

Staff from the City of Columbia’s Planning and Development Services Department has provided the Forest Hills Neighborhood with the following information that details the general design principles utilized by the City’s historic districts. The following information is offered to the neighborhood to facilitate an understanding of the foundational elements of design guidelines.

The following basic principles are simply the underlying elements included in design guidelines adopted by Columbia’s historic districts. The more specific aspects of each neighborhood’s design guidelines are decided upon by the individual neighborhood during the historic designation process.

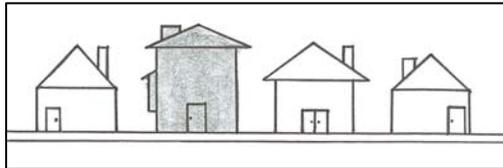
Basic Design Principles

When new construction projects are carried out in local historic districts, there are several basic design principles that City Staff use to evaluate the appropriateness of the design. New construction should be consistent with existing buildings along a street in terms of height, size and scale, proportion and rhythm of openings, orientation, etc.

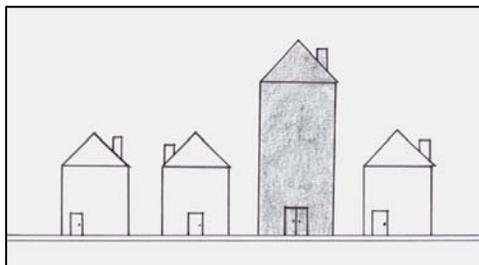
This does not mean that new buildings must imitate past architectural styles to be successful infill. Instead, they may reflect the era of their own construction while using significant themes, such as height, materials, roof form, massing, set-back, and the rhythm of openings to insure that a new building blends with its surroundings. It is hoped that the new construction of today will be contemporary and contextual so that it will be worthy of the affection and designation of future residents.

1) Height:

Construct new buildings to a height that is compatible with the height of neighboring historic houses. New construction should not vary greatly in height from the older buildings in the vicinity.



The new construction (in gray) is taller, but it is designed to be compatible with older structures.

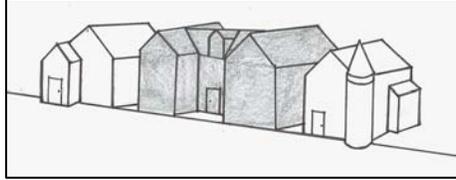


In contrast, the new construction shown here (in gray) is not designed to be compatible with surrounding buildings. It is far too tall in comparison to its neighbors.

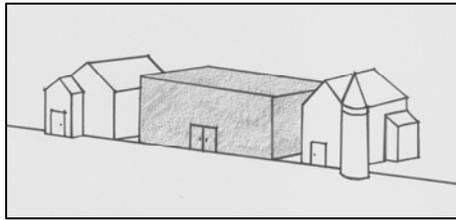


2) Size and Scale:

New construction should maintain a size and scale that is visually compatible with neighboring houses. This does not mean that newly constructed houses must be similar in square footage to existing houses.



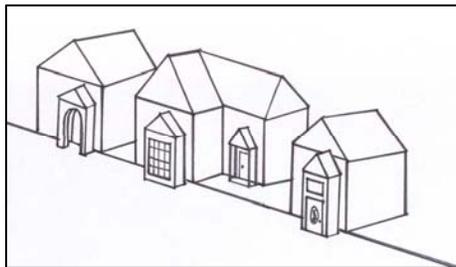
Although much larger than its neighbors in terms of square footage, the new construction (in gray) maintains the same scale and rhythm as the existing buildings.



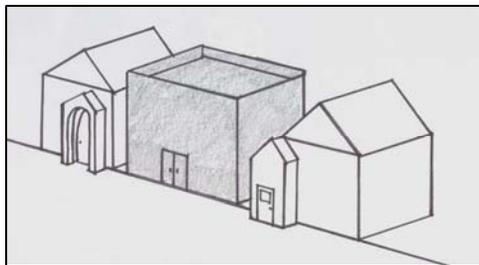
Do not construct buildings that disrupt the existing scale of the area. The new building shown here (in gray) disrupts the scale and rhythm of the streetscape

3) Massing:

The mass of a new building should be arranged so that the relationship between the solid components of the building (walls, columns, projections, etc.) and the open spaces of the building (such as windows, doors, arches, etc.) are compatible with existing historic homes on the block.



In this picture, all three houses demonstrate appropriate massing. The box-shaped houses are broken down into smaller, varied masses that help maintain the character of the street.

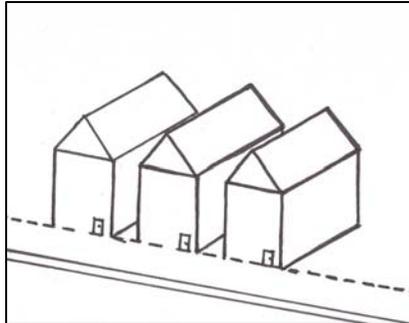


New buildings, like the one shaded gray, should not be constructed using a single, massive form.

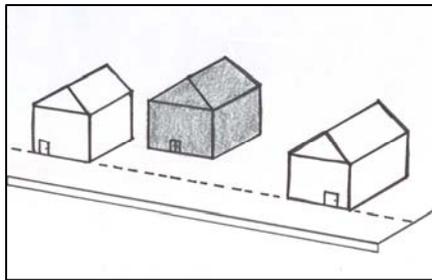


4) Setback:

New buildings should be located on the site so that the distance of the structure from the right of way is similar to other houses on the block.



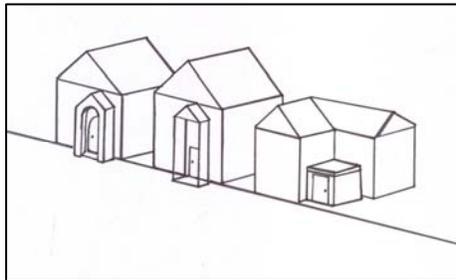
These houses share a similar setback from the right of way.



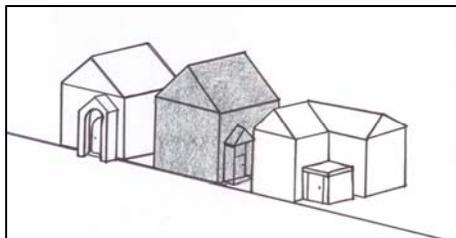
The gray-shaded house violates the existing setback pattern because it is situated behind existing façade lines. Placing a new building in front of the existing façade lines would also violate the setback pattern.

5) Sense of entry:

The main entrance of a new house, in addition to its associated architectural elements (steps, porches, etc.) should be situated on the house so that it is compatible to surrounding houses. This entrance should be constructed using architectural elements similar to other historic houses found on the block or street.



These houses share a similar sense of entry that is located on the street-facing façade.



The side entrance of the gray house is out of place among the other two houses, which have their entrances on the street facing façade.



6) Rhythm of openings:

Construct new buildings so that the height and width of windows and doors, and the rhythm of solids (*walls*) and voids (*door & window openings*) is visually compatible with historic houses on the block or street. It is important to maintain a similar ratio of height to width in the bays of the façade.



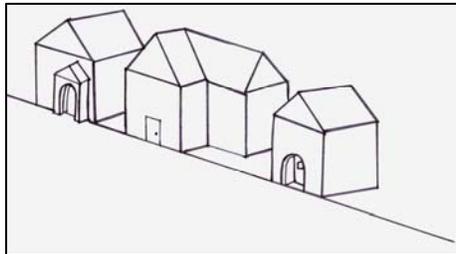
These three houses maintain an appropriate rhythm of solids and voids, and the windows and doors show an appropriate ratio of height to width.



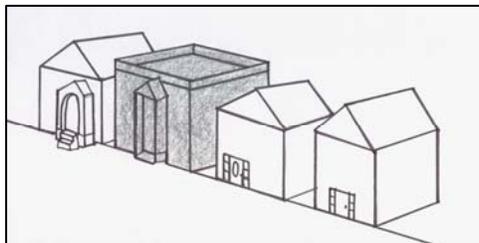
Do not introduce incompatible façade patterns that upset the rhythm of openings established in surrounding structures. The ratio of solids to voids found on the façade of the gray shaded house is incompatible with the other houses located nearby.

7) Roof Shape:

New construction should use roof shapes, pitches, and materials that are visually compatible with those of surrounding buildings.



These three houses share similar roof shapes yet the houses vary in style.



New construction (in gray) should not introduce roof shapes or pitches that are not found within the district.

