

CHAPTER

1

BASIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Historic preservation is an established part of city planning in Anderson. Over the past decades, the community has initiated preservation initiatives to protect the many historic resources that remain as reminders of the past. While the City continues to be dynamic and change continues to occur in response to varying community goals and economic conditions, preserving Anderson's heritage is a primary goal of the community. These design guidelines are written for use by property owners, residents, the Board of Architectural Review, City staff and others to foster the preservation of historic resources. They also provide useful information that may be applied in other preservation projects.

Background of Design Guidelines

Why Have Design Guidelines?

The design guidelines help establish a common understanding of preservation design principles and standards. Maintaining a high quality of life and retaining the charm and character that exists are important goals identified by the City and its residents. Therefore, these guidelines and the design review process through which they are administered promote preservation of the historic, cultural and architectural resources that reflect the history of Anderson. These resources are fragile and finite, and are vulnerable to inappropriate alteration and demolition. Recognizing this, the City of Anderson has established these design guidelines.

Basic Principles for Historic Preservation

These design guidelines incorporate principles set forth in *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, which are established by the National Park Service. These standards are policies that normally serve as a basis for more detailed design guidelines. The City of Anderson uses *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* as a basis for these guidelines. These appear in Appendix A and may be referenced by the BAR in making its decisions.



Design guidelines help a community set standards for character defining features, such as front yard setbacks, and provide a basis for review.

The Concept of Historic Significance

What makes a property historically significant? It is generally recognized that a certain amount of time must pass before the historical significance of a property can be evaluated. The National Register, for example, suggests that a property be at least 50 years old or, if more recent, have extraordinary importance before it may be considered for listing.

When considering whether a building, structure, site, object or district is considered historically significant the City of Anderson Board of Architectural Review considers the following criteria:

- Its role and contribution to the development, heritage or culture of the City of Anderson, State of South Carolina, or the United States.
- Its association with a significant event which has made a contribution to the broad patterns of history.



Every historic district has a period of significance—or the time span during which it gained architectural, historical or cultural importance.

- Its association with the lives of persons significant in local, state or national history.
- Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or period.
- Its identification with an architect or builder whose work has influenced the development of the city or state.
- Its embodiment of elements of design, detailing, materials or craftsmanship that render it significant.

Pursuant to the City’s Board of Architectural Review Ordinance, any building, structure, site, object or district that meets any one of the above criteria shall also have sufficient integrity of design, materials, workmanship, setting and location to make it worthy of recognition.

Period of Significance

Every historic district has a *period of significance*—or the time span during which it gained architectural, historical or cultural importance. A property is significant because it represents or is associated with a particular period or specific date in history. Frequently, this period of significance is its construction date and may also include the dates of subsequent additions or alterations. Portions of the building fabric that date from the period of significance typically contribute to the character of the structure.

Concept of “Integrity”

In addition to being historically significant, a property also must have integrity—a sufficient percentage of the structure must exhibit characteristics from the

period of significance. The majority of the building’s structural system and its materials should date from that time and its key character-defining features also should remain intact. These may include architectural details, such as dormers and porches, ornamental brackets and moldings, materials such as exterior siding, as well as the overall mass and form of the building. It is these elements that allow a building to be recognized as a product of its time.

Alterations

Many historic resources have experienced alterations over time, as design tastes changed or need for additional space occurred. In some cases, an owner would add a wing for a new bedroom, or to expand the kitchen. These early alterations typically were subordinate in scale and character to the main building and alterations were often executed using materials that were similar to those in use historically.

Some early alterations may have taken on historic significance of their own. One constructed in a manner that was compatible with the original building and that is associated with the period of significance may merit preservation in its own right.

In contrast, more recent alterations usually have no historic significance. Some later additions detract from the character of the building and may obscure significant features, particularly enclosed porches. Removing such additions or alterations may be considered.

This tradition of alterations is anticipated to continue. It is important, however, that new alterations be designed in such a manner that they preserve the historic character of the primary structure.

In general, keep the following in mind:

☞ **Early alterations, additions or construction more than 50 years old *may* have become historically significant and thus merit preservation.**

Many additions or alterations to buildings in the district that have taken place in the course of time are themselves evidence of the history of the building and its neighborhood and therefore may merit preservation.

- ☞ **More recent alterations, additions or new construction that are not historically significant may be removed.**

For example, metal siding may presently obscure original masonry. In this case, removal of this alteration, and restoration of the original material is strongly encouraged. Most alterations less than fifty years old lack historic significance.

Choosing an Approach

Preservation projects may include a range of activities, such as maintenance of existing historic elements, repairs of deteriorated materials, the replacement of missing features and construction of new additions. When planning a preservation approach, consider the definitions of the following terms:

1. **Preservation.** The act or process of applying measures to sustain the existing form, integrity and material of a building. Some work focuses on keeping a property in good working condition by repairing features as soon as deterioration becomes apparent, using procedures that retain the original character and finish of the features. Property owners are strongly encouraged to maintain properties in good condition.
2. **Rehabilitation.** “Rehabilitation” is the process of returning a property to a state that makes a contemporary use possible while still preserving those portions or features of the property which are significant to its historical, architectural and cultural values. Rehabilitation may include a change in use of the building or additions.
3. **Renovation.** To “renovate” means to improve by repair, to revive. In renovation, the usefulness and appearance of the building is enhanced. The basic character and significant details of a building are respected and preserved, but some sympathetic alterations may also occur.
4. **Restoration.** To “restore,” one reproduces the appearance of a building exactly as it looked at a particular moment in time. This process may include the removal of later work or the replacement of missing historic features.
5. **Remodeling.** To change the historic design of a building is to “remodel” it. The appearance is altered by removing original details and by adding new features that are out of character with the original. Remodeling is inappropriate.
6. **Reconstruction.** To “reconstruct” a building means rebuilding a structure that no longer exists exactly as it appeared historically. For most instances in Anderson, the exact reconstruction of an extant historic resource is inappropriate.

The Basic Principles for Historic Preservation in Anderson

While the guidelines provide direction for specific design issues, some basic principles of preservation form the foundation for them. The following preservation principles apply in Anderson and may be used by the BAR in making its decisions:

- **Respect the historic design character of the building.**

Don't try to change a building's style or make it look older than it really is. Confusing the character by mixing elements of different styles is not appropriate.

- **Protect and maintain significant features and stylistic elements.**

Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship should be treated with sensitivity. The best preservation procedure is to maintain historic features through proper maintenance from the outset so that intervention is not required. This includes rust removal, caulking, limited paint removal and reapplication of paint.

- **Preserve key, character-defining features of the property.**

Key features are those that help convey the character of the resource as it appeared during its period of historic significance. These may include the basic structural system and building materials, as well as windows, doors, porches and ornamentation. Typically, those features that are on the front of a building or that are highly visible from a public way will be most important.

- **Repair deteriorated historic features, and replace only those elements that cannot be repaired.**

Maintain the existing material, using recognized preservation methods whenever possible.

Planning a Preservation Project

The first step in planning a preservation project is to identify any significant features and materials of the structure. Retaining such details will greatly enhance the overall quality of the project. If they are in good condition, then selecting an appropriate treatment will provide for proper preservation. In making the selection, follow this sequence:



The first step in planning a preservation project is to identify any significant features and materials of the structure.

1. **Preserve:** If a building or feature is intact and in good condition, maintain it as such.
2. **Repair:** If the feature is deteriorated or damaged, repair it to its original condition.
3. **Replace:** If it is not feasible to repair the feature, then replace it with one that is the same or similar in character (e.g., materials, detail, finish) to the original one. Replace only that portion which is beyond repair.
4. **Reconstruct:** If the feature is missing entirely, reconstruct it from appropriate evidence.
5. If a **new feature or addition** is necessary, design it in such a way as to minimize the impact on original features.

In essence, the least level of intervention is preferred. By following this tenet, the highest degree of integrity will be maintained for the property.

Design of Alterations

Alterations may be considered for historic resources, however, these changes should occur in a manner that will not affect the integrity of the property. Because no two buildings will have the same design solution consider the following basic guidelines:

1. **Design any alterations to be compatible with the historic character of the property.**
 - Avoid alterations that would hinder the ability to interpret the original design character of the house.
 - Alterations that seek to imply an earlier historic period than that of the building are inappropriate.
2. **Avoid alterations that would damage historic features or materials.**

Basic Principles for Site Design and Infill

Designing a building to fit within a historic district requires careful thought. First, it is important to realize that, while a historic district conveys a certain sense of time and place associated with its history, it also remains dynamic, with alterations to existing structures and construction of new buildings occurring over time.

Design guidelines help assure that, when new building occurs, it will be in a manner that reinforces the basic visual characteristics of the area. This does not mean, however, that new buildings must look old. In fact, imitating historic styles found in Anderson is generally discouraged. Historians prefer to be able to “read” the evolution of the street. They do so by interpreting the age of a building, placing its style in relative chronological order. When a new building is designed to imitate a historic style, this ability to interpret the history of the street is confused.

Rather than imitating older buildings, a new design should relate to the traditional design characteristics of a neighborhood while also conveying the stylistic trends of today. New construction may do so by drawing upon some basic building features—such as the way in which a building is located on its site, the manner in which it relates to the street and its basic mass, form and materials—rather than applying detailing which may or may not have been historically appropriate. When these design variables are arranged in a new building to be similar to those seen traditionally in the area, visual compatibility results. Therefore, it is possible to be compatible with the historic context while also producing a design that is distinguishable as being newer.

The Basic Principles for Site Design and Infill

While the design guidelines for new construction provide direction for specific design issues, some basic design principles form the foundation for them. The following principles apply in Anderson and may be referenced by the BAR in making its decisions:

- **Respect the design character of the nearby historic properties.**

Don't try to make a new building look older than it is. The copying or exact duplication of architectural styles or specific historic buildings is discouraged. Often, a contemporary interpretation of those architectural styles seen historically will work best.

- **Maintain the setbacks and alignments of buildings in the surrounding context.**

A new building should be set back a similar distance from the street as those nearby historic buildings and incorporate a landscaped area that is in keeping with the neighborhood. Other alignments, such as those seen from similar eave heights, porch heights and the relative alignment of window and door moldings, are also important.

- **Relate to the scale of nearby historic buildings.**

A new building should relate to the general size, shape and proportions of those buildings seen historically. It is equally important for a new building to use similar primary building materials, at least in appearance.

- **Relate to the size of the lot.**

A new building should be in proportion with the overall size of its lot. Generally, smaller homes are built on smaller lots, and larger homes are reserved for larger lots. Although many of the lots and the traditional scale of single-family houses in the historic districts are smaller than current tastes support, a new building should, to the greatest extent possible, maintain the established scale.

Some people may be confused about this concept; for many, the initial assumption is that any new building should appear to be old. On the contrary, the design guidelines for site design and infill presented later in this document encourage new buildings that can be distinguished as being of their own time. At the same time, they do promote new building designs that would relate to the more fundamental similarities of traditional buildings.

Design Principles for Religious, Institutional and Civic Buildings

The design guidelines presented in this document focus on principles for rehabilitation and infill of residential projects that reinforce the historic building fabric and enhance the pedestrian experience. To do so, they draw upon principles established in traditional residential buildings. While these represent the majority of property types that occur in the area, civic facilities also are a part of the mix.

Civic facilities include churches, schools and libraries. Traditionally, these buildings contrasted with the framework of houses. They stand apart from the rows of houses and are framed by a large, formal lawn as a foreground. Their entrances are more prominent, and often grand in scale. While they stand apart as individual structures, they are a part of the community. Religious, institutional and civic buildings often function as a gathering place, and can be designed to complement the surrounding neighborhood.

Consider these basic principles for the design of religious, institutional and civic buildings:

- **Locate civic institutions such that they encourage pedestrian traffic and convey a sense of human scale.**
- **Design civic institutions to reinforce the system of streets and sidewalks.**
- **Provide edges of a civic property that are inviting to pedestrians.**
- **Provide outdoor spaces designed for public use.**
- **Convenient pedestrian connections should link abutting civic institutions.**
- **Minimize the visual impacts of automobiles.**
- **Locate primary entrances to face the street, not a parking lot.**
- **Minimize impacts on adjacent historic resources.**