



Sample Bridge Street Neighborhood Preservation District Design Guidelines

City of Salem Neighborhood Preservation District Study

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE:

The Salem Handbook, Historic Salem, Inc.

City of Salem Commercial Design Guidelines, Department of Planning and Community Development, 2005

Get Your House Right: Architectural Elements to Use and Avoid, Marianne Cusato and Ben Pentreath, 2007

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salem, massachusetts

bridge street neighborhood characteristics

- Buildings are set close to the street and to one another – a historic pattern seen in many Salem neighborhoods. Most buildings do not have a front yard; the buildings are directly next to the sidewalk.
- Variety of styles and building types reflect continual development from the 18th century to the present
- In general, building shapes and size are compatible on many blocks, despite different construction periods
- Building forms are simple without much ornamentation
- Detail is concentrated on porches, doorways, and bays
- Bridge Street's commercial buildings are a mix of converted residential structures and mid to late 20th century buildings on large parcels with surface parking lots. Most of the latter are one-story in height and are in the eastern section of the neighborhood.



new construction

New construction is expected and encouraged in the Bridge Street Neighborhood. The neighborhood's desire is that these new buildings blend in by respecting the important physical characteristics that define the area, while keeping their own identity.

The guidelines for new construction are deliberately kept simple so that proposed new design is not constricted by a series of rules that may limit creativity and personal choice. But the basic idea is to look around at the surrounding buildings first to get a sense of their character before choosing a design for a new building. The most important elements to consider are the existing buildings' form, size, massing and materials.

Design review of new construction is mandatory in the Bridge Street Neighborhood Preservation District. The review and decision of the Neighborhood Preservation District Commission is binding. What this means is that the applicant must abide by the Commission's decision, unless they want to appeal the decision.

If a variance is required for a proposed new construction project, which may include setback or height variances, the NPD Commission will make a recommendation to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) prior to the ZBA's hearing for a variance. If the variance is not granted, this element of the design will not be required.

- Commission reviews proposed project using design guidelines
- Commission decides if the proposed project can proceed as submitted

design guidelines

new construction

The **setback** of new buildings should be similar to surrounding older (those more than 50 years old) buildings.

- **Setback** refers to the distance that the front of the building is from the street or sidewalk.
- Zoning regulations require a **minimum setback of 15 feet** for buildings in the neighborhood, which is a deeper setback than most buildings currently have. Applicants for a new building will need to first gain approval from the NPD Commission for a setback less than 15 feet; they will then need to meet with the Zoning Board of Appeals to obtain this setback variance.

The **size and form** of all new buildings and additions (those over 50 square feet) must be compatible with surrounding older (those more than 50 years old) buildings

- **Size** means the height and scale of a building. Zoning regulates the heights and setbacks of new buildings, which can help determine a building's scale. The height and scale of a new building should consider those of existing buildings that border the property where new construction is proposed.
- **Form** refers to the building's configuration, including any projections and roof shapes.

The **materials and elements** on new buildings and additions must be compatible with adjacent older buildings

- Most of the buildings, both residential and commercial, in the Bridge Street NPD are covered with clapboard or replacement horizontal siding. Other materials, such as brick, stone, concrete block, or metal are more rare, but are represented in the NPD.
- In general for all new construction, natural materials are preferred. Synthetic materials will only be considered when they replicate the appearance and workability of natural materials including the ability to cut, profile, fit, detail, trim, and paint materials. Synthetic materials such as cementitious siding/trim products and cellular pvc products are more workable than hollow core and extruded products such as vinyl and aluminum.
- Vinyl siding and other polyvinyl chloride (PVC) elements on the outside of new buildings are discouraged.
- The term “elements” refers to window and door sizes and their basic spacing arrangement and the way they are framed, and projections such as towers, dormers, bay windows, and porches.

design guidelines

new construction



APPROPRIATE

The proposed 2-story side addition on this house is appropriate because it is set back behind the main entrance and produces an L-shaped form that is typical in the neighborhood.



NOT APPROPRIATE

The 1-story, shed-roofed side addition is not appropriate because its width, height, and roof pitch are not similar to those historically built in the neighborhood. The addition also covers the main entrance to the house, an important characteristic of this house.

design guidelines

new construction



NOT APPROPRIATE

The height and form of this 1-1/2 story house is inappropriate in a block of mainly taller 2-3-story buildings that are set closer to the street. While its setback and height conform to current zoning, its dissimilarity stands out in a distracting manner from the regularity of building height, form and setback currently on the street.



APPROPRIATE

This new storage building used appropriate colors and materials similar to those of industrial buildings in the vicinity. Its size and form are appropriate in its setting, which consists of larger brick and concrete industrial buildings.

design guidelines

new construction



APPROPRIATE

The 3-story building proposed on this corner location is similar in height, form, and design to surrounding buildings and conforms to the current zoning setback of 15 feet.

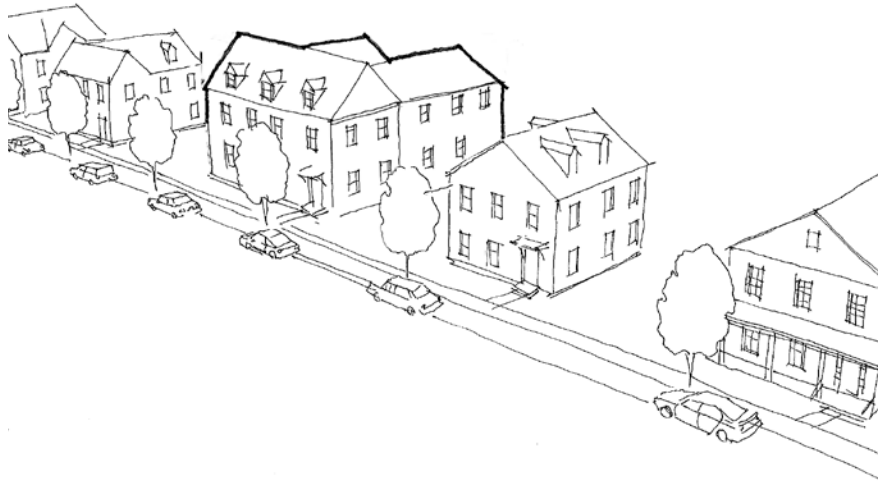


NOT APPROPRIATE

While this 3-story building conforms to current zoning, its pyramidal-roofed corner pavilion, vertical window and bay orientation, and mansard roof are not compatible with the surrounding flat-roofed brick apartment buildings.

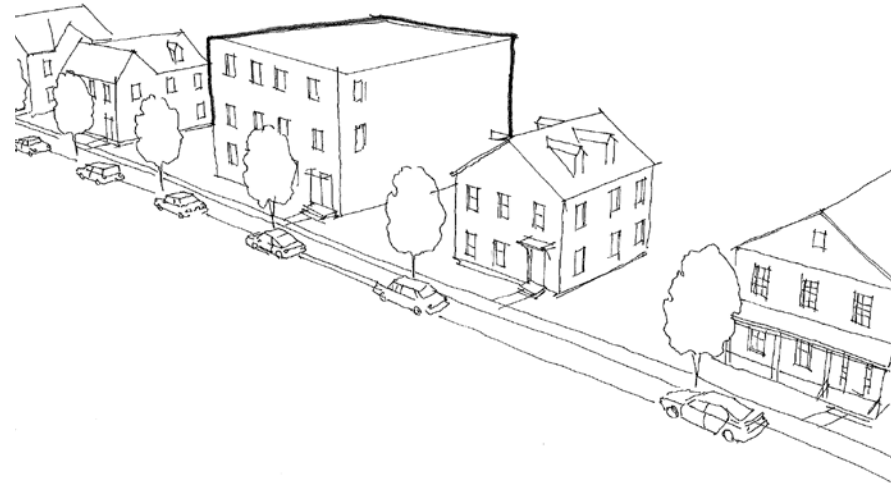
design guidelines

new construction



APPROPRIATE

The new building in the center of this row of existing houses is appropriate because it respects their basic form, setback and size.

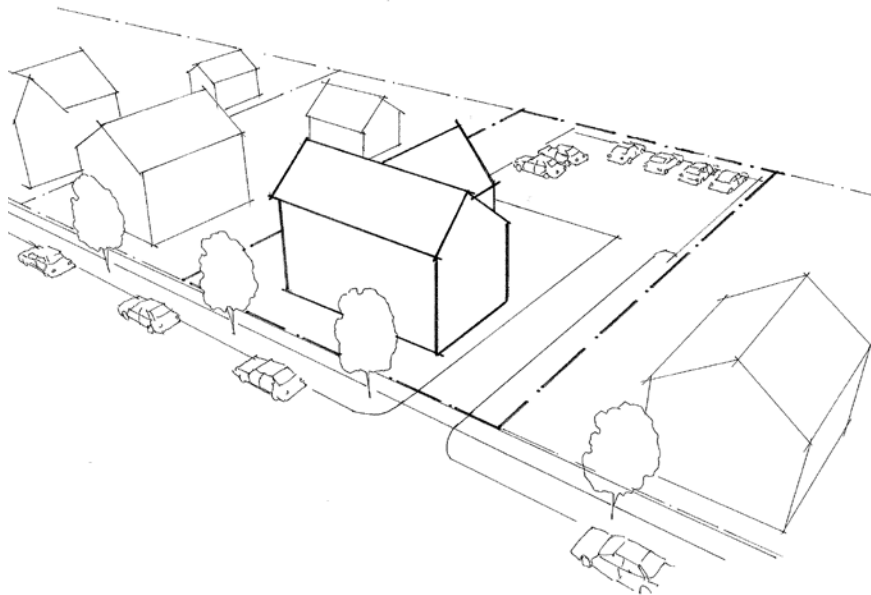


NOT APPROPRIATE

The new building is not appropriate because its larger size and boxier, flat-roofed form are out of place in relation to other buildings on the block.

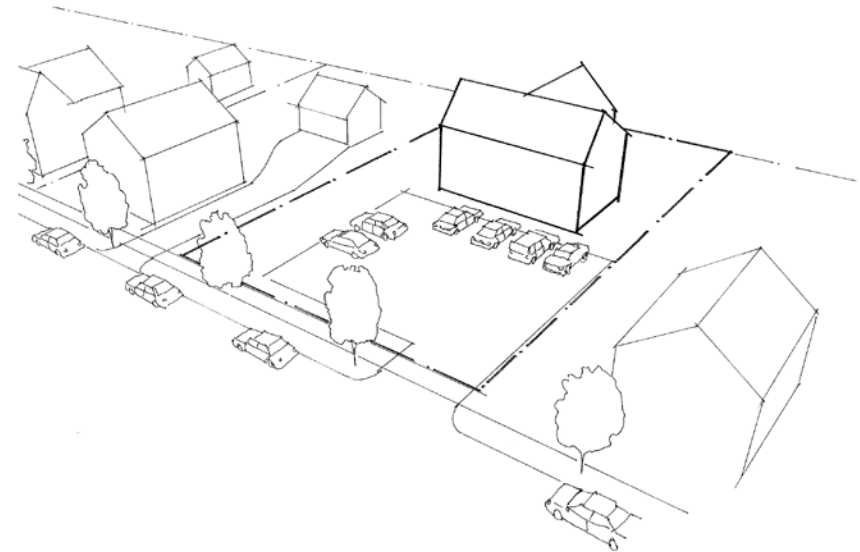
design guidelines

new construction



APPROPRIATE

This new commercial building is sited so that it is closer to the street and more in line with the setback of nearby buildings. Parking is in the rear, which can be advertised to drivers near the street.



NOT APPROPRIATE

The surface parking lot in front of this new commercial building disrupts the regular spacing of buildings and lessens the block's attractiveness for pedestrians.



demolition

Removal of existing buildings impacts a neighborhood's character. Unfortunately, buildings in poor condition may impact a neighborhood's property values and are sometimes regarded as demolition candidates for this reason. The binding review process will consider the poor condition of a building, but will also examine other factors prior to approval. The demolition can be considered positive if the new development in its place is beneficial to the block and the neighborhood as a whole. In other instances, demolition can be detrimental when it means the loss of a building that is representative of an architectural style or building type in the neighborhood and its removal breaks up the historic arrangement of buildings on a block and leaves a vacant lot in its place. An older building's removal and its subsequent replacement with a new structure can also be detrimental if the new structure does not fit in with the neighborhood's character.

Demolition of existing buildings more than 50 years old is subject to **binding** review. The Commission's decision on whether or not a building can be demolished is **binding** because of the significant impact demolition has on a neighborhood.

Financial Hardship

The Neighborhood Preservation Commission will expect the applicant who claims financial hardship in order to demolish a building to submit one or more of the following types of information, depending on the specific situation:

- Form of ownership of the property (sole, for profit, non-profit, limited partnership, etc.
- Professional estimates of costs to rehabilitate and to demolish the property.
- If the building is considered to be structural unsound, then a report from a licensed engineer or architect with experience in rehabilitation must submit a report that substantiates this claim.
- Estimated market value of the property in its current condition.
- Amount paid for the property, the date of purchase, and from whom the property was purchased. Terms of financing between the two parties, if any, should also be submitted.
- If the property is income producing, provide the annual gross income from the property for the previous two (2) years.

design guidelines

demolition

Demolition of existing buildings more than 50 years old is subject to binding review.

- The reason for limiting the review to buildings **more than 50 years old** is because this is typically the age that a building must have reached to be considered historic. In addition, most buildings less than 50 years old are not similar to the older buildings in a neighborhood and do not contribute as much to its historic character.

The need for demolition must be explained and justified in terms of financial hardship or a new development's benefit to the neighborhood in its place.

- **Financial hardship** means that the owner cannot financially afford to keep or maintain the building without severe financial consequences. The owner must be able to prove this situation through documents that help show an economic hardship, such as tax and utility bills, professional cost estimates to repair the building, and rental income statements. A more detailed explanation of the types of documents that may be required is in the appendix.
- **The new development's benefit** refers to its contribution to the neighborhood's well-being. This contribution can be include provision of additional affordable housing, removal of an existing building that is negatively impacting property values and quality of life, a new building that enhances the historic character of the neighborhood as compared to the loss of the existing building, or a new use that is needed in the neighborhood that cannot be accommodated in the existing building.

design guidelines

demolition

If demolition is approved and no new development is anticipated, the vacant lot must be screened from the street with landscaping and/or a fence. Alternatively, the lot can be wholly or partially landscaped without a fence or landscape screen. Trees can be added to the property.

- **Screening** should be either a fence or shrubs no more than 4 feet high on Bridge Street to conform to the existing Entrance Corridor Overlay guidelines. The height of fences and shrubs in other areas of the NPD should also conform to existing zoning. The fence or shrub screen must run along the entire front line of the property and at least the front half of both sides. If the parcel is a corner lot, both the front and the side fronting the corner must be entirely screened. Only the front half of the other side needs to be screened.
 - **Trees** must be at least 6 feet and have a caliper at least 4 inches when installed.
 - **Fences** should be constructed of natural materials, such as wood, metal, brick, and stone. Chain link fences are not allowed in the Entrance Corridor Overlay area. Vinyl and plastic fences are discouraged in all parts of the neighborhood.
- ▶ Brick walls should use historically appropriate brick. Bricks and mortar joints should be compatible in color, aggregate and joint profile with the building. Stone walls may be dry laid or set in a mortar that is historically appropriate in color, aggregate and joint profile. Split rail, stockade, and lattice fences should only be used in the rear and side yards.
 - ▶ The number of vehicular entrances through a fence or screen should be minimized. No more than one such entrance is preferred.

design guidelines

demolition



APPROPRIATE

Screening the vacant lot with approved landscaping, including shrubs and trees, helps soften and partially hide the view of parked cars or an empty open area.



APPROPRIATE

Screening the vacant lot with a fence of approved height and materials helps obscure some of the cars and provides a more solid front to the lot.

design guidelines

demolition



NOT APPROPRIATE

This vacant lot, filled with parked cars, detracts from the regular spacing and solidity of the block.



alterations to existing buildings

Most buildings are changed over time due to a variety of situations: updating the appearance of a building to suit the current owner's taste and prevailing fashions, adding or removing elements due to age, condition or new functions, and maintenance issues to name a few reasons. The purpose of the guidelines regarding existing buildings is to ensure that consideration is given to sensitive alterations that respect the original character of the building. As a result, taking some care to be sensitive will collectively contribute to the preservation of the neighborhood's overall character.

- **Only existing buildings over 50 years old** are subject to this review
- **Only changes to certain elements** would need to be reviewed by the Commission
 - The elements chosen for this advisory review are considered to be the most important elements of Bridge Street neighborhood's older existing buildings.
- Alterations include additions that are under 50 square feet in size (those over this size are included in the new construction guidelines) and changes to siding, architectural elements such as bays, porches, and roofs, and changes to original window and door openings.
- The Commission's review of proposed changes is **advisory**, not binding
 - The Commission is required to review only changes to the elements specified below in the design guidelines. While their review is advisory in the end, a project proponent must submit their plans to the Commission for review.
 - The Commission will provide suggestions to the project proponent on ways to make the proposed project more compatible with the neighborhood's character. The project proponent chooses whether or not to incorporate these suggestions in the project.

design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings

Removal and replacement of original building elements, such as siding, porch hoods, and exterior window trim, is subject to **advisory review**.

The appearance of replacement siding should be similar in appearance to the original siding on the building. For buildings with original clapboard siding, the width of the new courses should be similar to the original siding. For buildings with original wood shingles, the size, surface pattern, and width of the new shingles should be similar to the original shingles.

Even if replacement siding is installed, original elements on the building should be kept. They should not be covered over or removed to facilitate new siding installation. These elements include window, door and eave trim and cornerboards.

- The configuration of original window sash should be maintained, even if a newer replacement is installed. The number and appearance of panes in the upper and lower sash is both a stylistic and dateable feature on a building. If the building originally had multi-pane sash, its replacement with 1/1 sash can greatly change the building's historic appearance.
- Porch, window, and door hoods were especially common on late 19th century houses. In some cases, they were the only decorative feature on the house. Their removal would have a negative effect on the original character of the building.
- The size and placement of original window and door openings are characteristic elements of a building. Their enlargement, minimization, or removal may have a negative effect on the building's character. Avoiding changes to original openings is encouraged.

design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings



APPROPRIATE

Although vinyl siding now covers the original wood clapboard siding, the trim around the windows and doors and brackets and frieze at the roofline remain exposed unlike many vinyl siding projects that either remove or cover these types of elements.



APPROPRIATE

The original porch trim, including railing, support columns and spindles in the upper part of the porch are important elements to keep.

design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings



NOT APPROPRIATE

Although the porch roof appears original, this porch's support posts and railing have been replaced with more recent elements that are not compatible with the house's original character.



NOT APPROPRIATE

Retention of the original 6/6 sash is appropriate as shown on the house on the right. Removal of the original multi-paned sash, seen on the house on the left, and replacement with 1/1 sash is not appropriate.

design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings

Addition of new bays and porches and removal of original bays and porches is subject to **advisory** review.

- Many buildings in the Bridge Street neighborhood originally featured bay windows on their front and/or sides. In some cases, small porches with decorative elements accompanied these bays, especially on later 19th century buildings. Removal of these original elements or replacement of some elements, such as replacing railings or columns with newer elements that are not similar is discouraged. If elements need to be removed due to deterioration, then replacements should be as similar as possible to the original elements
- Other buildings, especially late 18th and early 19th century buildings, did not have bays or even porches. The addition of bay or porches on the front or visible sides of these buildings is discouraged.
- If new bays or porches are added to any building, their size and appearance should be proportional to the building and be simple in design.



Bay windows on the front or sides of houses are not seen on several Bridge Street neighborhood streets. Generally, early to mid-19th century houses did not originally have projecting bays.



By the 1860s-1870s, bay windows and other projections were a more common feature on houses in the Bridge Street neighborhood.

design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings



APPROPRIATE

This early 19th century brick house would not originally have featured bay windows. The bay windows on the side elevation, probably added in the 1870s-1880s, are set back from the front and do not overwhelm the structure.

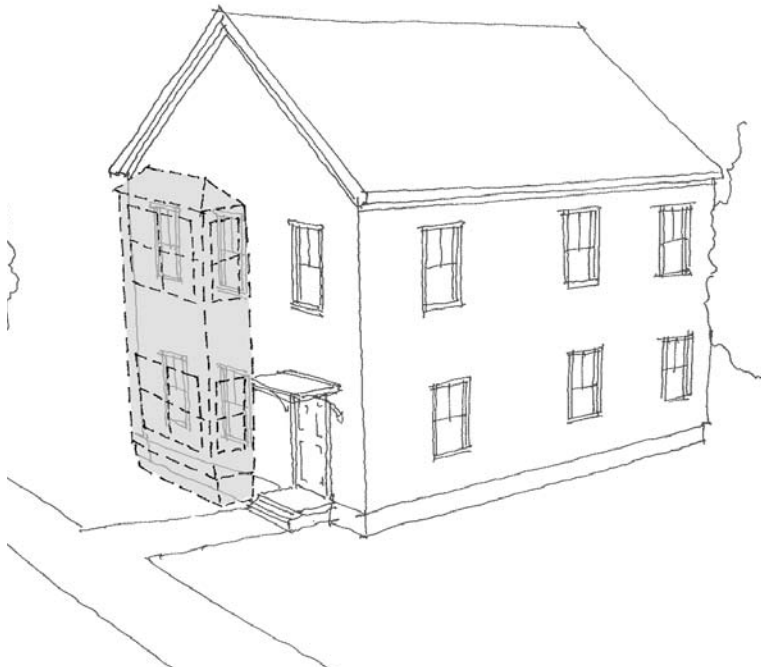


NOT APPROPRIATE/APPROPRIATE

House on the left displays very large porches and dormers. The one on the right retains its original porch and bays.

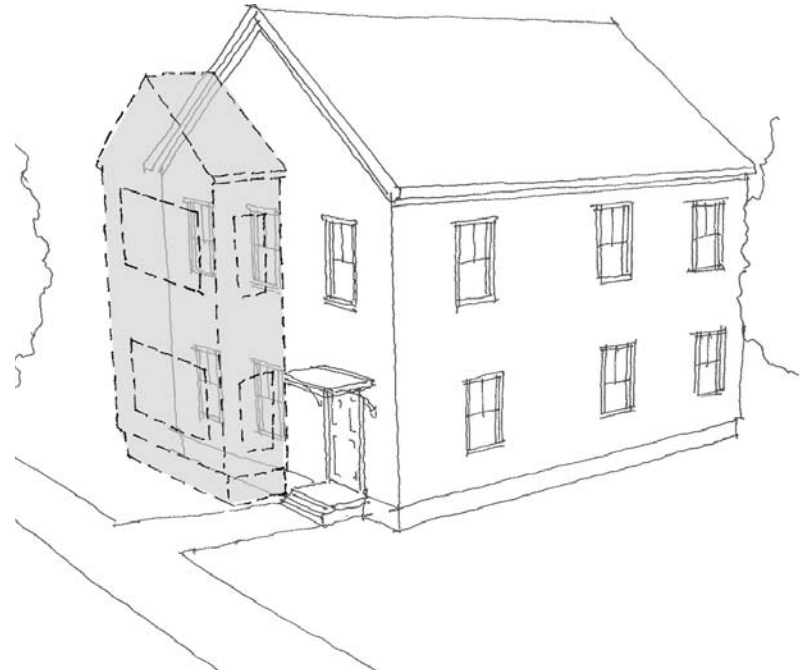
design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings



APPROPRIATE

The size of the new front bay displays an appropriate scale to the existing house.



NOT APPROPRIATE

The size of this new front bay window overwhelms the house.

design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings

Alterations to roofs, including the addition or removal of dormers, changes in roofline, and skylight additions are subject to **advisory review**.

- No one roof type characterizes the Bridge Street neighborhood's buildings, although a front gable is the most common. Roof types in the neighborhood also include side gable, mansard, hip, gambrel and flat roofs.
- Buildings with Mansard and hip roofs typically would originally have dormers. These types include mansard and hip roofs. Mansard roofs were only seen for a short time between 1860 and 1890. While most hip-roofed buildings date from the 20th century, some mid-19th century Italianate buildings also had hip roofs. Buildings with side and front gable roofs typically did not originally have dormers.
- Alterations to the roof that are subject to advisory review are those that change the roof's shape and profile. These alterations would include addition or removal of dormers, skylights, enlargement of existing dormers, and roof decks. The size and configuration of these elements is most important. Dormers, decks, and skylights that overwhelm a roof by their size are discouraged. If dormers are added, the roof type and pitch should be similar to that of the building.
- Equipment on roofs, such as satellite dishes, antennae, solar panels, photovoltaic units, wind turbines, etc. are also subject to advisory review. Placing this equipment so that it is not visible from the street is preferred.
- Replacement of roof coverings is not subject to review.

➤
A great variety of roof types is seen, due to almost continuous development of the neighborhood in the 18th through 20th centuries.

➤
The c. 1870 house on the left has a mansard roof, while the c. 1920 house on the right has a hip roof. Window dormers are a typical feature in both roof types.

design guidelines

typical roof types



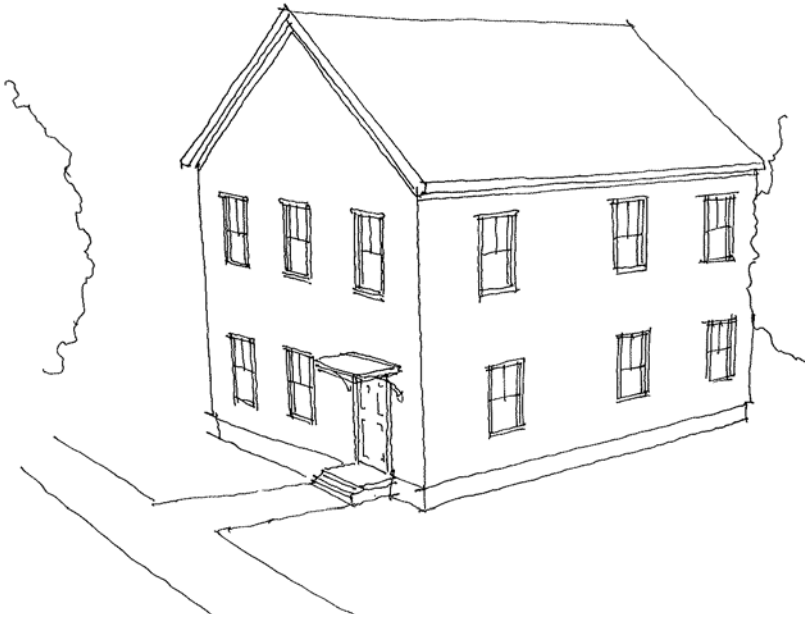
Both of these houses have front gable roofs in which the gable is facing towards the front.



Side gable houses are mostly seen on early to mid-19th century houses.

design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings



BEFORE

Homeowners add dormers to create more livable space at the roof level of the house.



AFTER

These dormers are appropriately-sized to the scale of this house.

design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings



AFTER

This single dormer is appropriately sized for the roof of this house.



AFTER

This large shed-roofed dormer overwhelms the house, especially because it is set so close to the front of the house.

design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings

Alterations to existing storefronts are subject to **advisory review**.

- Many buildings along Bridge Street are either former residential structures converted to commercial use or were built with a storefront on the first floor with residences above. Many of the existing storefronts, whether original or not, have been altered. Alterations include larger or smaller window openings, replacement sash and doors, and materials that frame the storefront.
- Larger window openings are preferred, unless the building was originally a residence only.
- Storefront windows next to the street can provide a level of security for pedestrians (if open to the store's interior) and function as a display of the store's offerings for both pedestrians and those in cars.
- Painted wood, steel and aluminum for framing and structural elements are preferred.



Larger windows are preferred over smaller windows for storefronts.

design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings



BEFORE

The small storefront windows on this former residence give the building a closed-up and unwelcoming appearance.

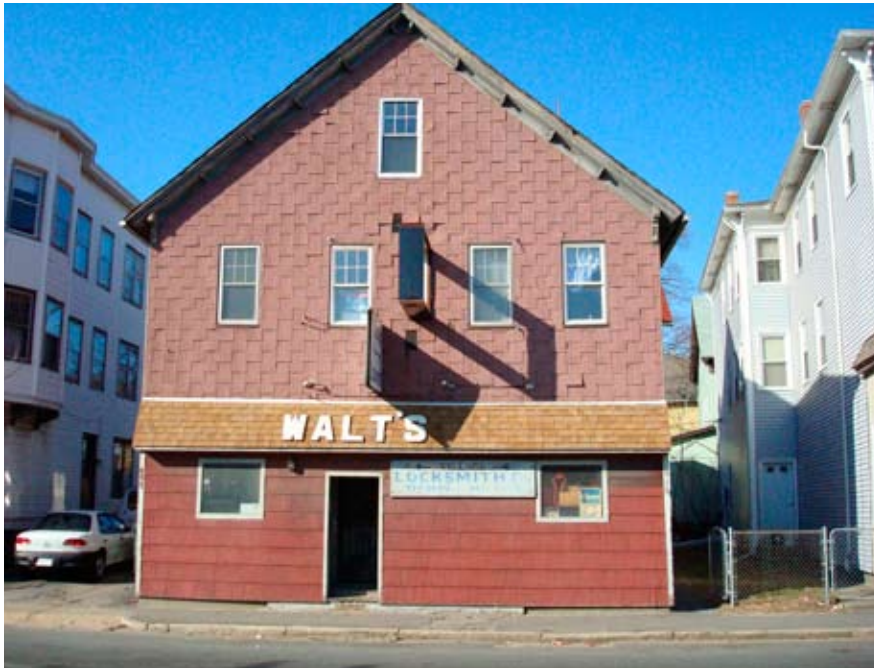


AFTER

Opening up smaller window openings for a more traditional storefront on an older building provides more attractive window display areas, a sense of security and interest on the street for pedestrians, and is usually then a better proportioned section of the building.

design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings



BEFORE

This building was always used for commercial purposes, but its original large storefront windows were removed and replaced with small windows and a shed roof.



AFTER

This new traditional storefront features large display windows with panels below, a recessed entrance, and an awning that shades the entrance and windows.

design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings



BEFORE

Another example of how smaller windows and opaque materials at the pedestrian level result in an uninviting appearance.



AFTER

Large open windows in the storefronts make a tremendous difference in the buildings and in the street view.

design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings

Storefront alterations to houses proposed to be converted to commercial use should retain the original window and door arrangements, especially on the front of the house.

Guidance on storefront designs is available in the publication, City of Salem Commercial Design Guidelines. Sections of this publication are devoted to storefront design in general, but specific suggestions are also presented for the Bridge Street neighborhood.



The first story of this former residence has been entirely removed and covered over for an extensive storefront addition.



The large windows flanking the enclosed center entrance on the right are out-of-scale with the other window openings.

