CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Historic District Landmarks Commission

Guidelines for Site Elements

Site Elements

Site elements frame the architecture along a streetscape. In some areas, the established site patterns and components, such as sidewalks, street trees, fences and walkways provide a consistent setting that is unique to a neighborhood.

When considering altering a site, the HDLC encourages property owners to develop an understanding of the environmental characteristics of their immediate surroundings and allow that understanding to direct their design. This approach will allow a more compatible relationship between a property and its neighborhood.

Section Index

The HDLC reviews all site elements, installations, demolitions, modifications, materials and features that are visible from the street including:

The only plantings subject to HDLC review are those required for screening of non-contributing site elements.

All applicants must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness (CofA) as well as all necessary permits prior to proceeding with any work. Please review this information during the early stages of planning your project. Familiarity with this material can assist in moving a project quickly through the approval process, saving applicants both time and money. Staff review of all details is required to ensure proposed work is appropriate to the specific property.

Additional *Guidelines* addressing other historic building topics are available at the HDLC office and on its web site at www.nola.gov. For more information, to clarify whether a proposed project requires Historic District Landmarks Commission (HDLC) review, to obtain property ratings or permit applications, please call the HDLC at (504) 658-7040.

Using These *Guidelines*

The first step in using these Guidelines is to understand the rating. The rating corresponds to the historical and/or architectural significance of properties and determines what will be permitted within local Historic Districts or at local Landmarks under the jurisdiction of the HDLC.

S *Significant Properties – Retain the highest degree of architectural and historical merit.*

C *Contributing Properties – Contribute to the overall District and city character.*

N *Non-Contributing Properties – Do not contribute to the overall District character.*

Cast iron fences often occur adjacent to masonry walls.

Fences, Walls and Gates

Fences, walls and gates are important elements of the overall character of a neighborhood. They:

- Identify boundaries, provide privacy and security
- Are often a major element of a streetscape – separating public from private property
- Are often related to a building's design
- Are often specific to their neighborhood – (Refer to *Historic District* descriptions, Page 10-4)

Fences

Fences constructed prior to the 1850s at front yards in New Orleans were typically wood picket fences, typically 4'-0" to 5'-0" in height, some very elaborately designed. At Greek Revival houses, wood fences often had 1" square pickets with a pointed top. These open types of fencing allowed the front elevation of buildings to remain visible from the public right of way. A common issue with wood fences is that they rot and need regular replacement. Solid wood fencing, made of vertical boards capped by a molded top, was often only installed at side and rear yards around gardens.

This fence includes 1" square wood pickets over a heavy bottom rail, supported by large wood posts – a style that was common in Greek revival homes.

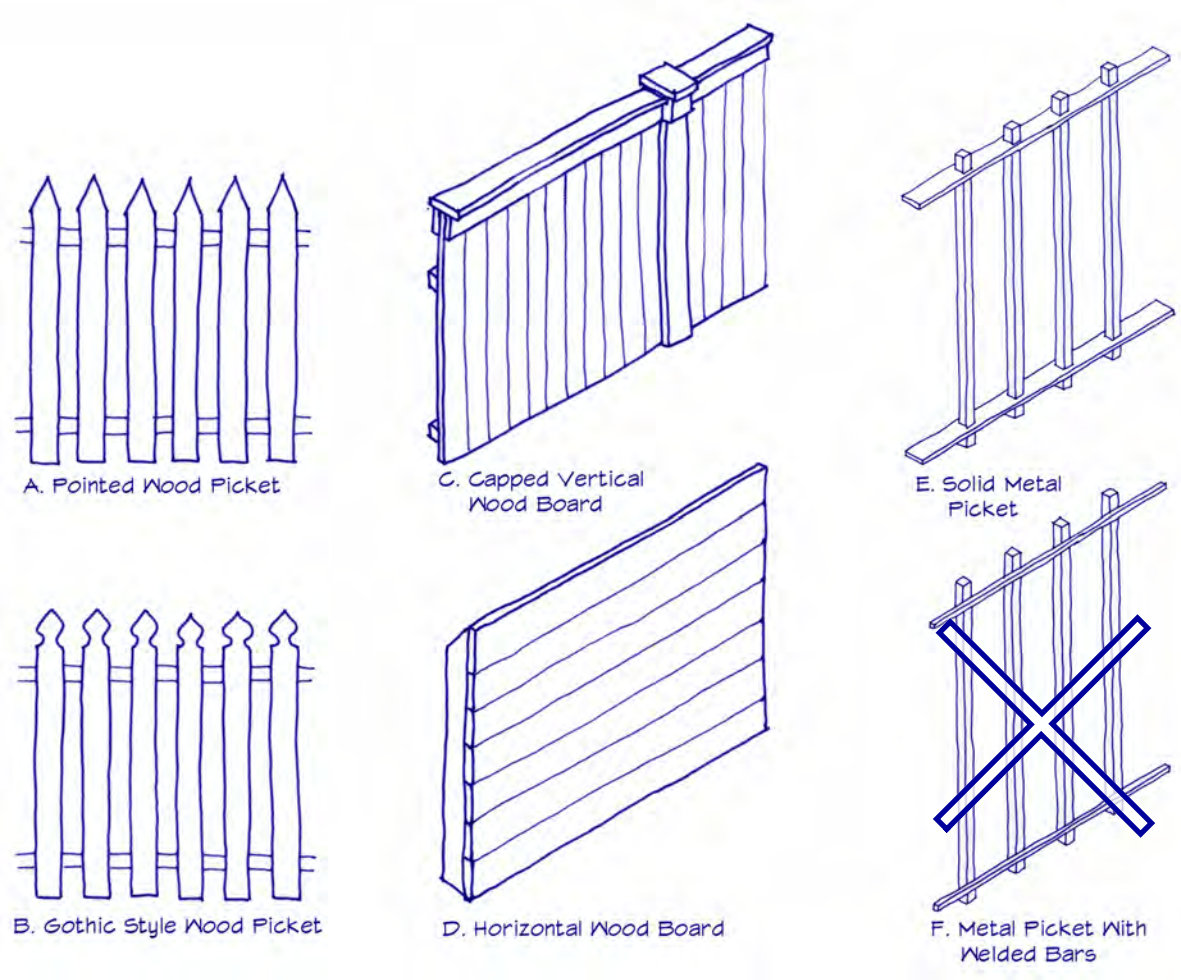
Beginning in the 1850s, cast iron became more prevalent and provided a much longer lifespan than wood. The casting of metal into molds allowed fences and gates to be made of highly elaborate and detailed patterns. Wrought iron tends to be used for simple, slender pickets. One of the advantages of iron fencing is that it is visually "thinner" than wood, increasing the view of the front of the building from the public right of way.

Taller and highly elaborate fences were often installed at grand, high-style homes, while simple, low wrought iron fences were often installed at simpler houses like shotguns. Historically, some homes, such as bungalows and Arts and Crafts style houses of the 1910s to 1920s, were built without fences. By the 1940s most new houses did not have fenced front yards, but back yards were typically fenced for privacy.

Wrought iron fences are often installed on low masonry chain walls less than 18" tall. Also note that the fence is relatively simple and made from narrow pickets, while the cast iron entrance gate posts are fairly ornate.

Gates

Pedestrian gates, traditionally along a walkway, are generally 3'-0" to 3'-6" wide. Gates for residential vehicular access are often about 10'-0" wide with a 12'-0" curb cut. When installed along a fence, gates tend to be of a similar material as the fencing. Gates providing the public entrance to the property, and their flanking gate posts, are often more elaborate than adjacent fencing. Gates to rear or side yards are often simpler than those at front yards. When installed at a masonry wall or pier, gates can be either wood or metal.



There are a variety of fence styles and types in New Orleans' neighborhoods. Wood picket fences, with either a pointed or gothic style top, (Examples A and B) are often found in front yards and are generally about 3'-0" to 4'-0" in height. Vertical or horizontal wood board fences (Examples C and D) are typically about 6 feet tall and are generally located in rear and side yards. Metal picket fences vary in height, but cannot exceed 5'-0" including chain wall if located at a front yard. If installing a metal picket fence, the pickets should be solid and punched through the horizontal bar as shown in Example E. Pickets welded onto a bar (Example F) are not permitted. ***(Traditionally fences follow the rise and fall of the adjacent site grading and do not always have a leveled top.)*** *Fence height is measured per the standards of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance.*

This brick wall has a decorative pattern that suggests panels and piers. The rear yard gate is located within the arched opening.

Walls and Piers

Landscape walls and piers are typically constructed of masonry with either a brick or stucco finish. They can be installed either alone or in combination with metal fencing. Low walls, also referred to as chain walls, are generally 12" to 18" in height, and topped with a metal fence.

The HDLC discourages the construction of walls that visually block primary façades from the public right of way, particularly at Significant or Contributing properties. In addition, although the HDLC does permit the construction of walls and piers with concrete blocks, they must have either full-size brick or a stucco finish.

Similar to masonry on buildings, brick and stucco walls and piers require regular maintenance. Refer the *Guidelines for Masonry and Stucco* for additional information.

A 3'-0" to 4'-0" foot high wood picket fence with a simple point is generally appropriate for the front yards of most properties except those in the St. Charles Avenue Historic District.

Appropriate Fences, Walls and Gates for Districts

Each District has its own character and typical features, including fences and walls. However, there is no single fence or wall type that is appropriate for every District or property. Some Districts tend to have a predominant fence or wall type while other Districts have a greater variety of options.

- **Lower Garden District**

  The Lower Garden District features residences of varying scale, style and age with different types of fencing. Several homes retain original or early fencing or walls that can provide the basis for new fence design. Wood fences with 1" pickets were common at Greek Revival homes. Cast and wrought iron fences are also found in the District, varying in height from 3 to 6 feet. Walls are relatively rare but can be found along the side and rear property lines of very grand houses and served to protect and conceal house work in yards. In limited cases, walls could be approved for use to provide privacy for a side or rear yards; but they will not be approved at the front yards of Contributing or Significant properties.

- **Esplanade Ridge and Treme**

  The Esplanade Ridge and Treme Historic Districts feature residences of different scales, styles and ages, and their fences vary accordingly. Historic fences at grand houses along Esplanade Avenue tend to be cast and wrought iron, 3'-0" to 5'-0" in height, and can be ornate. As the building and lot size diminishes on smaller streets, the fences are simpler and their scale is reduced. By contrast, many of the homes in Treme are similar in style to those in Marigny, and are built at the front property line. In both Esplanade Ridge and Treme, the majority of fences constructed on properties in the second half of the 19th century were wrought iron. As a result, a 3'-0" to 4'-0" high metal fencing is generally an appropriate option. For early Treme buildings located at the front property line, such as Creole cottages, a fence or wall between properties with a wood entrance gate facing the street would generally be appropriate.

- **Faubourg Marigny**

  Most buildings in the Faubourg Marigny are built at the front property line and very close together, typically without front yards. In cases where front yards are present, either a simple low wood or metal picket fence would be appropriate. Historically, capped solid board, vertical wood fencing or horizontally laid heavy boards secured to heavy wood posts were used to separate side and rear yards. An entrance gate of vertical wood boards was often located between the houses on a street to provide access to side and rear yards.

- **St. Charles Avenue**

  Fencing is an important visual feature along the Avenue which has large scale lots and residences set back from the sidewalk. Many original fences are wrought iron, allowing public view of the historic home beyond. In considering new fences for historic homes in the District, it is important that this visual quality be respected. If considering the installation of a new fence, a simple detailed metal fence is appropriate for St. Charles Avenue. If a chain wall is desired, it should generally be limited in height to maintain visual access of the front façade from the public right of way.

Most homes on St. Charles Avenue are set back from the street and include cast and wrought iron fences along the front property line.

Traditional horizontal board fences are constructed using 10-12" boards with beveled top and bottom edges installed horizontally. The use of beveled boards allows the fence to appear solid despite the space between boards.

Vertical board fencing should include a protective wood cap. (Refer to drawings, Page 10-3.)

Fence, Wall and Gate Guide

The HDLC Requires:

- **Staff review and approval of all details and materials for compliance with HDLC standards**

Front Yards and along Streets or Sidewalks

The HDLC Requires:

- Fences, walls and gates that are historically consistent in style with type and style of main building
- Appropriately scaled pickets for wood picket fence, typically pine, cedar or redwood
- Metal fencing can be either wrought or cast iron, or an alternate material, such as aluminum, typically with a matte black painted finish
- Metal pickets to be punched through horizontal rails and not welded to the face of rails
- Walls or chain walls that are limited to 18" in height with a brick or stucco finish that is approved by HDLC Staff with regard to color, type, texture and pattern
- Vertical board fences include a wood cap

The HDLC Recommends:

- Locating all pickets of boards on the outside of the posts facing neighbors or public right of way
- A painted wood finish or stained finish to appear as painted finish (Paint, stain or preservative treatment helps protect the wood, making the fence or gate last longer)
- Simple detailing of metal fences with plain, spiked pickets - All decorative elements are subject to HDLC review prior to installation
- New fences, walls and gates that are consistent in height and front property line setback as the heights and setbacks of adjacent fences

The HDLC Discourages:

- Elaborate ornamental detailing for metal fences except at high-style homes
- Metal fencing taller than 5'-0" overall and wood picket fencing taller than 42" when located between the street and main building façade
- The removal of existing historic fences that are in good condition

The HDLC Does Not Permit:

- Vinyl or synthetic fencing or gates
- Chain-link fencing
- Lattice fencing
- Hollow tube metal fencing
- Stockade fences of the type used in western forts, with wide boards cut to a point at the top except where its installation can be supported by historic documentation
- Barbed wire, concertina wire, razor ribbon wire and other similar security devices
- Solid wood fencing or walls in front yard of a Significant or Contributing building
- Exposed concrete block walls or piers
- Wood fencing at the front yard of properties in the St. Charles Avenue Historic District
- Fencing located on porches, stoops or stairs

Side Yards or Alleyways

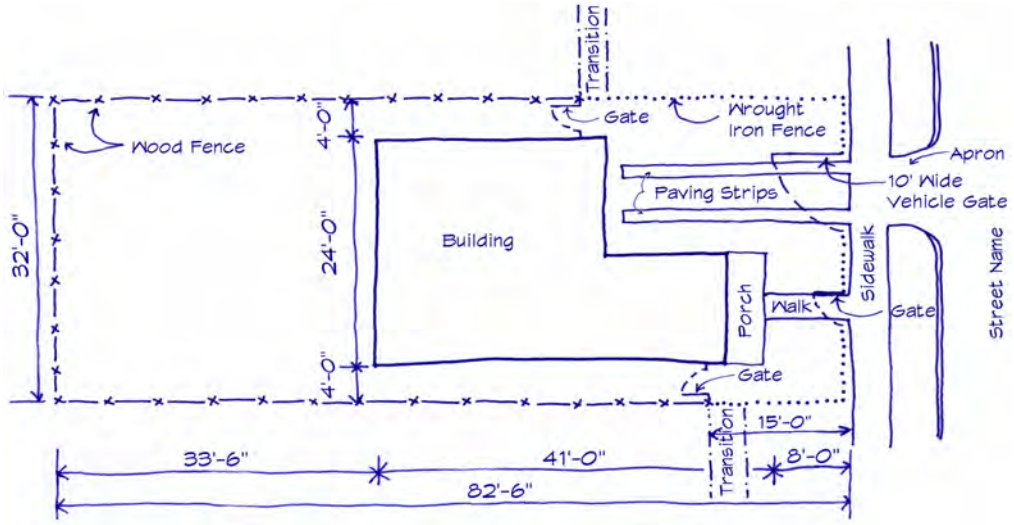
- All fences, walls and gates which are approvable in front yards are also approvable in side yards.

The HDLC Recommends:

- Wood fences, typically pine, cedar or redwood, with a wood cap *(The cap will help the fence last longer)*

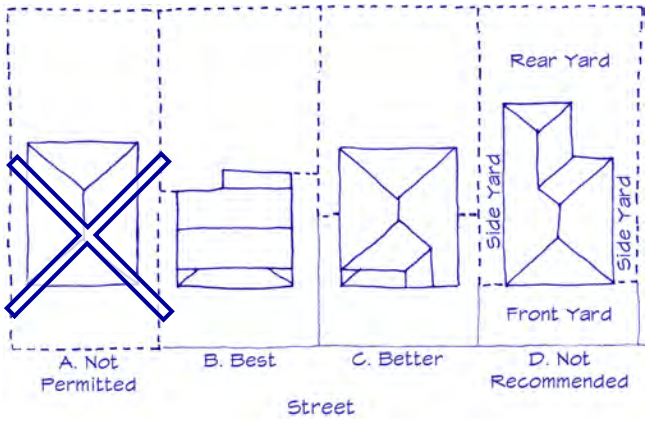
The HDLC Does Not Permit:

- Solid wood fencing that is closer to the front property line than the main building street façade
- A masonry wall taller than 18" that is closer to the front property line than the main building façade



Site plans should include the location of all buildings, paving and fencing; dimensions for the width and length of the lot; the size of all building; and the distances between the buildings and property lines.

A smooth transition between a shorter front yard fence and a taller side yard fence may be installed with metal fencing as in the example above, but is typically unsuccessful in wood fencing.



Solid wood fences over 5'-0" tall, shown as the dashed lines, are preferably limited to rear yard enclosures, Example B. Side yard fences, Examples C and D, might be permitted. A solid wood front yard fence, Example A, is not permitted.

Fence, Wall and Gate Review
Remove historic fence, wall or gate S C N Commission review.
Remove historically inappropriate fence, wall or gate S C N HDLC Staff review.
Install new appropriate fence, wall or gate S C N HDLC Staff review.
Install new inappropriate fence, wall or gate S C Commission appeal. N HDLC Staff review.

Commission Review and Appeal

Any fence type not covered by this Guide and any appeals of an HDLC Staff denial will be reviewed by the Commission on a case by case basis.

Additional Fence and Wall Reviews

In addition to HDLC review, proposed fences, walls and gates must conform to all requirements of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and Building Codes.

Lighting

Residential site lighting is generally located at porches. Security lighting shall be discreet in both size and location. If non-security lighting is installed, it should highlight architectural features or decorative landscaping. In addition, the impact on neighbors should be minimized.

All light fixtures that are visible from a public right-of-way are subject to HDLC review. (Refer to the *Guidelines for Porches, Balconies and Galleries*, Page 09-10 for additional information and review requirements.)

Herringbone pattern brick is a traditional paving material. Property owners are encouraged to retain historic paving.

Paving

Paving, which includes sidewalks, walkways, patios and driveways, has changed significantly from the 19th century with the development of new materials. Historically, paving could be as simple as crushed oyster shells or hard materials, such as brick or flagstone, laid in simple or ornamental patterns. Materials popularized in the 20th century include concrete and asphalt, and more recently cast concrete pavers, often colored and shaped to resemble brick.

In an effort to retain the quality of the City's historic properties and Districts, the HDLC encourages the retention, repair and maintenance of existing historic paving materials. Similarly, the HDLC encourages minimizing new paving and installing traditional paving materials in new installations whenever possible. If using non-traditional paving such as concrete, asphalt or concrete pavers, the HDLC encourages the use of landscaping to minimize its visual impact. Since the character and context of every property is unique, each application for a nontraditional paving material is taken on a case by case basis.

Parking strips are an appropriate alternative to a driveway.

Zoning Requirements

The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance dictates the amount of paving permitted on a lot. Please contact the City Planning Commission or Department of Safety and Permits to review allowable paving at your parcel prior to submission of a CofA application to the HDLC.

Paving Guide

The HDLC has jurisdiction over all paving on private property.

The HDLC Requires:

- Detailed, dimensioned site plans indicating the size and location of all proposed paving changes

The HDLC Recommends:

- Retention, repair and maintenance of historic paving materials
- Minimizing the amount of paving on a site
- Installing more permeable small scale paving materials, such as gravel or exposed aggregate paving instead of poured concrete or asphalt
- Simple, steel-troweled concrete finish – design and color of stamped concrete is subject to HDLC review
- Narrow parking strips instead of driveways or parking pads
- Patios instead of raised decks

The HDLC Discourages:

Removal of historic paving materials

The HDLC Does Not Permit:

- Parking areas in the front yards of residences
- Asphalt at walkways

Paving Review

Remove historically inappropriate paving;

Replace or repair historic paving in-kind

S C N HDLC Staff review.

Remove historically appropriate paving; Install new or additional paving; Replace existing paving with a different material

S Commission review.

C N HDLC Staff review.

Sidewalks

Although the HDLC does not have jurisdiction over sidewalks, property owners are required to maintain them. The HDLC encourages the retention and use of historic and traditional materials at sidewalks. Contact the following Department for additional information:

- **Sidewalks:** Department of Public Works
- **Street Trees:** Department of Parks and Parkways

Equipment and Systems

Equipment and systems subject to HDLC review include all mechanical, electrical, plumbing and telecommunication elements mounted on a building or located on a parcel that are visible from a public way, inclusive of required electrical and plumbing connections. This includes all roof-mounted equipment, exterior wall-mounted equipment and ground-mounted equipment such as:

- Mechanical equipment, air conditioner compressor units
- Vents, including restaurant exhaust vents, plumbing vents 4" and over in diameter (refer to Roof Ventilation Systems, Guidelines for Roofing, page 05-9)
- Television dishes and antennae
- Mobile telecommunications equipment
- Generators
- Solar panels *(refer to Guidelines for Roofing*, page 05-10)
- Wind turbines
- Building-mounted piping and irrigation systems
- Electrical equipment including generators and building-mounted electrical systems, conduit and junction boxes

Rooftop equipment shall not be installed in a visually obtrusive manner.

Roof Mounted Equipment

Roof mounted equipment including **mechanical equipment, vents, television dishes and antennae** and **mobile telecommunication equipment** are all examples of modern mechanical equipment and roof penetrations that can affect the historic integrity of a building. Although it is understood that some roof penetrations are required for items such as plumbing vents, property owners are encouraged to limit the amount of rooftop equipment and penetrations, and minimize the overall appearance of clutter.

Property owners of sloped roof buildings are encouraged to locate rooftop equipment and penetrations a minimum of 10'-0" back from the front building wall, and 12" below the roof ridge where they are visually minimized. (Refer to *Preferred Locations for Roof Objects, Guidelines for Roofing*, page 05-10.)

The installation of rooftop mechanical equipment, such as air conditioner compressor units, mobile telecommunications equipment or similar equipment, is not permitted where they are visually obtrusive from the public right of way.

Restaurant vents and exhausts should be installed within the building envelope and in a location where they are not visible from the public way.

Wall-Mounted Equipment

Wall mounted equipment can include:

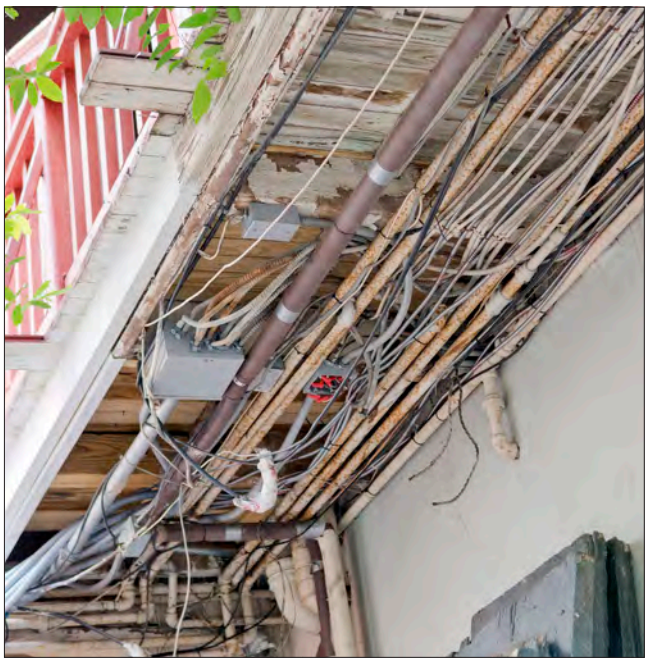
- Vents and exhausts
- Television dishes and antennae
- Entertainment devices such as television screens or displays as well as speakers and equipment
- Mechanical equipment such as ductless mini-split air compressor/condenser units and through-wall air conditioners and heating units
- Exposed electrical conduit, piping and irrigation systems for vegetation, including those for green walls (refer to page 10-10)
- Gas and electric meters

Restaurant ventilation systems typically provide exhaust for cooking equipment. The installation of restaurant ventilation systems is subject to building code requirements as well as HDLC review. Restaurant vents and exhausts should be installed in a location where they are least visible from the public right of way or within the building envelope. Through-wall ventilation and exhaust systems and the mounting of vent ducts to exterior walls that are visible from the public way are strongly discouraged.

Operational television dishes and antennae should be roof mounted in a manner that minimizes their visibility from the public way. They should not be mounted to porches, dormers or chimneys. (Refer to Preferred Locations for Roof Objects, Guidelines for Roofing, page 05-10.) All wall-mounted satellite dishes must be mounted a minimum of 10'-0" back from a building's street elevation. They should be disconnected and completely removed, including all associated wiring and fasteners, when no longer in use.

Entertainment devices, including television screens and speakers can increase enjoyment of exterior spaces. **Wall mounted entertainment devices, and associated electrical and plumbing connections, that are visible from the public way are subject to HDLC review**. Portable equipment and their connections, such as extension cords and garden hoses, are not subject to HDLC review.

Mechanical equipment, including ductless mini-split units or through-wall units should be installed in a visually unobtrusive, and rationally organized manner. This includes both wall mounted equipment as well as equipment mounted on porches, galleries or balconies. **Similarly, exposed wall-mounted electrical conduit, piping, irrigation systems, meters and devices should be minimized.** All abandoned equipment should be removed and the underlying materials repaired to match the historic condition.



The addition of more conduit, wiring and piping is both unsightly and a potentially hazardous. The visibility of exposed building infrastructure should be minimized and abandoned equipment removed.

Ground Mounted Equipment

Ground mounted equipment, which includes air conditioner condensers, generators, back-flow preventers, ground-mounted solar collectors, trash dumpsters, satellite dishes and antenna, and mobile telecommunication equipment are all examples of modern mechanical equipment that can affect the historic integrity of a site and its surroundings.

Property owners are required to locate ground-mounted equipment in a rear yard, or when this is not possible, at a side yard to minimize visibility. In addition, the HDLC requires that all ground-mounted equipment that is visible from the public right of way be screened.

Commercial Building Equipment

Refer to *Building Equipment, Guidelines for Commercial Properties,* page 11-21, for additional information regarding commercial building equipment.

Lighting, Security Cameras, Ceiling Fans

For additional information, refer to:

- *Lighting, Security Cameras and Ceiling Fans, Guidelines for Porches, Galleries and Balconies* page 09-10
- *Lighting, Guidelines for Commercial Properties,* page 11-20

Protecting Equipment from Flooding

To protect equipment and systems from flooding, it might be necessary to elevate it above the ground, thus increasing its visibility. Special care may be required to provide adequate equipment screening from the public way. In addition to elevating the equipment and systems, associated electrical devices, connections and junction boxes should be elevated to minimize the potential for flood-related system damage.

Equipment and Systems Review	
Install unobtrusive roof mounted equipment or system – Minimum 10’-0” from front building wall:	
S	Commission review.
C N	HDLC Staff review.
Install unobtrusive wall mounted equipment or system – Minimum 10’-0” from street-facing building wall:	
S	Commission review.
C N	HDLC Staff review.
Install unobtrusive ground mounted equipment or system:	
S	Commission review.
C N	HDLC Staff review.
Install new visually prominent roof, wall or ground mounted equipment or system	
S C	Commission appeal.
N	HDLC Staff review.

Landscape Features and Play Equipment

Landscape features, such as gazebos, pergolas and fountains; as well as play equipment such as swing sets, jungle gyms, swimming pools, Jacuzzis and tennis courts can all add to our outdoor enjoyment of our properties. Similar to ground mounted equipment, these are all examples of modern alterations that can affect the historic integrity of a site and its surroundings. Property owners are encouraged to locate landscape features and play equipment in a rear yard to minimize their visibility. Where the proposed location might be visible from the public right-of-way, the HDLC requires appropriate screening.

Shrubs and landscaping would provide screening of the play equipment and air conditioner units.

Small Structures

Small structures can be functional and provide enjoyment for property owners. They are generally less than 100 square feet in size, include tool or garden sheds; play houses; dog houses; permanent sun shading canopies; building or wall-mounted awnings, and gazebos. These are all examples of modern alterations that can affect the historic integrity of a site and its surroundings. Small structures that are visible from the public right-of-way should be constructed of materials that are approved for the existing main building such as walls and roof (Refer to appropriate *Guidelines* sections.) The installation of pre-manufactured sheds that are visible from the public right of way, particularly those with metal or vinyl wall cladding, are discouraged and shall be reviewed on a case by case basis.

To minimize their impact, small structures should be located in the rear yard to minimize their visibility from the public and ensure that they do not block the view of historic buildings or features. Where the proposed location might be visible from the public right of way, the HDLC might require screening.

Secondary Buildings and Structures

For information regarding secondary buildings and structures such as garages, larger sheds and carports please refer to the *Guidelines for New Construction, Additions and Demolition*, Page 12-20.

Green Walls and Façades

Green walls and façades were popularized in the early-21st century, providing a mechanism for vegetation to cover a vertical surface, often an exterior wall. The principal difference between a green wall and façade is that a green wall typically includes the growing medium, such as soil, as well as an irrigation system (page 10-8), while at a green façade, the plants are grown in soil at the base of the wall in the ground or a container. It is important to consider the following when contemplating a green wall or façade:

- Both green walls and façades are 21st century design elements that can alter the historic character of an area, requiring multiple fasteners mounted into a wall surface to support the vegetation
- Root systems can damage masonry and mortar and have a tendency to wick moisture into the wall
- Mature foliage can block sun rays and the ability of the wall to dry out and drive moisture into the building
- Green walls, which include the vegetation, growing medium and water, can be very heavy

In unobtrusive locations, an alternative to green walls and façades may be to construct an independent structure or trellis to support vegetation.

Green Walls and Façades

The HDLC does not permit the installation of green walls and façades at historic structures.

Landscape Features, Play Equipment; Small Structure; Green Walls and Façade Review

Install appropriate landscape features, play equipment and small structures with required screening – Minimum 20’-0” back from the front façade (and side in the case of a corner property)

S — Commission review.

C N — HDLC Staff review.

Install new visually prominent or inappropriate landscape features, play equipment or small structure

S C N — Commission appeal.

Install green wall on historic building

S C — Commission appeal.

N — HDLC Staff review.

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