

## DESIGN GUIDELINE CONSOLIDATION PROJECT-PRESENTATION GIVEN IN MARCH 2019

The Historic Zoning Commission recently received funding from the Tennessee Historical Commission for a design guideline consolidation project. The project will take place between January 2019 and September 30, 2019. This presentation was given in a community meeting in July of 2019.

*More information and draft design guidelines:* <https://www.nashville.gov/Historical-Commission/About/Historic-Zoning-Commission/Design-Guideline-Consolidation-Project.aspx>

*Existing Design Guidelines:* <https://www.nashville.gov/Historical-Commission/Services/Preservation-Permits/Districts-and-Design-Guidelines.aspx>

The Design Guidelines Consolidation Project includes two main components. One is to consolidate all the neighborhood conservation design guidelines into one basic set of design guidelines, with individual chapters for each district. All the neighborhood conservation design guidelines are already very similar, but the consolidation will provide an opportunity to reorganize and add clarifying language. The goal is to provide clarity to users of the document. The second component is to create new design guidelines and a plans book for outbuildings, to provide more flexibility in terms of size and design and clearer guidance.

### Process

The process will include regular meetings with stakeholders who will provide regular information and updates to property owners in their districts. Council members have appointed the stakeholders from each overlay that is located within their respective district. The commission has hired a consultant to create the outbuilding plans book and make recommendations regarding the design guidelines, in terms of outbuildings.

### Participation

To participate in the discussion, a first draft of the combined design guidelines is now available for comments. The section regarding outbuildings is blank now, as the consultant works on a first draft.

A discussion-oriented way to participate is on Padlet, that can be accessed from the website previously given, where you can see the thoughts of others, comment on their ideas or post your own. Feel free to comment on any aspect of the design guidelines that you want. Comments can also be sent to [Robin.Zeigler@Nashville.gov](mailto:Robin.Zeigler@Nashville.gov).

For background, it's important to know that according to state law, all the design guidelines must be based on the Secretary of Interior Standards, which are treatment standards created by the National Park Service. They can be viewed at <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm>

*The relevant page in the draft design guidelines is section I.D. on page 5.*

## The Overall Plan

The proposed revisions come from staff's experience with property owners, applicants and councilmembers over the years and discussions with the stakeholder group put together for the purpose of this project.

Design guidelines are a delicate balance between prescriptive language that provides specific "rules" and non-prescriptive so that the guidelines can address a multitude of scenarios. Because every property is different, each project must be taken on a case-by-case basis. The goal of design guidelines is to provide applicants a planning tool for their projects and to provide the Commission with a decision-making tool that works towards ensuring that decisions are fair.

The goal of this specific revision is to provide better guidance and clarity for the users, to capture policies and precedents that have been developed over the years, but in a way that doesn't provide such strict language that unique situations cannot be addressed.

To put it succinctly, the changes will give more leeway on details that will allow more flexibility in style and design while providing clearer direction on massing and scale, the key component to ensuring that new construction, whether it is an addition or a new building, is compatible with its context.

## Summary Review of Changes

We looked at providing a document that tracks each change but because every set of design guidelines are slightly different, the end result was not manageable any meaningful way. We recommend that you review the document as a new document and comment on Padlet as to what you think works for your community and what doesn't.

What is provided here is a summary. It is not every change.

**Issue 1: Organization.** Guidelines are reorganized in some places. For instance, the design guidelines for "Demolition" were moved to the front of the documents to emphasize that the prevention of the demolition of historic buildings is the primary goal of the overlay.

*The relevant page in the draft design guidelines is section III. on page 8.*

**Issue 2: Demolition.** Speaking of demolition, the current guidelines address the demolition of principal buildings but are not clear on partial demolition. The proposed language provides guidance on partial-demolition that is in keeping with the Secretary of Interior Standards and decades of policy and decisions.

*The relevant page in the draft design guidelines is section III.B.1. on page 9.*

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*The relevant page in the draft design guidelines is section III.B.1. on page 9.*

**Issue 3. Materials.** The current guidelines call for “visual compatibility” with historic materials.

**Issue 3: Recommendation.** The recommendation is to provide examples of types of materials that would be appropriate and those that would not. The design guidelines allow for the addition of italicized information without a formal public process in order to provide further guidance to the existing design guidelines. We propose leaving this list of materials as italicized so the section can easily be revised as new materials become available.

*The relevant page in the draft design guidelines is section IV.1 on page 12.*

**Issue 3. Existing design guidelines.** This issue has two parts.

There is a drawing in the design guidelines with a caption that reads: *Image to the right shows the area in which new construction would not require a Preservation Permit. All construction outside of the area will be reviewed.* The drawing is often read as showing the only place where an addition can be constructed, which is not the case. Instead it is meant to show that if an addition is small enough to fit into a specific area, then the addition would not need to be reviewed.

Another concern with the existing image is that it does not consider the height of an addition, which could be taller than the historic building and not really meet the “not visible” criteria.

*The relevant page in the draft design guidelines is section II. Design Guideline Principles which begins on page 6.*

**Issue 3: Existing Design Guidelines continued.** The second part of this issue is that the design guidelines are confusing in that that in one section they state that they only apply to areas that are visible from the public right-of-way and in the very next section, they state that the public facades are more carefully reviewed than others.

They currently read as follows:

1. *These guidelines shall apply only to the exteriors of buildings and to portions of proposed structures that would be visible from public rights-of-way.*
2. *The public facades--front-and street-related sides—of proposals for new buildings shall be more carefully reviewed than other facades.*

Since the establishment of the first overlay, the Commission has interpreted these sections as a review of all sides of any new construction but applying a more stringent review of those facades that are publicly visible.

**Recommendation 3: Part 1.** The proposed solution is to remove the drawing and replace it with a list of actions that would not require review.

*Example of a portion of the list added to the draft:*

*B. The following actions that do not require the removal of a historic feature(s) may not require a Preservation Permit. (These actions may still require a Building Permit. Please check with Codes Department before proceeding with work.)*

**Site**

- *Fences and walls that are not attached to a structure*
- *Structures without a roof such as some playground equipment*
- *Uncovered patios that are flush with existing grade*

We only have 1 or 2 requests for such small additions a year and by the time we gather enough information to determine a review is not needed, we have enough information to just go ahead and issue the permit which makes it easier to obtain the associated building permit. These permits typically have been, and will continue to be issued, within 48 hours of receipt of a complete application.

*The relevant page in the draft design guidelines is section II.D, starting on page 6.*

And we recommend clarifying the language to meet the policy and interpretation of the last several decades. The draft reads: *These guidelines shall apply to the exteriors of buildings, new construction in-whole or in-part, demolition in whole or in-part, and moving a building.*

*The relevant page in the draft design guidelines is II.C and E on page 6 and 7.*

**Issue 4: What is Reviewed.** In a neighborhood conservation zoning overlay, replacement siding, windows, doors and roofing are generally not reviewed; however, if more than two are being replaced, they are reviewed as “partial-demolition.” This is the primary difference between NCZO and HPZO

**Issue 4: What is Reviewed continued.** However, when all or even just the siding and windows are replaced, the result is the actual demolition of the building. In some cases, without the support of the siding and once the interior has been fully demolished, the building can collapse.

**Recommendation 4.** Propose that we start to review replacement siding to prevent what amounts to full demolition and for the health of the historic building. The proposed language is:

- *Historic siding would need to be beyond repair*

- *Non-historic siding that had original siding underneath would need to be assessed once the later siding is removed.*
- *Non historic siding could be replaced.*
- *Siding on a non-historic building could be replaced.*

*The relevant page in the draft design guidelines is section III.c of page 9.*

**Issue 5: Materials.** Roof color is reviewed for new construction; however, we have never had anyone ask for an inappropriate color. In addition, what would an inappropriate color be? When asphalt shingle first became available it was offered in a multitude of colors so the argument could be made that any color currently available could be an “appropriate roof color.” Roofing is also not permanent to the building so will change over time, just like the paint color of wood which is not reviewed in the NCZOs.

**Recommendation 5.** We propose to remove roof color as an action that requires review. In thinking of a “worst case scenario” the use of a multitude of colors might be the worse outcome; however, this is not likely to become a common choice among homeowners and can change the next time the roofing material is replaced.

*The relevant page in the draft design guidelines is section II.D. on page 7 (last bullet point).*

**Issue 6. Materials.** Currently lap siding on new construction is required to have a reveal of 5” or less. Reveal is that portion of the siding that remains exposed when another piece laps over it.

**Recommendation 6:** At the turn-of-the-twentieth century, buildings had a variety of siding reveals but were primarily 2” to 5”. Starting in the nineteen teens but definitely by the 1930’s and 40’s, siding reveal varied and had as much as 8” or 10” reveals. Wider reveals were more common on one-story homes with mitered corners. There are multiple ways that the issue can be addressed. For instance, the design guidelines could split the difference and allow for 7” which better fits the standard sizes available or maybe wide reveals are appropriate on outbuildings because of their minimal visibility.

We are recommending that there be no reveal requirement. Because wider reveals are cheaper—less material involved—the worst-case scenario might be that a wide reveal becomes typical for new construction.

*The relevant page in the draft design guidelines is section IV.1.c. on page 12.*

**Issue 7: Context.** Context is an important consideration, possibly the most important consideration, of the Commissioner when looking at infill construction. In the past, the Commission has considered any extant building in a historic overlay as providing context; however, some districts, especially some of the larger ones, have different contexts within different pockets of the neighborhood. The result was the occasional building that stands out from its context, and not in a good way.

Therefore, in more recent years, the Commission has only considered the “immediate context” when considering the appropriate massing and scale for infill. The goal of revised language is to provide a clearer definition when associated with infill and additions.

**Issue 7: Recommendation.** We recommend that clearer guidance on what is “immediate context” would be useful but want to be careful that it is not defined too narrowly to be able to address multiple situations.

Appropriate height and appropriate width, as well as overall scale, depend on the overall size of the building and so need to be addressed together.

The proposed language is:

*The height of the foundation wall, porch roof(s), eaves and ridges and the width of a new building shall be compatible with surrounding historic buildings on the block face. Where there are block faces with little historic context, the adjoining blocks may be used. The relevant page in the draft design guidelines is section V.A. on page 14.*

**Issue 8: Rooftops.** Rooftops decks are a new request that we have only seen in the last couple of years. The design guidelines were written at a time that rooftop decks were not an issue.

**Issue 8: Rooftop decks.** The proposed language to address rooftop decks is *Roof decks are not appropriate on the front or side of infill but may be appropriate on the rear if the deck is surrounded on all sides by an appropriately pitched roof.*

*The relevant page in the draft design guidelines is section V.B.9 on page 17 of the draft design guidelines for roof decks for infill and section V.D.6 on pages 24 and 25 for roof decks for additions.*

**Issue 9: Additions-Height and Width.** The design guidelines purposely do not provide specific language regarding height of additions since every building is different. The grade, existing roof form, proposed roof form, and existing and proposed eave and ridge heights collectively all provide direction on appropriate height.

Several years ago, italicized language was added to specify how much additional height could be appropriate, if pushed back far enough and if NECESSARY. The “if necessary” quickly was lost and there developed an expectation that all additions can be taller.

**Recommendation 9.**

A ridge-raise, as defined by the current design guidelines is an example of additional height. The proposed new language is:

6. An addition may be wider or taller (but not both) in the following circumstances and should meet the following design guidelines.

a. Rear additions that bump out to be wider than the historic building may be possible when:

- The lot is unusually shallow for the historic context
- When the lot is wider than typical lots in the immediate vicinity
- The historic building is narrower than thirty feet
- The historic building is shifted greatly to one side of the lot
- The addition is designed to leave the corners of the building visible and intact and does not wrap around the corner
- The rear addition does not also include an addition on the side of the historic building
- Eaves and ridges of addition do not exceed the main corresponding elements of the historic building

b. Additions taller than the historic building may be possible when:

- The grade rises steeply towards the rear of the lot
- The historic building is one or one and one-half stories tall and one to two-feet of additional height will allow for usable second-story space that otherwise is unavailable. Additions that are taller than the historic building are not appropriate on buildings that are two-stories or more.
- Proposed addition does not extend more than two-feet above the main roof form of the historic building
- The portion of the proposed addition that extends taller than the historic building is all roof, as seen from the street
- No portion of the proposal increases the height of the historic building itself, only the addition, except for "ridge raises."

c. Some one and one and one-half story historic buildings may increase in height with a "ridge raise." The purpose of a ridge raise is to allow for conditioned space in the attic and to discourage large rear or side additions. As such, a ridge raise is inappropriate for a proposal that also adds more than 50% of the original footprint; adds additional stories; that includes an addition that is wider than the historic house; that includes a side addition or that is proposed to be on a building that is two or more stories. Ridge raises may be used in the following ways and in the following conditions:

- The historic building is one or one and one-half stories
- The historic building has a side-gable roof form without clipped gables
- The raised portion sits in a minimum of two feet (2') from each side wall and is raised no more than two feet (2') of total vertical height within the same plane as the front roof slope.

The relevant page in the draft design guidelines is section V.C.6.a and b. on page 22.

**Issue 10. Additions.** Non-contributing buildings have always been treated differently than historic buildings; however, that is not clear in the existing design guidelines. There is a misconception that additions follow context in the same way as infill construction, which is not the case.

**Recommendation 10: Additions.** Recommend language that specifies that additions to historic buildings should be compatible with the historic building that they are attached to but that additions to non-historic buildings should be considered in the same way as infill since there is no need to “protect” the non-historic building. The goal with a non-historic addition is just to ensure that the end result fits into the neighborhood as well as the non-historic building might have prior to the addition.

The proposed language is:

*Additions to historic buildings should be compatible with the historic buildings. Additions to non-historic buildings should be considered in terms of new construction-infill, taking into account existing conditions. Existing conditions do not need to be altered to meet the design guidelines; however, if they are to be altered, the result must meet the design guidelines. The relevant page in the draft design guidelines is section V.A.1 and 2 on page 20.*

**Additional Issues.** This summary is not meant to be a complete review of every change to the design guidelines as each one of the 22 NCZOs is slightly different. Some other changes include italicized information that is now not italicized, revisions to grammar and punctuation, and additions and revisions to definitions.

*The relevant page in the draft design guidelines is section VIII. Definitions begins on page 31.*

There are two upcoming community meetings on August 14, 6pm, Lentz Public Health and August 19, 6pm, Midtown Precinct. The public hearing to adopt the revisions is scheduled for September 18, 2pm, Sonny West Conference Center.