

SECTION IV. NEW CONSTRUCTION

NEW BUILDINGS

When considering a new structure within the District the designer shall study the appearance and character of the entire neighborhood and pay particular attention to immediate abutters. The District has a unique character based on its history and development patterns. These characteristics express themselves in the scale, setback, roof form and materials and detail of its historic buildings. A new building should be designed so that it shares and is compatible with these qualities. New construction should be in harmony with the old and at the same time be distinguishable from the old so that the evolution of the District can be interpreted correctly.

The following guidelines offer general recommendations on the design of new buildings. The intent of these guidelines is not to be overly prescriptive, but to provide a checklist of design attributes to reference.

SCALE

Scale refers to the size of a building in relation to surrounding buildings as well as the relationship of the building to its site. Most of the structures in the District are between one-and-one-half stories and three stories in height and are often either three or five bays wide. The height and width of a new building should be designed with the average height and width of its immediate neighbors in mind.

MASSING

The mass of a building can be described as the boxlike forms that fit together to create the overall building shape and footprint. Massing is the three-dimensional form of a structure. Massing of Greek Revival and Federal era buildings was quite simple, while Italianate and Gothic Revival buildings often are more complex. The massing of a new building in the District should relate closely to the structures in close proximity. If this proves difficult a

building façade may be broken down into pieces, where each piece resembles the mass of its historic neighbors.

SETBACKS

The front setback is the distance between a building's façade and a public right-of-way. The setbacks in the District tend to be very uniform depending on location within the District. Most structures abut the sidewalk while many of the highly significant buildings are setback from the sidewalk and side property lines. This arrangement creates a distinct formal entryway with surrounding lawn areas. A new building should follow the precedents established by neighboring structures. Most likely the new building should be placed along the edge of the sidewalk and infill the width of the property. If the building is a highly significant civic structure or residence, it may be set back from the sidewalk and the two sides. Again, approximating site coverage of similar, nearby historic buildings. Averaging between the two setbacks types is discouraged. Applicants must adhere to current zoning requirements regarding setbacks.

MATERIALS

The selection of materials and textures for a new building should be compatible with and complement the surrounding buildings. The District has a range of finish materials including painted clapboards for small scale residential structures and brick and granite for larger scale commercial and civic structures. Wood structures typically have trim work providing a sense of detail while masonry structures often have rusticated granite blocks or carved or articulated pieces creating detail, texture and interest.

ALIGNMENTS AND RHYTHMS

A new building should relate to its immediate neighbors. The historic building pattern of the district creates a sense of rhythm that was achieved by groupings of buildings with aligning cornices, ridges and or bases. Building widths are similar and where a building is wider than its neighbors, the façade is typically articulated in such a way as to break it down into proportional sections. New buildings should follow these development patterns.

ROOF FORM

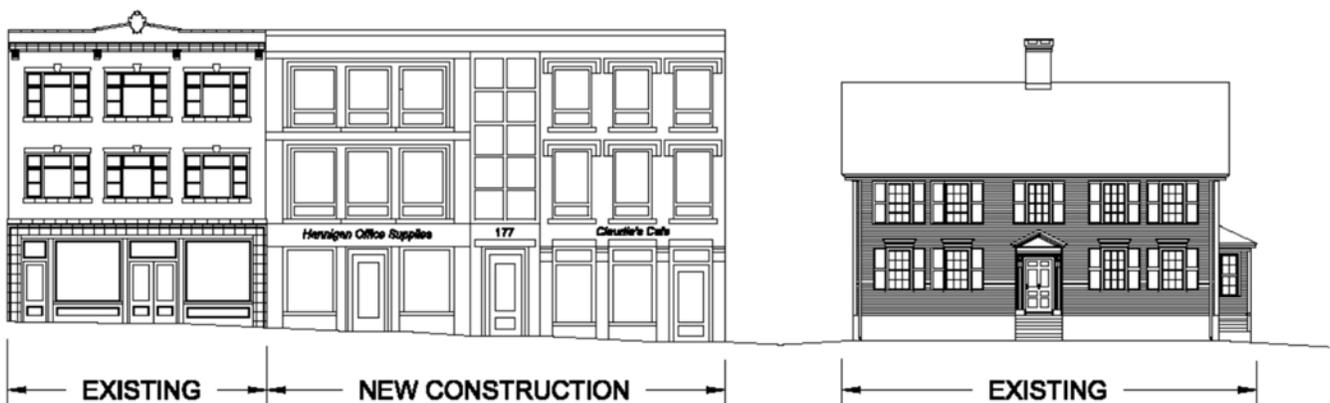
An important component of the District's visual appeal is its particular mix of historic roof shapes. The most common roof shape is a side or front gable found both on modest residences and prominent civic and commercial buildings. The second roof type is a simple flat roof found on most commercial blocks. Flat roofs are typically trimmed with a decorative cornice or parapet. There are also a handful of hipped roofs, usually found on free standing structures with surrounding lawn.

The choice of roof form for a new building should be based on its massing and scale. A large building footprint will require a flat roof solution where a smaller or freestanding building can support a gable or hipped roof.

FENESTRATION

Windows on the historic buildings within the District are typically vertically proportioned and appear in either a three or a five bay pattern. Commercial blocks often have large expanses of glass at the first floor for product display along the sidewalk. Windows in wood framed structures typically are framed with wood trim and often include a modest ornamental header. Windows in masonry buildings typically are set back in the masonry wall creating a "punched" opening effect and are often framed with rusticated or articulated masonry.

Window selection and patterning in new buildings should be compatible with neighboring structures. Windows do not necessarily need to be vertically proportioned or have ornamental casings, but the overall effect of the façade composition shall reference historical window opening to wall ratios. Historic buildings in the District typically have a large ratio of window opening to solid wall. New construction should reflect these relationships in some fashion.



Hypothetical new infill

NEW ADDITIONS

ADDITIONS TO HISTORIC BUILDINGS

A sympathetically designed addition can provide needed functionality and space with minimal alterations to the historic fabric of a structure. Additions to historic buildings are permitted, providing the design, massing, detail and finish is compatible with the design of the original structure and does not detract from the character defining features of the building. An addition may radically alter the building's appearance, and other options, such as altering the interior space or rehabilitating unused basement or attic space should be considered. The need for compatibility with the original structure does not preclude the use of contemporary design.

Two approaches to the design of additions to historic properties are available to an applicant. The first approach is to distinguish the new construction from the old by creating a balanced counterpoint between the two. This usually entails picking up on the massing and one or two other key elements of the historic building. Secondary elements to reference may include matching base heights or re-interpreting key character defining features such as belt courses, fenestration patterns or other rhythms found on the historic building.

The second approach available is more conservative in nature and results in an addition that will more closely match the original building. This approach should not be interpreted by the applicant as a license to replicate the design of the historic structure in its entirety. It is critical for an addition that closely resembles the historic structure to be distinguishable from the original by a trained eye.

Four factors to consider:

CONTEXT

Begin by looking at the existing building and nearby structures, including the relationship of

the building to the site, to other buildings, the setbacks and yard width. If the addition is to appear to be an integral part of the original structure the design and details should mimic the original. If the addition is to be contemporary the design should closely interpret details of the original structure or its neighbors. Reinterpreted elements should not overwhelm original features.

PLACEMENT

If possible, the addition should be placed on a secondary or rear elevation to maintain the integrity of the street view of the original. Additions should be attached to existing buildings in such a way that the form and integrity of the original would not be damaged if the addition were removed.

SCALE

The scale of the addition should appear secondary in size to the original. An addition can be larger than a historic property if it does not appear so from the public way.

MATERIALS AND TEXTURES

Materials and textures should be compatible with the historic structure. If the addition is to appear part of the original structure, original design elements should be replicated as closely as possible. If the additions is to be contemporary, the materials and textures may be contemporary, but should be complementary and harmonious with the original.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- If the addition is to appear an integral part of the original, at least one easily distinguished visual clue should be included. Slightly simplified window, door or cornice trim may provide this clue. Other examples of design features that could be modified include masonry opening sizes, material texture or simplification or complete removal of an ornamental feature.
- A clear visual break between the original building and the addition should be provided, for example by setting the addition back from the primary façade.
- The design and location of any new site feature should be in keeping with the overall development pattern of the neighborhood and not detract from its historic character.



Compatible addition to a historic property