

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUAL BUILDING ELEMENTS

This chapter presents design guidelines for the preservation of individual historic building elements in Georgetown. They apply to individually listed historic resources, as well as historic properties located in the Downtown and Old Town Overlay Districts. The guidelines are organized into a series of relevant design topics. Within these design topics are individual policy and design guideline statements upon which the City will base its decisions.

Commercial Facades

Ornamentation and details of elements such as cornices and parapets are original components that “dress up” a building and give it a sense of style and character. Ornamental items include hood molds, trim at doors, and windows; plaques and medallions; signboards or sign panels; date or name stones; and simple geometric shapes in metal, stone, or concrete.

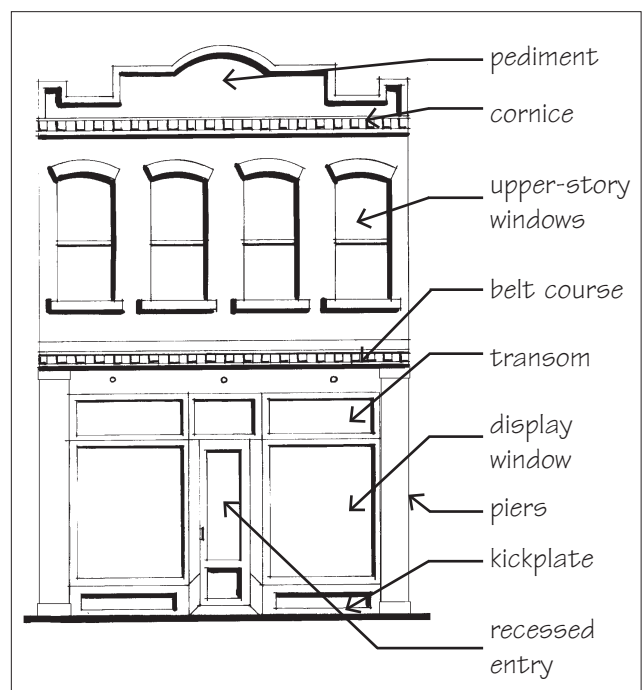
Cornices, which are usually found at the top of building walls, and ornamental moldings or belt courses, which are located just above storefronts, are horizontal projecting elements that provide a visual break in or termination to a wall. A parapet is an upward extension of a building wall above the roofline, sometimes ornamental and sometimes plain, used to give a building a greater feeling of height or a better sense of proportion.

Cornices are most apparent on late 19th century commercial structures, when several ornate, bracketed types were used. Early 20th century buildings were, as a rule, less decorated and had simpler ornamentation. Rather than cornices, they tend to have parapets, some low and some extending several feet above the roof surface. A parapet may be capped with brick, stone, or tile, and frequently decorative elements or panels are placed in it.

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Commercial buildings should, for the most part, all relate to the street and to pedestrians in the same manner: with a clearly defined primary entrance and large windows that display goods and services offered inside. The repetition of these standard elements creates a visual unity on the street that should be preserved.



Typical commercial storefront components.

Windows & Doors

Windows and doors are some of the most important character-defining features of historic structures. They give scale to buildings and provide visual interest to the composition of individual façades. Distinct window and door designs in fact help define many historic building styles. Windows and doors often are inset into relatively deep openings or have surrounding casings and sash components, which have a substantial dimension that casts shadows that contribute to the character of the historic style.

HARC should consider the following when evaluating proposals to replace historic windows:

1. Historic windows and doors are not necessarily decorative, so their functionality as well as appropriate design should be considered.
2. Whether the repair of the historic windows and/or doors is technically not feasible.
3. The window and door openings should not be altered to accommodate windows or doors of different sizes, proportions, views, or configurations.
4. If the windows and doors are visible to the public they should not be removed, enclosed, or obscured.
5. Windows and doors visible to the public view should be retained in the original location.
6. Whether the appearance matches the details such as window or door size, shape, operation, glass configuration, material, and finish. The appearance of the sash, opening size, and decorative detail should look like the historic window or door.

7. Whether the operation of the replacement window or door is the same; for example, double-hung or casement windows that open inward.
8. Whether the muntin style, configuration, detailing, and installation is the same for the replacement window or door as the historic window or door.
9. Whether the sash and frame materials are the same materials, match the historic detailing, style, complexity, and profile.

HARC should assess the following when evaluating proposals to replace non-original windows:

1. Whether the proposed replacement windows and/or doors are based on the documented configuration of the building's original windows and/or doors.
2. Whether historic window and door openings are proposed to be altered to accommodate windows or doors of different sizes, proportions, views, or configurations.
3. A historic window or door opening should not be enclosed, altered in its dimensions, or obscured.
4. Whether the non-original windows and/or doors have taken on historic significance and now contribute to the history of the building.

Roofs

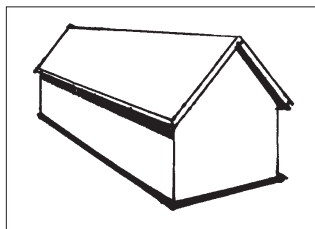
The character of the roof is a major feature for most historic structures. When repeated along the street, the repetition of similar roof forms contributes to a sense of visual continuity for the neighborhood. In each case, the roof pitch, its materials, size, and orientation are all distinct features that contribute to the character of a roof. Gabled and hip forms occur most frequently in residential areas while flat roofs appear on most historic commercial buildings in Georgetown.

Although the function of a roof is to protect a structure from the elements, it also contributes to the overall character of the building. The Overlay Districts have seen the construction of various roof forms, as illustrated below.

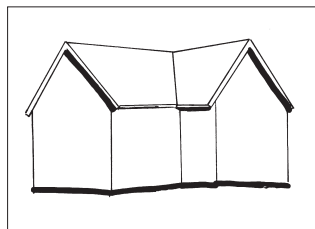
When evaluating roofing proposals HARC should consider the following:

1. The condition of the deteriorated or damaged existing roof materials and whether they can be economically repaired.
2. Whether the proposed new roofing material can be installed without removing, damaging, or obscuring character-defining architectural features or trim, such as cupolas, dormers, cornices, brackets, chimneys, cresting, finials, and weathervanes.
3. If the proposed new roofing material is similar in regard to size, style, and details of the original historic roofing materials, to the extent that such original roofing can be documented. If no photographic or other documentation exists for original historic roofing materials, selection of new roof materials shall be typical of those used in the style of the historic building.
4. The original form and shape of the roof are retained.
5. The original character of the structure should be maintained.

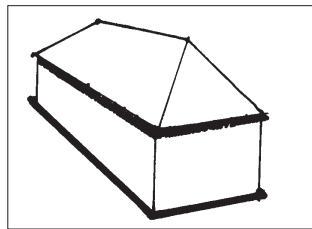
Typical Roof Types



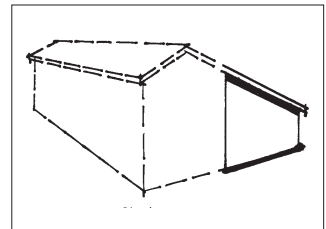
Gabled roof



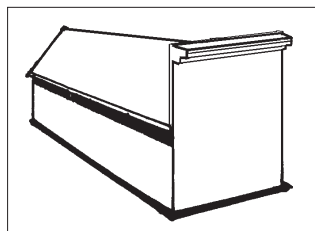
Cross-Gabled roof



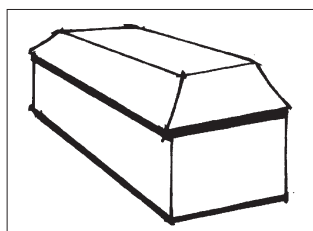
Hipped roof



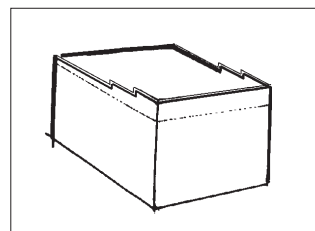
Shed roof



**False front
(pediment)**



Mansard roof



**Flat roof
with parapet**

Porches

Many residential styles and building types developed with the porch as a prime feature of the front façade. Because of their historical importance and prominence as character-defining features, porches should be preserved and they should receive sensitive treatment during exterior rehabilitation.

Porches vary as much as architectural styles. They differ in height, scale, location, materials, and articulation. Some are simple one-story structures, while others may be complex with elaborate details and finishes. These elements often correspond to the architectural style of the house and therefore the building's design character should be considered before any major rehabilitation work is begun.

HARC should take the following into consideration when asked to approve the alteration or addition of a historic porch:

1. If the existing porch has deteriorated or become badly damaged such that repair is technically infeasible.
2. The proposed new porch is similar to the historic porch in regards to size, style, detail, and shape and will be constructed from historic or appropriate new materials.
3. If inadequate documentation of original porches exists, a new porch should be typical of those built in the style of the historic building. A simplified adaptation may be allowed if physical evidence of the original is non-existent or if the design is prohibitively expensive to recreate.
4. Whether the existing porch materials are being retained, unless it is technically infeasible to do so.
5. If proposed new railings and balusters on an existing or new porch use historic or appropriate new materials, are designed in a style similar in appearance to historic balusters, and whether railings are characteristic of the style of the historic building.
6. The porch floor is of a type characteristic of the style of the historic building. Spaced planks shall not be used where painted tongue-and-groove boards would have been used historically.
7. New and existing wood visible from the right-of-way is painted unless it can be documented that the original wood was unpainted or stained (generally, unpainted pressure treated wood will not be allowed).
8. Concrete steps and porches are allowed if it can be shown that they existed on the building historically or if they are characteristic of the style of building.

Policy: Maintain an historic storefront and all of its character-defining features.

6.1 For a commercial storefront building, a rehabilitation project shall preserve these character-defining elements:

- **Display windows:** The main portion of glass on the storefront, where goods and services are displayed. This will help maintain the interest of pedestrians by providing views into goods and activities inside first floor windows.
- **Transom:** The upper portion of the display window, separated by a frame.
- **Kickplate:** Found beneath the display window. Sometimes called a bulk-head panel.
- **Entry:** Usually set back from the sidewalk in a protected recess.
- **Upper-story windows:** Windows located above the street level. These usually have a vertical orientation.
- **Cornice molding:** A decorative band at the top of the building.
- These features shall not be altered, obscured or removed.



For a commercial storefront building, a rehabilitation project shall preserve these character-defining elements.

6.2 Maintenance of storefronts.

- Wash display windows.
- Repair damaged kickplates.
- Re-caulk display windows to reduce air infiltration.
- Install weather-stripping around doors.

6.3 If a storefront is altered, restoring it to the original design is preferred.

- If evidence of the original design is missing, use a simplified interpretation of similar storefronts. The storefront still should be designed to provide interest to pedestrians.
- Note that, in some cases, an original storefront may have been altered early in the history of the building, and may itself have taken on significance. Such alterations should be preserved.
- See also *Preservation Briefs #11: Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts*, published by the National Park Service.

Combining Rehabilitation Principles - A Case Study

This sequence of photographs illustrates the positive results of combining procedures for preservation, repair, reconstruction, and sympathetic alterations that are set for in the design guidelines in this chapter.



If a storefront is altered, restoring it to the original design is preferred. (Compare with the two photos of the same building to the right.)



Using historic photographs can help in determining the original character. (Compare with below.)



This rehabilitation preserves surviving details and reconstructs missing ones. (Ft. Collins, CO)

6.4 Alternative designs that are contemporary interpretations of traditional storefronts may be considered.

- Where the original is missing and no evidence of its character exists, a new design that uses the traditional elements may be considered.
- However, the new design should continue to convey the character of typical storefronts, including the transparent character of the display window.



If evidence of the original design is missing, use a simplified interpretation of similar storefronts. The storefront still should be designed to provide interest to pedestrians. (Boulder, CO)

6.5 Retain the kickplate as a decorative panel.

- The kickplate, located below the display window, adds interesting detail to the streetscape and should be preserved.
- If the original kickplate is covered with another material, consider exposing the original design.



Retain the kickplate as a decorative panel.

6.6 If the original kickplate is missing, develop a sympathetic replacement design.

- Wood is an appropriate material for replacements on most styles. However, ceramic tile and masonry may also be considered when appropriately used with the building style.

6.7 Preserve the character of the cornice line.

- An original cornice moulding should be preserved.
- Most historic commercial buildings have cornices to cap their facades. Their repetition along the street contributes to the visual continuity on the block.
- Many cornices are made of sheet metal. Areas that have rusted through can be patched with pieces of new metal.



Preserve an original cornice molding.



When a building is missing its cornice, consider the two options presented below.



Reconstruct a missing cornice when historic evidence is available.



A simplified interpretation also is appropriate for a replacement cornice if evidence of the original is missing.

6.8 Reconstruct a missing cornice when historic evidence is available.

- Use historic photographs to determine design details of the original cornice.
- Replacement elements should match the original in every detail, especially in overall size and profile. Keep sheet metal ornamentation well painted.
- The substitution of another old cornice for the original may be considered, provided that the substitute is similar to the original.

6.9 A simplified interpretation is also appropriate for a replacement cornice if evidence of the original is missing.

- Appropriate materials include stone, brick, and stamped metal.

6.10 Retain the original shape of the transom glass in historic storefronts.

- Transoms, the upper glass band of traditional storefronts, introduced light into the depths of the building, saving on light costs. These bands should not be removed or enclosed.
- The shape of the transom is important to the proportion of the storefront, and it should be preserved in its historic configuration.
- If the original glass is missing, installing new glass is preferred. However, if the transom must be blocked out, be certain to retain the original proportions. One option is to use it as a sign panel or decorative band.

6.11 A parapet wall should not be altered, especially those on primary elevations or highly visible facades.

- When a parapet wall becomes deteriorated, there is sometimes a temptation to lower or remove it. Avoid doing this because the flashing for the roof is often tied into the parapet, and disturbing it can cause moisture problems.
- Inspect parapets on a regular basis. They are exposed to the weather more than other parts of the building, so watch for deterioration such as missing mortar or excessive moisture retention.
- Avoid waterproofing treatments, which can interfere with the parapet's natural ability to dry out quickly when it gets wet.

Policy: Historic windows and doors significantly affect the character of a structure and should be preserved.

The size, shape and proportions of window and door openings are important features. They give scale to buildings and provide visual interest to the composition of individual facades. These features are inset into relatively deep openings in a building wall or they have surrounding casings and sash components that have substantial dimensions. They cast shadows that contribute to the character of the building.

6.12 Preserve the position, number, size, and arrangement of historic windows and doors in a building wall.

- Enclosing an historic opening in a key character-defining facade is inappropriate, as is adding a new opening.
- Do not close down an original opening to accommodate a smaller window. Restoring original openings which have been altered over time is encouraged.
- Historically, windows had a vertical emphasis. The proportions of these windows contribute to the character of each residence and commercial storefront.

6.13 Preserve the functional and decorative features of an historic window or door.

- Features important to the character of a window include its clear glass, frame, sash, muntins, mullions, glazing, sills, heads, jambs, moldings, operation, location, and relation to other windows.
- Features important to the character of a door include the door itself, door frame, screen door, threshold, glass panes, paneling, hardware, detailing, transoms, and flanking sidelights.
- Historic screen and storm doors should be preserved and maintained.



The upper-story windows on the side of this historic commercial building have been filled in with brick. Where instances like this exist, consider reopening the windows.



After: The upper-story windows have been reopened.



Consider use of a storm window to enhance the energy efficiency of an existing historic window rather than replacement. (Deadwood, SD)

6.14 Maintenance of windows.

- Wash windows.
- Clean debris from windows.
- Replace loose or broken glass in kind. This will reduce air leaks.
- Replace damaged muntins, moldings, or glazing compound with material that matches the original in shape, size, and material.
- Repair window hardware or replace with materials that match the original in scale and design. If the replacement hardware does not match the original design it should be simple, unobtrusive, and compatible with the style and building's period of significance.
- Install weather-stripping. This will enhance energy conservation significantly.
- Maintain the interior views, so that either merchandise or furniture can be seen.

6.15 Repair wood features by patching, piecing-in, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing the wood.

- Avoid the removal of damaged wood that can be repaired.
- Rebuild or repair portions of existing window frames, sashes, sills, or portions thereof, rather than replacing complete windows unless it is technically infeasible to do so.
- See also *Preservation Briefs #9: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows*, published by the National Park Service.

6.16 Glass in doors and windows should be retained.

- If it is broken or has been removed in the past, consider replacing it with new glass. If security is a concern, consider using wire glass, tempered glass, or light metal security bars (preferably on the interior).
- Replacement glass may be insulating glass, but it should match the style and color of the original glass.
- Replacement glass should match the historic glass - clear, rolled ("wavy"), tinted, etc.
- Removal of historic leaded, art, stained, beveled, prismatic glass, etc. should not be permitted, unless it is damaged and is technically infeasible to repair.



Preserve leaded glass decorative features. (Texarkana, TX)

6.17 Installing window air-conditioners in windows on building fronts is inappropriate.

6.18 Maintain recessed entries.

- The repetition of recessed entries provides a rhythm of shadows along the street, which helps establish a sense of scale.
- These recessed entries were designed to provide protection from the weather and the repeated rhythm of these shaded areas along the street helps to identify business entrances. Typically, recessed entries were set back between three and five feet.
- Restore the historic recessed entry if it has been altered.
- Avoid doors that are flush with the sidewalk, especially those that swing outward.

6.19 Where entries were not recessed historically, maintain them in their original position.

- However, one may also need to comply with other code requirements, including door width, direction of swing, and construction.
- In some cases, entries must comply with accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Note, however, that some flexibility in application of these other regulations is provided for historic properties.
- See also *Preservation Briefs #32: Making Historic Properties Accessible*, published by the National Park Service.



Maintain recessed entries where they are found. This recessed form, for example, preserves the original character, even though it no longer serves as a doorway.

Policy: A new or replacement window or door should match the appearance of the original.



The side wall of a historic building located on a corner will have fewer openings.

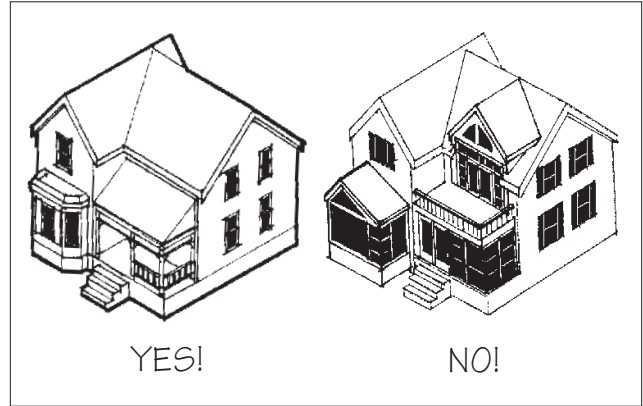
While replacing an entire window or door is discouraged, it may be necessary in some cases. Although wood is preferred as a replacement material, metal is common on the market today and sometimes is suggested for replacement. It is possible to consider alternative materials, if the resulting appearance matches the original as closely as possible. The substitute also should have a demonstrated durability in this climate.

6.20 When window or door replacement is necessary, match the replacement to the original design as closely as possible.

- Preserve the original casing, when feasible.
- If the original is double-hung, then the replacement window should also be double-hung, or at a minimum, appear to be so. Match the replacement also in the number and position of glass panes.
- Very ornate windows or doors that are not appropriate to the building's architectural style are inappropriate.
- Using the same material (wood) as the original is preferred.
- A new screen door added to the front of a visible door should be "full view" design or with minimal structural dividers to retain the visibility of the historic door behind it.
- A screen door should be sized to fit the original entrance opening and the design should be of the appropriate style and period of the building.
- Security doors are non-historic additions. If installed, they should follow the guidelines for screen doors.

6.21 Maintain the historic ratio of window and storefront openings to solid wall.

- Significantly increasing (or decreasing) the amount of glass will negatively affect the integrity of a structure.
- On traditional storefronts, first floors should be more transparent than upper floors.
- Upper floors should appear more solid than first floors.
- Avoid a blank wall appearance that does not provide interest to pedestrians. Note, however, that the side wall of a historic building located on a corner will have fewer openings.
- Large surfaces of glass are inappropriate on residential structures and on the upper floors and sides of commercial buildings.
- If necessary, divide large glass surfaces into smaller windows that are in scale with those seen traditionally.



Maintain the historic ratio of window openings to solid wall.

Policy: Preserve the original form and scale of a roof.



In residential areas, most roof forms are pitched, such as gabled and hipped.



Most commercial buildings have flat, or slightly sloping roofs.

6.22 Preserve the original roof form of an historic structure.

- In residential areas, most roof forms are pitched, such as gabled and hipped. Most commercial buildings, on the other hand, have flat, or slightly sloping roofs.
- Avoid altering the angle of a historic roof. Instead, maintain the perceived line and orientation of the roof as seen from the street.
- Retain and repair roof detailing. All architectural features which give the roof its fundamental traits, such as dormer windows, cupolas, cornices, brackets, chimneys, cresting, and weather vanes, shall be retained.
- Often repairing a basically sound roof can be much less expensive than a complete replacement. If a new roof is necessary, try to match the color, material, and pattern of the old as closely as possible. A roof may be re-roofed with substitute materials, such as asphalt or composite shingles that resemble the original style, if the original materials are determined to be beyond repair, are no longer available, or the historic roofing has been previously removed or covered.
- Skylights shall not be added where they are visible from the public right-of-way.
- Skylights should be placed at the rear rooflines or behind gables or dormers.
- Do not install new ornaments unless it can be shown that they historically existed on the roof.
- Roof alternations such as adding a greenhouse, roof deck, solar panels, vents, and mechanical and electric equipment are not recommended if they would be visible from the street. These items should be made less noticeable by minimizing the size and using subdued colors.

6.23 Locate downspouts to minimize impacts on historic canopies and other facade details.

- Water from downspouts should drain away from the building properly.
- Ideally, a downspout should empty into an underground drainpipe that takes the water to the sewer or street.
- If this is not possible, a downspout should empty onto a metal or concrete splashblock that slopes downward and away from the building.
- Maintain and repair existing gutters and downspouts in place.
- If existing gutter and downspouts are deteriorated to the extent that they must be replaced, new gutters and downspouts shall match the original historic gutters and downspouts. They shall be of size and profile that would be characteristic of the period of significance.
- Where built-in gutters exist and must be repaired, repair or replace only those sections needing it, using similar materials to existing historic built-in gutters.
- Note that galvanized half-round sheet metal gutters may in many cases be more appropriate for historic buildings that had exposed gutters than the colonial profile aluminum gutters and downspouts commonly used today.

6.24 Regular maintenance and cleaning is the best way to keep your roof in good shape.

- Inspect the roof for breaks, or holes in the surface, and check the flashing for open seams.
- Many commercial buildings have shallow sloping flat roofs that are hard to see, so there is a tendency to forget about them until problems develop.
- Clean debris from gutters and downspouts to prevent the backing up of water.
- A roof should not hold water.
- Patch leaks in the roof. This should be a high priority for ongoing building maintenance.
- Replace deteriorated flashing.
- Re-solder downspout connections to prevent water from leaking into walls.

Policy: Maintain a porch and its character-defining features.



This porch has experienced an inappropriate alteration; wrought iron supports have replaced wood piers. Compare it with its “twin” in the photo below. (Spartanburg, SC)



When replacing porch posts, use supports that are of adequate size. This porch reconstruction was based on neighboring houses of similar character and age. (Spartanburg, SC)

Historically, porches were popular features in residential designs. A porch protects an entrance from rain and provides shade in the summer. It also provides a sense of scale to the building and provides a space for residents to sit and congregate. A porch provides stylistic details to the house, and in some cases is an integral part of an architectural style.

6.25 Maintain an historic porch and its detailing.

- Do not remove original details from a porch. These include the columns, balustrade, and any decorative brackets that may exist.
- Maintain the existing location, shape, details, and columns of the porch.
- Missing or deteriorated decorative elements should be replaced with new wood, milled to match existing elements. Match the original proportions and spacing of balusters when replacing missing ones.
- Unless used historically, wrought iron porch posts and columns are inappropriate.
- Where an historic porch does not meet current code requirements and alterations are needed or required, then retrofit it to meet the code, while also preserving original features. Do not replace a porch that can otherwise be modified to meet code requirements.
- A missing porch and its steps should be reconstructed, using photographic documentation and historical research, to be compatible in design and detail with the period and style of the building.
- Most precast concrete steps are not acceptable alternatives for primary façade porches.
- Construction of a new non-original porch is usually inappropriate.
- The construction of a non-original second or third level porch, balcony, deck, or sun porch on the roof of an existing front porch is inappropriate.

6.26 Avoid enclosing an historic front porch with opaque materials.

- Enclosing a porch with opaque materials that destroy the openness and transparency of the porch is inappropriate.
- If historic porches that have been enclosed in the past are proposed to be remodeled or altered, they should be restored to their appearance during the period of significance, unless the enclosure, by nature of its age, architectural significance, or other special circumstance, has achieved historic significance of its own.
- When a porch is enclosed or screened, it shall be done with a clear transparent material. This material should be placed behind porch columns.



When a porch is enclosed or screened, it shall be done with a clear transparent material. This material should be placed behind porch columns. (Memphis, TN)

6.27 The detailing of decks and exterior stairs should be compatible with the style and period of the structure.

- The color and material of decks and stairs should complement the main structure.
- New decks should be minimally visible from the street and should have no major impact on the original building.

6.28 Avoid altering original chimneys.

- Existing brick chimneys should not be removed or covered with stone, stucco, or other non-original material.
- If chimneys are damaged or missing they should be restored to their original condition or reconstructed in keeping with the chimney design of the period.

