



SHAKER HEIGHTS

Shaker Heights Landmark Commission Design Guidelines

Introduction

The City of Shaker Heights has a rich history as one of this country's premier planned communities. The unique character and integrity of the city is apparent to residents and visitors alike. Tree-lined streets, well-planned neighborhoods, distinctive residential architecture, and an efficient rapid transit system are among the city's distinguishing features. The city was developed in the early 20th century by O.P. and M.J. Van Sweringen, who envisioned a suburban residential community based on the principles of the English Garden City Movement. These principles include the use of curving streets to take advantage of natural topography, the incorporation of parks, boulevards, and green spaces into residential neighborhoods, and the development of a public transit system to serve residents.

The city has a high concentration of architect-designed, early 20th century houses in a variety of historic revival styles. Each house in the city contributes, in some way, to the overall character of the city and each homeowner plays a significant role in maintaining the city's heritage. These guidelines were written to articulate a high standard for home maintenance and restoration, commensurate with the high standards used in the original design of the homes. They were written to encourage you, as a homeowner, to provide the quality maintenance and restoration that your house deserves.

The resale value of your home is strongly influenced by authenticity and the retention of architectural character because the uniqueness of the architecture in Shaker Heights is what draws many people to the city. By following these guidelines and preserving the architectural quality of your home, you can protect your investment and enhance the historic appeal of your neighborhood.

National Register District and Local Landmarks

Approximately two-thirds of Shaker Heights is included in a National Register Historic District. The district was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 and is recognized for the quality of its architecture and as an outstanding example of suburban community planning. The boundaries of the district basically enclose the portions of the city's development that were complete at the time of the Van Sweringen brothers' deaths (1935-36). Additional areas of the city may be eligible for National Register designation in the future.

Properties in the National Register Historic District are *not* subject to review by the Landmark Commission. However, homeowners in the District have a special responsibility to preserve and maintain their properties because each property contributes to the quality and character of the district as a whole.

The Landmark Commission has a specific responsibility to a relatively small number of properties it has designated as local landmarks and those properties within the local Shaker Square and Winslow Road Historic Districts. Any proposed exterior architectural or environmental changes to these properties must receive a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Commission. When reviewing changes to landmarked properties, the Commission uses the ten guidelines highlighted in the following pages.



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The following ten guidelines are based on the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation*. They have been expanded by the Landmark Commission to relate more closely to the architecture and history of Shaker Heights. The guidelines are intended to be broad and flexible so that they can be used by owners of both landmarked and non-landmarked properties. At the same time, they hold up a high standard for rehabilitation, appropriate to the quality of the architectural stock.

1 Distinguishing Features

The historic character of a property should be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property should be avoided.

Entrances/doors – Many Shaker Heights homes have distinctive entryways, and the front door is often the focal point of a residential façade. Whenever possible, retain the original door, trim, fixtures, and porch structure for your front entrance. Many doors in Shaker Heights were custom fabricated and would be difficult to replace. If a replacement door is necessary, it should match the original door in material, size, and style. A replacement door should also have the same series of panels and windows and a frame of the same dimensions. Contemporary door designs, such as flush doors, are not appropriate to the style of a historic house.

The installation of metal security doors is discouraged because these doors can detract from the appearance of your home. There are other security methods available which would not have as serious an impact on the style and appearance of your home.

Roofs – On many homes in the city, the roof is the defining visual feature. Retain or restore the original shape of your house's roof, including the pitch, eave lines, and ridge. The original Van Sweringen standards for the city prohibited the use of asphalt shingles, so the majority of homes in the city originally had slate or wood shingles, wood shakes, or clay tile roofs. If your home still has its original roof, you should conserve, repair, and maintain this roof if possible. These original materials have a much longer life than the asphalt shingles commonly used today. With proper maintenance and repair, many of these roofs can last indefinitely.

If your roof is leaking or has other problems, consult a roofer who has experience with the roofing material on your house. When roofs leak, it is sometimes a signal that the problem is far advanced, although it is possible to have a leak in an otherwise sound roof. As a preventive measure, roofs and flashing should be inspected regularly by a competent professional. Most roofers work mainly with asphalt shingles and will recommend re-roofing with this material without considering the option of repair. Many roofs, especially high quality slate roofs, can be repaired by replacing nails or fasteners that have rusted out and/or by repairing the roof flashing. If these repairs are done properly, your existing roof may outlast a new asphalt roof by a considerable margin.

A roof problem may be caused by a relatively small section of deteriorated shingles. If this is the case, the damaged section may be replaced while leaving the sound portions of the roof intact. Per the city's building code, a roofer may replace up to 25% of a roof, as long as the new shingles are the same material



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and color as the existing roof. If the deteriorated area is larger than 25% of the roof, the entire roof must be replaced.

If a roof is too deteriorated to repair, you should get cost estimates for replacing the roof with the original material. Wood or slate shingles or clay tile may be substantially more expensive than asphalt shingles to install, but the cost difference between the materials over the life of the roof may be less than you would expect. *Always get quotes for both materials and compare the lengths of the guarantees so that you can make an informed choice when re-roofing your house.*

If you decide to re-roof your house with asphalt shingles, select shingles that match your existing roof as closely as possible. If your house has a wood shingle or shake roof, select a heavyweight, dimensional asphalt shingle in a dark brown, black, or “weathered wood” color. If your house has a slate roof, select one of the many slate-colored asphalt shingles available. Ask your roofer to show you a variety of samples from different manufacturers so that you can pick the most appropriate color for your house. Also, ask your roofer for addresses of other houses which have been re-roofed with the shingle you are considering. Seeing shingles installed on a roof will give you a better idea of their color and texture than a small shingle sample.

Some slate roofs have a distinctive texture and strong shadow lines. If this is the case for your house, select a dimensional asphalt shingle, which approximates the three-dimensional quality of the existing material. Some slate roofs have a very flat texture with individual shingles abutting rather than overlapping each other. If this is the case for your house, you may want to consider a heavyweight three-tab shingle which will more closely approximate this flatter appearance.

The new shingle you select must meet the minimum weight requirements of the building code. For an organic asphalt roof, the shingle must weigh at least 280 pounds per square (100 square feet) of roofing material. For a fiberglass-reinforced asphalt shingle, the weight must be at least 255 points per square. Typically, shingles which carry a 30-year warranty from the manufacturer are heavy enough to meet the city’s minimum weight requirement.

Preserve or replace any roof-mounted architectural features, including dormers, cupolas, cornices, brackets, chimneys, and cresting. Gutter and downspout materials should be appropriate to the house and have the same size, shape, and texture as the original gutter and downspout system.

Windows – Windows are a significant feature of any house. Many houses in Shaker Heights have leaded glass windows or other customized window treatments. Retain the original windows on your house whenever possible. Retain, repair, and reuse the original openings and trim, including sash, glass, lintels and sills, doors, pediments, and hardware. Also, retain the number and size of original window openings. If existing windows cannot be preserved, new windows should match the size, type, color, and sash profile of the original windows. When replacing windows, look at many new windows to find the best match for your home. Vinyl windows may seem convenient, in terms of maintenance, but the see windows often have a heavier, less graceful appearance than the original wood windows. Replace existing wood windows with new wood windows whenever possible. You may need to order custom replacement windows for your home rather than an off-the-shelf product. Although custom windows cost more, they



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will enhance the value of your home to a greater extent than a standard window, which is not well-suited to your home.

Steel casement windows, which were commonly used in the city in the 1920's and 1930's, pose a more difficult problem. The steel window frames and glazing bars (sections of metal which hold the glass in place) have a thin and elegant appearance, and can be a defining characteristic of a house. If your house has steel casements, retain and recondition these windows whenever possible. Steel casements can be realigned and squared in their frames to improve their operation and reduce drafts. Removing built-up layers of paint and repairing rusted sections of the windows can also improve their operation and thermal efficiency. Restored metal windows will never be as energy-efficient as modern replacements, but if the restoration work is done properly, the windows can be made draft free and will last for many years.

If steel casement windows have deteriorated to the extent that they cannot be repaired or reconditioned, consider metal replacement windows in order to retain your house's unique look. More conventional window replacements should only be considered as a last resort. If this is the case, be sure to look at as many replacement windows as possible and select a new casement window which approximates the look of the original windows as closely as possible.

Traditional houses typically have muntin bars which divide the windows into smaller panes of glass. The original windows on a house are often true-divided lights, which means that the windows are made up of smaller individual panes. Replacement windows often have single panes of glass with snap-in muntin bars. It is important to select replacement windows that replicate the original windows, using true-divided lights rather than windows with snap-in muntin bars, because true-divided lights have a more authentic appearance.

Siding – Original siding materials, which may include wood siding, wood shingles, stucco, or masonry, should be retained if possible. If wood clapboards or shingles are deteriorated, they can be repaired or replaced, with a little effort and skilled carpentry, to match existing.

Vinyl and aluminum siding are strongly discouraged because, even when carefully installed, these materials alter the character and appearance of a home. It is often impossible to duplicate original cornices, moldings, and details in aluminum or vinyl and, in many cases; the resulting loss of detail alters the style and character of a house. Even when the original trim is replicated in vinyl or aluminum, it tends to be a much simplified version of the original detail. Also, since new siding is applied on top of existing siding, details around windows and doors can appear recessed behind the siding rather than projecting slightly in front of the siding. New siding with embossed wood graining (intended to simulate the texture of wood) is also inappropriate. Real wood siding has a smooth finish; exaggerated wood graining would be undesirable to a carpenter and is rarely seen in quality construction.

From a functional standpoint, the house that “needs” vinyl siding to improve its appearance is the house that can often afford it the least. Unsightly exterior damage (paint that won't stay on, damaged wood siding, warped clapboards, and stains) may reflect deeper problems that require more care than a cosmetic re-siding job can provide. These problems are related to water or humidity that condenses



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within the walls. It is important to deal with these problems rather than just cover them up with new siding.

If the problem is simply that too much paint has accumulated over the years, you should explore the options for paint removal. Although blaststripping should be avoided because it can damage wood siding, scraping, sanding, and chemical strippers, when combined with a proper primer, can provide a sound surface for repainting.

The maintenance and periodic painting of a wood frame structure is a time consuming and expensive effort. It is understandable that re-siding, which promises relief from periodic painting and gives a home a new appearance, would have considerable appeal for homeowners. However, both vinyl and aluminum siding are subject to fading and most homeowners eventually resort to painting these materials to achieve a new and clean appearance.

2 Architectural Character

Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property should be preserved.

Chimneys – Chimneys in Shaker Heights can be unusual and distinctive, especially for houses designed in the Tudor and French styles. Many chimneys are defining features of a home's architectural style and reflect the skilled craftsmanship of the masons who constructed them. These chimneys should be maintained and repointed as necessary rather than removed or replaced.

Porches – Front porches are fairly uncommon in Shaker Heights, although open side and rear porches appear with some frequency. Enclosing a porch is discouraged because open porches are distinctive elements for many houses. If you do plan to enclose a porch with windows, try to find windows which maintain the size and proportions of the existing openings. This will help to keep the light, open feel of the porch once it is enclosed.

Shutters – many houses in Shaker Heights were designed with shutters. These shutters may not be functional, but they provide color and enhance the symmetry of a house. Original shutters should be retained if possible. If shutters must be replaced they should replicate the size and proportion of the existing shutters. An exception to this rule is if the shutters on your house now were not part of the house's original design. You can determine this by comparing the size and proportions of the shutters to that of the windows. *Correctly proportioned shutters are the same height as the window and exactly half of the window's width.* The bottoms of the shutters should align with the tops of the windows sills. If your shutters are the wrong size or proportion for your house, they should be replaced. Keep in mind that not all houses were designed for shutters. If the properly sized and proportioned shutters for your windows do not fit between the windows on your house, shutters should not be used.

Gutters and downspouts – some houses have decorative means for transporting water from the roof to the ground. Copper gutters and downspouts were used for some houses and, with proper maintenance, will continue to function indefinitely. If sections of copper gutters begin to fail, these sections should be



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replaced in kind. If gutters and downspouts are significantly more expensive than extruded aluminum, they will last much longer and can sometimes prove cost effective over the long term.

Box gutters were also used in some cases to carry water from the roof. These gutters are built into the cornice and soffits of a house. Skilled carpentry was required to construct these gutters and, although their maintenance is more complicated than for standard extruded gutters, they should be preserved.

Landscape – The gardens and landscape of some Shaker Heights homes were designed by leading landscape architect, just as many of the houses were designed by leading architects. Preserving the landscape originally designed for your home is another aspect of preserving the historic and aesthetic significance of your property and of the community as a whole. Deep setbacks with manicured front lawns are typical for many Shaker Heights homes. The continuous expanse of a series of residential lawns gives the city's neighborhoods a park like character. Front yard fences should be avoided because they disrupt the visual continuity of the landscape.

3 Repair and Replacement

Deteriorated historic features should 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 where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features should be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

The key to a successful rehabilitation of a building is to maintain the building's characteristic details and original materials. Roofs, windows, siding, and other building features should be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible. Original materials or details should not be removed from a building when they can be repaired.

If your home has been modified and you are planning to restore it to its original appearance, careful research is necessary. Consider hiring an architect to help you recreate whatever elements may be missing. If the original plans for your home are available, they are the ideal information source. The Building Department at City Hall has plans on microfiche *only* for homes built in 1947 or later. For older homes, you may be able to get the plans from a previous owner, or if your home has had an addition or been substantially remodeled since 1947, partial plans may be available in the Building Department.

Old photographs are another good source of information about your home. The Shaker Historical Society library, the Fine Arts Department at the Cleveland Public Library, and the library at the Western Reserve Historical Society have photograph files which include some older photographs of Shaker homes and streetscapes. Call these libraries for additional information about library collections and policies.



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4 Cleaning and Paint Removal

Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, should be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials should not be used.

Cleaning the exterior of your house or removing old layers of paint should always be done using the gentlest means available. Blaststripping, which includes sand, grit or water blasting, and hydrosilica cleaning are not recommended for the following reasons:

- Blaststripping creates rough surfaces. Ironically, having cleaned the dirt off your house, the resulting rough surface will accelerate future accumulations of dirt. Also, if you blaststrip paint from wood siding, the resulting rough-surfaced siding will be more porous and will require significantly more paint to create an even-toned surface.
- The rate of weathering for your house will be increased, especially if you blaststrip brick. This is because the hard outer surface of the brick is removed, exposing the softer inner surface.
- The resulting appearance will be historically inappropriate. Blaststripped brick has an orange cast (if the brick was initially red) and it looks very different from the patina of an aged building. Blaststripping wood siding will remove the soft summer wood, accentuating the wood grain so that it resembles the exaggerated graining pattern of vinyl siding.
- Blaststripping is an environmental hazard because most houses built before 1970 contain some lead paint. Blasting off old paint will make lead particles airborne and this is a potential health hazard, especially to any children in your household.

If your home's exterior needs cleaning, begin with water and hand scrubbing with a natural bristle brush. Painting the wood trim of a masonry building can revive a faded façade and eliminate the need for masonry cleaning. Remove old layers of paint from siding and trim only when necessary, by scraping and hand sanding. A heat gun may also be used on a low setting to remove paint.

5 Additions and Alterations

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

Additions – additions should be in keeping with the style of the principal structure. The scale of the addition should not overwhelm the existing house. Rather, it should enhance and underscore the significant features of the existing house. Materials for an addition should match or be equivalent to the materials on the existing building.



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Skylights – although skylights are a popular way of getting light into a house, they are not appropriate in all cases. Dormers are a more traditional way of getting additional light into a house and should be considered, especially if the front elevation of the house will be affected.

When selecting a skylight, look for a small unit with a flat profile. Skylights should be located in the most inconspicuous location possible. Also, skylights should relate to exterior features of the house rather than be located strictly based on interior constraints. For example, a skylight can be centered on a window or bay. A group of small skylights which align with some exterior feature of a house is usually more appropriate than a single large skylight.

Decks and spas – Contemporary features like decks, spas, and other recreational additions may detract from the appearance of a traditionally designed house. If you choose to add a deck or spa to your house, it should be constructed in the most inconspicuous location available (rear yard) and in a low-key style that does not compete with the existing architecture of the house. Deck details, like railings and steps, should pick up details, perhaps in a simplified way, that appear on the house.

Garages/auxiliary buildings – In Shaker Heights, many garages were designed specifically to match the house. These garages may have roofs, siding, trim, and other details which replicate the features of the house. It is important to preserve your original garage if it was designed as an architectural companion to your house.

Sometimes the original garage is in poor condition or is too small to meet the needs of a current homeowner and must be replaced. Often when a garage is replaced, the new garage is of a more standard design than the original. Although a standard style garage is less expensive than a custom structure, the Landmark Commission encourages you to consider constructing a garage that reflects the style, features, and materials of your house.

Similarly, auxiliary buildings, such as storage structures and gazebos, should be custom designed to suit the style of your house and the features of your property. Small storage buildings are usually most successful then they are designed to be as inconspicuous as possible with a low-pitched roof and a dark neutral color scheme. Gazebos and garden structures can make a stronger design statement but they should not compete with the style of your house. Prefabricated storage structures and gazebos are discouraged because they are often incompatible with a house and it is difficult to modify or customize a pre-fabricated structure successfully.

Colors – When selecting new paint colors for your house, you should consider the style of the house and the colors of existing materials that will not be painted (such as masonry foundations and chimneys, and the roof). You should also consider the color schemes of adjacent houses and select colors that will be harmonious with your neighbors. The Van Sweringens had very specific color recommendations for houses based on architectural styles. The Van Sweringens' recommendations are summarized and expanded upon in *Shaker Village Colors*, which is available free of charge at www.shakeronline.com (a printed book may be purchased in the Planning Department at City Hall for \$6.50).



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Access ramps – Access ramps for elderly or disabled residents help make a house more livable for its owners and are not discouraged by the Landmark Commission. However, ramps should be constructed in the most inconspicuous location available, preferably at the rear of the house.

As an alternative to a ramp, a site can sometimes be regarded so that a sidewalk slopes gently to the entrance of the house. This ramp alternative only works when the site can be regarded at a pitch of no more than one inch per twenty feet. A sloped sidewalk often does not require a handrail, so that impact of this alternative on the appearance of a house is minimized. When combined with landscaping, a sloped sidewalk can enhance, rather than detract from, the value of your property.

New house construction in historic areas – A new house should be compatible with its neighbors. It is not necessary for a new house to replicate the architectural style and precisely the same detailing of older, historic homes in the city. Rather, a new house should be carefully detailed and constructed of high-quality materials in order to be consistent with the character of Shaker Heights. A new house may be designed in a traditional style, like the majority of the houses constructed in the earlier stages of Shaker's development, or it may be designed in a contemporary style that does not make reference to the English, French, Colonial, or other historic precedents commonly found in the city. In any case, building height, setback, proportions, and materials for a new house should be consistent with other houses in the neighborhood.

Exterior features of a new house, such as window sill or header lines, the proportion of window and door openings to the overall façade, and the horizontal or vertical emphasis of major building elements should be compatible with existing houses in the neighborhood. For example, Shaker Heights houses tend to have an abundance of windows on all four sides. A current practice of designing houses with few or no windows on the side elevations is not appropriate, in most cases, for houses in Shaker Heights.

Exterior materials for a new building should be of a high quality and should be consistent with materials used for other buildings in the neighborhood. Also, the relationship of a house to the open space between it and neighboring houses should be consistent in new construction. The city's zoning code addresses this issue by specifying minimum (and in some cases, maximum) setbacks from the street and from other buildings.

6 Architectural Integrity

New additions and adjacent or related new construction should 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.

Alterations and additions – Ideally, any alteration or addition to your home should be 'reversible' because a subsequent owner may wish to restore the property to its original appearance. For small projects, this can be accomplished by retaining the original exterior walls to the most complete extent possible and by constructing new features with framing systems that minimally interrupt the original surfaces and materials. For large projects, such as major additions, it may not be possible to make a project truly 'reversible'. Instead, be sure that the design and materials for the addition are of the highest quality, so



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that the addition enhances the architectural features of your home and, over time, has the potential to become historic in its own right.

'Impermanent' alterations – Paint colors and fences are considered 'impermanent' alterations because they tend to have a limited life span and can easily be changed back to an earlier appearance. However, an inappropriate paint scheme or fence can dramatically alter the appearance of your property and these alterations should be considered carefully. The Commission has two booklets available for your reference: *Shaker Heights Fences* and *Shaker Village Colors*. Both are available free of charge at City Hall and will help you to select the fence or color scheme that works best for your house.

Avoid painting any brick or stone on your house if these materials were not originally painted. It can be very difficult to remove paint from masonry in order to restore a house to its original appearance, so it is best not to paint these materials in the first place.

Removal of materials – If windows, doors, trim or other features of your house are removed as part of a construction project, the Landmark Commission encourages you to store these items in case a subsequent owner wants to restore the house to its earlier appearance.

7 Changes Over Time

Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right should be retained and preserved.

Although many houses in Shaker Heights are less than 100 years old, some changes which have occurred since a house's original construction may have become 'historic' in their own right. To find out about alterations to your house since it was constructed, check the building card for your house in the Building Department at City Hall. The card will list the dates of any alterations as well as the builder and/or the architect. Before you remove any later additions or alterations, you should evaluate their significance. If the project enhanced the original design of your house or was the work of an architect or master builder, it may be significant and worthy of preserving.

The houses in Shaker Heights most likely to have been altered substantially are the 'Century' homes. These Western Reserve farmhouses pre-date the Van Sweringens and were often altered in the 1920s and 1930s when new houses were being constructed all around them. These alterations may or may not be architecturally or historically significant and need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Landscaping – The landscape for your property changes over time, gradually becoming overgrown, and may need to be trimmed to restore its best appearance. Foundation plantings, shrubs, and trees tend to be small when initially planted. Over time, they mature until they reach the point where they are appropriately scaled for the house. However, plant materials may eventually grow so large that they are out of scale with the house or obscure a house's architectural features. Analyze the landscape of your house carefully and prune any plant materials which seem overgrown, out of scale or off balance with your house. New plantings should enhance, but not overwhelm, your home's architectural features.



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8 Historic Integrity

Each property should 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 elements from other historic properties, should not be undertaken.

In general, buildings and additions to buildings should not be made to look older or newer than they really are by adding details or fixtures from another architectural style or time period.

Additions – When planning an addition to your house, it is important to pick up details, materials, and proportions from the main structure. However, in general you should try not to make the addition look like it was built at the same time as the existing house. It might seem more in keeping with the character of your house simply to repeat the architectural details of the house on the new addition. But when the new work is indistinguishable from the old in appearance, then the ‘real’ historic property may no longer be perceived and appreciated by the public. An addition should complement, but not replicate, the original design.

An addition should be compatible with the architectural style of the original house. Most houses in Shaker Heights were designed in traditional architectural styles-primarily the Tudor, French and Georgian styles. Additions should reflect the style of the principal structure, although a traditional style may be interpreted in a contemporary way.

Regardless of whether your house is very traditional or more contemporary in appearance, you should not attempt to make the house look older than it actually is. Your house is a product of its own time, and any additions or alterations should respect this fact.

9 Compatible Uses

A property should be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.

Residential properties – Most residential properties in Shaker Heights continue to be used for their original purposes. The city’s zoning code strictly limits the uses allowed in single- and tow-family homes. However, accessory uses such as day care and home offices are now allowed, with restrictions, in residential properties. These accessory uses must fit into a historic house with little or no change to its exterior appearance or its site.

Multi-family properties – Multi-family properties also continue to be used for their original purposes, although residents of these buildings today may have different needs than the original occupants. For example, residents today often need additional parking spaces. This need must be balanced with the need to maintain the quality of a historic streetscape, especially in the Shaker Square Historic District where increased demand for surface parking could diminish the pedestrian quality of the district. Many multi-family buildings in Shaker Heights have underground parking areas which are invisible from the



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street. Supplementing underground parking with surface lots can undermine the visual character of multi-family districts and should be avoided.

Historic sites – parks, country clubs, green spaces, and the Shaker Lakes are defining features of Shaker Heights. These areas should be retained as open space. New or more intense uses should preserve the visual character of these areas. New uses which undermine the park like character of the city, especially in residential areas, are strongly discouraged.

10 Archeology

Archeological resources should be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures should be undertaken.

Residents are often surprised to learn that Shaker Heights may have archeological resources. Although many potential ‘archeological sites’ were destroyed by construction activity during the peak periods of the city’s development, it is possible that archeological artifacts from the North Union Shaker Community, the Warrensville Township settlers, or earlier, pre-European inhabitants of the area still exist. The Shaker Lakes area, in particular, is likely to contain archeological resources.

Actually, any building or structure could potentially contain archeological components. Park land and open spaces may likewise contain archeological sites. Before you begin a construction or demolition project requiring a major ground disturbance, you should consider the possibility that your property may contain archeological artifacts.

The Landmark Commission encourages you to make every reasonable effort to identify significant archeological sites, and, if such a site is located on your property, to take into account the effect of construction on the site. Ideally, you should contact a professional archeologist during the planning phase of a project involving a major ground disturbance. If it is determined that a significant archeological site will be affected by any project, a management plan designed to mitigate the impact of the project on the significant archeological site should be prepared and implemented as appropriate.



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Hiring Skilled Professionals

Understanding the previous ten guidelines is an important step toward preserving the architectural character and quality of your home. It is also important to hire skilled professionals who will respect the original materials and architectural features of your home when completing repairs or renovations.

Many homes in Shaker Heights have materials and craftsmanship not typically found elsewhere. As a result, contractors may attempt to use standard maintenance and renovation procedures which are often completely inappropriate to a house's unique features. Examples of this include roofers who often lack experience in slate, wood or clay tile roofs and who may automatically advise you to replace your roof with asphalt shingles. Similarly, a builder who lacks experience in specialized metalwork may advise you to replace copper gutters with a more standardized product. Although it is sometimes difficult to find a craftsman with the skills required to preserve your home's special features, it is very important that you fully explore your options before making any decisions about work to be done to your home.

One of the best ways to locate skilled craftspeople is to ask your friends and neighbors for referrals. Also, many neighborhood associations maintain contractor referral lists which are generated by Shaker residents. Before you sign a contract, always ask for addresses of similar projects, preferably in Shaker Heights, and visit these properties to evaluate the quality of the finished work.

For larger or more specialized projects, consider hiring an architect experienced in historic preservation. A preservation architect's expertise can help to assure that your project will be done right and will add to the value of your home. A preservation architect can also locate the skilled craftspeople needed to complete your project. The Cleveland Chapter of the American Institute of Architects can provide you with the names of architects who are experienced in working with historic houses.

City Processes

Architectural Board of Review – Any exterior change to a building and all new construction in Shaker Heights must be approved by the Architectural Board of Review. The Board meets twice a month to review plans, which must be submitted one week before the meeting. Small projects, including re-roofing and some window replacements, can sometimes be reviewed administratively by city staff, depending on the circumstances. Please contact the Planning Department for additional information about the Board's processes, policies, and meeting schedule.

Board of Zoning Appeals – Additions, alterations, auxiliary structures, fences, air conditioning units, and other projects may require variances from the city's zoning code. The zoning code can limit the height and placement of an addition, auxiliary structure, fence, etc. The code also requires screening for air conditioning units and some fences. If your plans do not comply with zoning code requirements, you may apply for a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeals. When you submit plans to the Architectural Board of Review, they are automatically reviewed for zoning compliance by the Zoning Administrator. You will be notified if your plans require any variances to the zoning code. For more information, contact the Planning Department.



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Building Permits – Most construction projects and all fences require permits from the Building Department. The Building Department will not issue a permit until you have complied with the requirements of the Architectural Board of Review and, if necessary, the Board of Zoning Appeals. However, it is important to contact the Building Department early in the process to ensure that your project will comply with the provisions of the building code. For more information contact the Building Department.

Landmark Commission – In addition to the requirements listed above, all exterior changes and additions to properties which have been designated as local landmarks or are within the local landmark districts must be approved by the Landmark Commission. The Commission must review all exterior building and environmental changes to landmarked properties before a building permit is issued. The Commission's approval for any project must be obtained *in addition* to the approval of the Architectural Board of Review. The Commission will use the guidelines in this booklet to decide whether to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for a proposed project. For more information, please contact the Planning Department.

Special Programs for Homeowners – For information about the city's programs designed to assist homeowners in repairing and maintaining their properties, please contact the Neighborhood Revitalization Department. Programs may include low-interest loans for home repairs, home maintenance workshops, and tool loans.

Shaker Heights City Hall - 3400 Lee Road, Shaker Heights, OH 44120

[Planning Department](#) 216.491.1430
(Landmark Commission, Architectural Board of Review, Board of Zoning Appeals)

[Building Department](#) 216.491.1460
(Building and Fence Permits)

Shaker Heights Community Building – 3350 Lee Road, Shaker Heights, OH 44120

[Neighborhood Revitalization](#) 216.491.1370
(Low-interest Loans, Workshops)



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Resources

City Publications

[The Homeowners' Guide to Preservation and Maintenance](#) (1991, reprinted 2001).

Shaker Heights Fences, 1995 (reprint).

[Shaker Village Colors](#), 1983 (reprinted 2008).

Other Publications

Caring for Your Old House: a Guide for Owners and Residents, Judith L. Kitchen.

[Preservation Briefs](#), National Park Service Preservation Assistance Division. [47Preservation Briefs are currently available on a variety of topics dealing with the maintenance and preservation of historic buildings].

Old-Building Owner's Manual, Judith L. Kitchen.

[Old House Journal](#).

Respectful Rehabilitation: Answers to Your Questions about Old Buildings, National Park Service Preservation Assistance Division.

[This Old House](#).

All publications are available at the Shaker Heights Public Library or through interlibrary loan.

Photograph Collections

Cleveland Public Library, Fine Arts Division, 325 Superior Avenue NE, Cleveland, Ohio 44114.
216.623.2848

Shaker Historical Society, 16740 South Park Boulevard, Shaker Heights, Ohio 44120. 216.921.1201

Western Reserve Historical Society Library, 10825 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106.
216.721.5722

[Ohio Memory Online](#)