

GUIDELINES FOR CONSTRUCTION AND ALTERATIONS IN THE COLLINSVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT

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A. GENERAL

The Historic District for the village of Collinsville was established to preserve and protect the many architectural phases of a Connecticut mill town in continual growth. The concept of “continual growth” anticipates the needs of property owners within the District to expand, reduce or otherwise modify their property to accommodate the continually changing functional requirements which come with the passage of time.

Because the Historic District Commission (HDC) has the responsibility to “preserve and protect the architectural phases” of Collinsville, it has been given the power to rule on the “appropriateness” of all modifications which would change the appearance of any District properties when viewed from the street line.

The purpose of the following guidelines, then, is to give the HDC a set of standards which will aid it in judging the appropriateness or proposed modifications, and to provide a basis for consistency in these decisions over time. These guidelines and Commission decisions govern only those parts of building visible from a public street, way, or place.

In general, the underlying principle of the Historic District is that, when bringing an old building up to modern functional standards or constructing a new facility, it is essential that the architectural character of the building and the neighborhood is not lost in the process. The following principles as set forth by the U.S. Department of the Interior establish a foundation upon which to construct a set of guidelines. Those principles, slightly modified, are reprinted here, after which the specific guidelines for the village of Collinsville are given, broken down by category of work.

General Requirements:

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

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B. DESIGN

1. New Construction and Additions:

Scale and Form: All new construction and additions shall be consistent with the scale of the surrounding structures. Scale includes such factors as building height, width, and the proportion of height to width; proportion of solid to void elements, i.e., wall area to area of window and door openings; the size of the dominant elements of the building, the massing of the building and the arrangement of the building's dominant elements which affect setbacks, overhangs, etc.

Mood and Character: Carefully assess the mood and character of the neighborhood where new construction is to take place. Avoid new construction which by its form, texture, etc. is not consistent with the mood and character of the neighborhood, even though all requirements for appropriate scale may be met. Avoid new construction which inauthentically reproduces older architectural styles. Utilize contemporary design and construction for new buildings, while acknowledging the qualities of scale, mood and character of the surrounding buildings

New additions should be designed and constructed so that the character-defining features of the historic building are not radically changed, obscured, damaged, or destroyed in the process of rehabilitation. New design should always be clearly differentiated so that the addition does not appear to be part of the historic resource.

3. Restoration and Rehabilitation

Plan Ahead: Avoid "gutting" of a structure before new functional arrangements have been carefully planned to minimize altering the buildings original appearance.

Restoration: Try to research thoroughly the history of the structure and restore it as nearly as can be determined to its original form. Try to make use of the most current methods of restoration of partially deteriorated materials.

Replacement of Original Materials: Re-use original materials to the greatest extent possible. Where original material is unavailable or deteriorated, use new materials in the same form and with the same method of installation as the original. Avoid selecting new building materials which are out of scale, character, or otherwise present an appearance distinctly different from the original building.

C. EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

1. Stone and Brick Foundations:

Maintain the original appearance of the foundation. If possible, clean and reuse existing material. Avoid repairs with material that are not generally the same shape, size and type as the original. Use mortar of the same color and strength as the original. Avoid over-mortaring joints or tooling to a profile inconsistent with the original.

2. Walls:

- a. Framed Walls: Retain and restore original materials whenever possible. Avoid removal of existing materials such as clapboards or shingles, since these form a major part of the building's texture. When deteriorated material must be replaced or repaired, use material that replicates the old as nearly as possible. Be aware of the use of different materials on a single building, such as a shingle gable over a clapboard first story, and replace or repair with similar materials. Do not resurface frame buildings with a material which changes the textural appearance of the original building. If using the same kind of material is not technically or economically feasible, then a compatible substitute material shall be submitted for review and consideration.

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Sandblasting should be avoided since it can damage siding and other architectural features. However, property owners wishing to sandblast siding should employ a reputable contractor experienced with, and sensitive to, historic structures. Sandblasting should result in no permanent change to a structure except removal of paint.

- b. Masonry Walls (brick, stone and concrete block):** When repairing a masonry wall, if possible, clean and reuse existing material. Replace deteriorated masonry with materials that match the original. Avoid removal of paint from masonry surfaces if the paint was originally applied for aesthetic or practical reasons. Avoid the use of artificial materials such as simulated brick or stone siding.

If repointing is necessary, replicate the original mortar joint in color, texture, size, hardness and profile.

Clean masonry, when necessary, using the gentlest method available, such as soft brushes and low-pressure water. Avoid sandblasting or using harsh chemicals which may react with masonry and alter the appearance as these methods may destroy the material's natural ability to repel water. Always consult with a professional.

3. Trim and Decorative Features:

Cornices, Brackets, Columns, Posts, Balusters, etc.: Retain such decorations and trim, since they are constituting an essential part of the building's character and appearance. When severe deterioration requires, replace or reconstruct such features as nearly as possible to their original form. Avoid removing or cladding these important elements, since this would significantly alter the appearance of the building.

Ornamental Metal Work: Clean, repair and restore decorative metal works such as railings, fences, and other trim. On iron work, clean areas of rust and halt further rusting by repainting to match the original color. Avoid painting of non-ferrous metals such as brass or copper, as brass should be cleaned of oxidation when possible, and copper should be left to oxidize naturally. Always consult with an expert.

Door and Window Trim: Retain and restore door and window trim, such as lintels, sills, architraves, pediments, hoods, etc. to their original form. Avoid cladding door and window trim, especially when ornamental or decorative, with artificial siding products.

Shutters: Research the history of the structure to determine if shutters were part of the original design. If so, try to restore the originals or replace them with shutters which match the originals in form and material. Avoid installing pre-fabricated or mass-produced shutters of artificial materials such as aluminum or vinyl.

4. Doors:

Primary Doors: Respect the "main entrance" to the building and its relationship to the site and the building form. Avoid relocating or introducing new doors into the principal elevations of the building. Retain original door design including panels, lights, and hardware, and, if replacement is required, try to duplicate the original design in form and material.

Secondary Doors: While less important visually than primary doors, secondary doors such as back or side doors, basement doors and hatches, etc., should be retained or replaced in a way that respects their original form. If new secondary doors must be introduced, avoid locating these in a way that negatively impacts the original composition or symmetry of the facade.

Storm Doors: Although pre-20th century buildings were not usually equipped with storm doors or windows, the energy conscious property owner of today often finds these to be essential in reducing energy consumption. When used, storm doors should be selected to compete as little as possible with the design of the main door. Try to use wood frame storm doors. If metal storm doors must be used, try to select a frame color which is the same as the door trim. Avoid using bright aluminum-colored frames. Try to select a design and arrangement of lights which

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complements rather than detracts from the design of the door. Avoid decorative grilles or scrolls which may be inappropriate to the design or character of the building.

5. Windows

Retain existing window sash whenever possible. If replacement is required, respect the stylistic period of the building by selecting sash design and arrangement of lights which reflect the building's original form. Avoid creating new window openings which negatively impact the original composition or symmetry of the facade. Window replacement in order of HDC preference is: restore existing windows; replace sash and balances with "sash packs" thus retaining interior and exterior trims; install a new window with new interior and exterior trim to match existing; install a vinyl replacement window.

Storm Windows: The early storm windows were wood framed single units which covered the entire window opening. They were used in place of the window screens in winter and, like the screens, hooked onto clips at the top piece of window trim. When installing storm windows on buildings of the early 20th century style or older, try to use this type of wood frame window. If metal storm windows must be used, select a color which is consistent with the color schemes of the period.

6. Porches and Steps:

Retain porches and steps in their original form. Remember that porches and steps which were added later often reflect evolving architectural styles, and may be important to the building's historical integrity. Avoid stripping porches of original material or features such as handrails, balusters, columns, brackets, or decorations of wood, metal, tile or masonry. Repair or replace deteriorated architectural features with new material that duplicates the original as closely as possible. Avoid enclosing porches and steps in a manner that alters their intended appearance. If it is essential to enclose a porch, do so inside the columns and railings, and in a way which preserves the original form and character of the building.

7. Roofs:

Form and Features: Retain the original roof form including gables and eaves, hips, dormers, etc. Avoid introduction of forms inappropriate to the original form of the roof, such as oversized dormers, skylights, etc. Retain or replace the original architectural features which give the roof its essential character, such as dormers, cupolas, cornices, brackets, cresting and weather vanes.

Roofing Material: Asphalt shingles are acceptable. Avoid using roofing material which is so light or bright in color or tone that it detracts from the character of the building or the continuity of the neighborhood.

Gutters, Downspouts and Flashings: Retain original gutters, downspouts and flashings. Or, if replacement is necessary, use materials which are similar in form and color to the original. Remember that gutters and downspouts can be strong visual elements, and avoid introducing new ones in locations where they will detract from the original composition of the building.

Roof-top Equipment: Place roof-top equipment such as antennae, air conditioners, exhaust fans, vents, solar collectors, etc. in a location where they cannot be seen from the street. Where solar collectors must face the street for efficiency, mount them in a way which minimizes their profile and makes them as inconspicuous as possible.

8. Chimneys:

Retain the original height and form, number and location of the chimney(s), since these are critical links with the historical development of the structure. Avoid adding new chimneys, especially false ones, which give the building an appearance it never had.

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9. Outbuildings:

Garages, Carriage Houses, Barns, Etc: Buildings such as these often contribute significantly to the historical or architectural interest of the property. Because of this, they should be treated with no less respect than the primary structure itself. Follow the procedures for the particular features and types of construction covered elsewhere in these guidelines. Retain and repair as needed those buildings and their features which are important to the historical integrity of the property. When modifications or rehabilitation is required, such as installing new doors on a garage or carriage house, try to select a replacement of the same design and character as the original.