

5. GUIDELINES FOR SITE & LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Site Design, Parking & Treatment of Historic Landscape Features

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ILLUSTRATIONS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT



The design guidelines include many photographs and diagrams to illustrate acceptable or unacceptable approaches. The illustrations are provided as examples and are not intended to indicate the only options.

If there appears to be a conflict between the text of the design guidelines and a related illustration, the text shall prevail.

KEY TO ILLUSTRATION SYMBOLS



A checkmark on an illustration indicates an approach that is generally appropriate.



An asterisk on an illustration indicates an approach that may be acceptable in some contexts or situations.



An X mark on an illustration indicates an approach that is generally inappropriate.



INTRODUCTION

Site features and landscapes are an important part of Denver's historic context. Proper treatment of these features helps retain the unique qualities that make Denver special and assists with the preservation and interpretation of historic buildings and districts.

This chapter provides guidelines for site and landscape design that apply to a variety of projects, including:

- **The treatment of historic streetscape features such as street trees and furnishings** (benches, trash receptacles, etc.) on an individually-designated Denver landmark or any property in a historic district
- **The treatment of historic landscape features, such as a historic site wall, sloping "Denver Hill" yard, or fence** on an individually-designated Denver landmark or any property in a historic district

- **The design of new landscape features such as retaining walls** on an individually-designated Denver landmark or any property in a historic district
- **The location and design of a new or expanded surface parking lot** on an individually-designated Denver landmark or any property in a historic district
- **The location and design of service and mechanical areas** on an individually-designated Denver landmark or any property in a historic district
- **Other site and landscape design considerations** including landscape screening and the site lighting on historic commercial properties

This chapter begins with general site and landscape guidelines, followed by guidelines that are specific to residential or commercial properties.

BUILDINGS ADJACENT TO PARKWAYS

Denver has a distinctive system of historic parkways that serve as central organizing corridors and confer special identity to adjacent properties and neighborhoods. Over a dozen of the city's early parkways are designated under Denver's City Beautiful Parkway Historic District. Several designated parkways, such as the 7th Avenue and Williams Street Parkway, have not only stand-alone historic value, but are also focal points and character-defining features of residential historic districts. Denver Parks and Recreation regulates development adjacent to parkways, including setback requirements, and design restrictions for buildings, walls and fences, and curb cuts to ensure that these parkways retain their historic character. For more information, contact Denver Parks and Recreation. Proposed changes to historically designated properties adjacent to parkways are also subject to LPC design review, and these design guidelines. Owners proposing changes adjacent to landmark designated parkways are advised to coordinate early with both Denver Parks and Recreation, and Landmark Preservation staff.

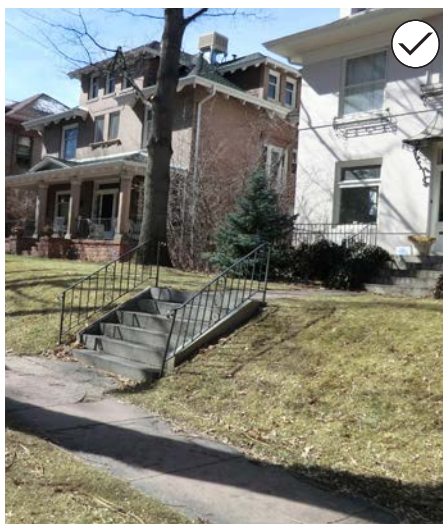
CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES OF A HISTORIC DISTRICT

When planning site and landscape designs in a historic district, it is important to carefully review the district's character-defining features. See "Appendix A: The Character-defining Features of Denver's Historic Districts" for more information.

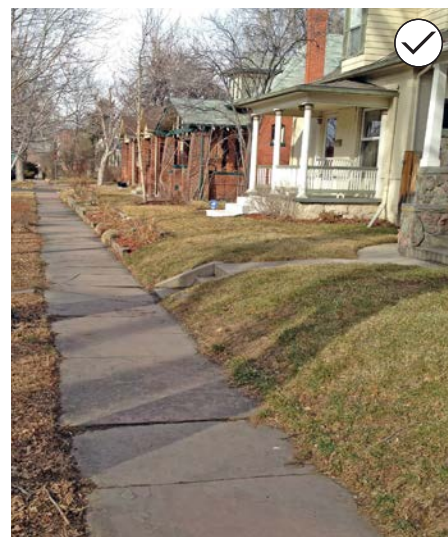
General Principles for Site & Landscape Design



110. Preserve established trees and historic tree lawns.



111. Preserve historic stone sidewalks



INTENT STATEMENTS

- 5a To preserve historic site features that support the character-defining features of historic properties and districts
- 5b To ensure that new site features maintain and enhance historic character
- 5c To maintain a strong relationship between buildings and the street through sensitive site design

CARE OF ESTABLISHED TREES

The [City Forester](#) provides information on the maintenance of established trees, as well as assistance with the selection of hardy, drought-tolerant plants. More information is available at the [Denver Forestry Web Site](#).

HISTORIC SIDEWALKS

Many of Denver's original sidewalks are constructed from sandstone quarried along the Dakota Hogback near Lyons, Colorado. Lyons sandstone was also used in some Denver buildings exported to Midwestern cities. Many of Denver's Lyons sandstone sidewalks have been replaced with concrete. Those that remain are highly valued for their color, character and durability, and should be preserved.

GENERAL DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR SITE & LANDSCAPE DESIGN

5.1 Retain and restore historic site and landscape features.

- a. Preserve original landscape and features, such as walkways, fences, site walls, street trees, historic stairways and special plantings or ornamental site features that are character-defining features of the property or historic district.
- b. Preserve historic stone sidewalks. See "Historic Sidewalks" at left for more information.
- c. If beyond repair, replace deteriorated historic site features with matching features, including design and materials.
- d. Retain original open space patterns at the sides and rear of a structure.

5.2 Preserve established trees and historic tree lawns.

- a. Preserve established and specimen trees in the front yard area and tree lawn. Assess tree conditions and ensure measures of protection/preservation are included in any development plans.
- b. Maintain grass and/or low-water ground cover in an existing or new tree lawn (the landscaped area between the street and the sidewalk).
- c. Do not cover or pave an existing tree lawn, except for ADA-compliance or to provide necessary connections to the sidewalk.

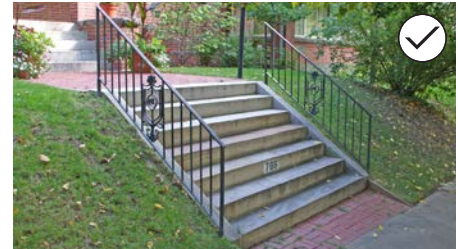
5.3 Plan new site and landscape features to respect the character-defining features of the historic district or individually-designated Denver landmark.

- a. Landscape the street-facing portion of a lot to be consistent with historic landscape patterns on the street, such as matching tree types where one is missing along a consistent tree row.
- b. Where an established tree has been removed, replace it with a similar species.
- c. When introducing a new site feature or modifying an existing feature, such as a stairway, fence or retaining wall, respect historical patterns in terms of placement, proportions and design compatibility with surrounding historic context.
- d. When designing a new sidewalk or path, use colors, styles and finishes similar to those seen in nearby historic sidewalks.
- e. Avoid introducing new site features that convey a false sense of history.
- f. Avoid introducing new readily visible site features, such as curb cuts, which were not historically present on the property, or prevalent in the historic district.

Residential Site & Landscape Design



112. Preserve the context of a historic building and district by maintaining historic front yard landscape areas.



113. Maintain the character of a "Denver Hill" sloping front yard area.

- 5d To preserve the context of a historic building and district by maintaining historic front yard landscape areas
- 5e To maintain the traditional features, such as topography and plantings, that define private yards without obscuring historic properties
- 5f To ensure that new front yard features maintain and enhance the character of historic properties and districts

USE OF THE TERM "FRONT YARD"

The design guidelines for residential site and landscape design primarily address "front yard" areas that are highly visible from the sidewalk and street. The guidelines for a "front yard" also apply to a street-facing side yard on a corner property, or other yard areas between buildings and the street.

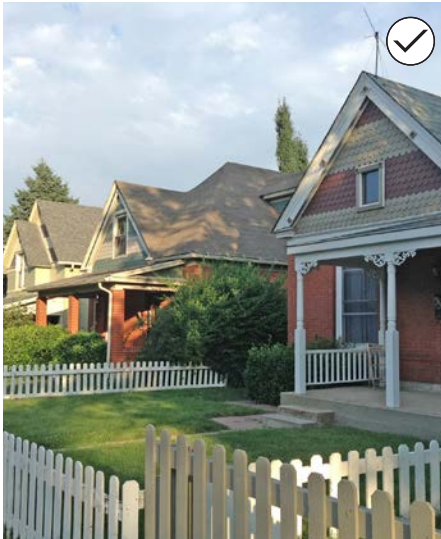
GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR RESIDENTIAL SITE & LANDSCAPE DESIGN

5.4 Maintain front yard landscape areas.

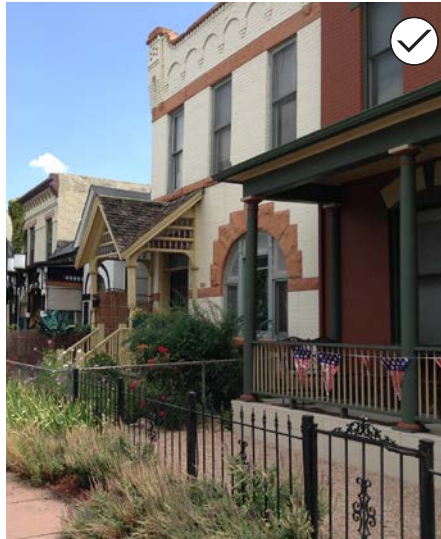
- a. Reserve most of the front yard area for a grass lawn or a designed xeriscape that uses low-water plantings while maintaining the appearance of a landscaped front yard.
- b. Where grass is not used, plant less water-intensive ground coverings.
- c. Use decorative modular pavers, a cellular paving system or recycled historic site materials (such as stone or brick) to minimize the visual impacts of a larger paved surface area.
- d. Avoid introducing topographic features, such as berms, that were not historically present, especially if other front yard areas on the street do not include similar features. Changes to grades can also impact the watering and health of existing yard and street trees.

5.5 Maintain the character of a "Denver Hill" sloping front yard area.

- a. Preserve the character of a "Denver Hill" sloping front yard area where it is a character-defining feature of the historic district or a characteristic of the block. See "Historic Background & Treatment Strategies for the "Denver Hill"" on page 98 for more information.
- b. Where the slope is unstable, use plant materials, or subterranean retaining walls to stabilize the slope, whenever possible. See Guideline 5.10 on page 97 for more information.



114. Design a new front yard fence to minimize impacts on the historic context.



115. Where they are part of the historic context, preserve and repair historic front yard, and street facing, fences, masonry site walls and retaining walls.

GUIDELINES FOR FENCES & WALLS

5.6 Where they are part of the historic context, preserve and repair historic front yard and street facing fences, masonry site walls and retaining walls.

- Replace only those portions of an original fence, site wall or retaining wall that are deteriorated.
- Preserve the character of the original mortar joints when re-pointing an original masonry site wall or retaining wall.
- Preserve an original wire fence when it is a character defining-feature of the historic district (a new chain link fence is not allowed).

5.7 Add a new front yard or street-facing fence only where at least one of the following conditions is present:

- An open front yard is not a character-defining feature of the historic property or district
- Historic or legally built fences or site walls are present on several properties in the surrounding context/block
- It is not possible to create a usable enclosed side or rear yard area
- Constructing a low fence at the top of a "Denver Hill" sloping front yard area would provide a compatible alternative to removing the slope. See "3. A Fence at the top of the slope" on page 98 for more information.

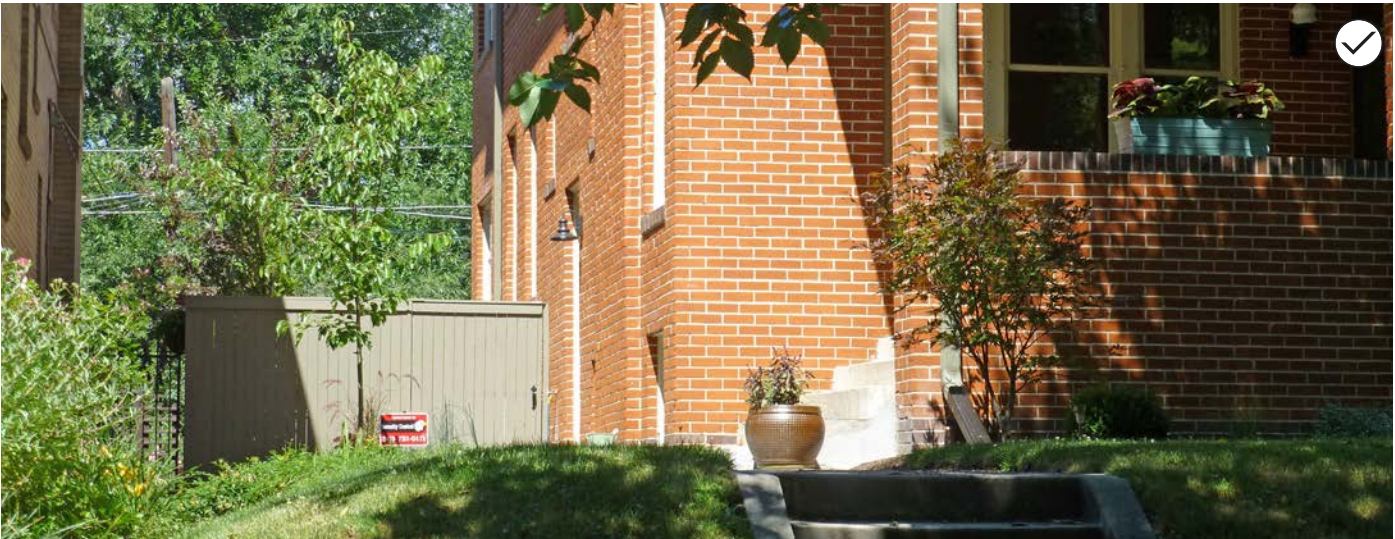
FENCES & MASONRY SITE WALLS

Front yard fences and site walls are not common in most of Denver's historic districts. Where present, they combine with gates, pillars and low hedges to help define the public edges of private yards without blocking views of the property. The most common fence materials were wrought iron and wood. Site walls (freestanding walls) and retaining walls (walls used to hold back earth) were most often constructed using stone, although other masonry materials such as brick were sometimes used.

New front yard fences are discouraged because they often interrupt the pattern of historic front yards. Where they are part of the surrounding historic context, low open hedges or shrubs may provide alternatives to constructing a new fence. New site walls are generally not allowed.

DENVER ZONING CODE FENCE AND WALL STANDARDS

Article 10 of the [Denver Zoning Code](#) sets forth base standards for the location and height of new fences and walls in front and side yard areas. The Design Guidelines promote maintenance of historic fences and walls, and provide strategies for the compatible design of new fences.



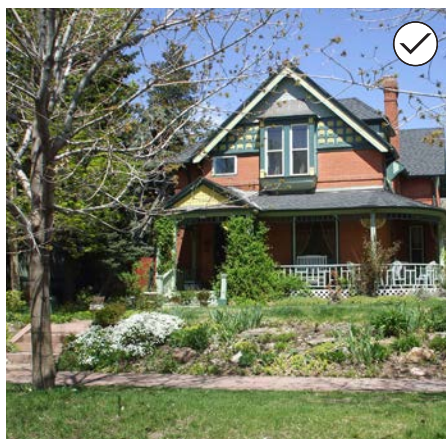
116. Locate a rear yard fence to have minimal visibility from public view.

TREE REQUIREMENTS IN DENVER

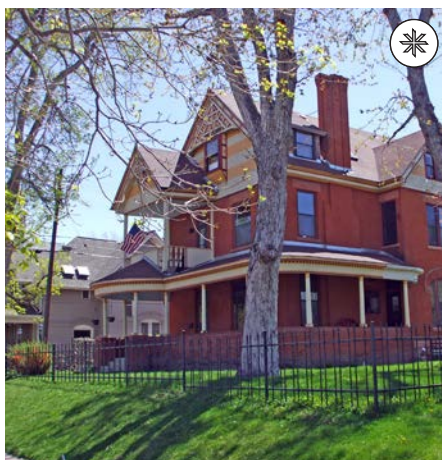
Denver's mature and diverse tree canopy adds to the character and desirability of many historic districts. A permit is required from the Office of the City Forester prior to planting or removing trees from the public right-of-way (such as trees located in the buffer lawn between a sidewalk and street curb) per Chapter 57 of the [Revised Municipal Code](#). When considering a new street tree, contact the City Forester for the approved street tree list and for tree spacing guidelines. When a property is in the process of demolition or construction, property owners must also protect established trees and provide new landscaping within setback areas of a property per Article 10 of the [Denver Zoning Code](#).

GUIDELINES FOR FENCES & WALLS (Continued)

- 5.8 Design a new front yard fence to minimize impacts on the historic context (when warranted based on the criteria in Guideline 5.7).
 - a. Design a new front yard fence to be simple, open, and low (unless taller fences are typical of the historic district or surrounding historic context). The maximum front yard fence height should be 48" or less.
 - b. Use compatible but simplified (less ornate) versions of historic fences and walls present in the historic district or in the surrounding historic context.
 - c. Use historic fence and wall materials present in the historic district or in the surrounding historic context. Do not use vinyl or other nontraditional fence materials.
 - d. Do not install a new chain link fence in the front yard (an existing chain link fence should be preserved when it is a character-defining feature of the district).
 - e. Do not install opaque fencing of any kind. A fence should be more than 50% open.
- 5.9 Add a rear yard fence consistent with historical patterns of the property and surrounding historic district.
 - a. Locate a rear yard fence to have minimal visibility from public view.
 - b. Situate a rear or side yard fence return at least one foot behind the front corner of a historic house façade, and to be located behind important architectural features, such as bay windows and chimneys whenever possible.
 - c. Use a rear and side yard fence type and materials traditionally found in the historic context, such as simple iron or wooden solid or open picket fence. Only use stone, brick, or a stuccoed wall if it corresponds with the historic property and surrounding historic context.
 - d. Design new fences to have traditional height, style and design to blend with historic building and surrounding historic context.
 - e. When installing a wooden fence, ensure that the pickets face to the exterior and the framing faces to the inside.
 - f. Locate a rear yard fence along traditional lot lines. If a non-traditional fence, such as a dog run, is proposed, locate in a way as to be concealed from public view.



117. Explore alternatives before proposing significant alterations to the “Denver Hill”, including using stabilizing plant materials with drought-tolerant planting and other ground cover that does not require mowing or a high degree of maintenance, as illustrated above.



118. Explore constructing a low, open style, fence at the top of the slope to provide an enclosed front yard area for children or pets, rather than replacing the slope with a new retaining wall.



119. Locate and design a new retaining wall to minimize impacts on the historic context. As illustrated above, a low kick wall can help stabilize the yard while maintaining most of the historic slope.

GUIDELINES FOR NEW RETAINING WALLS

5.10 Explore alternatives before proposing significant alterations to the “Denver Hill.” Alternatives to explore include:

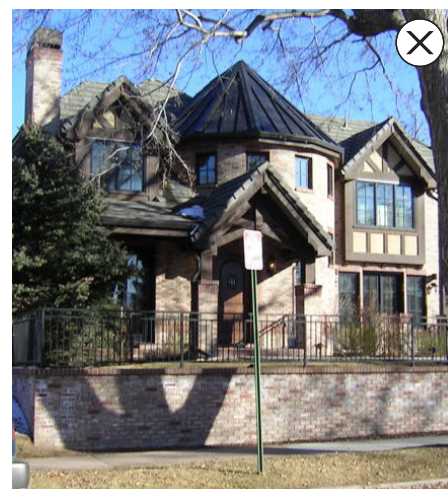
- Using stabilizing plant materials with drought-tolerant planting and other ground cover that does not require mowing or a high degree of maintenance, rather than constructing a new retaining wall.
- Constructing a low, open style, fence at the top of the slope to provide an enclosed front yard area for children or pets, rather than replacing the slope with a new retaining wall.
- Constructing a subterranean retaining wall to stabilize the slope.

5.11 Avoid adding a new retaining wall unless necessary and all alternatives have been explored.

- Add a new retaining wall that will alter the slope of a “Denver Hill” front yard area only where at least one of the following conditions is present:
 - » The “Denver Hill” is not a character-defining feature of the historic district.
 - » There is a high level of variety in the treatment of front yard areas among adjacent properties, including retaining walls.
 - » The front yard slope is unstable, threatens the foundation of a historic structure, and other stabilization strategies have failed.

5.12 Locate and design a new retaining wall to minimize impacts on the historic district or historic property (when warranted based on the criteria in Guideline 5.11).

- Use a low kick wall, up to one foot in height, to help stabilize the yard while maintaining most of the historic slope.
- Design a new retaining wall to minimize visual impacts on the character-defining features of the historic property, block and district.
- Use materials that are common to the historic district or that relate to the historic property. For example, if a stone wall is a part of the design tradition, the wall should be stone, or stone-faced.
- Avoid using terraced retaining walls.
- Do not completely replace the slope with a tall retaining wall.



120. Do not completely replace the slope with a tall retaining wall.

Historic Background & Treatment Strategies for the “Denver Hill”

A number of Denver’s historic districts feature properties elevated above the street with mostly flat front yards that slope steeply towards the street at the inner edge of the sidewalk. Denver promoted this particular configuration since it allowed rain hitting public sidewalks to drain into the street rather than onto private property, while also providing an attractive planting strip at street curb level. When present, this “Denver Hill” (also called the “Denver Roll”) can be a character-defining feature of a property or historic district. Refer to the character-defining features of a particular district in Appendix A.

Several potential treatment strategies for the “Denver Hill” are illustrated below. Maintaining the original grassy slope is preferred. Other treatment strategies may be appropriate where there is variety in the treatment of front yard areas along the same block, or where it is necessary to stabilize the slope.



Photo of unnamed street in Denver, ca. 1930. (Courtesy of Denver Public Library, Call No. Rh-1036)

1. SLOPE MAINTAINED IN ORIGINAL CONDITION



Maintaining the original grassy slope is preferred where the slope was not previously altered with retaining walls or other features.

2. STABILIZING PLANTS REPLACE GRASS



Stabilizing the slope with low-water plantings may be appropriate, especially as an alternative to constructing a new retaining wall.

3. A FENCE AT THE TOP OF THE SLOPE



Constructing a low fence at the top of the slope may be appropriate to provide an enclosed yard area for children or pets.

4. A LOW RETAINING WALL



Stabilizing the slope with a low “kick wall” may be appropriate to help stabilize the yard while maintaining most of the historic slope.

5. SLOPE TERRACED WITH RETAINING WALLS



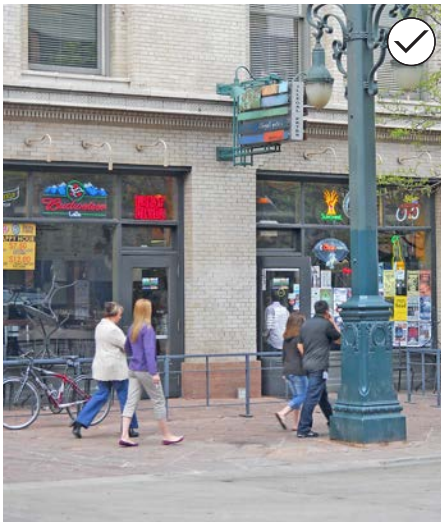
Terracing the slope with retaining walls is generally inappropriate.

6. LOT LEVELED WITH A HIGH RETAINING WALL

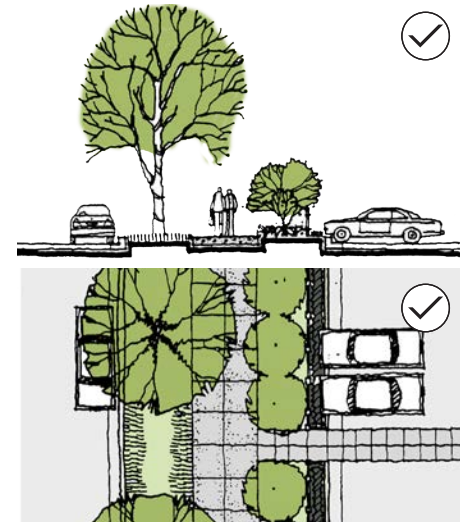
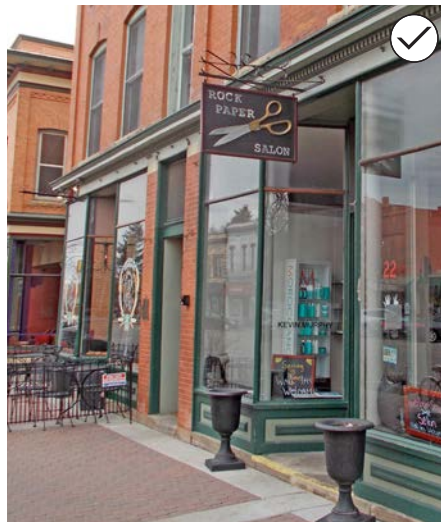


Completely removing the slope with a single retaining wall is inappropriate.

Figure 27: Historic Background & Treatment Strategies for the “Denver Hill”



121. Maintain the active, pedestrian-friendly, character of historic commercial, multifamily and mixed-use streets.



122. Minimize the visual impacts of a surface parking area.

INTENT STATEMENTS

- 5g To maintain the active, pedestrian-friendly, character of historic commercial, multifamily and mixed-use streets
- 5h To minimize the impact of parking areas, new site features and mechanical equipment on the historic character of commercial, multifamily and mixed-use streets

ENHANCING THE STREET EDGE

Building and streetscape features should work together to reinforce neighborhood character and enhance the pedestrian experience along the street edge between buildings and the street. Such features include:

- » Pedestrian-oriented entries
- » Street-facing windows
- » Public spaces that are linked to the sidewalk (i.e., patios and courtyards)
- » Street trees
- » Sidewalks
- » Street furniture (lighting, benches, etc.)
- » Public art

Note that the [Denver Streetscape Design Manual](#) provides the template for enhancements in the street right-of-way.

GUIDELINES FOR STREETScape & PARKING

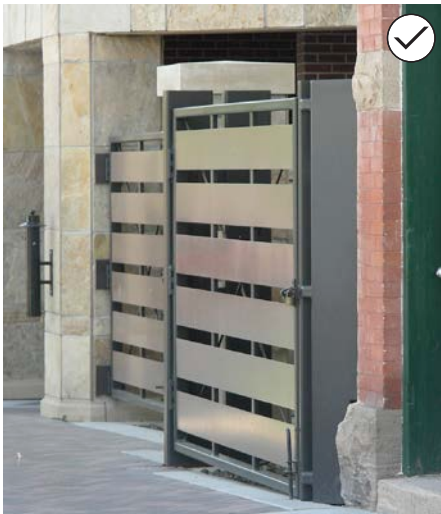
- 5.13 Use pedestrian-scaled design elements to enhance the historic streetscape.
 - a. Locate street furniture near heavily used pedestrian areas, such as major pedestrian routes, building entrances and outdoor gathering places.
 - b. Design street furniture to complement the character-defining features of the historic district (See page 88 for more information on site furnishings in courtyards, plazas and patios).
 - c. When a new fence and/or retaining wall is needed for security purposes, design a new open-style fence and/or retaining wall to be as low in height as possible and with a simple design to minimize visual impacts. Refer to 5.8, 5.9 and 5.12 for additional guidance.
 - d. Do not impede a primary pedestrian way with street furniture.
 - e. Plant street trees to enhance historic buildings and offset heat island effects of commercial areas. (Contact the [City Forester](#) for specifications on planting trees in hardscape).
- 5.14 Design a patio or dining area in/adjacent-to the public right-of-way to maintain views of a historic building from the street and sidewalk.
 - a. Use high quality materials for patio railings and furniture.
 - b. Use simple, low, patio railings.
 - c. Avoid highly decorative patio railings.
 - d. Do not locate walls or other solid enclosures between the sidewalk and a patio or dining area.
 - e. Do not affix umbrella holders or planters to patio railings because they reduce visibility between the sidewalk and building.
 - f. Do not obstruct a sidewalk with an at-grade patio or dining area. See Guideline 4.28 on page 88 for more information.
- 5.15 Locate and access surface parking areas to minimize impacts on the historic streetscape, rhythm of the built environment and disruption to pedestrians.
 - a. Minimize the visual impacts of a surface parking area (note that this is especially important in, and adjacent to, historic residential areas).
 - b. Locate surface parking areas to the side or rear of buildings.
 - c. Provide access to surface parking areas from an alley, when feasible.



123. Screen ground-mounted mechanical equipment.



124. Locate service areas and ground-mounted mechanical equipment to the side or rear of buildings.



125. Where possible, place a service area or ground-mounted mechanical equipment within a building alcove, especially if it is not located to the side or rear of a building.

MECHANICAL, UTILITY & SECURITY EQUIPMENT ON A HISTORIC BUILDING

The design guidelines on this page address site service areas, security and ground-mounted mechanical or utility equipment. Guidelines for mechanical, utility and security equipment on the exterior of a historic building are provided on page 58.

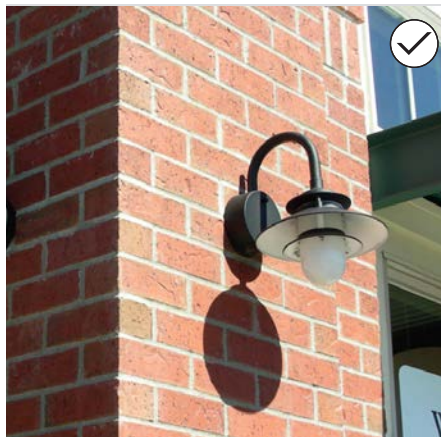
GUIDELINES FOR ALLEYS & SERVICE AREAS

- 5.16 Site and access service areas and ground-mounted mechanical equipment to minimize impacts on the historic streetscape and disruption of the pedestrian environment.
 - a. Locate service areas and ground-mounted mechanical equipment to the side or rear of buildings.
 - b. Where possible, place a service area or ground-mounted mechanical equipment within a building alcove, especially if it is not located to the side or rear of a building.
 - c. Provide access to service areas from an alley, where present.
 - d. Avoid locating a service area (including trash containers), or mechanical equipment, adjacent to residential property or directly against a public sidewalk.
- 5.17 Minimize the visual impacts of a new service area.
 - a. Orient a service entrance, waste/compost disposal area or other service area toward alleys or service lanes, and away from public streets and residences.
 - b. Locate a service area to minimize potential noise impacts or other residual effects on nearby properties.
 - c. Screen ground-mounted mechanical equipment.
 - d. Screen a service area with a wall, fence or planting.
- 5.18 Minimize potential security issues in an alley or parking area.
 - a. Install vandal-proof security cameras, whenever possible.
 - b. Minimize hidden areas or tight spaces between buildings and service areas.
 - c. Use compatible lighting to improve security in an alley or parking area. See Guideline 5.23 on page 103 for more information on compatible lighting.

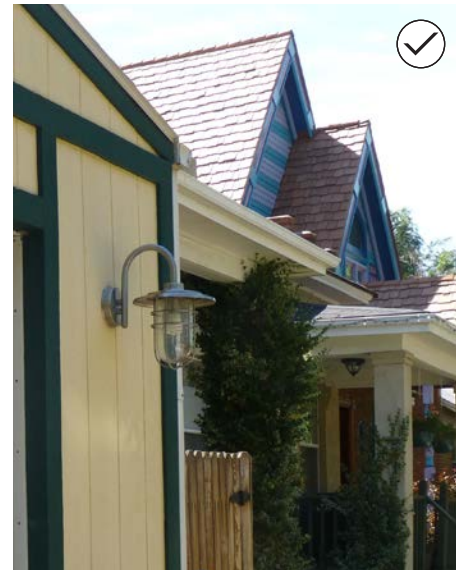
Site & Building Lighting



126. Preserve historic light fixtures.



127. If new light fixtures are necessary, use a contemporary design, or simplified historic lighting design that is compatible with the placement, design, materials and quality of lighting on adjacent historic buildings.



INTENT STATEMENTS

- 5i To minimize the impact of site lighting on historic properties and districts
- 5j To preserve historic lighting to maintain the original historic ambiance
- 5k To provide illumination that enhances the historic context and does not overwhelm historic structures

ZONING REQUIREMENTS FOR LIGHTING

In addition to these guidelines, the [Denver Zoning Code](#) provides standards for exterior lighting, including requirements to prevent light trespass and glare onto adjacent properties, and to limit light pollution generally. Certain light sources are prohibited in Denver. Refer to Section 10.7 of the [Denver Zoning Code](#) for more information..

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SITE & BUILDING LIGHTING

5.19 Preserve historic light fixtures.

- a. Supplement, rather than remove, historic light fixtures.
- b. Adapt historic light fixtures with better illumination and glare control while maintaining the original physical appearance of the fixture.
- c. Repair and retrofit historic light fixtures whenever possible.
- d. Replace missing light fixtures if sufficient documentation exists.
- e. Where historic fixtures remain and additional lighting is needed, add new fixtures to be subordinate to the historic fixtures in terms of placement, scale, design and illumination.

5.20 Coordinate lighting with historic streetscapes and buildings.

- a. Coordinate light fixtures to be compatible with the design of the historic structure, historic district and surrounding historic context.
- b. Coordinate storefront lighting along the street whenever possible.
- c. When considering street lights, avoid conflicts with street trees. Street lights should be located below the street canopy and at least five feet from street trees.

5.21 Design lighting to be compatible and subordinate to historic buildings and the surrounding historic context.

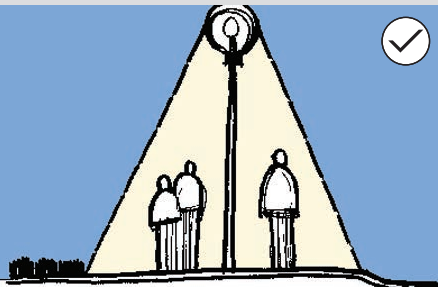
- a. Use existing or ambient streetlight or storefront lighting rather than adding new lighting whenever possible.
- b. If new light fixtures are necessary, use a contemporary design, or simplified historic lighting design that is compatible with the placement, design, materials and quality of lighting on adjacent historic buildings.
- c. Limit the level of illumination to be sufficient to perform the needed lighting task.
- d. Design and orient new light fixtures to provide down-lighting.



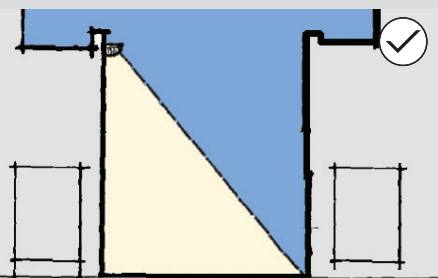
128. Use low, shielded, fixtures with down-lighting, or light bollards within landscaping to illuminate pedestrian walkways if needed.

SCALING SITE LIGHTING

Site lighting should be scaled to its purpose as illustrated below.



Use small scale fixtures to illuminate pedestrian walkways.



Use fixtures that provide even lighting for a plaza, courtyard or patio area.

GUIDELINES FOR SITE LIGHTING

5.22 Design site lighting to be compatible and subordinate to historic buildings and the surrounding historic context.

- Base site lighting designs on historic site or building lighting patterns if they are known.
- Scale new site lighting fixtures to the building and to be subordinate to adjacent historic structures.
- Use low, shielded, fixtures with down-lighting, or light bollards within landscaping to illuminate pedestrian walkways if needed.
- Use modest site lighting to illuminate building entrances and entries into parking areas.
- Use fixtures that provide even lighting for a plaza, courtyard or patio area.
- Do not install site lighting that conveys a false sense of history, such as faux historic street lights.
- Do not provide greater illumination in parking areas than at building entrances or for pedestrian walkways.
- Do not use site lighting that is brighter than historic building lighting.



129. Use lighting sources and illumination levels that enhance historic building and district character.

GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING LIGHTING

5.23 When necessary, design and install new building light fixtures that are compatible with the historic building and surrounding historic context.

- a. Install lighting at the ground level of buildings only.
- b. Design and locate new light fixtures to be perceived but not seen, incorporating lighting into recessed entries, porches, canopies and alcoves whenever possible.
- c. Scale new light fixtures to the building (i.e., use monumental light fixtures only on monumental buildings)
- d. Consider using building light fixtures with a contemporary design that are compatible in materials, quality and design with the historic building.
- e. Consider using period reproduction fixtures if they can be matched in style, quality and materials with the historic building, and are subordinate to historic building architecture and features.
- f. Do not design lighting for the sole purpose of attracting attention to building architecture or to building uses.

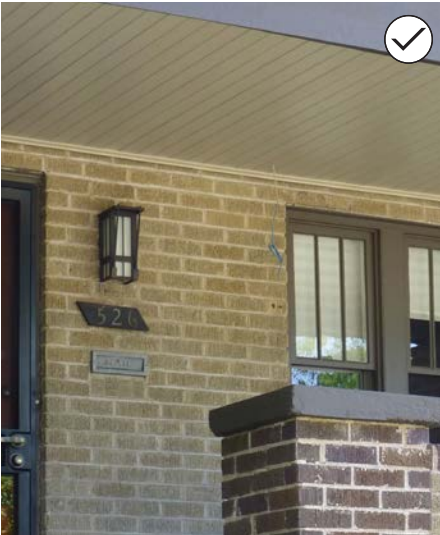
5.24 Use lighting sources and illumination levels that enhance historic building and district character.

- a. Use illumination with a warm white light which does not distort the color of building materials or finishes.
- b. Do not install flood lights or fluorescent tube lighting on street elevations.
- c. Do not use colored bulbs or gels, or lighting with changing colors on historic buildings.
- d. Do not install light fixtures that cast light upward into the sky or onto the façade of a historic building, except as noted in design guideline 5.25 below.



BUILDING LIGHTING IN DENVER

In the years following Mayor Speer's 1904 visit to Paris, France, Denver began to artfully light key downtown streets and boulevards as part of his City Beautiful initiative. Many early civic structures in city parks were also highlighted with elegant lighting. No building was more exuberant in its lighting than the 1910 Denver Gas and Electric Building (Insurance Exchange Building) on 15th Street (see above). New banks and office blocks in the early 20th century often included monumental entry light fixtures that matched the scale of the new architecture. More modest commercial buildings were often lit with unobtrusive fixtures, sometimes hidden under a recessed entryway. Residential lighting became more common after the turn of the century. Grand mansions might have wall gates with lights on entry posts or ornamental wall lighting, but most early 20th century residences had unobtrusive porch ceiling lights or pendant fixtures. While incandescent lamps were the single option for night lighting in the early 20th century, neon lights and fluorescent lamps were used for some commercial applications in Denver by the 1930s.



130. Minimize negative impacts to a historic building façade when installing lighting.



GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING LIGHTING (continued)

5.25 Use building illumination that is appropriate to the significance of the building.

- a. Direct floodlights, or other façade illumination, only onto important civic buildings while avoiding illumination on adjacent façades or the sky.
- b. Limit lighting of detached houses to entries and walkways.
- c. Coordinate security lighting with other building lighting, where possible.
- d. Use professionals when designing floodlighting for civic buildings to avoid distortion of building features and unnecessary glare.
- e. When designing architectural lighting for a civic building, use the smallest possible fixtures hidden underneath cornices and parapets to minimize visual impacts to the extent feasible.

5.26 Minimize negative impacts to a historic building façade when installing lighting.

- a. Locate and install light features so they may be removed without significant damage to historic building fabric.
- b. Do not install lighting conduits, junction boxes and wires on primary building façades.



131. Direct floodlights, or other façade illumination, only onto important civic buildings while avoiding illumination on adjacent façades or the sky.