

Section 2

Site And Setting





NOTES

2.0 Site and Setting: Overview

(From the Secretary of the Interior's Standards)

A. **Building Site**

The building site consists of a historic building or buildings, structures, and associated landscape features within a designed or legally defined parcel of land. A site may be significant in its own right, or because of its association with the historic building or buildings. The relationship between buildings and landscape features on a site should be an integral part of planning for every work project.

B. **Setting (District/Neighborhood)**

The setting is the larger area or environment in which a historic property is located. It may be an urban, suburban, or rural neighborhood or a natural landscape in which buildings have been constructed. The relationship of buildings to each other, setbacks, fence patterns, views, driveways and walk- ways, and street trees together create the character of a district or neighborhood.

C. **Special Considerations**

For these guidelines, corner properties are to be considered as having two front yards.

See [Section 4.3](#) for [Sample-Site Layout Sketch](#).

2.1 Public Rights-of-way and Alleys:

The Belle Grove Historic District is composed of 22 square blocks. The boundaries are as shown on the area map in Appendix Section 6.4. The district is located in an area designated as "Original Fort Smith." The topography varies from a high point of 443.5ft. above sea level at 'E' Street and North Sixth, to a low point of 416.8 ft. above sea level at 'H' Street and North Eighth Streets. The (rights-of-way) are narrow and were originally paved with brick pavers. There are some sections of the streets that have exposed brick, but most of the streets are paved with asphalt. One alley between 6th & 7th Streets and 'C' and 'D' Streets has brick pavers. Other alleys are asphalt or gravel. The brick pavers have had rough wear due to automobile traffic, and numerous dips and bumps are present.



Some of the curbs are made of cut stone sections. Sidewalks are located on all of the streets. They are separated from the streets by a grass median. The lots in the District are as originally platted and typically are 50 ft. x 140 ft.

Utilities such as gas, sewer and electric poles are located in the alleys, except gas meters are located at the street on 5th Street. Water lines are located in the streets. Sewer manholes are located in the streets at C, D, E, F, G, & H Streets. There are some underground storm water lines, but most of the storm water runs off. On several streets, storm water drainage is by way of channel or drain flumes made of rock. At the corner of 'C' and Seventh Streets there are original large slabs of stone covering an area for water to drain below the crosswalks at the curbs.



Vehicular traffic at most of the residences use the alley as access to garages or properties. There are several concrete carriage steps at the curb such as at 309 North '7th' Street. On North 'C' Street between 7th & 8th Streets there is an original arched concrete structure with steps to each side. This structure (platform) was used by the nearby church for funerals. The casket would be carried up the steps and the horse-drawn hearse would back up to the platform and permit easy loading of the casket.

During the 1980's, light fixtures replicating gas lamps on pipe posts were added along the north south streets.

During the 1970's, Bradford Pear trees were added along some north and south streets.

A painted cast metal shield (boundary marker) with "Belle Grove Historic District" is mounted on a steel pipe at each entrance street to the District.

2.1 Public Rights-of-way and Alleys: Guidelines

Recommended

- .1 Obtain proper permits for any work necessary in the alleys or street rights-of-way such as plantings, etc.
- .2 Properly maintain lawn areas at streets.
- .3 Screen with landscaping or approved materials such elements in the alleys as gas meters and trash cans and trash dumpsters. Obtain COA and properly screen roll-off dumpsters that will be in place for longer than (30) days,
- .4 Prune and trim trees in the public right-of-way in a manner that preserves the existing trees and tree canopies in the historic districts.
- .5 If repair or construction work in the public right-of-way is necessary, protect and retain historic features such as stone curbing, gutters, and street plantings. Replace in kind any damaged or deteriorated historic features. Repair or replace sidewalks, curbs and paving, where needed, to match adjacent historic materials in design, color, module, pattern, texture, and tooling.
- .6 Maintain historic driveways and curb cuts.



2.2 Historical Research and Archaeology

A. Historical Research

An important part of any historical property is its ancestry, genealogy or lifecycle. When becoming involved with an historic building or site, or a property that had a building removed, it is important to research the complete history of the property to determine what uses, events or conditions may have occurred after the life cycle of the property and/or building(s). Research will establish dates that a property was acquired, and/or building built, and by whom. Primary sources for such important information include property deeds, wills, contracts, vital statistics, city or community history, church records, courthouses, Sanborn Fire Maps, photos, newspapers, libraries, neighbors, tax records, and bank records (loans, etc.).

B. Archaeology

Archaeology is defined as - "the science or study of history from the remains of early human cultures as discovered chiefly by systematic excavation; "Through systematic archaeological excavation of a site, a wealth of historical knowledge can be obtained. Since Fort Smith was constructed in the early 1800's, and since there were settlers and Native Americans in the area, since that time it is likely that many artifacts can be uncovered on properties in the Belle Grove Historic District.

If buildings existed prior to a present building, there may exist additional foundations exposed or covered over. If new construction is planned, it is important to investigate the areas where new construction may occur so as to protect (or remove as last resort) any underground archaeological artifacts or obstructions which may interfere with new construction.

2.2 Historical Research & Archaeology: Guidelines

Recommended

- .1 Surveying and documenting areas where the terrain will be altered to determine the potential impact to important landscape features or archaeological resources.
- .2 Protecting, e.g., preserving in place important archaeological resources.
- .3 Planning and carrying out any necessary investigation using professional Archaeologists and modern archaeological methods when preservation in place is not feasible.

Not Recommended

- .4 Failing to survey the building site prior to the beginning of rehabilitation work which results in damage to, or destruction of, important landscape features or archaeological resources.
- .5 Leaving known archaeological material unprotected so that it is damaged during rehabilitation work.
- .6 Permitting unqualified personnel to perform data recovery on archaeological resources so that improper methodology results in the loss of important archaeological material.

2.3 Site Features and Plantings:

There are two types of "cultural landscapes," according to NPS Brief #36, that most historic properties fit into.

A Historic Designed Landscape - is a landscape that was consciously designed or laid out by a landscape architect, master gardener, architect, or horticulturist according to design principles, or an amateur gardener working in a recognized style or tradition. The landscape may be associated with a significant person(s), trend, or event in landscape architecture; or illustrate an important development in the theory and practice of landscape architecture. Aesthetic values play a significant role in designed landscapes. Examples include parks, campuses, and estates.



A Historic Vernacular Landscape - is a landscape that evolved through use by the people whose activities or occupancy shaped that landscape. Through social or cultural attitudes of an individual, family or a community, the landscape reflects the physical, biological, and cultural character of those everyday lives.

A historic property consists of all its cultural resources - landscapes, buildings, archaeological sites and collections.

A property's landscapes, site features and buildings are an integral part of the neighborhood and district, in addition to their value to an individual site.

A property's topography, size, location, amount of open space, streets and alleys all are important factors in the defining characteristics of a particular historic site.

A range of issues may need to be addressed when considering how a particular cultural landscape should be treated. This may include the in-kind replacement of declining vegetation, reproduction of furnishings, rehabilitation of structures, accessibility provisions for people with disabilities, or the treatment of properties that are rehabilitated for new uses.

Any work that is undertaken on a historic property should be accomplished in a conscientious, caring and professional manner.

Refer to NPS Preservation Brief #36: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes.

See Section 4.3 for Sample -Site Layout Sketch.

2.3 Site Features and Plantings: Guidelines

Recommended

- .1 Identifying, retaining, and preserving buildings and their features, as well as features of the site which are important in defining its overall historic character. Site features may include circulation systems such as walks, paths, roads, or parking; vegetation such as trees, shrubs, fields, or herbaceous plant material; landforms such as terracing, berms or grading; furnishings such as lights, fences, or benches; decorative elements such as sculpture, statuary or monuments; water features including fountains, streams, pools, or lakes, and subsurface archaeological features which are important in defining the history of the site.
- .2 Preserving important landscape features, including ongoing maintenance of historic plant material.
- .3 Protecting the building and landscape features against arson and vandalism before rehabilitation work begins, i.e., erecting protective fencing and installing alarm systems that are keyed into local protection agencies, and covering and/or securing all openings to prevent access by unauthorized persons.
- .4 Providing continued protection of historic building materials and plant features through appropriate cleaning, rust removal, limited paint removal, and re-application of protective coating systems; and pruning and vegetation management.
- .5 Evaluating the overall condition of the materials and features of the property to determine whether more than protection and maintenance are required, that is, if repairs to building and site features will be necessary.
- .6 Designing and constructing a new feature of a site when the historic feature is completely missing, such as an outbuilding, terrace, or driveway. It may be based on historical, pictorial, and physical documentation; or be a new design that is compatible with the historic character of the building and site.
- .7 Designing new onsite parking, loading docks or ramps when required by the new use so that they are as unobtrusive as possible and assure the preservation of the historic relationship between the building(s) or landscape.
- .8 Designing new exterior additions to historic buildings or adjacent new construction which is compatible with the historic character of the site and preserves the historic relationship between the building(s) or landscape(s).
- .9 Removing non-significant buildings, additions, or site features which detract from the historic character of the site.
- .10 Retain and preserve original features (or pre-1950) such as walks, patios, retaining walls, curbs, stepping stones, planting beds, gazebos, trellis', etc.
- .11 Preserve and maintain; Historic and landmark trees such as oaks, walnut and hickory, locally rare species, trees with seasonal color (flowers, fruits, fall leaves), trees well situated in the landscape both artistically and functionally such as those that provide summer shade. Remove trees which are declining or weak species, insect and disease prone.



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- .12 Schedule routine inspections of trees and landscape materials.
- .13 Replacing deteriorated or damaged landscape features in kind.
- .14 Properly locate and minimize the visual impact of mechanical equipment by screening it from view.
- .15 Plant ivy or vines on existing chain-link fencing and screen utility connections and service boxes with plantings.
- .16 Provide plants as a buffer-edge at parking areas and along fences, walks, foundations, and porch edges and to highlight building features.
- .17 Keep yard plantings simple and at a level for easy maintenance.
- .18 Remove vines from building walls and roofs to prevent damage to the structure and historic materials.
- .19 Design building additions, new construction, parking or other site improvements so that large trees and other significant site features are preserved.
- .20 Research the site and records to ascertain previous planting and landscape areas which may be refurbished.
- .21 Make an inventory of all existing landscape elements and prepare a scaled plan for future reference.
- .22 Protect plants and trees during any rehabilitation work on the building or other site features.
- .23 Retain traditional landscape elements used for defining building entrances.
- .24 Maintain neighboring setbacks established for yard defining elements such as hedgerows, fences or buildings.
- .25 Construct screens or trellises with vines around existing non-conforming site structures.
- .26 Refrain from using heavy equipment on site that will damage the landscape and possibly archaeological artifacts.
- .27 If an addition or accessory building is planned, be careful in excavating any excess areas of the site.
- .28 Retaining the historic relationship between buildings and the landscape.
- .29 Protecting and maintaining buildings and the site by providing proper drainage to assure that water does not erode foundation walls, drain toward the building, or damage or erode the landscape.
- .30 Minimizing disturbance of terrain around buildings or elsewhere on the site, thus reducing the possibility of destroying or damaging important landscape features or archaeological resources.



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- .31 Replacing in kind an entire feature of the building or site that is too deteriorated to repair if the overall form and detailing are still evident. Physical evidence from the deteriorated feature should be used as a model to guide the new work. This could include an entrance or porch, walkway or fountain. If using the same kind of material is not technically or economically feasible, then a compatible substitute material may be considered.

Not Recommended

- .32 Failing to survey the building site prior to the beginning of rehabilitation work which results in damage to, or destruction of, important landscape features or archaeological resources.
- .33 Removing or radically changing buildings and their features or site features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the property so that, as a result, the character is diminished.
- .34 Removing or relocating buildings or landscape features, thus destroying the historic relationship between buildings and the landscape.
- .35 Removing or relocating historic buildings on a site or in a complex of related historic structures - thus diminishing the historic character of the site or complex.
- .36 Radically changing the grade level of the site. For example, changing the grade adjacent to a building to permit development of a formerly below-grade area that would drastically change the historic relationship of the building to its site.
- .37 Failing to maintain adequate site drainage or changing the site grading so that water no longer drains properly causing buildings and site features to be damaged or destroyed.
- .38 Introducing heavy machinery into areas where it may disturb or damage important landscape features or archaeological resources.
- .39 Allowing important landscape features to be lost or damaged due to a lack of maintenance.
- .40 Permitting the property to remain unprotected so that the building and landscape features or archaeological resources are damaged or destroyed.
- .41 Removing or destroying features from the site such as iron fencing, masonry balustrades, plant material, patios, stepping stones, trellises, arbors or walks.
- .42 Failing to provide adequate protection of materials on a cyclical basis so that deterioration of building and site features results.
- .43 Failing to undertake adequate measures to assure the protection of building and site features.
- .44 Replacing an entire feature of the building or site such as a fence, walkway, or driveway when repair of materials and limited compatible replacement of deteriorated or missing parts are appropriated.

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- .45 Using a substitute material for the replacement part that does not convey the visual appearance of the surviving parts of the building or site feature or that is physically or chemically incompatible.
- .46 Removing a feature of the building or site that is unrepairable and not replacing it; or replacing it with a new feature that does not convey the same visual appearance.
- .47 Adding conjectural landscape features to the site such as period reproduction lamps, fences, fountains, or vegetation that are historically inappropriate, thus creating a false sense of historic development.
- .48 Creating a false historical appearance because the replaced feature is based on sufficient historical, pictorial, and physical documentation.
- .49 Introducing a new building or site feature that is out of scale or of an otherwise inappropriate design.
- .50 Introducing a new landscape feature, including plant material that is visually incompatible with the site, or that alters or destroys the historic site patterns or vistas.
- .51 Locating any new construction on the building site in a location which contains important landscape features or open space. For example, removing a lawn and walkway and installing a parking lot.
- .52 Placing parking facilities directly adjacent to historic buildings where automobiles may cause damage to the buildings or landscape features, or be intrusive to the building site.
- .53 Introducing new construction onto the building site which is visually incompatible in terms of size, scale, design, materials color and texture; which destroys historic relationships on the site; or which damages or destroys important landscape features.
- .54 Removing a historic building in a complex of buildings or removing a building feature, or a landscape feature which is important in defining the historic character of the site.
- .55 Using heavy equipment on a site to strip away all vegetation and topsoil from the entire site rather than within a restricted construction area.

NOTES

2.4 Fences and Walls



Numerous patterns and styles and several different materials of fencing are in the Belle Grove Historic District. These should be preserved and retained.

The materials used for the fences are wood and metal. Some of the metal fences are constructed above low stone or brick walls. Some of the fences have very decorative patterns, corner posts and gates. Fences and walls have served as security barriers and property line markers and to keep pets or children at home. Low stone or brick walls have been used as retaining walls at some locations.

For these guidelines, corner properties are to be considered as having two front yards.

See [Section 4.3](#) for [Sample-Site Layout Sketch](#).

2.4 Fences and Walls: Guidelines

Recommended

- .1 Fences of iron, wood, stone or brick original to the historic site, or at least 50 years old, should be preserved and retained. If missing, may be reconstructed based on documentary and pictorial evidence.
- .2 Iron fences are compatible with substantial-sized buildings other than bungalows and craftsman style houses which had wood fences.
- .3 Protect and maintain wood, masonry and metal elements of fences and walls by appropriate means. Refer to Guidelines in Section 3 for further information.
- .4 For repair and replacement of parts or all of the components, refer to Section 3.
- .5 Introduce new fences or walls of traditional materials only in locations and designs which are characteristic of the District.
- .6 Wood picket fences may be located in front and side yards of bungalows and craftsman style houses generally on property lines. They should be painted or stained white or light beige tones; have a height of three feet maximum; pickets no wider than four inches and spaced no further than three inches apart; and of a design that is compatible with the house.
- .7 For these guidelines, corner properties are to be considered as having two front yards. Privacy wood board fences should be restricted to the rear yards; no taller than six feet; set back from the front facade at least one-half the distance between front and back walls of the building. Boards should be flat in a single row, and if painted should blend with the structure. The design should be compatible with the building.
- .8 Planting of ivy, vines or shrubs to cover or screen existing chain-link fencing is encouraged.



Not Recommended

- .9 Installing chain-link fencing or vinyl composite fencing.
- .10 Removing historic fencing or cutting out sections for driveways or walkways.
- .11 Installing non-appropriate fencing materials or patterns.
- .12 Constructing concrete and concrete block, railroad ties or landscape timber walls or retaining walls.
- .13 Locating fences incorrectly.



2.5 Walkways, Drives and Off-Street Parking



Only a few of the larger early Belle Grove Historic District residential properties had driveways from the street to the building or to the alleys, which preserved the beautiful, continuous grassy, tree lined streetscape of the District. Since in-fill construction has taken place, there are numerous driveways and off-street parking lots that serve a restaurant, apartments, offices and other building types.

Most of the walks, drives and off-street parking areas of the present Belle Grove Historic District are, in some instances, contrary to good guidelines and practices and are not examples to follow for such new construction.

In an attempt to provide for better, more historically compatible walkways, drives and off-street parking, these guidelines are presented.

See [Section 4.3](#) for [Sample-Site Layout Sketch](#).

2.5 Walkways, Drives & Off-Street Parking: Guidelines

Recommended

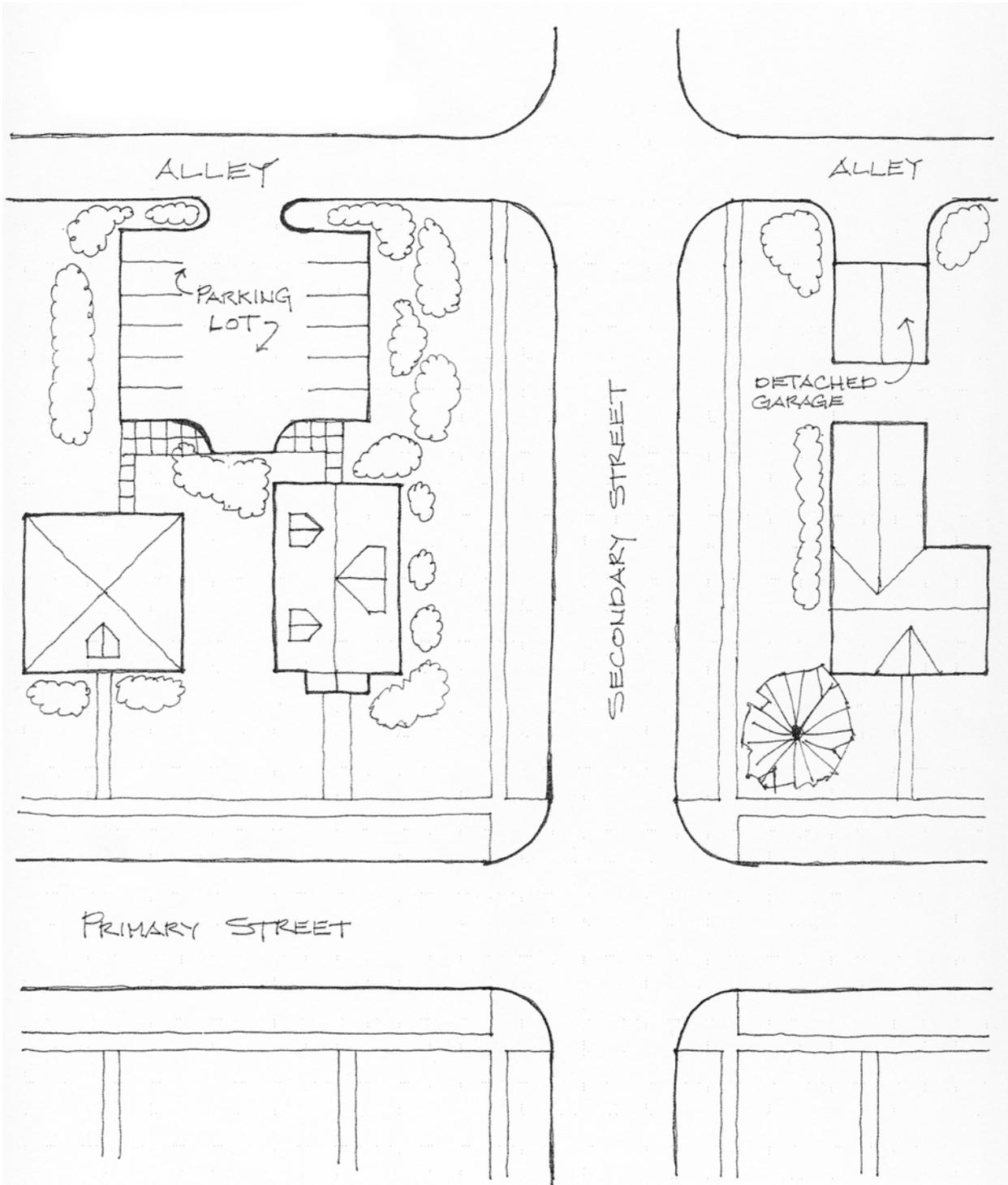
- .1 If a walkway, drive or off-street parking area is historic, it should be retained and preserved.
- .2 If replacement of a section of a historic walkway, drive or parking area is required, it should be replaced with materials matching or compatible with existing materials.
- .3 Adhere to the Fort Smith Zoning Ordinances in reference to on-site parking requirements.
- .4 Locate off-street parking so that the existing site topography, site features and trees are retained.
- .5 Retain the public walkways and street access if a new driveway is required.
- .6 Protect building and site elements and trees during site work.
- .7 Construct screening of parking areas from the street by plants, shrubs, fences, or walls and provide interior planting islands to break up paved areas.
- .8 Locate parking areas to the rear of the property and preferably off the alley.
- .9 Materials recommended for paving parking areas include brick or stone pavers, concrete, compacted crushed rock or compacted crusher dust.
- .10 For lighting walkways, driveways and parking areas follow the guidelines for lighting in Section 2.7.
- .11 If locating a parking lot on a vacant lot, align the front of the parking area no closer to the street, than the front of an adjacent building furthest from the street.
- .12 If locating a parking lot on a corner lot, it should be screened on both streets. See Number 11 above for alignment.



Not Recommended

- .13 Asphalt is not an historic building material and is not recommended for paving parking areas unless used in a colored patterned texture.
- .14 Constructing parking areas, which damage or disturb historic character-defining building or site elements or mature trees.
- .15 Parking areas visible from the street.
- .16 Constructing parking areas in front yards of houses.
- .17 Cutting or damaging curbs and streets.

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PREFERRED PARKING DIAGRAM



NOTES

2.6 Garages & Accessory Structures



Within the Belle Grove Historic District there are several historic garages or carriage houses. Generally, they were constructed of the same materials and the same style as the main house. Since the alley was the prominent access to these structures, they were constructed at the alley property line. Some homes on corner lots have the garages opening onto the side street. Guests could be dropped off at the front walk and the automobile or carriage would be taken to the carriage house or garage. Most residents, who had automobiles then, like today, would put their automobile in the garage and enter their house from the back door.

Historic garages and accessory structures should be preserved and maintained. Use the same guidelines for such rehabilitation as for the main buildings noted herein.

See [Section 4.3](#) for [Sample-Site Layout Sketch](#).

2.6 Garages & Accessory Structures: Guidelines

Recommended

- .1 Preserve and maintain existing garages and accessory structures that contribute to the historic character of the site.
- .2 A historic structure may be missing or deteriorated beyond rehabilitation. In such cases replace it with a structure meeting the following:
 - a. A design based on accurate documentation.
 - b. A new design following the guidelines for additions to historic buildings or new construction.
 - c. A design in either "a" or "b" should be compatible with the principal structure and other similar structures in the District.
- .3 Any new garage or accessory building should be located and oriented to match similar conditions on other sites within the neighborhood and District.



Not Recommended

- .4 To introduce a prefabricated structure that is not compatible with the main structure or other similar historic structures within the District.
- .5 To construct a garage or accessory building that requires removal of any portion of other historic buildings or their character-defining features, site elements such as trees, historic fences, walls or landscaping.
- .6 To create a building with a false historical appearance.



2.7 Lighting

Lighting fixtures have evolved over the years since the invention of the electric light bulb. The gas lanterns of the earlier historic district were replaced with electric street lamps. The current street lamps resemble the early gas lamps.

Light fixtures on buildings should be researched to determine if there were exterior lights on porches or entrances, or yard lights, etc.

Since there have been many lighting fixtures and lamp posts created to resemble historic fixtures, it is important to determine what period and style of fixture and post may be appropriate for the intended use.

If lighting is to be placed on-site for parking or all-night illumination, it is important to consider the neighboring property as well as site being designed. Site, signage or building lighting should be located so as not to disturb a neighbor. Small, low area lights and walkway lights are preferable to larger pole-mounted lights.



2.7 Lighting: Guidelines

Recommended

- .1 Original building and site light fixtures and lampposts should be refurbished and reused where possible.
- .2 Security lights on buildings should be placed on the secondary and rear facades.
- .3 Research the period of the building construction to ensure that earlier fixtures are not used.
- .4 Post-mounted lights should not exceed 10 ft. in height and be of brass, copper, or painted metal.
- .5 Lighting designs should enhance the ability to interpret the historic character of the street, as seen at night, and should not overwhelm it.
- .6 Lighting sources at signs and buildings should be shielded from view.
- .7 Use lighting to:
 - Accent architectural details
 - Accent building entries
 - Accent signs
 - Illuminate sidewalks

Not Recommended

- .8 Post-mounted or building-mounted lights that shine into neighboring yards or buildings.
- .9 Lighting fixtures that represent a historical period earlier than the historic building.
- .10 Flood lighting building facades.
- .11 Animated lighting.





2.8 Signage

NPS Preservation Brief No. 25 "The Preservation of Historic Signs" notes that American sign practices originated largely in Europe. The earliest commercial signs included "symbols" of the merchants' goods or tradesman's craft.

Emblems were mounted on poles, suspended from buildings or painted on hanging wooden boards. Symbolic signs were necessary since few could read. A sheep signified a tailor, a tankard a tavern, the red and white striped pole signified the barbershop, and three gold balls were hung outside a pawnshop.

Historical photographs of the original Belle Grove area show the residential aspect. Only several storefront buildings existed.

The present state of the Belle Grove Historical District includes residences, offices and apartment type structures which, in some cases, were converted to the new uses or constructed as in-fill buildings.

In planning for signage, it is important to match the historic styles for lettering, sizes, colors and the support structure and method of illumination.

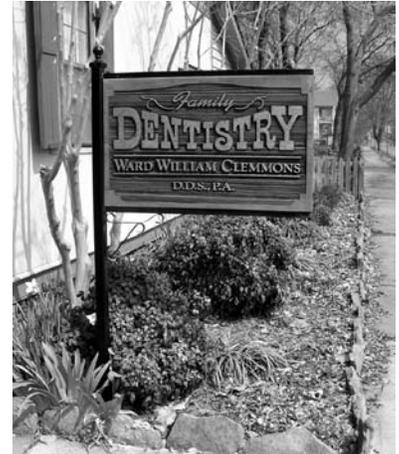
2.8 Signage: Guidelines

Recommended

- .1 Preserve and refurbish any existing historic signage.
- .2 Coordinate the style of new signs, the style and size of lettering, colors, and the sign support structure with the building style.
- .3 Signs should enhance the use and style of the building and District.
- .4 Colors should be compatible with the building and the character of the neighborhood.
- .5 Signs should be of historic materials such as painted wood, finished carved wood, glass, copper or bronze letters.
- .6 Signs should contain lettering that does not exceed 6 inches in height, except for storefronts which will be considered on a per case basis.
- .7 Lighting for signs should be concealed and spot or up-lit lighting is recommended.
- .8 "Ghost" historic painted wall signs should be preserved and not removed.
- .9 Painted historic murals may be appropriate on walls of existing commercial buildings.
- .10 New yard signs should be freestanding and not exceed six square feet in area.
- .11 Posts may be of wood or painted (matt finished) tubular steel.
- .12 Brick or stone, end or base supports may be used.
- .13 When several businesses share a building, signs should be combined.
- .14 Small placard signs suspended at porch eaves may be appropriate.

Not recommended

- .15 Banners or fabric signs are not permitted at any time. See H-1 zoning ordinance available in the planning department for other items not permitted.
- .16 Plastic substrate signs and internally lighted signs.
- .17 Single pole mounted signs.
- .18 Signs of inappropriate sizes, heights, materials or colors.
- .19 Wall or window signs on buildings other than storefronts.
- .20 Portable, moving or flashing signs.
- .21 Separate signs for businesses in the same building.



NOTES