



Sample Point 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

point neighborhood characteristics

- Buildings are set close to the street and occupy most of the lot footprint
- Most of the Point's buildings were constructed within a 3-year period from 1914-1917, using a model building code that stressed fireproof qualities
- Residents chose designs from plans provided to them or were architect-designed, which has resulted in many similar building types and forms in the neighborhood
- In general, building shapes and size are compatible on many blocks with a height restriction of 2-4 stories imposed by the model building code
- Porches are one of the most characteristic elements: open porches across the front of buildings and multi-story porches on the rear and sides
- Buildings are simple without much ornamentation, although classical elements dominate



new construction

New construction is expected and encouraged in the Point 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 Point 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.

- 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 height and overall shape.
- **Form** refers to the building's configuration.

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

- Buildings in the Point neighborhood are either wood frame that is covered with clapboard or replacement horizontal siding, brick, and less commonly, cement block. On most blocks, there is a mix of wood and brick buildings which allows more latitude in the choice of the new building's exterior sheathing. The exterior of new buildings should either be brick or wood or shingle siding. Vinyl siding and other polyvinyl chloride (PVC) elements on the exterior are discouraged on new buildings.
- The term "elements" refers to window sizes and their basic spacing arrangement and projections such as dormers, bay windows, and porches.

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.



APPROPRIATE

Although this building exceeds the height limitation of 3 stories in the neighborhood, its overall form, recessed bays, flat roof, and window spacing are characteristic of nearby buildings. A height variance would need to be approved by the NPD, followed by a variance request to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

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.

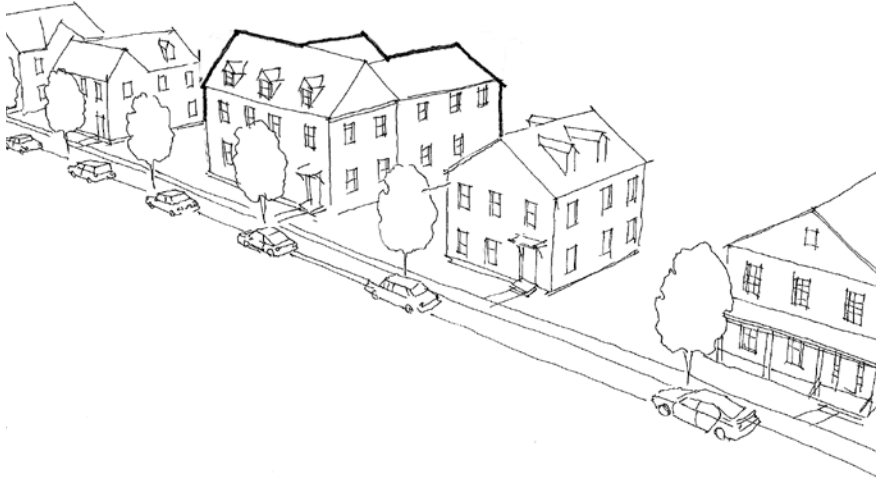


APPROPRIATE

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.

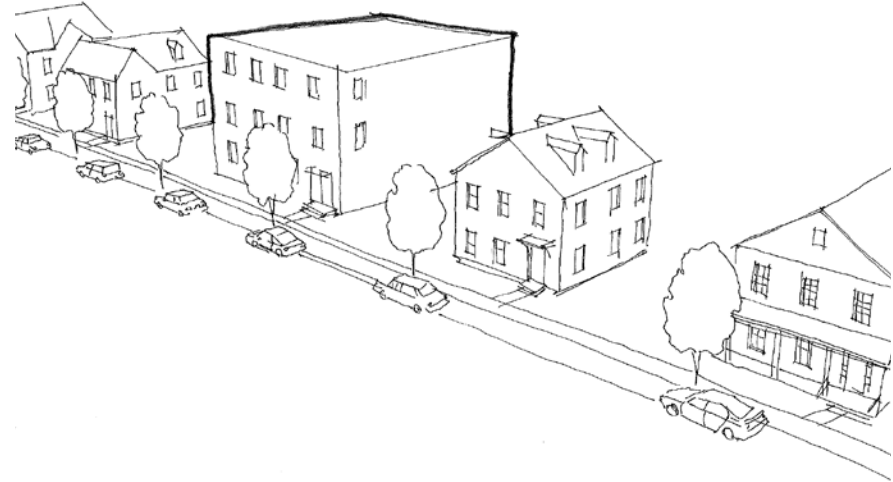
design guidelines

new construction



APPROPRIATE

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

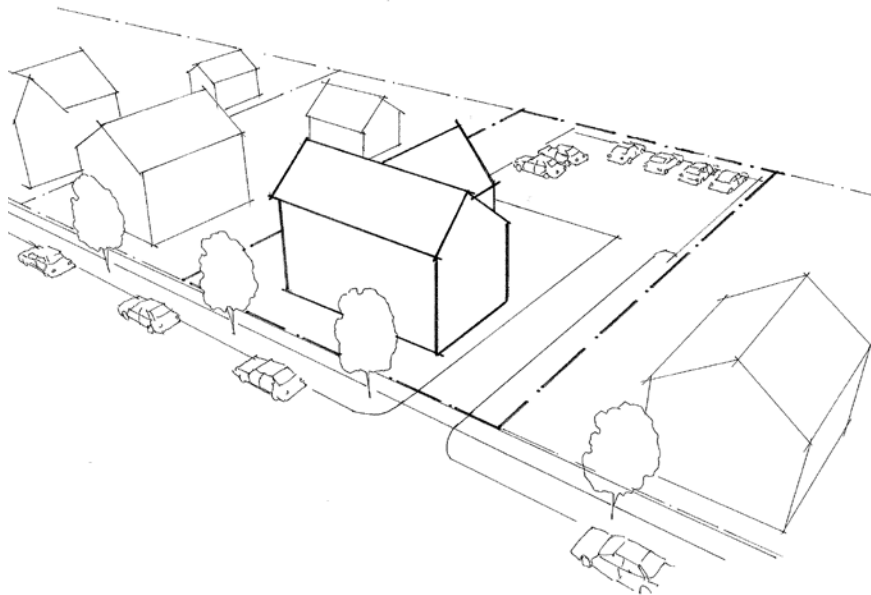


NOT APPROPRIATE

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.

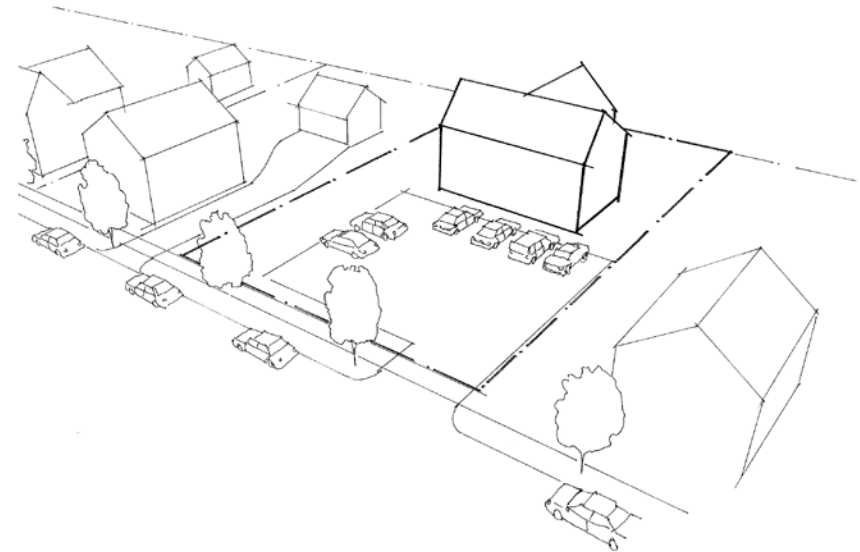
design guidelines

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 the building up without severe financial consequences. The owner must be able to prove this situation through the submission of documents, such as tax and utility bills, cost estimates to repair the building, and income statements.
- **The new development's benefit** refers to its contribution to the neighborhood's well-being. This contribution can be, for example, provision of additional affordable housing, new buildings that are considered to add to the historic character of the neighborhood, 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 or trees can be added to the property.

- **Screening** should be either a fence or shrubs no more than 4 feet high on Lafayette Street to conform to the existing Entrance Corridor Overlay guidelines. The height of fences and shrubs should be no more than 4 feet in other areas of the NPD. 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.

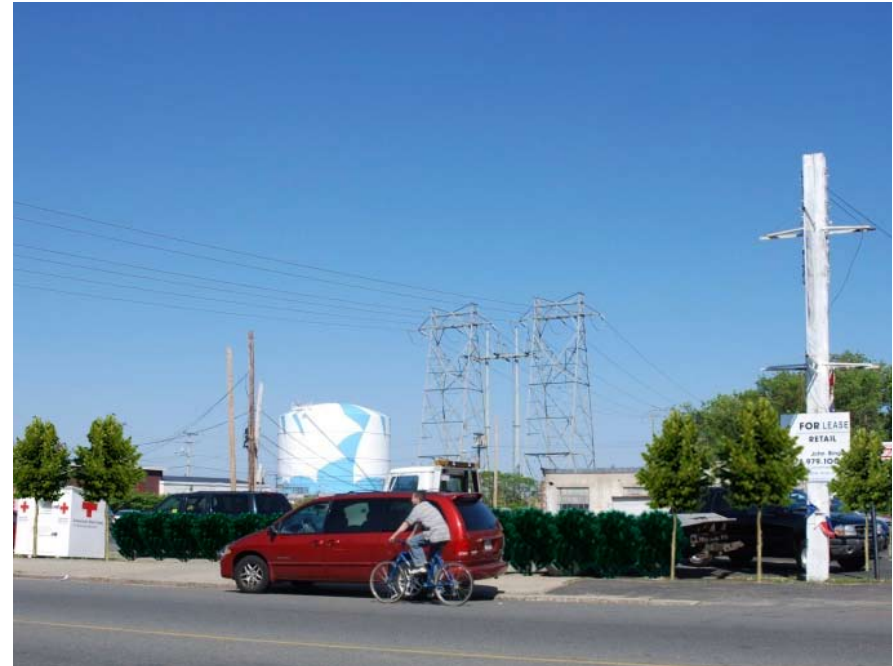
design guidelines

demolition



APPROPRIATE

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



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.

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 the Point neighborhoods' 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, window and door trim, and cornices 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.

- Most Point neighborhood buildings exhibit minimal decorative detailing, true to their Colonial or Classical Revival styles. Removal of trim, such as door or window surrounds, decorative stones or plaques, or dentils, would negatively impact the building's character. Removal of trim is discouraged.
- The configuration of original window sash should be maintained, even if a newer replacement in another

material 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.

design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings



APPROPRIATE

Retention of the characteristic cast stone cornice, window arches, brick panels, and quoins on this Leavitt Street building is appropriate, rather than removing or covering them.



APPROPRIATE

This house retains most of its original 6/1 window sash, although the replacement of some window sash with more recent 1/1 sash on the first story illustrates how important the appearance of the sash is to the character of the house.

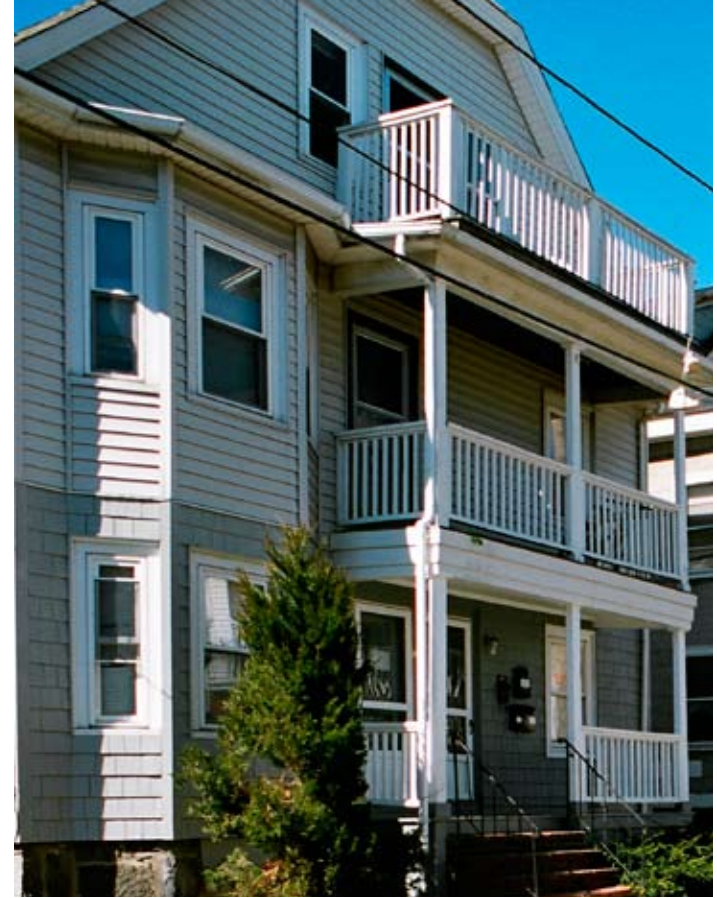
design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings



NOT APPROPRIATE

These two formerly identical houses both originally had porches with open railings. The porch on the right now has a closed railing, while the porch on the left is a complete replacement.



APPROPRIATE

Despite the addition of vinyl siding on the upper stories, this house does retain its first story shingles, wide simple window trim, and porch elements.

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 of the wood frame houses in the Point neighborhood originally featured open front porches, while many of the large brick apartment buildings had open multi-story porches on the sides and rears of the larger brick apartment buildings. The porch elements were usually simple in design, which was typical of the Colonial and Classical Revival styles that dominate the neighborhood.
- 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.
- 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.



The original multi-story porches on these buildings display simple detailing and are an important feature in the Point neighborhood.



Many buildings in the neighborhood have single or multiple story bays.

design guidelines

alterations to existing buildings



APPROPRIATE

This house retains its open front porch and two-story bay windows, which present a balanced façade.



NOT APPROPRIATE

The recessed porch in the center of the second story has been enclosed, contributing to this house's bland appearance.

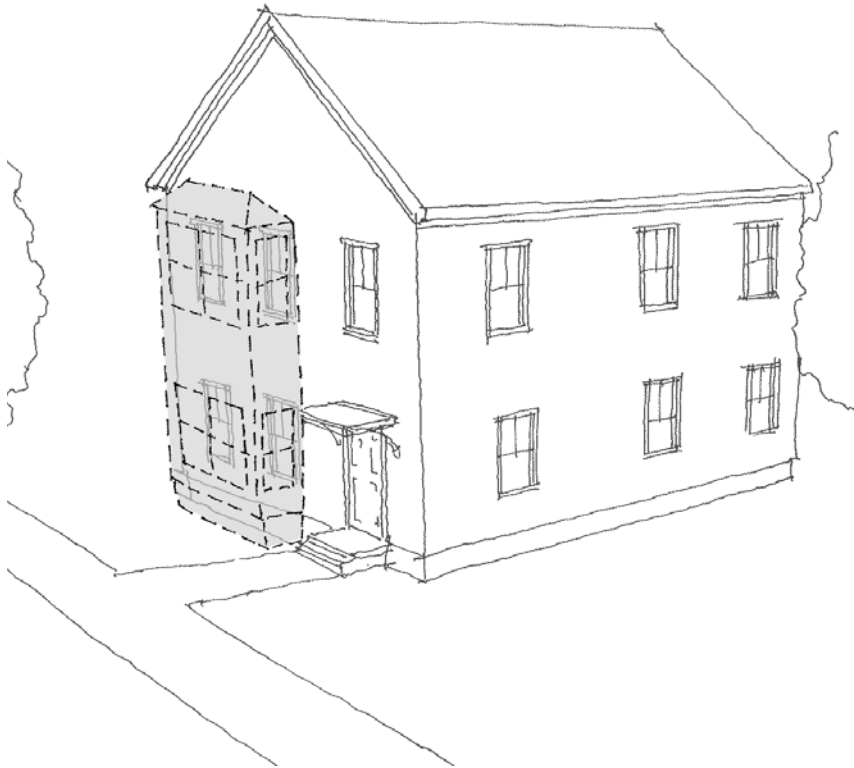


NOT APPROPRIATE

The small added bay is too small proportionately for this house

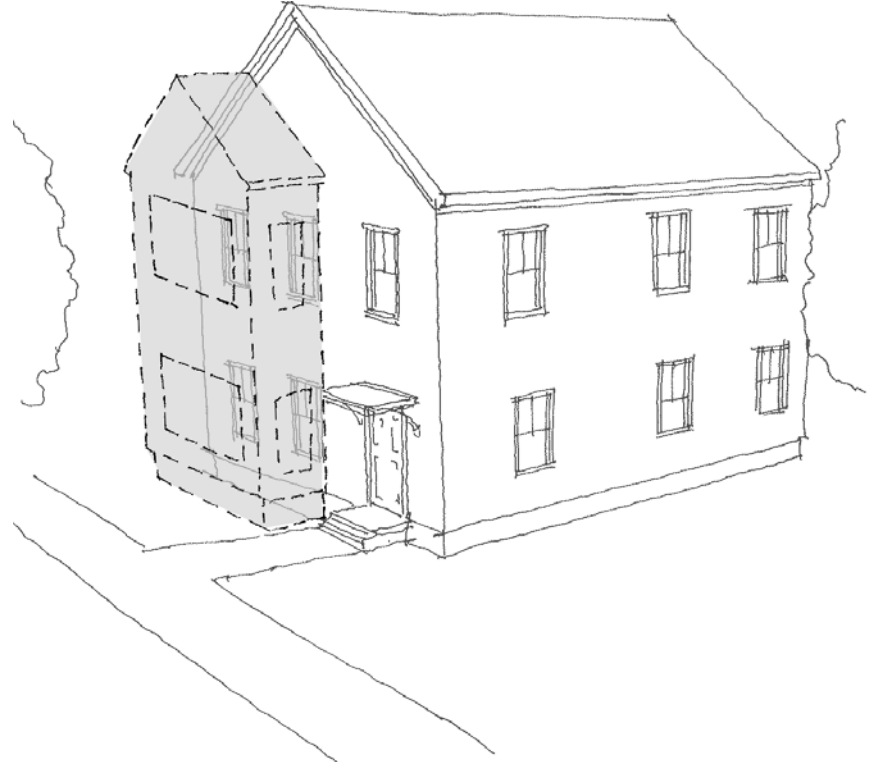
design guidelines

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 Point neighborhood's buildings, although a front gable is the most common. Roof types in the neighborhood also include side gable, hip, gambrel and flat roofs.
- Buildings with hip roofs typically would originally have dormers. 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.

➤

Roof types in the Point neighborhood include hip, side gable, flat, and front gable. The front gable and hip are the most commonly seen roof types. This view of Harbor Street includes buildings with (from left to right) a hip, front gable and flat roofs.

➤

Dormers are typically the same roof type as the main roof. On Congress Street, the original dormers centered in the roof follow the main hip roof. The larger and more recent shed roof dormer on the house at the right does not conform to this practice.

design guidelines

typical roof types



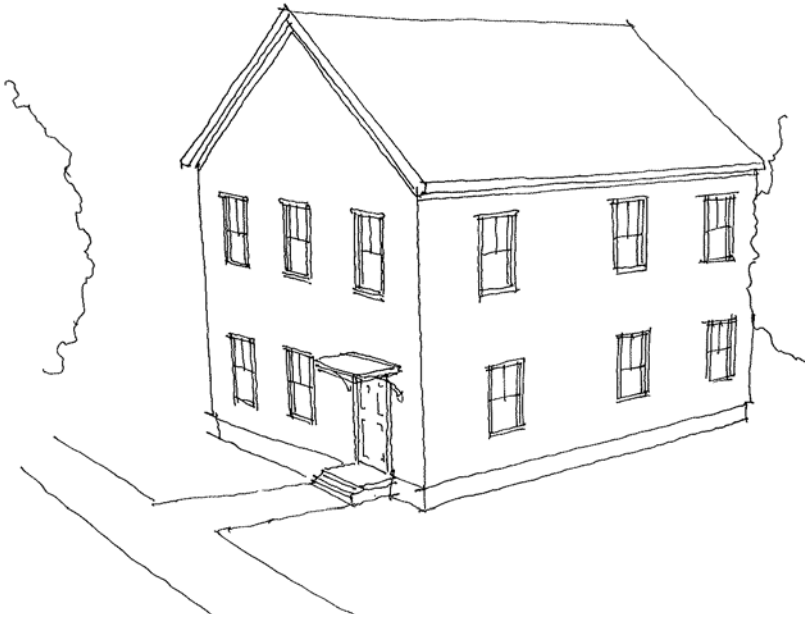
The vast majority of brick apartment buildings in the neighborhood have flat roofs; most also feature a classically detailed cornice.



A rooftop addition to the one-story house on the right foreground would be appropriate, since so many houses nearby are two and three stories in height.

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

- Throughout the Point neighborhood are buildings that originally had a storefront or other commercial use on the first story and residences in the upper stories. Some of these building's first story has been converted to residential use. Many of the existing storefronts 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.
- Painted wood, steel and aluminum for framing and structural elements are preferred.



This storefront originally had much larger windows. Larger windows are preferred over smaller windows for storefronts.



The original storefront space of this building is now an apartment. The infill of vinyl siding and smaller windows within the storefront area for this purpose is typical in the neighborhood. The larger storefront windows might have been retained in this conversion, although additional window covering would be required.

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, and the Lafayette Street Corridor as well.



The more recent storefront addition completely covers the original first story of this residence.



These two Congress Street apartment buildings are very similar, but the one on the right always had a residential use at the first story. The building on the left might have employed the same size windows in its storefront conversion to residential use.

