Design Standards Revisions

November 12, 2026

CHARLOTTE HISTORIC PRESERVATION EST. 1976

Public Comments Received to Date

- **McCrorey Heights** neighborhood meeting – September 10
  - Thanked staff and HDC and appreciative of the work
  - Support the proposed changes
  - Request:
    - Paintable materials other than wood for front door replacement (ex. Fiberglass, Metal)

- **Oaklawn Park** neighborhood meeting – September 14
  - Thanked staff/Commission for the work and glad to see the recommendations
  - Support changes the proposed changes

- **5.8, #9** – Contrast requirement. Should this be kept or eliminated?

Timeline

Design Standards Revisions Public Comment + Adoption

- **HDC Workshop**, updated recommendations for McCrorey Heights + Oaklawn Park – September 9
- **McCrorey Heights** neighborhood meeting – September 10
- **Oaklawn Park** neighborhood meeting – September 14
- **HDC Public Hearing** – October 14
  - *Deadline to submit public comments: Tuesday, November 10 at 12:00 noon*
- **HDC Vote*** – November 12
- **Design Standards effective for NEW applications** – November 13
  - *Applications submitted prior to Nov 13 reviewed under current Design Standards.*

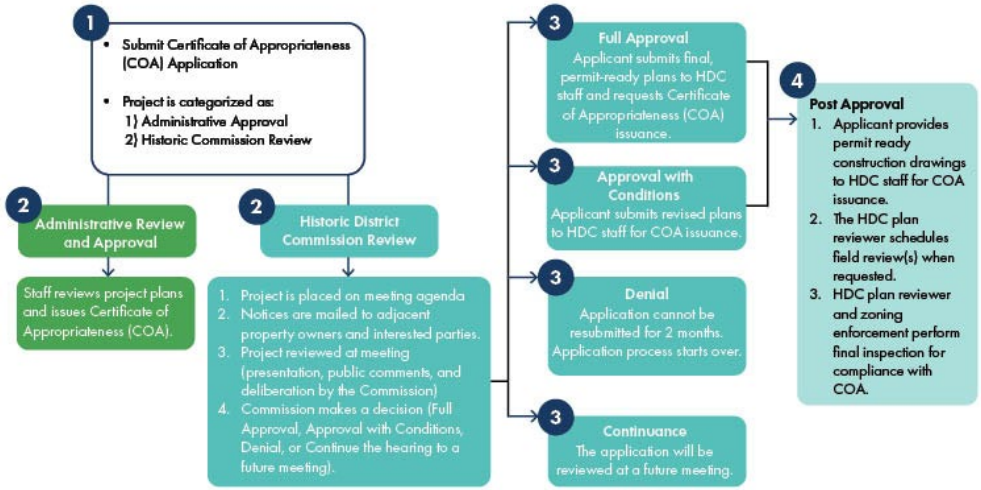
** Pending public comments received*

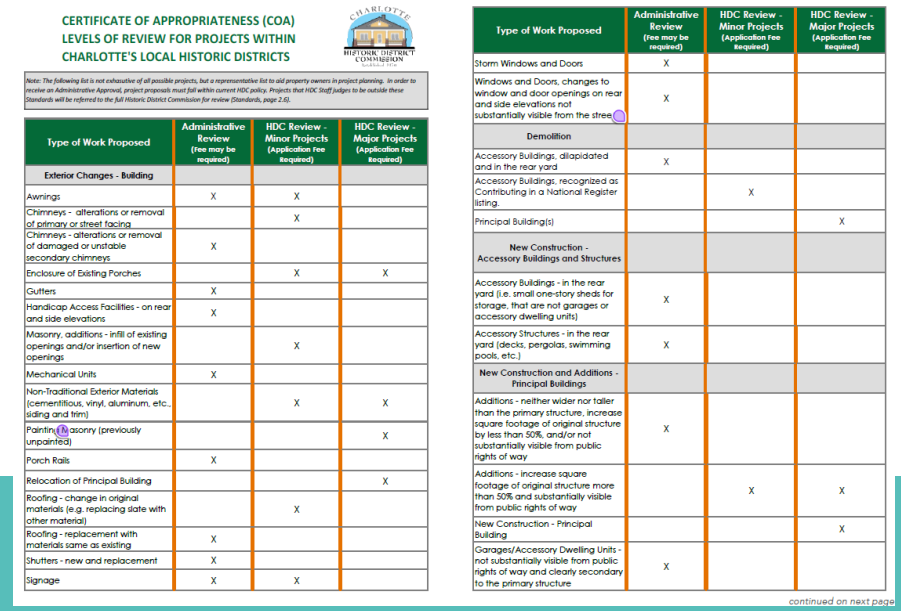
DESIGN STANDARDS UPDATES

- **Document wide**
  - **Add McCrorey Heights references** (Ex. Captions that only reference OP but should also include MH).
  - **Update any lingering Zoning Ordinance references to the UDO.**
  - **Eliminate any conflicting language** i.e. "existing" vs "original" vs "historic" throughout the document.
  - **Add disclaimer statements**:
    - Photographs do not imply approval or appropriateness of every portion therein.
    - The City and HDC have no control over the cost of labor, materials, equipment, or services, methods of pricing, competitive bidding, or market conditions.
- **Introduction**
  - **Clarify how to use the document**: Applies to existing structures and proposed new structures in historic districts.
  - **Do's and Don'ts:** Apply to all buildings, structures, sites, objects within designated local historic districts.

DESIGN STANDARDS UPDATES

- Chapter 2
  - Update review process flow-chart
  - Clarify roof replacement (ex. Existing asphalt shingle replaced with new asphalt shingle).
  - Clarify 50% increase includes covered porches
  - Clarify staff review of large accessory buildings in rear yards does not include corner lots.
  - Chart updates (masonry, window replacement)





CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS (COA) LEVELS OF REVIEW FOR PROJECTS WITHIN CHARLOTTE'S LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Note: The following list is not exhaustive of all possible projects, but a representative list to aid property owners in project planning. In order to receive an Administrative Approval, project proposals must fall within current HDC policy. Projects that HDC Staff judges to be outside these Standards will be referred to the full Historic District Commission for review (Standards, page 2.6).

Type of Work Proposed	Administrative Review (fee may be required)	HDC Review - Minor Projects (Application Fee Required)	HDC Review - Major Projects (Application Fee Required)
Exterior Changes - Building			
Awnings	X	X	
Chimneys - alterations or removal of primary or street facing		X	
Chimneys - alterations or removal of damaged or unstable secondary chimneys	X		
Enclosure of Existing Porches		X	X
Gutters	X		
Handicap Access Facilities - on rear and side elevations	X		
Masonry, additions - infill of existing openings and/or insertion of new openings		X	
Mechanical Units	X		
Non-Traditional Exterior Materials (cementitious, vinyl, aluminum, etc., siding and trim)		X	X
Painting masonry (previously unpainted)			X
Porch Rails	X		
Relocation of Principal Building			X
Roofing - change in original materials (e.g. replacing slate with other material)		X	
Roofing - replacement with materials same as existing	X		
Shutters - new and replacement	X		
Signage	X	X	

Type of Work Proposed	Administrative Review (fee may be required)	HDC Review - Minor Projects (Application Fee Required)	HDC Review - Major Projects (Application Fee Required)
Storm Windows and Doors	X		
Windows and Doors, changes to window and door openings on rear and side elevations not substantially visible from the street	X		
Demolition			
Accessory Buildings, dilapidated and in the rear yard	X		
Accessory Buildings, recognized as Contributing in a National Register listing.		X	
Principal Building(s)			X
New Construction - Accessory Buildings and Structures			
Accessory Buildings - in the rear yard (i.e. small one-story sheds for storage, that are not garages or accessory dwelling units)	X		
Accessory Structures - in the rear yard (decks, pergolas, swimming pools, etc.)	X		
New Construction and Additions - Principal Buildings			
Additions - neither wider nor taller than the primary structure, increase square footage of original structure by less than 50%, and/or not substantially visible from public rights of way	X		
Additions - increase square footage of original structure more than 50% and substantially visible from public rights of way		X	X
New Construction - Principal Building			X
Garages/Accessory Dwelling Units - not substantially visible from public rights of way and clearly secondary to the primary structure	X		

continued on next page

DESIGN STANDARDS UPDATES

- **Chapters 3 and 4**
  - No changes
- **Chapter 5: Masonry**
  - 2. “structure, or site feature.”
  - 3. “Leave unpainted masonry unaltered from its original condition (e.g. no paint, stain, limewash, whitewash, etc.)



BUILDING MATERIALS 5

MASONRY

Historic masonry has been used for centuries and is one of the most durable building materials available. It may include brick, stone, terra cotta, concrete, stucco, tile, and mortar.

Most masonry problems can be avoided with monitoring and prevention. Disintegrating mortar, cracks in mortar joints, loose bricks, or damaged plaster work may signal the need for masonry repair.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

National Park Service Preservation Brief #1: Assessing Cleaning and Water-Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings
www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief01.htm

National Park Service Preservation Brief #2: Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings
www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief02.htm

National Park Service Preservation Brief #6: Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings
www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief06.htm

National Park Service Preservation Brief #38: Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry
www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief38.htm

Brick masonry is used for walls on Colonial Revival houses (top) and other revival styles (center). Stone is used as a highlight around doors (center) and as a section of the facade (bottom) as seen in the Mid-Century Modern Example.

STANDARDS

For Masonry:

1. To maintain masonry in a sound condition, prevent water from gathering at the base of a wall by ensuring that the ground slopes away. Repair any leaking roofs, gutters, downspouts, and secure loose flashing.
2. Retain masonry features that are important in defining the overall character of the building.
3. Leave unpainted masonry unpainted.
4. Repair or replace a masonry feature only when necessary, using masonry that respects the size, texture, color, and pattern of the historic material, as well as mortar joint size and tooling.
5. Repair cracks and unsound mortar with mortar and masonry that matches the historic material. Ensure that cracks do not indicate structural settling or deterioration. Sound mortar should be left intact.
6. Cleaning masonry should only be undertaken to remove heavy paint buildup, halt deterioration or to remove heavy soiling. The best method for cleaning unpainted brick is to use a low-pressure wash of no more than 200 psi, equivalent to the pressure in a garden hose. A mild detergent may be added when necessary.

   To remove paint from masonry, chemically clean with an appropriate cleanser and low pressure wash. Test any detergent or chemical cleaner on a small, inconspicuous part of the building first. Older brick may be too soft to clean and can be damaged either by chemicals or by the pressure of the water. (This test is a mandatory step if you are applying for federal or state rehabilitation tax credits.) Do not sandblast or use high-pressure water-blasting as these methods can do irreparable damage to masonry. Follow any environmental regulations when undertaking such cleaning.

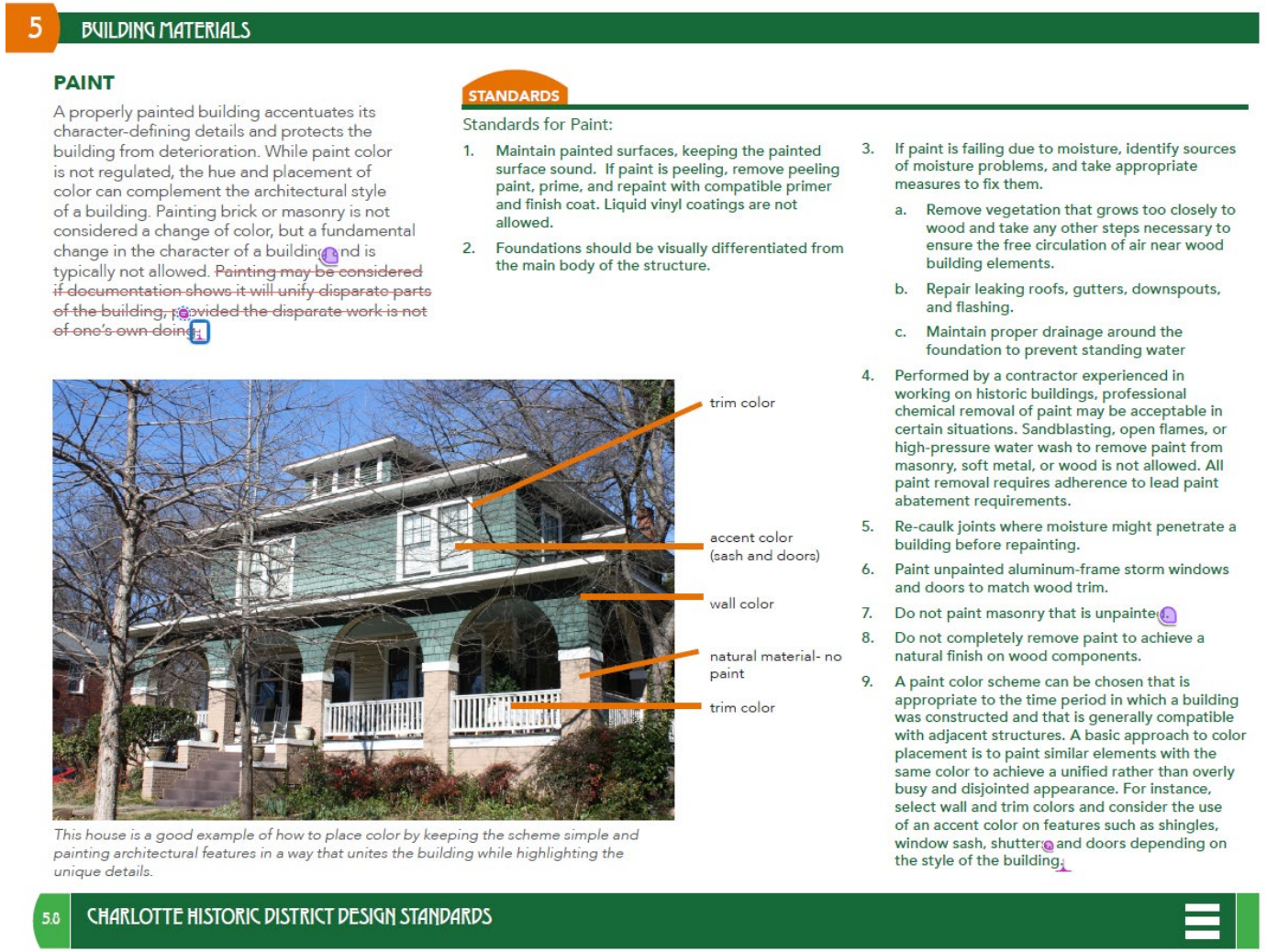
CHARLOTTE HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN STANDARDS 5.5

CHARLOTTE HISTORIC PRESERVATION EST. 1976

DESIGN STANDARDS UPDATES

> Chapter 5: Paint

- > Intro: … "When poor repair work is present (mortar issues, mismatched masonry, etc.), then a stain (not paint) may be used to blend these areas with the original brick/mortar colors. Approval of the stain and areas to be stained is required prior to undertaking any work."
- > 7. "Keep all masonry unaltered from its original condition (e.g. no paint, stain, limewash, etc.)"



5 BUILDING MATERIALS

PAINT

A properly painted building accentuates its character-defining details and protects the building from deterioration. While paint color is not regulated, the hue and placement of color can complement the architectural style of a building. Painting brick or masonry is not considered a change of color, but a fundamental change in the character of a building and is typically not allowed. ~~Painting may be considered if documentation shows it will unify disparate parts of the building, provided the disparate work is not of one's own doing.~~

STANDARDS

Standards for Paint:

1. Maintain painted surfaces, keeping the painted surface sound. If paint is peeling, remove peeling paint, prime, and repaint with compatible primer and finish coat. Liquid vinyl coatings are not allowed.
2. Foundations should be visually differentiated from the main body of the structure.
3. If paint is failing due to moisture, identify sources of moisture problems, and take appropriate measures to fix them.
   a. Remove vegetation that grows too closely to wood and take any other steps necessary to ensure the free circulation of air near wood building elements.
   b. Repair leaking roofs, gutters, downspouts, and flashing.
   c. Maintain proper drainage around the foundation to prevent standing water
4. Performed by a contractor experienced in working on historic buildings, professional chemical removal of paint may be acceptable in certain situations. Sandblasting, open flames, or high-pressure water wash to remove paint from masonry, soft metal, or wood is not allowed. All paint removal requires adherence to lead paint abatement requirements.
5. Re-caulk joints where moisture might penetrate a building before repainting.
6. Paint unpainted aluminum-frame storm windows and doors to match wood trim.
7. Do not paint masonry that is unpainted
8. Do not completely remove paint to achieve a natural finish on wood components.
9. A paint color scheme can be chosen that is appropriate to the time period in which a building was constructed and that is generally compatible with adjacent structures. A basic approach to color placement is to paint similar elements with the same color to achieve a unified rather than overly busy and disjointed appearance. For instance, select wall and trim colors and consider the use of an accent color on features such as shingles, window sash, shutters and doors depending on the style of the building.

trim color
accent color (sash and doors)
wall color
natural material- no paint
trim color

This house is a good example of how to place color by keeping the scheme simple and painting architectural features in a way that unites the building while highlighting the unique details.

5.0 CHARLOTTE HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN STANDARDS

CHARLOTTE HISTORIC PRESERVATION EST. 1976

DESIGN STANDARDS UPDATES

> Paint, 5.9 – Current

9. A paint color scheme can be chosen that is appropriate to the time period in which a building was constructed and that is generally compatible with adjacent structures. A basic approach to color placement is to paint similar elements with the same color to achieve a unified rather than overly busy and disjointed appearance. For instance, select wall and trim colors and consider the use of an accent color on features such as shingles, window sash, shutters and doors depending on the style of the building.



This house is a good example of how to place color by keeping the scheme simple and painting architectural features in a way that unites the building while highlighting the unique details.

> Paint, 5.9 – Options

Option 1: While the Commission does not regulate color, contrast is important. The historic buildings in Charlotte's local districts do not have monochrome pallets, except for Neoclassical buildings. A paint color scheme can be chosen that is appropriate to the time period in which a building was constructed and that is generally compatible with adjacent structures. A basic approach to color placement…

Option 2: While the Commission does not regulate color unless integral to the material itself (brick, metal, etc.), the following is meant to assist property owners in selecting a paint color scheme. ~~can be chosen that is appropriate to the time period in which a building was constructed and that is generally compatible with adjacent structures.~~ The time period of construction and architectural style can help to guide color choices. A basic approach to color placement…

Option 3: While the Commission does not regulate color unless integral to the material itself (brick, metal, etc.), contrast is important. The historic buildings in Charlotte's local districts do not have monochrome pallets, except for Neoclassical buildings. The following is meant to assist property owners in selecting a paint color scheme. ~~can be chosen that is appropriate to the time period in which a building was constructed and that is generally compatible with adjacent structures.~~ The time period of construction and architectural style can help to guide color choices. A basic approach to color placement…

DESIGN STANDARDS UPDATES

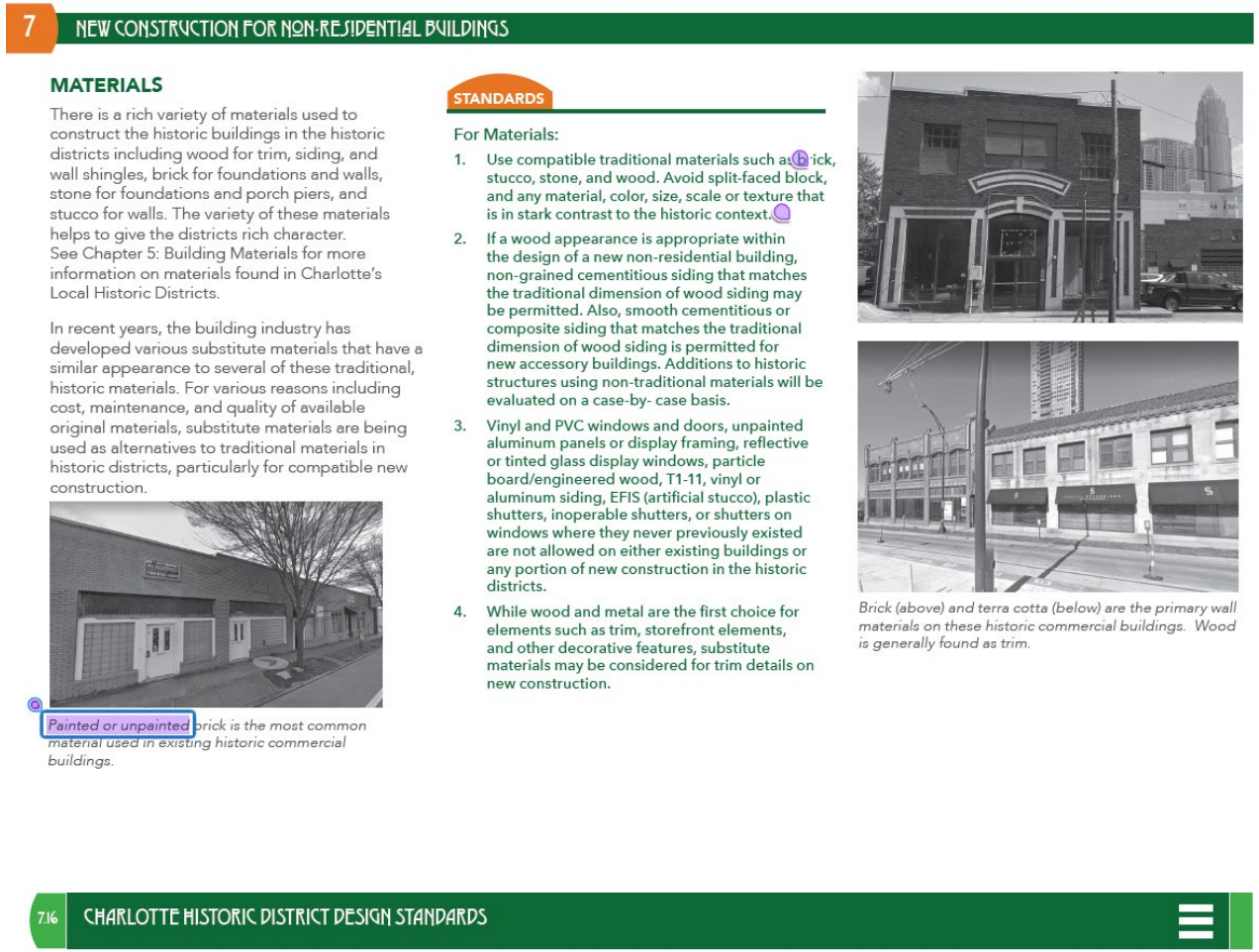
- Chapter 6
  - Height and Width
    - 1. … "taking into consideration the existing topography and any proposed grading."
  - Scale
    - "5. When dormers are used as a scale reducing technique, they should not be coplanar with the wall below but must be visibly inset to appear as true dormers."

DESIGN STANDARDS UPDATES

- Chapter 6
  - Materials
    - 6. New brick **"and mortar"**... **"stained, whitewashed, limewashed, or otherwise altered from its traditional color."**
  - Doors and Windows
    - 1. a. "the ratio of solids (walls) and voids (windows and doors); **break up long expanses of walls with windows and doors.**
  - Additions
    - 2. ...."**When adding dormers to an existing building in any way, then the dormers should not be coplanar with the wall below but must be visibly inset to appear as true dormers."**
    - 7. ...increase the building's **"historic, total"** square footage...
    - 8. rear yard **"(as measured from the back of he original, historic house)"**...

DESIGN STANDARDS UPDATES

- Chapter 7: Materials
  - 1. Use compatible traditional materials such as “traditional colors of brick”… “New brick should not be stained, whitewashed, limewashed, or otherwise altered from its traditional color.”
  - Caption: Strike “Painted or unpainted”



7 NEW CONSTRUCTION FOR NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

MATERIALS

There is a rich variety of materials used to construct the historic buildings in the historic districts including wood for trim, siding, and wall shingles, brick for foundations and walls, stone for foundations and porch piers, and stucco for walls. The variety of these materials helps to give the districts rich character. See Chapter 5: Building Materials for more information on materials found in Charlotte's Local Historic Districts.

In recent years, the building industry has developed various substitute materials that have a similar appearance to several of these traditional, historic materials. For various reasons including cost, maintenance, and quality of available original materials, substitute materials are being used as alternatives to traditional materials in historic districts, particularly for compatible new construction.

Painted or unpainted brick is the most common material used in existing historic commercial buildings.

STANDARDS

For Materials:

1. Use compatible traditional materials such as brick, stucco, stone, and wood. Avoid split-faced block, and any material, color, size, scale or texture that is in stark contrast to the historic context.
2. If a wood appearance is appropriate within the design of a new non-residential building, non-grained cementitious siding that matches the traditional dimension of wood siding may be permitted. Also, smooth cementitious or composite siding that matches the traditional dimension of wood siding is permitted for new accessory buildings. Additions to historic structures using non-traditional materials will be evaluated on a case-by- case basis.
3. Vinyl and PVC windows and doors, unpainted aluminum panels or display framing, reflective or tinted glass display windows, particle board/engineered wood, T1-11, vinyl or aluminum siding, EFIS (artificial stucco), plastic shutters, inoperable shutters, or shutters on windows where they never previously existed are not allowed on either existing buildings or any portion of new construction in the historic districts.
4. While wood and metal are the first choice for elements such as trim, storefront elements, and other decorative features, substitute materials may be considered for trim details on new construction.

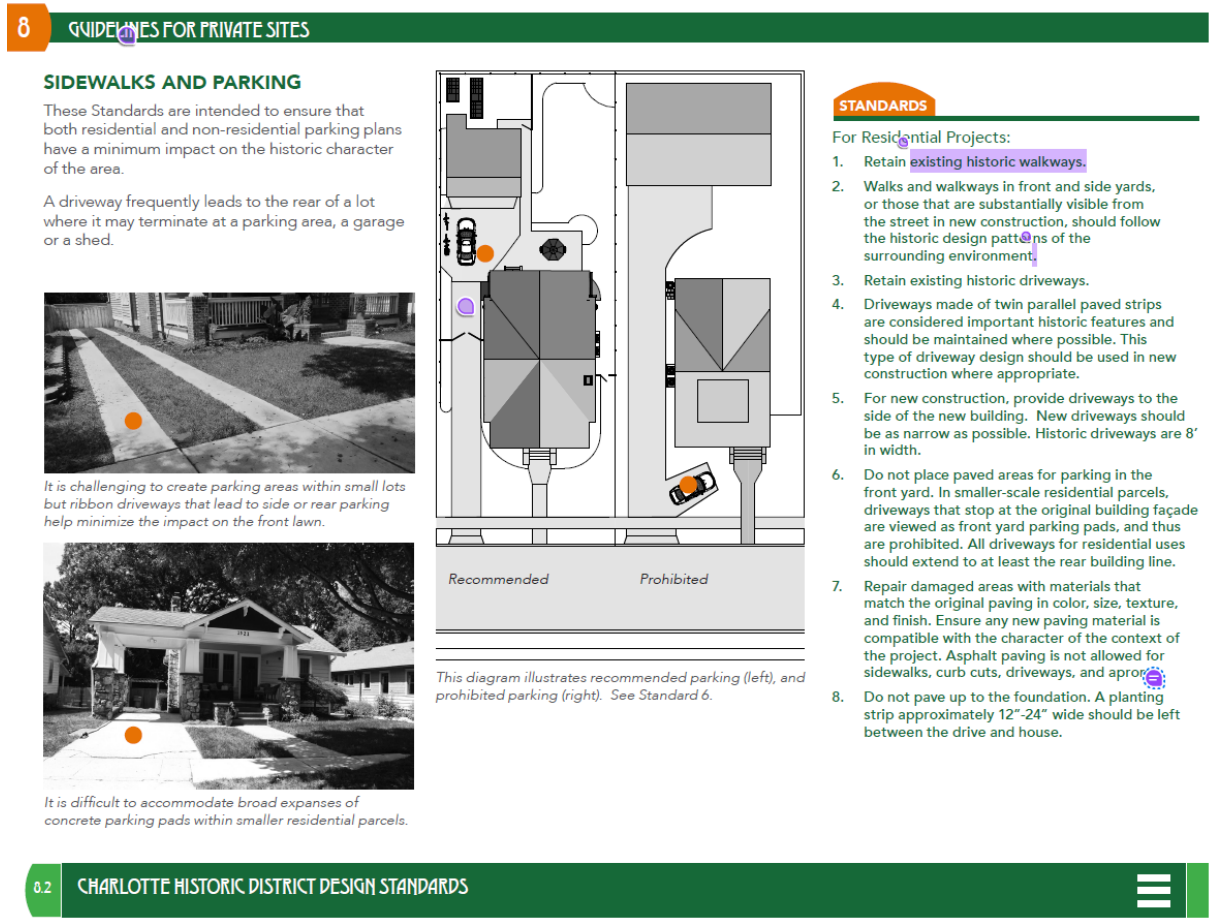
Brick (above) and terra cotta (below) are the primary wall materials on these historic commercial buildings. Wood is generally found as trim.

7.16 CHARLOTTE HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN STANDARDS

CHARLOTTE HISTORIC PRESERVATION EST. 1976

DESIGN STANDARDS UPDATES

- Chapter 8: Sidewalks and Parking, 8.2
  - 1. "Whenever possible, original historic walkways should be retained. If a material change is desired, the new walkway should match the dimensions of the original historic walkway."
  - 2. …"When secondary walkways are installed, they should be narrower than the primary walkway."
  - 7. Asphalt paving is not allowed for sidewalks, curb cuts, driveways and aprons **"in front of the rear thermal wall of buildings with a residential form."**
  - Update illustration to carriage strip driveway.



8 GUIDELINES FOR PRIVATE SITES

SIDEWALKS AND PARKING

These Standards are intended to ensure that both residential and non-residential parking plans have a minimum impact on the historic character of the area.

A driveway frequently leads to the rear of a lot where it may terminate at a parking area, a garage or a shed.

It is challenging to create parking areas within small lots but ribbon driveways that lead to side or rear parking help minimize the impact on the front lawn.

It is difficult to accommodate broad expanses of concrete parking pads within smaller residential parcels.

Recommended *Prohibited*

This diagram illustrates recommended parking (left), and prohibited parking (right). See Standard 6.

STANDARDS

For Residential Projects:

1. Retain existing historic walkways.
2. Walks and walkways in front and side yards, or those that are substantially visible from the street in new construction, should follow the historic design patterns of the surrounding environment.
3. Retain existing historic driveways.
4. Driveways made of twin parallel paved strips are considered important historic features and should be maintained where possible. This type of driveway design should be used in new construction where appropriate.
5. For new construction, provide driveways to the side of the new building. New driveways should be as narrow as possible. Historic driveways are 8' in width.
6. Do not place paved areas for parking in the front yard. In smaller-scale residential parcels, driveways that stop at the original building façade are viewed as front yard parking pads, and thus are prohibited. All driveways for residential uses should extend to at least the rear building line.
7. Repair damaged areas with materials that match the original paving in color, size, texture, and finish. Ensure any new paving material is compatible with the character of the context of the project. Asphalt paving is not allowed for sidewalks, curb cuts, driveways, and aprons.
8. Do not pave up to the foundation. A planting strip approximately 12"-24" wide should be left between the drive and house.

8.2 CHARLOTTE HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN STANDARDS

DESIGN STANDARDS UPDATES

- **Chapter 8: Landscaping and Lawns, 8.4**
  - 7. Original house → **"historic building"**
  - 9. Certain modern materials for landscape and site features are not allowed **"in front yards"** including:

    "f. Large rocks and boulders."
- **Trees, 8.5**
  - 3. 10" → **≥ 15"**



8 GUIDELINES FOR PRIVATE SITES

LANDSCAPING AND LAWNS

Like the placement of a structure on its site, the character of the landscape and accompanying plantings contribute to the identity of the historic district. Charlotte's Local Historic Districts have a rich landscape quality that gives them a distinctive character including large shade trees and well-kept yards with a variety of plantings. (For more information on Trees, see the following section).

Retain historic site features whenever possible such as the original rolled concrete curb pictured above.

Do not use interlocking concrete block with beveled edges, such as the example shown left, for landscape and site features.

Foundation plantings help anchor this house to its surroundings.

An occasional large tree or shrub can be found in the front lawns of Oaklawn Park, but most such areas are planted with only grass.

STANDARDS

For Landscaping and Yards:

1. Historic site features are considered integral parts of historic properties and cannot be removed without approval.
2. Retain existing trees and plantings that help define the district's character.
3. Replace diseased or dead plants and trees to match the plant to be replaced or with indigenous species (refer to the Charlotte Land Development Standards Manual for Approved Plant Species).
4. Repeat the dominant landscape design (plant, size, and species) found in the historic district when installing new plantings.
5. In residential uses, setbacks must be clear of plantings and structures that obstruct the view of the main building on a property.
6. Do not replace grass in front yards with paving, gravel, or other non-traditional materials.
7. In a single-family use, no more than 50% of the rear yard (as measured from the back of the historic building) shall be of impermeable material including the roofs of additions to original buildings, paving, decks, patios, pools, and accessory buildings. Wood slatted decks are considered permeable.
8. For decks not visible from the street, composite decking materials are allowed on horizontal surfaces only.
9. Certain modern materials for landscape and site features are not allowed including:
   a. Interlocking concrete blocks with beveled edges
   b. Bare concrete block
   c. Treated landscaping timbers
   d. Railroad ties
   e. Pre-fabricated lattice
10. Use hardscape materials that complement the historic structure and property. Bluestone may be used in areas not visible from the street.

0.4 CHARLOTTE HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN STANDARDS

CHARLOTTE HISTORIC PRESERVATION EST. 1976

DESIGN STANDARDS UPDATES

- **Chapter 9: Demolition**
  - 6. If a building cannot be retained…
    - Strike “if possible”
    - Add: “and the locations/size/species of all canopy trees ≥15” in diameter.”

- **Appendix B – Glossary**
  - Add definitions for “Historic Building” and “Non-Traditional Materials”

McCrorey Heights and Oaklawn Park Window & Door Survey





Survey Results:
Windows, Front Doors + Garage Doors

Recommendations:
Windows, Front Doors + Garage Doors

McCrorey Heights Survey Results

Street Name	Total Historic Houses	Total Parcels	Windows: Original	Windows: Replaced	Front Doors: Original	Front Doors: Replaced	Front Doors: Unsure*	Garage: Historic	Garage Door: Original	Garage Door: Replaced
Clifton	3	3	3	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
Creek	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Condon	6	9	3	3	4	2	0	2	1	1
Fairfield	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fairmont	2	2	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
Madison	36	38	16	20	18	15	3	4	0	4
Mulberry	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oaklawn	21	22	9	12	12	7	2	3	1	2
Patton	46	54	26	20	26	20	0	3	1	2
Washington	31	41	11	20	13	17	1	5	0	5
Van Buren	16	17	2	14	5	9	2	0	0	0
TOTALS	**161**	**189**	**71**	**90**	**79**	**73**	**9**	**18**	**4**	**14**
Percentage of Historic Houses			**44%**	**56%**	**49%**	**45%**	**6%**	**11%**	**2%**	**9%**

CHARLOTTE HISTORIC PRESERVATION EST. 1976

**Doors not visible from street due to security doors, storm doors, or location*

Oaklawn Park Survey Results

Street Name	Total Historic Houses	Total Parcels	Windows: Original	Windows: Replaced	Front Doors: Original	Front Doors: Replaced	Front Doors: Unsure*	Garage: Historic	Garage Door: Original	Garage Door: Replaced
Dean	40	40	16	24	10	30	0	0	0	0
Gunn	14	14	8	6	2	11	1	1	0	1
Jennings	8	10	4	4	4	4	0	0	0	0
Kay	3	3	0	3	2	1	0	0	0	0
Miles	10	10	5	5	6	4	0	0	0	0
Mulberry	25	30	8	17	9	15	1	1	1	1
Orvis	28	30	9	19	8	18	2	0	0	0
Russell	69	72	35	34	23	43	3	4	1	3
Waddell	27	27	15	12	12	14	1	0	0	0
TOTALS	**224**	**236**	**100**	**124**	**76**	**140**	**8**	**6**	**1**	**5**
Percentage of Historic Houses			45%	55%	34%	62%	4%	3%	0.5%	2.5%

CHARLOTTE HISTORIC PRESERVATION EST. 1976

*Doors not visible from street due to security doors, storm doors, or location

Recommendations

DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS CHANGES

TODAY

Commission Review Required

- Original window replacement
- Original front door replacement
- Original garage door replacement (any where on the building)
- **All buildings**

PROPOSED – Existing Buildings

Administrative Review

- Original window replacement
- Original front door replacement
- Original garage door replacement
  - Front elevations = wood
  - Side + rear elevations (even if facing a side street) = steel, aluminum, fiberglass, or wood (no vinyl)
- **1950s, 1960s and 1970s-era historic buildings**

WHAT DOES NOT CHANGE?

Replacement Materials

- Wood, aluminum clad, aluminum metal/store front (no vinyl)
- Match original design, style, and layout
- Does not include Bungalows or other pre-1949 buildings

CHARLOTTE HISTORIC PRESERVATION EST. 1976

New Construction + visible additions still require Commission review