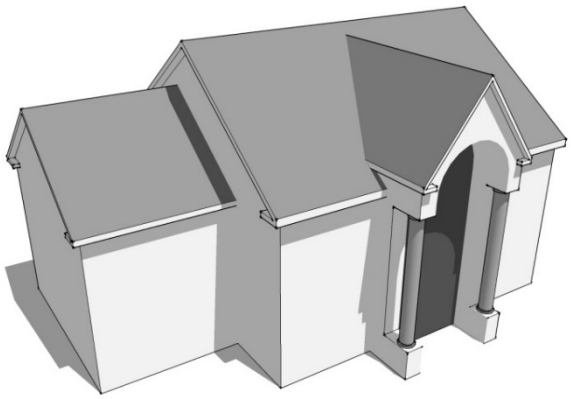
6) Front door entry areas should be appropriately scaled to the size of the facade. Two story tall entryways or columns are generally discouraged, especially in neighborhoods where this is not common. ***[Figure 14]***

7) Porches which have open airspace underneath should not have the underside enclosed in a manner which would prevent proper air circulation.

FIGURE 13 - ENCLOSED PORCH EXAMPLE

This architecturally significant porch has been carefully enclosed so that the original columns, railings and details are retained and still highly visible. The new enclosure is set within the porch and painted a dark color to be less noticeable.

FIGURE 14 - ENTRY WAY



Front door entry should be appropriately scaled to the size of the façade. Grand, multi-story entryways such as this are overly sized for the home, and are typically not compatible with the older neighborhoods and are discouraged.

VIII. Materials

Includes the proper use of exterior materials on a structure.

1) New construction should attempt to use one exterior material on a facade as the dominant theme, with additional materials only used sparingly for accents or trim. The use of many different transitions from one material to the next along the same horizontal level- commonly found in contemporary subdivisions- is generally discouraged in older neighborhoods. ***[Figure 15]***

2) The use of two or more different facade materials is sometimes better utilized at different vertical levels. (e.g. masonry at bottom, wood clapboard above.) ***[Figure 16]***

3) Material transitions at outside corners are discouraged (e.g. wood clapboard turning the corner and changing into masonry.) ***[Figure 17]***

4) The transition from one material to the next should occur at a logical step or massing change in the facade, such as in inside corner. ***[Figure 18]***

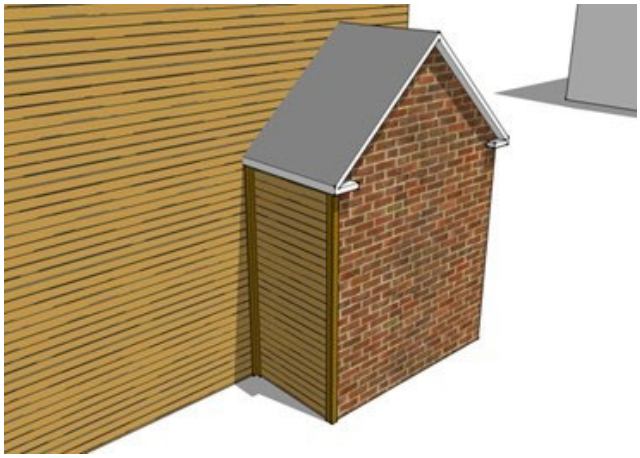
FIGURE 15 - DISCOURAGING MATERIAL TRANSITIONS

Incorrect*. The use of many different transitions from one material to the next along the same horizontal level- commonly found in contemporary subdivisions- is often not appropriate, especially in older neighborhoods.*

FIGURE 16 - PREFERRED MATERIAL TRANSITIONS

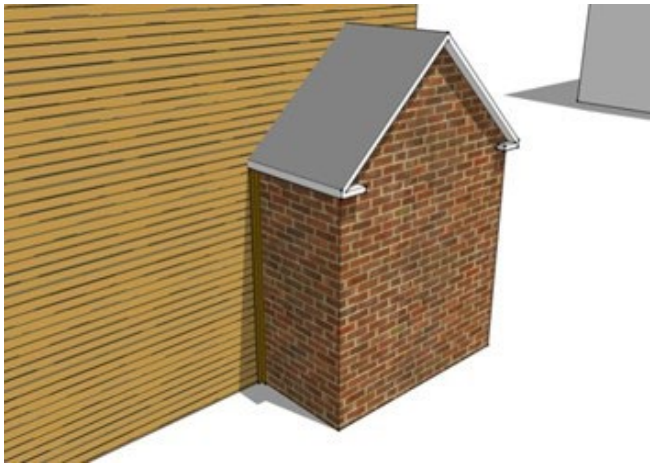
Correct. *A preferred use of material is shown here, where wood clapboard is the dominant material used, while the stone and trim is used more sparingly above and below it as a design accent.*

FIGURE 17 - OUTSIDE CORNER EXAMPLE



Incorrect. *Material transitions at outside corners, such as the example above, are generally discouraged.*

FIGURE 18 - INSIDE CORNER EXAMPLE



Correct*. Material transitions at the inside corners, such as the example above, are generally preferred because they reinforce the different massings and provide a logical location for one material to end and the next one to begin.*