

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Florence Historical Board
Florence, Alabama
(Adopted June 24, 1996)

INTRODUCTION

In order to maintain the historical character of Florence, these guidelines will assist both the person directly involved in a preservation project and the Florence Historical Board as it makes decisions regarding such projects.

PURPOSE

Design guidelines are criteria and standards for the Florence Historical Board to consider in determining the appropriateness of proposed work within an historic district:

- (a) To preserve and protect the historical and/or architectural value of buildings or other structures.
- (b) To regulate exterior design, arrangement, texture, and materials proposed to be used within the historic district to ensure compatibility with the district as a whole.
- (c) To create an aesthetic appearance which complements the historic buildings or other structures and fosters civic beauty.
- (d) To strengthen the local economy by stabilizing and improving property values.
- (e) To promote the use of historic districts for the education, pleasure, and welfare of the present and future citizens of the City of Florence.

GROUNDINGS FOR CLASSIFICATION

The Historic District classification is reserved for those districts within the city which have been listed on the Alabama Register of Historic Places and/or on the National Register of Historic Places.

ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY

Definition:

- A change in building material;
- The addition or elimination of any architectural feature of a structure;
- A repair that reconstructs any part of an existing building;
- An addition that extends or increases floor area or height of any building;
- Or construction of an outbuilding.
- A change in paint color.

General Principles:

- These guidelines should apply only to exteriors of buildings and areas of lots visible from public rights-of-way.
- Proposals for exterior work to be done on public facades (front and street-related elevations) should be more carefully reviewed than that to be done on other facades.

Criteria:

The following shall be considered in reviewing structures within a district:

- (a) Historic and/or architectural value of the present structure(s).
- (b) Relationship of exterior architectural features of such structure(s) to the rest of the structure(s) of the surrounding area;
- (c) General compatibility of exterior design, arrangement, texture and materials proposed to be used;
- (d) Any other factor, including aesthetic, which is deemed pertinent; and

(e) Conformity with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION:

- (a) Every reasonable effort should be made to provide a compatible use for a property which requires minimal alteration of the building, structure, or site and its environment, or to use the property for its originally intended purpose.
- (b) The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building, structure, site or its environment should not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.
- (c) All buildings, structures, and sites should be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis which seek to create an earlier appearance should be discouraged.
- (d) Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure, or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and its significance should be recognized and respected.
- (e) Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize a building, structure, or site should be treated with sensitivity.
- (f) Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by historic, physical, or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other buildings or structures.
- (g) The surface cleaning of structures should be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building materials should not be undertaken.
- (h) Every reasonable effort should be made to protect and preserve archeological resources affected by, or adjacent to, any project.
- (i) Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties should not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural, or cultural material, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the property, neighborhood, or environment.
- (j) Whenever possible, new additions or alterations to structures should be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be unimpaired.

GUIDELINES FOR ALTERATIONS

ADDITIONS

Definition:

- Additions are areas that increase the living or working space of a structure.
- This does not include the addition of architectural elements.

Recommended:

- Generally, an addition should be situated at the rear of a building in such a way that it will not disturb either front or side public facades.
- Additions should follow the guidelines for new construction (see below).

ROOFS

Recommended:

- Original roof pitch and configuration should be maintained.
- The original size and shape of dormers should be maintained.
- Original roof materials and color should be retained. If replacement is necessary, original materials should be used. Composite shingles may be substituted for original roofing when it is not economically feasible to replace or repair with original materials or when the original roof is beyond repair. The color and texture of replacement shingles should be appropriate to the architectural style and period of the house.
- Parapet walls should be retained where applicable.
- Modern membranes roof systems for flat roofs may be allowable.

Not recommended:

- Dormers generally should not be introduced where none existed originally.
- Skylights and solar collectors should not be visible from a public right-of-way.

PORCHES

Recommended:

- Original details (such as brackets, friezes, flooring, ceiling material, columns, etc.) and shape (outline, roof height, and roof pitch) should be retained.
- Original porch materials and architectural details should be maintained. If different materials are substituted, they should be a close visual approximation of the original.
- The enclosing of side and rear porches may be considered appropriate if the visual openness and character of the original porch is maintained.

Not recommended:

- The enclosing of front porches is inappropriate.

WINDOWS

Recommended:

- The original size and shape of the windows should be maintained.
- The original number and arrangement of panes should be maintained.
- The original materials or similar kinds of materials should be maintained.

Not recommended:

- The characteristic window shape in Florence is vertically rectangular - higher than it is wide. Horizontal windows and picture windows are generally not appropriate.
- Shiny, raw aluminum storm windows and screens are not appropriate. Blind stop storm windows, painted to match sash color, may be appropriate.
- Shutters, unless appropriate to the style of the building, should not be introduced. Shutters should fit an opening in height and width, and should be located so that, if they were closed, the opening would be covered.
- New window openings should not be introduced unless they match the existing window configuration and their placement harmonizes with the existing rhythm of openings.
- Original windows should not be filled in.
- Window unit air conditioners should not be visible from public rights-of-way. Where possible, these should be placed in windows which do not face a street.

DOORS

Recommended:

- The original size and shape of door openings should be maintained.
- Original transoms, sidelights, and doors should be maintained.
- Replacement doors should be compatible with original doors.
- Flush doors are generally inappropriate.

Not recommended:

- Shiny aluminum doors are not appropriate. Blind stop, full-view storm doors, painted to match the doorframe, may be appropriate.
- Generally, it is better not to introduce new door openings on facades visible from the street.
- Generally, original door openings should not be filled in.

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS (such as brackets, architectural decoration, vent covers, etc.)**Recommended:**

- Original details should be repaired where possible, using similar materials.
- The replacement of irreparable details should be done with close visual approximations of the originals.

Not recommended:

- Architectural details of any period or style not original to the building should not be introduced.
- Original details should not be removed.

MATERIALS**Recommended:**

- Original building and roof materials should be retained. (Original building materials may include wood, brick, stone, terra cotta, pressed metal, stucco and other materials; original roof materials may include slate, metal, composite shingles and other materials).
- If replacement is necessary, it should be with original materials or close visual approximations of the original.
- Masonry repointing should be done with care to match the original mortar color, type and texture.
- Original tooling configuration and joint width should be maintained.
- Cleaning should be done with the gentlest means possible (test patches should be in an inconspicuous area).
- Replacement wood siding should be consistent with the original size, direction, and lap dimension.
- Original wall shingles should be maintained.

Not recommended:

- The use of Portland cement should be avoided when repointing old brick.
- The painting of brick is generally inappropriate unless it is already painted, mismatched or so deteriorated that it cannot withstand weather. If painting is necessary, original brick colors, selected to match or blend with the original brick, should be used.
- Painting of stone is inappropriate.
- In general, original siding should not be covered or replaced with a material or texture not original to the building. However, other types of siding (vinyl and metal) may be used with approval.
- Since sandblasting causes severe damage to brick, mortar and wood, its use should be avoided.
- Water pressure cleaning of wood should be at a pressure low enough not to raise the grain of the wood (less than 350 PSI).

COLOR**Recommended:**

- The Florence Historical Board reviews exterior paint colors for their historical appropriateness.

- The Florence Main Street Office maintains a file of historic paint colors or will assist in locating appropriate historic colors upon request.

OUTBUILDINGS

Recommended:

- Outbuildings related to a building (fences, walls, street lamps, steps, paving, sidewalks) should be visually compatible with the environment to which they are related.

FENCES

Recommended:

- Low retaining walls in front yards should be kept where they exist.
- New or reclaimed iron fencing may be appropriate for properties with pre-1900 structures. Iron fencing is generally not appropriate for later structures.
- Wood-picket fences are appropriate in front or rear yards of houses.
- Board fences, with wider boards set close together, are appropriate only around rear yards.

Not recommended:

- Chain link or woven fences are generally inappropriate for front or visible side yards. They may be used in rear yards. If a portion of rear fence is visible from the street, it should be camouflaged with hedge or vine.
- Introduction of retaining walls where none existed should be avoided.

SIGNS

Recommended:

- The appearance, size, position, method of attachment, texture of materials, color, and design of signs should be in keeping with the collective characteristics of the structures surrounding the property on which the sign will be located.
- The City of Florence has sign regulations which apply to all signage in the city. These are very detailed and comprehensive. Owners who fail to comply with these regulations can be required to remove the sign. Therefore, it is suggested that owners check this ordinance before ordering a sign. Copies of the sign ordinance may be found at City Hall in the Building Department. The Florence Main Street Office also keeps a copy of this ordinance.
- Buildings and signs may be illuminated by remote light sources, provided that these light sources are shielded to protect adjacent properties.
- Where possible, signs should be typical of historical era of building.

Not recommended:

- Signs attached to the structure should not cover any architectural detail.
- Off-site signs should not be permitted.
- No sign that flashes, blinks, revolves, or is put in motion by the atmosphere should be permitted.
- Realtor signs should not remain in place more than ten (10) days after the closing of a sale of a house or lot.

LANDSCAPE

Recommended:

- All aspects of site development should be sympathetic to the character of landscape development, types of plants, and spatial treatment of adjacent properties.
- The Florence Main Street Office maintains files for assistance with landscaping around historic homes.
- The City of Florence has landscaping regulations for commercial properties. Owners should check the ordinance before doing any landscaping. Copies of the ordinance are at City Hall in the Building Department or a copy is also available at the Florence Main Street Office.

LIGHTING

Recommended:

- Original exterior light fixtures should be retained if at all possible.
- Recessed or ceiling mounted exterior fixtures not visible from the street are appropriate.
- Freestanding lampposts in yards should be reviewed before they are installed.

NEW CONSTRUCTION

Definition:

The construction of any freestanding structure on any lot and/or additions to existing structure.

General Principles:

- Guidelines should apply only to exteriors of buildings and areas of lots visible from public rights-of-way.
- The public facades (front and street-related elevations) of proposals for new buildings should be more carefully reviewed than other facades.
- Because new buildings usually relate to an established pattern and rhythm of existing buildings, both on the same and opposite sides of the street, the dominance of that pattern and rhythm must be respected and not disrupted.
- New construction should be consistent with existing buildings along a street in terms of:
 - height, scale, setback, and rhythm;
 - relationship of materials, texture, details, and color;
 - roof shape;
 - orientation; and
 - proportion and rhythm of openings.
- Reconstruction may be appropriate when it reproduces facades of a building which no longer exists and which was located on that site if:
 - the building would have contributed to the historical and architectural character of the area;
 - it will be compatible in terms of style, height, scale, massing, and materials with the buildings immediately surrounding the lot on which the reproduction will be built; and
 - it is accurately based on pictorial documentation.

GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

HEIGHT

Recommended:

- New buildings should generally be constructed to the same number of stories and to a height which is compatible with the height of adjacent buildings.

SCALE

Recommended:

- The size of a new building; its mass in relation to open spaces; and its windows, doors, openings, and porches should be visually compatible with the surrounding buildings.

SETBACK AND RHYTHM OF SPACING

Recommended:

- The setback from front and side yard property lines established by adjacent buildings must be maintained. When a definite rhythm along a street is established by uniform lot and building width, a new building should maintain the rhythm.

RELATIONSHIP OF MATERIALS, TEXTURE, DETAILS, & MATERIAL COLOR

Recommended:

- The relationship and use of materials, texture, details and material color of a new building's public facades should be visually compatible with and similar to those of adjacent buildings, or should not contrast conspicuously.

ROOF SHAPE

Recommended:

- The roofs of new buildings should be visually compatible, by not contrasting greatly with the roof shape, slope and/or orientation of surrounding buildings.

ORIENTATION

Recommended:

- The site orientation of new buildings should be consistent with that of adjacent buildings and should be visually compatible. Directional expression should be compatible with surrounding buildings, whether that expression is vertical, horizontal, or non-directional.

PROPORTION AND RHYTHM OF OPENINGS

Recommended:

- The relationship of width to height of windows and doors, and the rhythm of solids to voids in new buildings should be visually compatible with the surrounding buildings.

ADDITIONS TO EXISTING BUILDINGS

Recommended:

- Additions to existing buildings should be kept to a minimum.
- Additions should be compatible in scale, materials, and texture to the existing building(s) and, where appropriate, to surrounding buildings.
- Additions may be located to the rear and the side rear of existing buildings in ways which do not disturb the public facades.

Not recommended:

- Additions should not be visually jarring or contrasting.
- Additions should not be made to the public facades of existing buildings.
- The creation of an addition through enclosure of a front facade porch is inappropriate and should be avoided.

OUTBUILDINGS

Recommended:

- Garages, storage buildings, greenhouses, drive-through tellers, gazebos and other outbuildings should reflect the character of the existing homes and surrounding buildings and should be compatible in terms of height, scale, roof shape, materials, texture and details.
- Garages, if visible from the street, should be situated on the lot as is historically established for the neighborhood.

Not recommended:

- The location and design of outbuildings should not be visually disruptive to the character of the surrounding buildings.

OUTBUILDINGS

Recommended:

- Outbuildings related to new buildings, including driveways, sidewalks, lighting, fences, street furniture, awnings, and walls, should be visually compatible with the environment of the existing buildings and sites to which they relate.

DEMOLITION

Definition:

The tearing down of a building.

General Principle:

- Since the purpose of historic districts is to protect historic properties, the demolition of a building that contributes historically or architecturally to the character and significance of the district is inappropriate and should be avoided.

Guidelines:

Demolition is inappropriate:

- if a building is of such architectural or historical interest and value that its removal would be detrimental to the public interest;
- if a building is of such old or unusual or uncommon design and materials that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced without great difficulty and expense; or
- if its proposed replacement would make a less positive visual contribution to the district, would disrupt the character of the district, or would be visually incompatible.

RELOCATION

Definition:

The moving of a building in a district from one site to another or into or out of the district as described below.

General Principles:

- The moving of an existing building which retains architectural and historical integrity and which contributes to the architectural and historical character of the district should be avoided.
- The moving out of the district of a building which does not contribute to the historical and architectural integrity of the district or which has lost architectural integrity due to deterioration and neglect should be appropriate if its removal or its replacement will result in a more positive, appropriate visual effect on the district.

Guidelines for Relocation:

- Relocated buildings must be carefully rebuilt to retain and maintain original architectural details and materials.
- A building may be moved into the district if it maintains a sense of architectural unity in terms of style, height, scale, massing, materials, texture, siting and setback with existing buildings along the street.
- A building may be moved from one site to another in the district if:
 - the integrity of location and setting of the building in its original location has been lost or seriously threatened;
 - the new location will be similar in setting and siting;
 - the building will be compatible with the buildings adjacent to the new location in style, height, scale, materials, siting and setback; and
 - the relocation of the building will not result in a negative visual effect on the site and surrounding buildings from which it will be removed.