



~Edgartown Historic District Guidelines~

Adopted September 2006 - Revised September 2016 & 2018

Purpose of the Historic District:

The purpose of the Edgartown Historic District Commission is to preserve and protect the distinctive characteristics and architecture of buildings and places of historical significance in Edgartown. The Edgartown Historic District was established by town meeting in 1987, pursuant to Chapter 40C of the Massachusetts General Laws that allows cities and town to establish historic districts and was expanded in 2016. A significant number of buildings are listed in the National & State Registers of Historic Places. Within the district the Commission can prevent demolition or inappropriate alteration of exterior features as well as influence the construction of new buildings to preserve the historic aspects or architectural characteristics. *Building history should be thoroughly researched. *Sources for Historical Information may include: MACRIS (mhc-macris.net), Edgartown Assessor's Office, Registry of Deeds, Probate Court, MV Museum, Neighbors and Abutters

The Edgartown Historic District contains buildings ranging in style from Early English through Log Cabin, early and late Colonial, Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, various Victorian interpretations of Empire and other styles, turn-of-the century Store Front, Queen Anne and some Ranch. This rich mix of styles is the result of the tastes, economic status and interest of past generations and forms Edgartown's visual History.

The Edgartown Historic District Commission (EHDC) encourages the development and maintenance of the architectural mix which is an important part of the History of the town. It is not the intention of the by law to create a "Williamsburg" type town but simply to preserve our diverse architectural heritage.

Buildings in the Historic District may not be constructed, altered or demolished without a Certificate of Appropriateness from the EHDC. Nor will the Building Inspector issue a building permit without the requisite certificate.

The following guidelines are intended to provide direction. As the title suggests, the guidelines are intended to help guide homeowners with their plans for renovations, additions or any change that is visible from a public way. Each application is considered on a case-by-case basis.

Standards of Review:

Any change in the existing conditions of the exterior of a structure, whether or not it requires a building permit, is subject to review by the EHDC the building or structure is located in the Historic District and is visible from a public way. Streets, alleys, parking lots and the harbor are considered public ways. (see Historic District map) The EHDC reviews applications on a regular basis. In the case of major renovations public hearings will be scheduled in addition to the initial presentation and follow up meeting with the commission. The public hearing allows for abutters or other members of the public to voice their support, opposition or simply to comment on the

proposed applications. The public hearing takes place approximately 4-5 weeks after the initial presentation due in part to the mailing of abutter's notices and 2 publications in the local paper.

Primary considerations in the review process are building history, siting and scale of proposed additions or renovations and materials planned for use in construction. It is always the preference of the EHDC for the use of natural materials, true to the building materials of the period in which the building was constructed.

Applications will be studied to determine the importance of their impact on the Historic District within the following types of classification.

- A. Construction involving changes in materials and colors only, such as substituting wood for copper gutters.
- B. Changes in certain design features which do not affect the overall form, such as entry steps, or addition of a door or window.
- C. Minor additions to a building which do not alter the original form of the building.
- D. Minor additions to a building resulting in slight changes to original form.
- E. Changes that irrevocably alter the form of the original building or result in partial or total demolition. Demolition of outbuildings, are included here.

Certificates Issued:

The design review process begins when an application for a *Certificate of Appropriateness*, a *Certificate of Non-Applicability*, or a *Certificate of Hardship*, accompanied by building history, plans, elevations, and specifications, as may be relevant to the request, is submitted to the Preservation Commission office. Typically, at this stage, the applicant will meet informally with the Staff to discuss the proposed project and go over the information provided. It is advisable to provide as much information, in as much detail, as possible, since an application lacking specificity and clarity may encounter delays in the review process. No building permit for construction, alteration, or demolition of an exterior architectural feature or building within a historic district can be issued without one of the following certificates.

Certificate of Non-Applicability:

If the Staff determines that the proposed work (1) is not visible from a "public way" (including public paths, parks or bodies of water), or (2) is a like-kind repair or replacement of existing conditions, then the HDC will issue a Certificate of Non-Applicability and the applicant may apply for a building permit without a hearing by the Commission. In this case an expedited approval will be issued and delivered to the office of the building inspector.

Certificate of Appropriateness:
(following Commission design review and/or Public Hearing)

If the Staff determines that the proposed work is not entitled to a Certificate of Non-Applicability and is not a minor change or minimally visible from a public way, it must be reviewed by the Commission at a public hearing. Designs that the Commission determines meet the Guidelines are issued a Certificate of Appropriateness. If the design as presented might be acceptable with further revisions, then, with the applicant's concurrence, the Commission may elect to work with the applicant and architect to arrive at a design consistent with these Guidelines prior to the next public hearing. Modified designs which the Commission determines meet the guidelines are then issued a Certificate of Appropriateness. In instances of major renovations or significant changes to features visible from a public way the Commission may elect to continue the public hearing allowing for notification, to the public, by newspaper advertisement and letters sent to abutters.

Certificate of Hardship:

In certain rare cases the Commission may, in its sole discretion, issue a Certificate of Hardship if failure to approve an application would involve a substantial hardship, financial or otherwise, to the applicant, and if the proposed work will not result in a significant detriment to the local historic district.

What work does Not require Design Review:

All changes to the exterior of a building that are visible from a public way, park or body of water must be reviewed and approved by the Commission. Such changes include, but are not limited to, repairs, replacements and alterations to windows, doors, roofs, new construction, additions, fences, walls, driveways, sidewalks, decks and changes in grade. For the purposes of determining visibility, existing and proposed wooden fences and landscaping are deemed not to block sight lines from a public way. If there is a question regarding visibility, the final determination will be made by the chairman of the commission or the chair's designee.

Ordinary like-kind (exact duplicate) repairs and replacement may not subject to design review, although staff approval is required before a building permit is issued.

The Commission does not review paint colors. However, the appropriateness of the application of paint and stains to previously non-painted surfaces such as masonry, shingles, or siding is subject to review.

While landscaping is generally not subject to design review by the Commission, the following are subject to review and approval by the Commission: (1) changes to grade, (2) outside HVAC equipment (excluding window units) and (3) yard structures, including, but not limited to, fences, swimming pools, play houses and pergolas.

General Guidelines – Definitions of Terms:

Scale of Buildings: New construction should be considered as a part of a larger setting rather than a singular unit. It should be in proportional relationship to the existing homes and structures on the street, in the neighborhood and in the general area. Height, width, scale and general form, what is generally referred to as “Massing”, should reflect that of adjacent buildings. New work should not overshadow the existing structures but should be subordinate to the historic structure. New work should complement existing historic buildings and should complement them by referencing some of the existing details, which may include: siding, decking, railings, windows, doors and trim. The grade of the existing site should be maintained. Proposed building heights are measured from existing grade.

Chimneys: Common materials and finishes are brick, stone and stucco. Unpainted masonry should not be painted unless that is the existing condition. Other chimney like enclosures for pipes, vents or similar attachments to the exterior are considered on a case by case basis. Existing chimneys should be retained even if interior fireplaces are removed. The height and original pattern of decorative brickwork should be maintained.

Gutters & Downspouts: Wood gutters, when an integral part of an ornamental cornice or roof edge design, should be repaired and maintained. Copper gutters which duplicate the original profile may be considered as a replacement for wood gutters. Aluminum gutters should not be used. Composite gutters may be reviewed on a case by case basis. Existing copper gutters should be replaced in kind, including matching the original molding profiles. Roof top HVAC and other mechanical elements, should be placed out of view.

Dormers: The historic nature, that is, the original proportions of the roof should be retained when proposing the addition of a dormer. Correct placement of dormers on a roof is vital to the design. The pitch of a dormer will vary according to the pitch of the main roof but no dormer should be flat or have less than a 4 pitch. Windows, including trim should account for at least 50% of the dormer’s front wall face. The siding of the dormer should be the same material and color as the main walls of the building.

Roofs: Roof shape and pitch are important factors in the visual character of a building and should be consistent with the form and style of the original structure. The roof shape and slope shall be preserved as integral to the period of the building. Generally, the pitch of a gable roof should be no lower than 7/12, although 9/12 or 8/12 are preferred. Pitches may vary on a gambrel roof but should follow the proportions found on historic gambrel homes.

Windows & Doors: Existing windows and doors should be repaired not replaced, whenever possible. Replacement windows and doors should closely follow the original pieces in structure and style. On new windows and doors, simulated true divided light with factory installed mullions and Muntins, no wider than 7/8” wide, shall be used. For new windows, the size, number of panes and type of window should not be changed unless the window has already been changed from the original and is not currently appropriate. New windows should be simulated true divided light with factory installed “Muntins” and “Mullions”. New doors should be in the

style of the original doors in detail and material. Trim detail on both windows and doors should be the width, thickness and profile of the existing historic trim.

Why the Commission encourages retention of original windows:

The windows of your house are an important part of its original fabric. In fact, along with any masonry or slate, window glass is often the only untouched original surface normally seen in most houses (most wood surfaces are routinely painted, while floors are typically sanded down to look like new). The replacement of existing windows and storm windows with double-glazed windows, whether as an alternative to maintenance and repair or because of claims of greater efficiency, is strongly discouraged. There are several reasons for this.

Historic windows assembled with old growth wood are more durable than most modern windows manufactured with commonly available new growth wood. Properly maintained, historic windows will last indefinitely. The best modern "organic seal" double glazing has a guaranteed life of only 20 years and will inevitably fail (cloud up).

One sheet of glass in a sash, even with external applied "muntins", reflects light in a different manner than the multiple panes, set in putty, found in a typical old sash. This remains apparent even when the old sash is behind a storm window. Similarly, the original glass found in most old sash is at least somewhat irregular which also contributes to a liveliness of the reflections from old windows.

Replacement windows are factory made to standard designs and will never exactly match existing sash in all dimensions. Most of the thermal benefits of insulated glass windows derive from the fact that there are two layers of glass with dead air between them and that the window and its installation in the wall is well sealed against air infiltration. A properly weather-stripped, well caulked, single glazed window (new or rebuilt), with good quality storm windows has the same energy efficiency of a standard insulating glass window. Note: Interior storm windows are available. Generally, the repair and rehabilitation of existing sash, including the installation of weather stripping and good quality storms, can be accomplished at no greater cost than that of replacement insulating glass windows and, if property maintained, will last much longer.

Porches, Entryways, Decks, Balconies, Roof-decks and Stairs: Exterior architectural elements such as porches and stairs should be retained if they are original or possess significant features. Such items as railings, balusters, columns, posts, brackets, lighting fixtures and ornamental iron work are included in this category. Porches and entrance porticos, including the ornamental details, should be retained. Open porches should not be enclosed or glazed. Sleeping porches should be retained and porches and entry steps should be replicated in kind.

Siding: Original siding material should be retained whenever possible. Deteriorated materials should be repaired or replaced with new material that duplicates the original as closely as possible. Appropriate siding materials are wood, wood shingles, clapboard, and brick. The removal of vinyl or aluminum siding is strongly encouraged.

Shutters: Shutters should only be proposed where historically and architecturally correct. Shutters should be of a louver design with the louvers slanted in the historically correct direction. Each shutter should match the height and on half the width of the window opening. They should be installed with shutter hardware that is appropriately scaled and must be operable.

Skylights: Skylights are generally not appropriate in the any roof area which can be seen from a public way. If proposed for an area out of public view, the skylight should be low profile.

Fences: Fences are significant architectural features and should be appropriate to the property. Cast and wrought iron fences which are original should be retained, repaired and painted when necessary. Wood fences should be repaired if appropriate and should be replaced in kind if not repairable. Fencing should not prevent or restrict views of buildings from a public way. Front fences should not exceed 42 inches and should be open in character so as to not create visual barriers.

Stockade style fences should not be constructed. It is always desirable to use historically accurate materials for fencing. Use of composite materials for replacement of wood fencing will be reviewed on a case by case basis and specifics of the composites are to be presented along with samples. In all cases, composites must be painted. The following should not be used for residential properties: Plastic, chain link, split rail, stockade & formed metal.

Parking, Driveways and Paths: Parking may be a significant alteration to a property. Driveways, parking areas and paths should be discreet in the amount of open space converted to parking. Brick, gravel and stone are the preferred materials, although other materials will be considered. Landscaping should be integrated with the parking surface area; existing trees should not be removed to make way for parking.

Foundations: Foundations should be consistent with the existing structure and area. Materials should be natural such as brick and concrete. In new construction, foundations should be of height consistent with the foundation height of the architectural style of the house and in harmony with the foundations in the area. In both new construction and renovations, any change to a foundation requires a certified determination of the existing and proposed grade and current and proposed height of buildings. Any covering of foundations should complement the details of the structure. Venting and pipes should be located out of the public view.

Grading and Site Work: the existing natural contours of the landscape should be preserved as much as possible. Proposed building heights are measured from the original grade prior to any site work. Retaining walls should be used only to mediate large grade changes or to allow for planting areas. Retaining walls should be inconspicuous and faced with brick or stone. Exposed cement blocks, concrete and pressure treated lumber are not appropriate.

Handicap Access: In planning access to a historic building, care must be taken to comply with existing law and to cause the least impact to the building's historic character and façade. Materials used for ramps and railings should be compatible with the original building and designed to reflect the building's architectural character.

Garages, Shed, Barns and Outbuildings: As with additions, outbuildings should be of a scale and size that is subordinate to the original buildings. Size, placement of materials and relationship to the lot and surrounding structures will be considered.

Landscaping: The commission has jurisdiction over fences, walls, paths and driveways if they are visible from a public way. The following changes to landscaping features require HDC approval: Building or removal of any landscaping structure visible from a public way including: fencing, walls, permanent benches, decks, monuments and pergolas. Plantings that would grow to a height that would impede views from a public way are not appropriate. The HDC may request plant screening for elements such as fencing or air conditioning units.

Lighting & Exterior Features: Exterior fixtures include, but are not limited to lighting and window boxes. Exterior features should be compatible with the style and period of the building. Metal lanterns, wall or post-mounted, are often the most appropriate choice. Any landscape and security light is subject to review on a case by case basis. Window boxes/racks should be appropriate to the style of the buildings. All outdoor plumbing fixtures should be out of public view.

Modern Equipment: Modern equipment includes mechanical equipment visible from a public way including: antennas, meters, cellular towers, HVAC equipment, propane and other tanks, alarm systems & fans. All modern equipment should be as small inconspicuous as possible. Modern equipment on the ground should be sited at the rear of the building and should be screened by fences and/or vegetation. Equipment on the roof should be located behind chimneys or otherwise screened from view.

Solar Panels: When ruling on applications for Certificates of Appropriateness for solar energy systems, the commission shall consider the policy of the commonwealth to encourage the use of solar energy systems. Solar panels should be flush mounted and of a matching roof color that reduces visibility from the public ways. Panels should be sited on rear facing roof surfaces or other secondary surfaces that are least visible from the street.

Storefronts and Awnings: Storefronts and structures should maintain similar proportions and scale of neighboring structures. Storefront facades should not obscure the basic architectural framework or details of the building. The commission considers the color, dimensions and appropriateness of awnings on stores and homes. Should an owner want to replace an existing awning she should make an application to the HDC. If awnings are removed for the winter season the metal support structure should also be removed.

Materials: Applicants are encouraged to use materials and methods of building that are in keeping with the historic buildings in the district. Natural materials such as wood, wood clapboards and wood shingles, glass, brick and stone are preferred. Synthetic materials such as plastic, vinyl and aluminum are not appropriate. Composite materials are not preferred but are reviewed for use on a case by case basis.

Demolition and Removal: Demolition or removal of a building or structure located in the Historic District, whether or not the building is visible to the public, requires a demolition Certificate of Appropriateness from the HDC. **There is a strong presumption in favor of retaining all existing buildings and structures.** Relocation may be considered as an alternative to demolition. Any application for demolition based on deterioration must be supported by an official Structural Engineer's Report. A second opinion Structural Engineering report may be required and ordered by the HDC at the applicant's expense. Where a new building or structure will be replacing an existing building, approval of the new structure by the Commission is required as a condition to granting a certificate for demolition or removal. In addition to the plans and specifications ordinarily required for a new building, the application must submit a timetable and such other guarantees and assurances for the completion of the replacement building, as the Commission may require.

New Construction and Renovation: The Commission will review all proposed alterations of, and additions to, existing structures and all new construction. Alterations and additions should be compatible with the character of the building and earlier additions in terms of size, scale, massing, material, location and detail. The original portion of the building and earlier additions should continue to be recognizable apart from the addition by means of massing, articulation of setbacks, trim and ornamental detail. Additions should be designed so that the primary elevations of the original building remain clearly delineated and any addition shall be subordinate to the historic building.

New construction should respect the existing historic streetscape. The historic relationship of buildings to the street, including setbacks and open spaces, should be maintained. In areas where historic garages are generally detached, new garages should be detached. Attached garages should be located behind the main mass of the house and/or not facing the street, if possible. Garages with three or more bays are not historically appropriate

The Commission will consider the appropriateness of the size and shape of the building or structure in relation to both the land area upon which the building or structure is situated and to buildings and structures in the vicinity. The Commission may impose and setback requirements more restrictive than those required by the Zoning bylaw.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- 1. How long will the approval process take?** The process may take as little as two weeks or up to six weeks or more depending upon the timing of the application and the complexity and scope of the application. In many cases a Public Hearing will be scheduled, requiring a 14 day notice be mailed to abutters and two consecutive publications of the notice, in the local weekly paper.
- 2. What is required to complete the application?** Application must include complete supporting materials such as a complete history of the property, photographs, drawings, plans, site plans, materials lists (sample materials). The HDC Assistant is happy to assist in the application process.
- 3. What are the fees?** *Minor Alterations/Repairs: Non Structural (roofing, siding, door & window replacement) - \$30.00. Minor Alterations: Structural (inc: foundations) - \$50.00. New Construction, Additions, Renovations (accessory structures two story) - \$100.00 Accessory Structure: Garage, Barn, Shed, Deck - \$50.00.* If the application is sent forward for a Public Hearing, the local paper's advertising fees will be billed to the applicant.
- 4. What if my application is denied?** The appeal process is through the Superior Court.
- 5. What if my house is not historic?** There are many homes and buildings in the Historic District that are not presently considered Historic. Still, as they are located within the Historic District, changes to these buildings will require review from the HDC. The commission will look at the age of the building and approve changes, renovations or additions that are appropriate to the age, construction and style of the building.

**Sources for Historical Information may include: MACRIS - Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (mhc-macris.net), Edgartown Assessor's Office, The Registry of Deeds, Probate Court, MV Museum, Neighbors and Abutters.*