1

WINCHESTER
HISTORIC DISTRICT
DESIGN GUIDELINES

OWNING PROPERTY IN THE HISTORIC DISTRICT & DESIGN REVIEW

Winchester has a wealth of distinctive dwellings and structures in its historic district of approximately forty-five blocks containing 1,242 properties. From the late eighteenth through the early twentieth centuries, Winchester residents created a rich variety of houses, commercial structures and institutional buildings throughout the city and, in particular, in the historic core area. The district follows a gridiron plan and remains a densely built and compact area with many blocks of contiguous rowhouses and commercial structures. A large number of early log and stone structures remain scattered throughout the district. While various structures have been demolished and replaced over the years, many historic structures have been carefully preserved.

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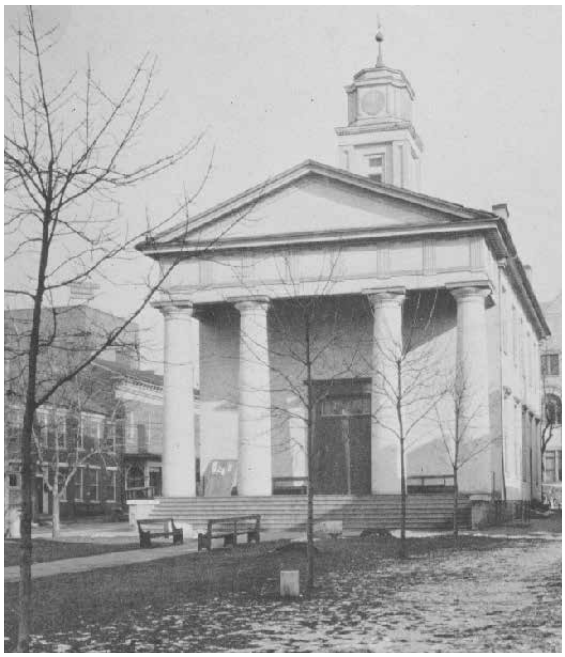
Winchester has long been a leader in historic preservation in the Shenandoah Valley. Preservation of Historic Winchester (PHW), Inc. was founded in 1964 as a local, private non-profit organization to encourage preservation in the district. Among its many programs, PHW has created a nationally acclaimed revolving fund from which monies are used to buy and sell threatened properties. Historic easements and covenants are placed on the properties that are then resold.



The Greek Revival styled Frederick County Courthouse (above) and the Romanesque Winchester City Hall (below) are two of the most significant structures within the historic district as shown in these historic photographs.

In 1967 the city created its first local historic district, which was expanded in 1976. A handbook was created in 1985 for all property owners within the historic district. The commercial core of the historic district was designated a Virginia Main Street City in 1985, and the Old Town Development Board has played an important role in encouraging the reuse and rehabilitation of many of Winchester's historic commercial buildings.

These guidelines have been developed to provide detailed recommendations to further aid you, the property owner, and the Board of Architectural Review in the ongoing goal of historic preservation in Winchester. The intent of these guidelines is to guide design decisions within the district, not dictate them. These are a set of principles, not a set of strictly followed laws. The BAR and property owners should follow the intent of the guidelines as they continue to work together to preserve the unique and irreplaceable resources of the historic district.

Understanding your Building: District Character

The Historic Winchester District was created by the City of Winchester. It encompasses the historic core of the city in which each generation has left its mark. The resulting historic district, while architecturally diverse, retains a high degree of cohesion and visual integrity. This district is densely built up and many buildings within it share similar scale, forms, materials and setting. Within this common architectural vocabulary there are several sub-areas.

Core Area: The Loudoun Street Mall and Surrounding Commercial Streets

This downtown area contains a majority of traditional commercial buildings. They are, for the most part, two or three stories in height and have a three-part facade with a cornice, upper floors and storefront. Many are of masonry construction and have a very limited or nonexistent setback, and are attached to the building next to them. Some have had the facade and the storefront remodeled through the years. Several early residences still remain in this sub-area.

Western Edge: Washington Street and Fairmont Avenue

Both of these tree-lined corridors contain some of the larger residences in the district and date from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Most domestic architectural styles are found in this sub-area where lots are ample and frequently contain large trees and a variety of plantings. Most dwellings have a deep setback from the sidewalk that is occasionally lined with a low stone wall or fence.

Western Corridor: Amherst Street

This corridor extends all the way to the house museum and gardens of Glen Burnie, the property of Winchester's founder, James Wood. Several other large nineteenth-century residences line the street, which also has a large number of noncontributing commercial structures. Closer to downtown there are several blocks of medium-scaled, single-family dwellings on Amherst and neighboring side streets.

Southern Entry: Cameron, Braddock and South Kent Streets

This residential neighborhood is characterized by a variety of mostly two-story smaller-scaled rowhouses dating from the late eighteenth through the early twentieth century. While most of the dwellings are frame, log, and stone, brick dwellings also are found in this sub-area. There is a high degree of cohesion in this area with similarly scaled houses containing minimal setbacks, raised basements, and stairs leading to a small entry porch.

Northern Area: West Piccadilly and Peyton Streets

Medium-scale brick residences with shallow front yards dominate this sub-area. For the most part, they date from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century and many are executed in the American Foursquare style with square-like proportions, two-stories, a hipped roof with a large shed dormer, and a full-width front porch. A smaller number of Federal brick residences dating from early nineteenth century are also found in this area along with several twentieth-century bungalows.

Eastern Edge: Kent Street Corridor

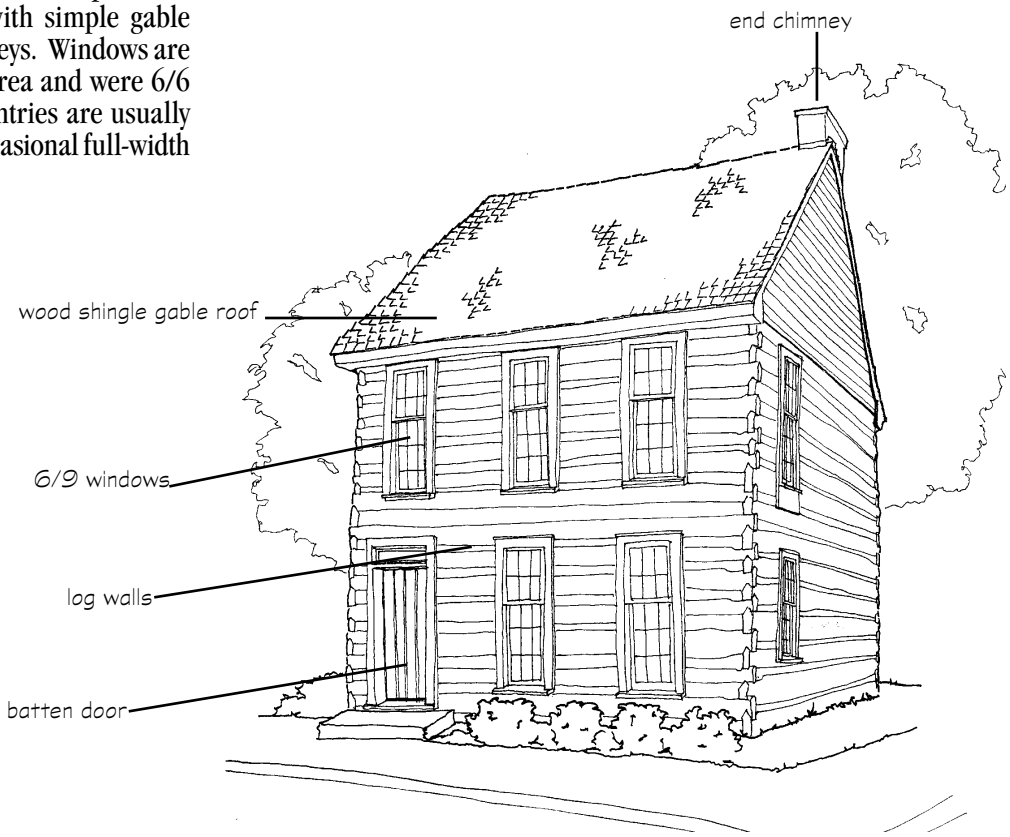
This border of the district contains a mixture of elements including the Town Run and the CSX railroad line along with several industrial properties. The Kent Street corridor and neighboring Sharp Street contain a variety of small-scale frame vernacular rowhouses interspersed with several newer commercial properties.

Architectural Styles

The following drawings and photographs illustrate the most common architectural styles in Winchester's historic district. They show the prototype of the style. Many of the buildings are simplified, or vernacular, versions of these more ornate styles. Some buildings exhibit elements from several styles. In other instances the style may be present in individual residences, rowhouses or in commercial structures. The stylistic features identified in these drawings and photographs are examples of the kinds of distinctive elements that should be preserved when you rehabilitate your building. Additional examples of commercial building styles may be found on page 4 of *Brochure 5: Guidelines for Commercial Buildings.*

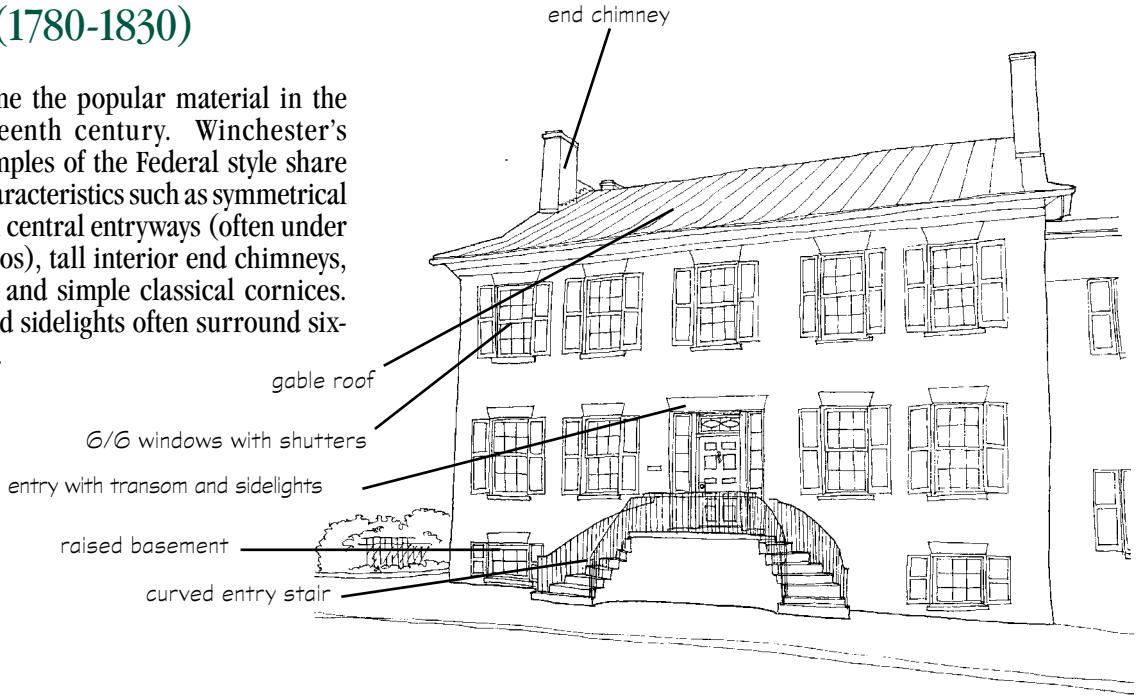
Late 18th/Early 19th Century Vernacular (1790-1820)

Many of the earliest dwellings in Winchester reflect the simple building traditions of the area. Houses were constructed frequently of log and then were clad in wood clapboards. Forms are rectangular with simple gable roofs and tall brick chimneys. Windows are small compared to wall area and were 6/6 or 6/9 paned patterns. Entries are usually small porticos with the occasional full-width porch.



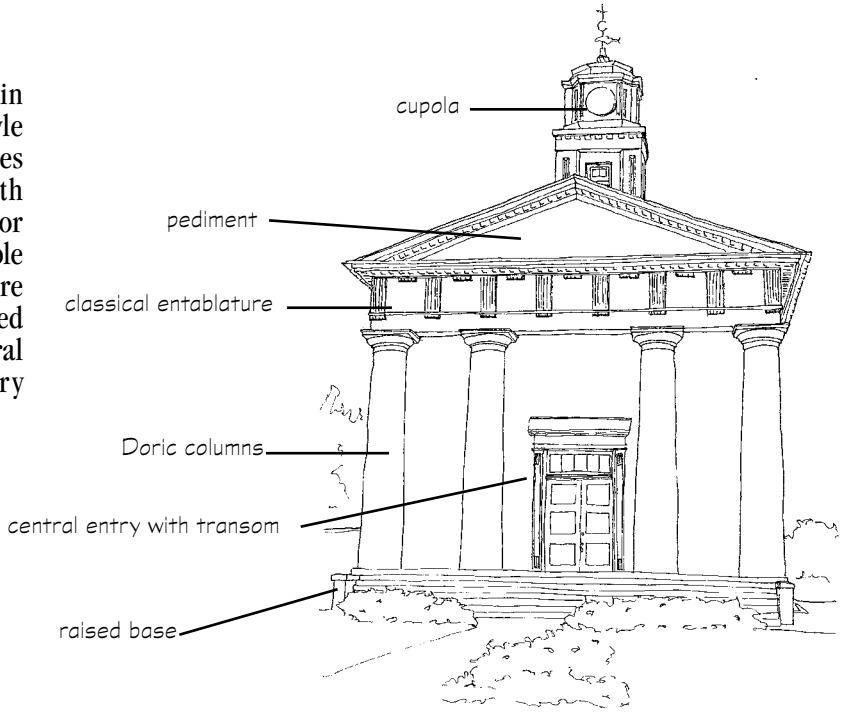
Federal (1780-1830)

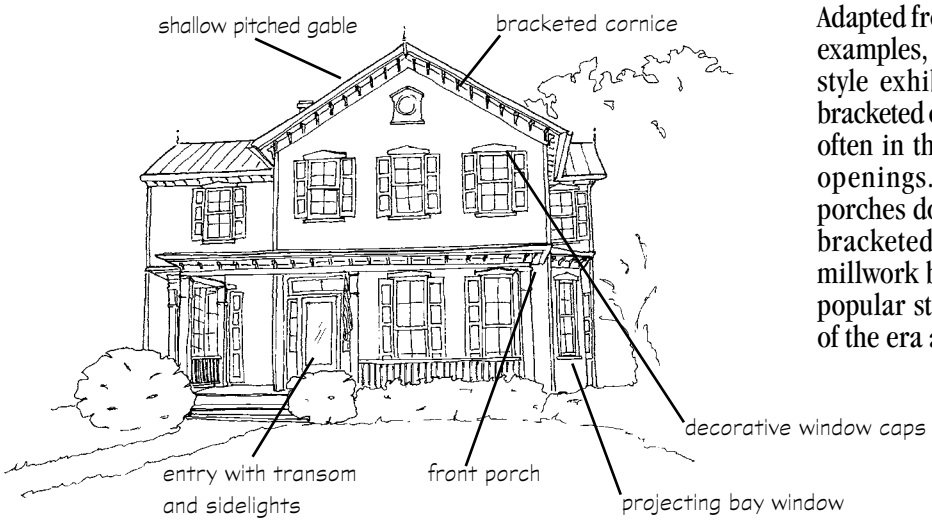
Brick became the popular material in the early nineteenth century. Winchester's several examples of the Federal style share common characteristics such as symmetrical facades with central entryways (often under small porticos), tall interior end chimneys, gable roofs, and simple classical cornices. Fanlights and sidelights often surround six-panel doors.



Greek Revival (1840-1860)

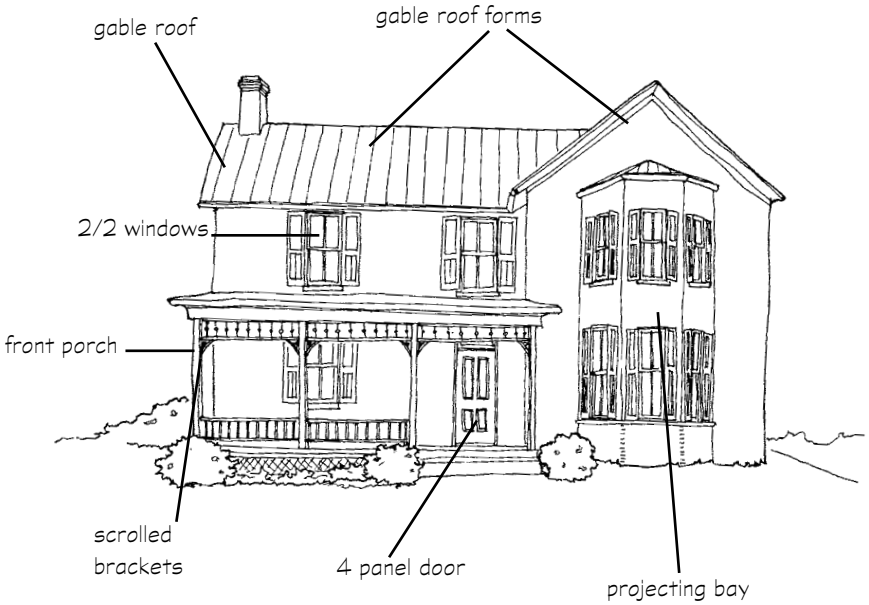
Although similar to the Federal style in overall appearance, Greek Revival-style structures introduced several new changes including paired windows, often with decorative surrounds. Roofs are hipped or gable and occasionally have a central gable or pediment in the entry bay. Porticos are usually one story and classically designed with pilasters and columns, although several examples have monumental two-story porticos gracing their facades.





Italianate (1860-1890)

Adapted from picturesque Italian residential examples, the Winchester derivation of this style exhibits gable roofs, the trademark bracketed cornice, and decorative brickwork, often in the form of segmental arches over openings. Partial- or full-length front porches dominate facades and usually have bracketed supports, cornices, and sawn millwork balusters. This is one of the most popular styles for commercial architecture of the era and for rowhouses in Winchester.

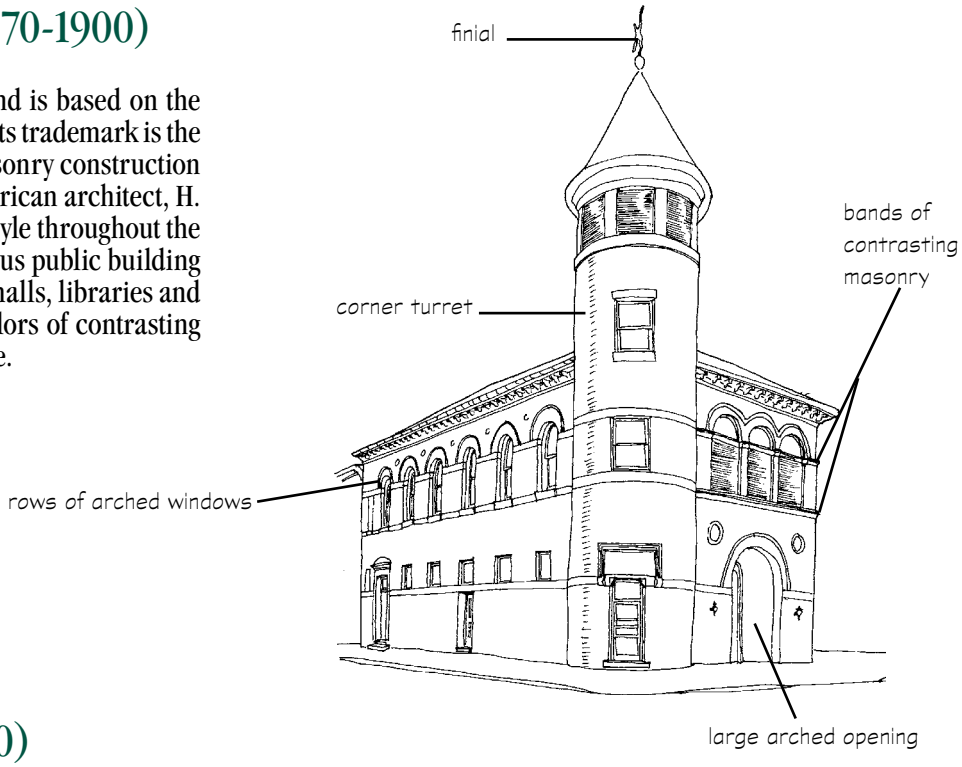


Folk Victorian (1870-1910)

Another of Winchester's dwelling forms, the Folk Victorian, was popular because of its modest cost and simple construction using balloon framing. It had various plans, similar to the Italianate with a central-hall I-house form, an "L" or "T" shaped plan and a side-passage townhouse plan. Wood clapboards (often grooved German siding) sheathe these houses which are covered with metal gable roofs. Decoration is limited to sawn millwork on porches or occasionally in decorative gables or cornices.

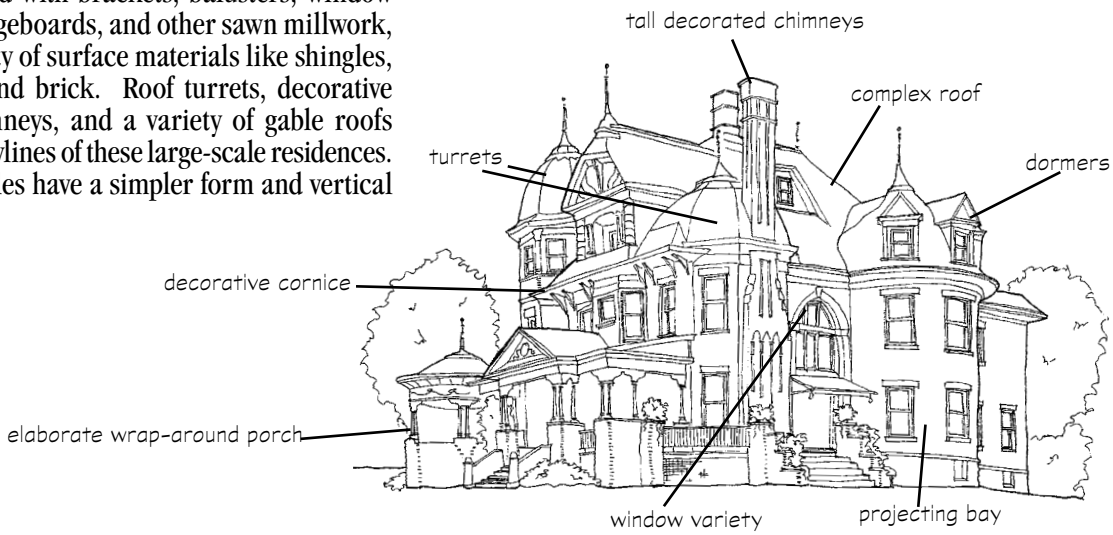
Romanesque Revival (1870-1900)

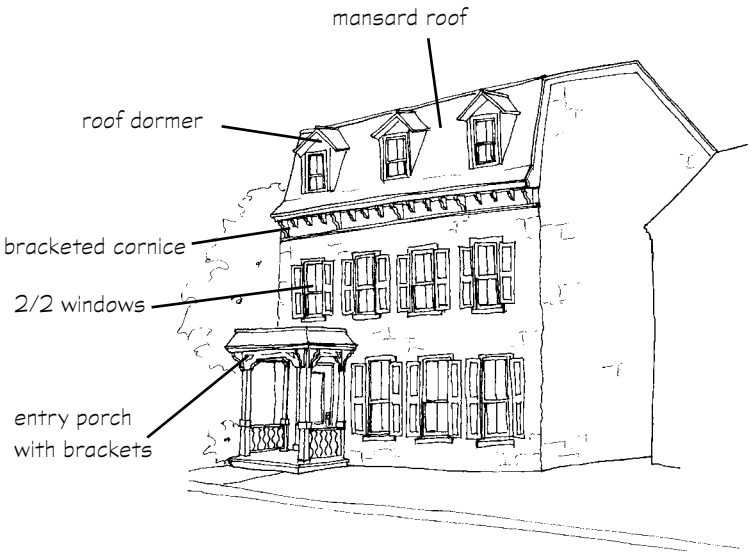
This is another romantic style and is based on the architecture of the middle ages. Its trademark is the round arch along with heavy masonry construction similar to medieval castles. American architect, H. H. Richardson popularized the style throughout the country when he used it for various public building projects such as churches, town halls, libraries and post offices. Several types or colors of contrasting masonry help articulate this style.



Queen Anne (1880-1900)

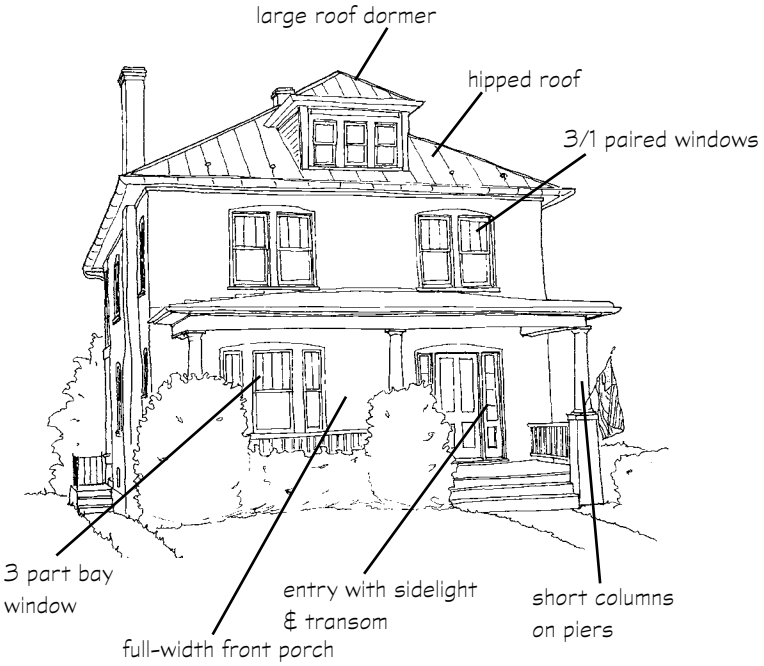
These dwellings, commonly known as "Victorian," are characterized by a complex roof, vertical proportions, asymmetrical facades, and a wrap-around porch. More elaborate examples are richly decorated with brackets, balusters, window surrounds, bargeboards, and other sawn millwork, and use a variety of surface materials like shingles, wood siding, and brick. Roof turrets, decorative tall brick chimneys, and a variety of gable roofs highlight the skylines of these large-scale residences. Smaller examples have a simpler form and vertical proportions.





French Second Empire or Mansard (1870-1900)

This Victorian era style is found in freestanding and rowhouse examples in the historic district. Its most distinguishing feature is its mansard roof, which usually creates another complete level in the dwelling. The roof is frequently covered in slate shingles and may have contrasting patterns and colors. Other typical details include a bracketed cornice and porch, two-over-two windows often crowned with a decorative cap, and a double-door entryway. More elaborate examples may contain a central pavilion tower in the facade.

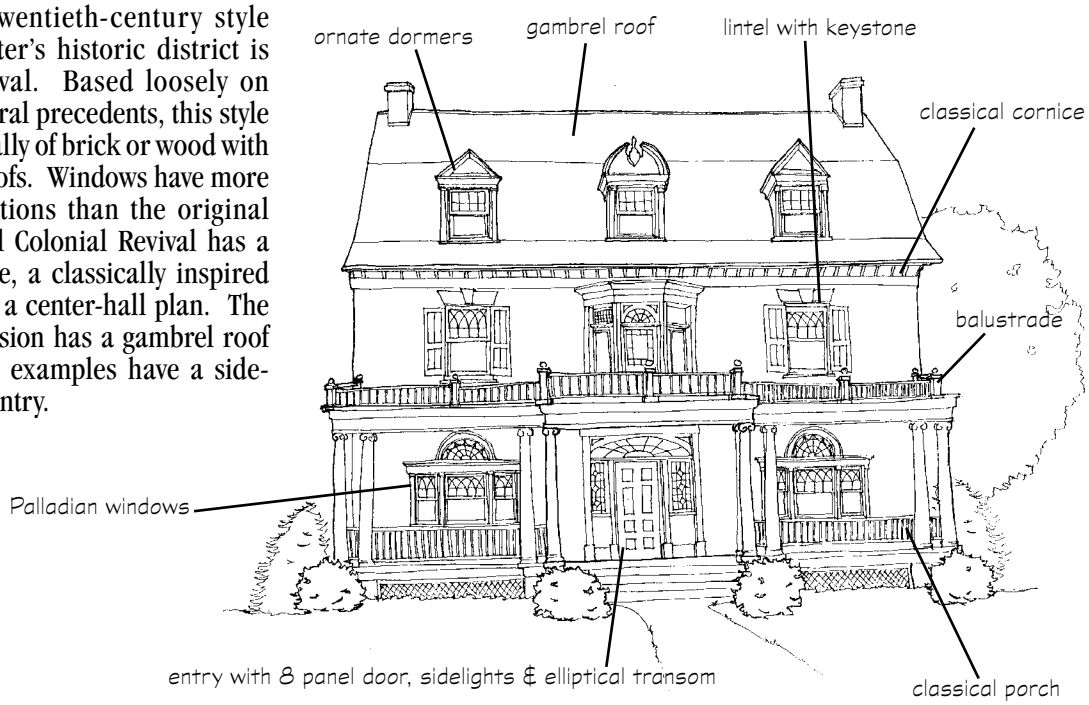


American Foursquare (1900-1930)

Another common form found in Winchester in both large-scale and smaller, simpler versions is the American Foursquare. It has a trademark hipped roof with a deep overhang, a dominant central dormer, and a full-width front porch, often with classical details. Its name comes from its square shape and four-room plan. The exterior materials may be brick, wood or stucco. Some versions of this house were sold in prefabricated form from companies like Sears and Roebuck.

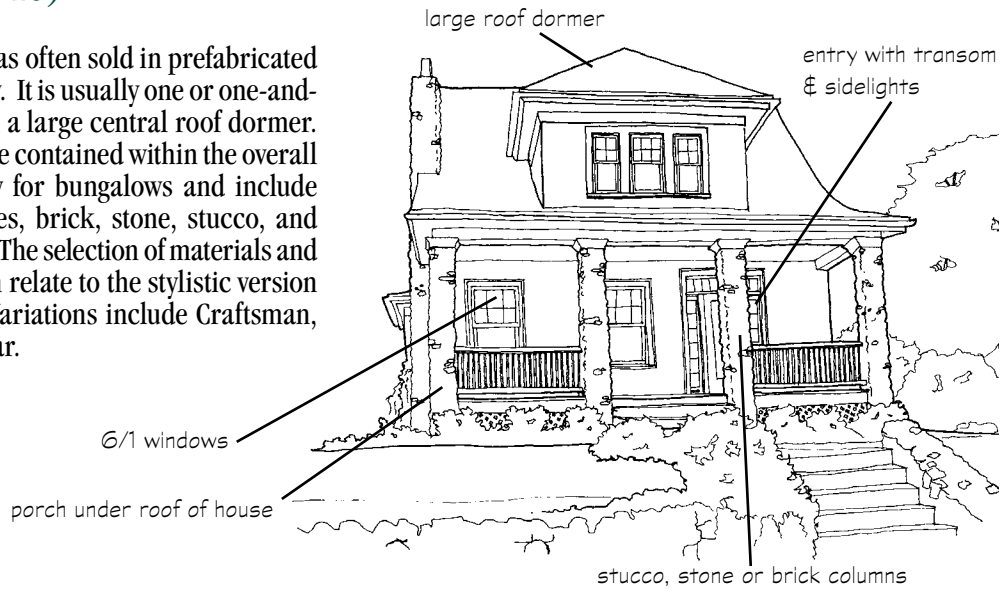
Colonial Revival (1900-1940)

A very popular twentieth-century style found in Winchester's historic district is the Colonial Revival. Based loosely on Georgian and Federal precedents, this style is constructed usually of brick or wood with gable or hipped roofs. Windows have more horizontal proportions than the original styles. The typical Colonial Revival has a symmetrical facade, a classically inspired small portico, and a center-hall plan. The Dutch Colonial version has a gambrel roof and some simpler examples have a side-passage plan and entry.



Bungalow (1920-1940)

Another house form that was often sold in prefabricated packages was the bungalow. It is usually one or one-and-one-half stories, often with a large central roof dormer. Front porches frequently are contained within the overall roof form. Materials vary for bungalows and include wood siding, wood shingles, brick, stone, stucco, and combinations of the above. The selection of materials and the decorative details often relate to the stylistic version of the bungalow design. Variations include Craftsman, Tudor, or simple vernacular.



Going Before the Board of Architectural Review (BAR)

Winchester has several historic district designations. The local Historic Winchester (HW) District was first created in 1967, and has been expanded over the years. Its boundaries are shown on the map on page 12. This designation by the City Council includes the design review process, which property owners must go through before undertaking work on the exterior of their property, as described below.

While many requests are still reviewed and acted upon the BAR, City Council adopted provisions for the City's Zoning Administrator or Planning Director/designee to approve Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) on an administrative basis.

The National Register of Historic Places Historic District ("The Winchester National Historic District") is different than the local Historic Winchester district. It was designated in 1980 by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources which at the same time put the district on the Virginia Landmarks Register. Both the state and federal listings allow property owners to use state and federal income tax credits for rehabilitation, subject to various regulations. For properties that are situated only within the National District, there is no review by the local BAR. For properties situated within both districts, if a property is making use of state and/or federal rehabilitation tax credits for exterior changes to their property, a certificate of appropriateness can be administratively approved by the Zoning Administrator or designee (no review by the local BAR required unless there are no Federal/State rehabilitation tax credits being used).

Your first step is to determine if you need to go through the design review process and what type of approvals, permits and certificates are needed for your project. Contact the Winchester Planning Department, which takes all applications for the Board of Architectural Review and for Administrative Review.

Minor actions such as routine exterior maintenance may not require a COA. These types of projects, however, may require a building permit, depending on the scope of work. Examples requiring a building permit include window, siding or roof material replacement.

In accordance with section 14-5 of the Winchester Zoning Ordinance, the Zoning Administrator (or designee) may review, and may approve or deny, applications for Certificates of Appropriateness.

Definition of Principal Elevations - a side of a building or structure facing a public street (see diagram):

- Front elevation
- Corner Side (for structures on corner lots)

Definition Non-Principal Elevations - a side of a building or structure that does not face a public street (see diagram):

- Sides (except corner sides) - see diagram below
- Rear elevation - Rear of building or structure that does not face a public street (see diagram)

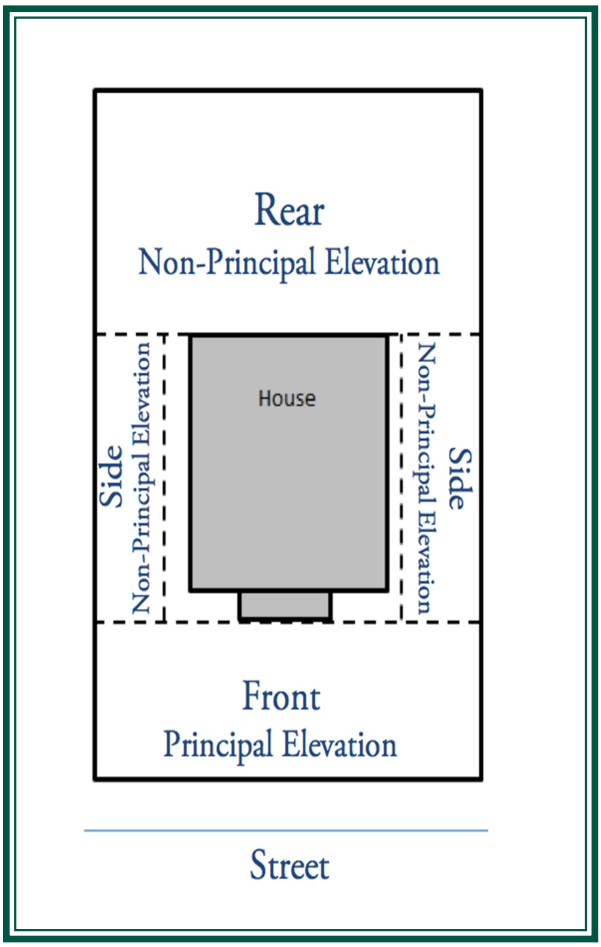


Diagram defining principal elevations (non-corner lot)

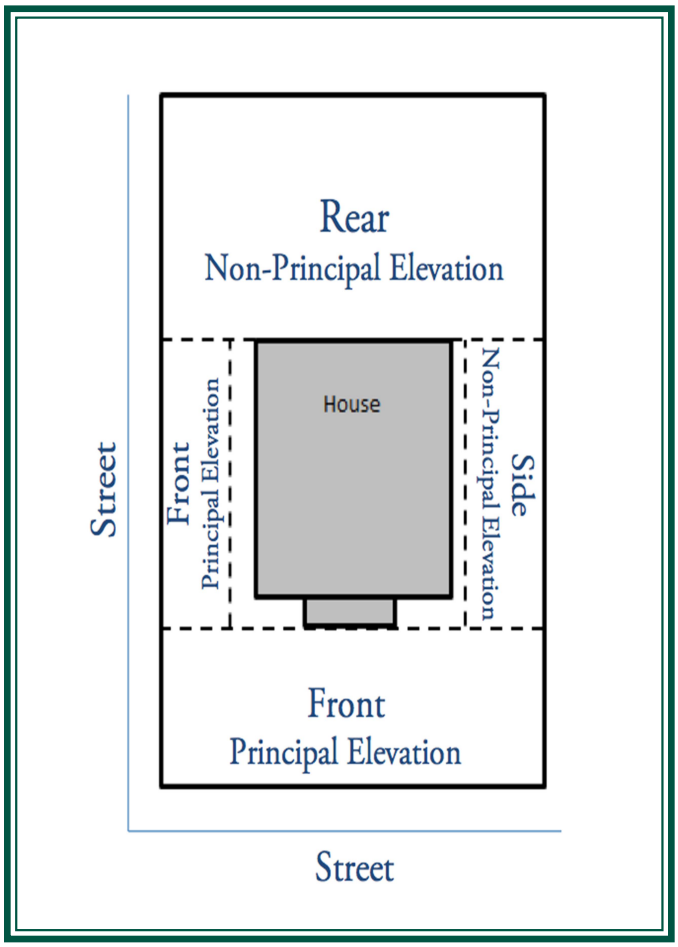
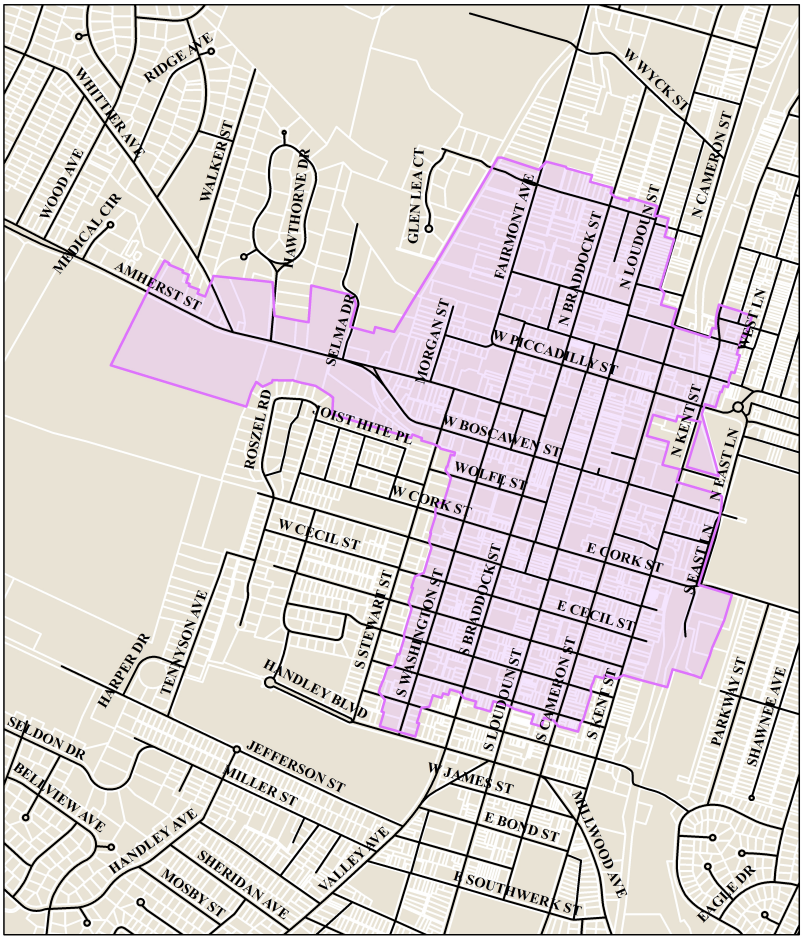


Diagram defining principal elevations (corner lots)

Maintenance

If a project consists of the repair or maintenance of an existing exterior element of any building or structure in the Historic Winchester District, so long as there is no change in the form or materials, no Certificate of Appropriateness is required.

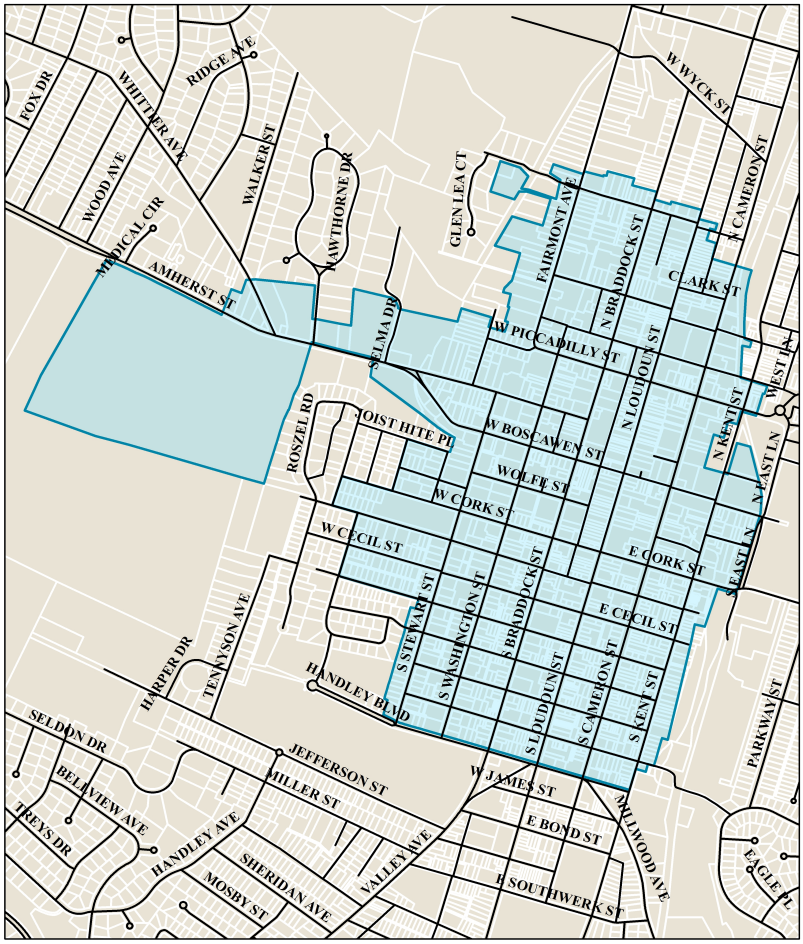
Historic Winchester District (Local)



NOTE: See City Code Section 25-1 for the definition of the Primary and Secondary downtown assesment districts. Properties at exterior corners of terminal intersections are not within the secondary district per City Code definition.

Please reference this for specific guidelines for the properties located in these assessment districts. A map of the downtown assessment districts is available in the Planning Department.

Winchester Historic District
(National Register of Historic Places)



Three Levels of Historic District Designation Compared

The National Register Historic District and the Virginia Landmarks Register District are two of the three types of historic district designations. The third type of historic district is the *local* historic district. The City of Winchester has adopted regulations and established a local historic district. There are no additional local regulations associated with National or Virginia Landmarks Register districts. This chart contains comparative information on the three types of historic districts.

	National Register of Historic Places	**Virginia Landmarks Register**	**Local Historic District**
Essential Character	Honorific Educational	Honorific Educational	Regulatory Local Overlay Zoning
Restrictions on Property Rights	Some interior and exterior restrictions if Federal tax credits used. Changes to the property may affect its eligibility as a contributing structure to the district.	Some interior and exterior restrictions if State rehab tax credits used. Changes to the property may affect its eligibility as a contributing structure to the district.	Some restrictions pertaining to exterior alterations. Requirements for exterior changes are defined by Article 14 of the Winchester Zoning Ordinance.
Controlling Authority	National Park Service (NPS)/Keeper of Register State Review Board	Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR)/Historic Resources Board	Board of Architecture Review (BAR) City Council (who appoints members to the BAR and decides appeals of BAR decisions)
Criteria for Designation	Established by federal law and NPS regulations.	Established by *Code of Virginia* and VDHR regulations.	Established by a local ordinance of local government.
Benefits	Encourages preservation of the district. National recognition/prestige. Eligible for plaque. Federal investment tax credits for rehabilitation may apply. Federal agencies whose projects affect a listed property must give the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on the project and its effects on the property.	Encourages preservation of the district. Statewide recognition/prestige. Eligible for plaque. Opens door to state rehab tax credits.	Maintains character of district. Protects investment. Local recognition/prestige. Plaques may be offered. May be linked to 10-year local real estate tax abatements.

Three Levels of Historic District Designation Compared

Rights of Owners	Designation requires consent of majority of property owners.	Designation requires consent of majority of property owners	Public hearings held before Designation by means of a local Zoning Map amendment. Owner may appeal BAR decisions to City Council.
Boundary Definition	Drawn to include greatest number of resources that contribute to district. Can include non-contributing resources.	Drawn to include greatest number of resources that contribute to district. Can include non-contributing resources.	Local designation is independent of National Register or Virginia Landmarks Register designation. Boundaries of a local district can differ from national and state historic district boundaries.
Restrictions on Sale of Property	No disclosure required.	No disclosure required.	No disclosure required. Purchasers are advised to exercise whatever due diligence a particular purchaser deems necessary with respect to any historic district designated by the locality pursuant to State Codes section 15.2-2306, including review of any local ordinance creating such district or any official map adopted by the locality depicting historic districts, in accordance with terms and conditions as may be contained in the real estate purchase contract, but in any event, prior to settlement on a parcel of residential real property.
Effect of Designation on Property Values	Some evidence that it serves to maintain property values. No evidence that it serves to decrease property values.	Some evidence that it serves to maintain property values. No evidence that it serves to decrease property values.	Some evidence that it serves to maintain property values. No evidence that it serves to decrease property values.

(Information provided by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources)

What to Submit

The Board of Architectural Review must receive enough information on which to base its decision. You will need to fill out an application provided by the Winchester Planning Department. In addition, you will be requested to provide photographs, scaled drawings and plans or other documentation, as required by the board. These submissions do not have to be prepared by professionals, but must be prepared in such a way as to be easily understood by the board members. The application spells out the requirements for each type of submission. There may be other types of permits or approvals required, depending on the type of work involved. Examples could include zoning, sign permits, asbestos removal, etc. You are expected to be present at the BAR meeting to present your request and answer any questions that the board members may have.

Project Checklist

1. Look at your building to determine its style, age, and the elements that help define its special character. The previous section, "Architectural Styles" should be helpful.

2. Rehabilitation projects within Winchester's National Historic District may qualify for federal and state tax credits as well as for local tax abatement and loan programs. Your property may also be located in the Winchester Enterprise Zone and could qualify you for local incentives and tools if your project involves real estate development, business expansion, and job growth in targeted areas of the City. All of these incentives have different requirements. Check with the Winchester Planning Department, the Old Town Winchester office, the office of the Commissioner of the Revenue, the office of the Development Services Director, or the Northern Regional Office of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to see if your project qualifies for these special financial incentives.

3. Check the zoning ordinance to make sure that your planned use is allowed. If you are changing the use or working outside of the existing walls, you may need to rezone your property or secure a site plan approval or secure a variance from the zoning regulations.

4. Chances are you will need a building permit. Become familiar with the local building code as it applies to historic buildings and meet with your building inspector early on about your plans.

5. Seek advice on technical preservation issues from the City Planning Department, the Northern Regional Office of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources or Preservation of Historic Winchester, Inc.

6. Use contractors with prior successful experience in working with historic buildings and materials. Some tasks, such as re-pointing or cleaning historic masonry, require special knowledge, techniques, and methods. Check with Preservation of Historic Winchester, Inc. or the Northern Regional Office of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources for potential names of such contractors.

7. If your project is complicated or large scale, you should strongly consider employing an architect experienced in working with historic buildings.

8. Review the following Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. These ten standards **must** be followed if you are using federal and/or state tax credits. The BAR also follows these standards and the guidelines when reviewing applications for Certificates of Appropriateness involving rehabilitation.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

The guidelines in this publication are based on The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. They express a basic rehabilitation credo of "retain, repair, and replace." In other words, do not remove a historic element, do not replace an element if it can be repaired, and replace an element that has been removed or cannot be repaired.

First developed in 1979 and most recently revised in 1995, these guidelines have been continually expanded and refined. They are used by the National Park Service to determine if the rehabilitation of a historic building has been undertaken in a manner that is sensitive to its historic integrity. The guidelines are very broad by nature since they apply to the rehabilitation of any contributing building in any historic district throughout the United States.

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.

6. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature should match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing architectural features must be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If these resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

List of Additional Resources and Organizations

Winchester Planning Department
15 North Cameron Street
Winchester, VA 22601
Phone: (540) 667-1815
E-mail: plngdept@winchesterva.gov

Preservation of Historic Winchester
530 Amherst Street
Winchester, VA 22601
Phone: (540) 667-3577
E-mail: phwinc.org@gmail.com

Northern Regional Office of DHR
P.O. Box 519
5357 Main Street
Stephens City, VA 22655
Phone: (540) 868-7029

Winchester-Frederick County Historical Society
1340 S. Pleasant Valley Road
Winchester, VA 22601
Phone: (540) 662-6550

Handley Library Archives
P.O. Box 58
100 West Piccadilly St.
Winchester, VA 22604
Phone: (540) 662-9041
Email: archives@handleyregional.org

Technical Preservation Services Online Education:
A number of interactive websites hosted by the Technical Preservation Services of the National Park Service cover topics including moisture, maintenance, rehabilitation and tax incentives.
Website: www.nps.gov/tps/

National Alliance of Preservation Commissions:
The NAPC is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation that builds strong local preservation programs through education, training, and advocacy.
Website https://napcommissions.org/

National Trust for Historic Preservation:
The National Trust for Historic Preservation, chartered by Congress in 1949, is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting historic resources. It works to save historic buildings, and the neighborhoods and landscapes they anchor through education and advocacy.
Website: www.preservationnation.org/

National Trust Main Street Center
Provides information and resources on the Main Street program of downtown revitalization through historic preservation and economic development.
Website: www.mainstreet.org/

List of Additional Resources and Organizations Continued

Old House Journal Online
The OHJ online offers practical advice publications, forums, historic house plans and a restoration directory.
Website: www.oldhousejournal.com

Preservation Trades Network
It provides a much needed opportunity for both experienced and novice members of the preservation trades community to exchange experiences, skills, and ideas.
Website: www.ptn.org/

Traditional Building Magazine Online
This website is a gateway to leading suppliers of traditionally styled products and related services. These products are appropriate for restoration and renovation of older structures - as well as traditionally styled new buildings.
Website: www.traditional-building.com/

Historic Colors Guide
Compiled by PHW, this guide provides Historic District property owners a reference to what colors are recommended for certain ages and architectural styles of buildings. The BAR does not have a fixed color palette that owners must choose from.

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