



BLOOMINGDALE HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES



DC HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD



DRAFT HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES
PROPOSED BLOOMINGDALE HISTORIC DISTRICT
REQUEST FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

ISSUED JUNE 1, 2018

**COMMENTS REQUESTED BY
JULY 26, 2018**

The D.C. Historic Preservation Office (HPO) has prepared these draft guidelines in response to an application to designate a Bloomingdale Historic District. The D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) is scheduled to hold a public hearing on the historic district application on July 26, 2018.

These guidelines have been prepared to provide information on the practical effect historic designation would have on property owners within the boundaries of the proposed district. After a public comment period and any necessary revisions, the guidelines would be submitted for review and adoption by the HPRB if the proposed historic district is designated.

INTRODUCTION

Bloomingdale is proposed for listing as an historic district in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites. If designated by the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB), work requiring a D.C. building permit, such as exterior alterations, new construction, demolition, and subdivisions, is subject to a design review process under the D.C. historic preservation law. The purpose of the law is to ensure that such work preserves important character-defining features of historic properties and is compatible with the character of the historic district.

Design guidelines establish the principles that would be applied by the HPRB and Historic Preservation Office (HPO) in the review of exterior work requiring a permit. Guidelines seek to identify the important architectural characteristics of historic properties that should be retained during renovation projects, while also providing assurance to property owners that those alterations that do not affect important features will be allowed. They are intended to provide clarity, transparency and predictability to the decision-making process for property owners.

These guidelines supplement the policies established by the city's preservation law, regulations and standards. Historic district design guidelines allow the HPRB to establish design guidance that is tailored to the historic character, building conditions, and circumstances of individual historic districts. While maintaining general consistency with the citywide guidelines applicable to all historic properties, district-specific guidelines allow flexibility in the application of certain provisions when warranted by the specific characteristics of the district. In instances where policies within these district guidelines may differ from city-wide policies, the historic district guidelines shall take precedence.

The city's preservation review process is administered by the D.C. Historic Preservation Office (HPO), a division of the Office of Planning, which has a professional staff of architects and preservation specialists who can provide architectural and technical assistance on products and methods appropriate to the renovation of older properties.

Property owners are encouraged to consult informally with the HPO before submitting a building permit application for exterior work. The staff can approve most types of work, such as in-kind repair and replacement and minor alterations, in an expedited "over-the-counter" permit review process. More substantial work, such as new construction or large additions, is subject to review by the Historic Preservation Review Board at its monthly meetings, for which the HPO can provide guidance and direction before the preparation of building plans.

For further information and full texts of the preservation law and regulations, visit the DC Historic Preservation Office at 1100 4th Street, SW, Suite 650, or see our website at www.preservation.dc.gov.

PRESERVATION GOALS AND PRINCIPLES

The city's preservation law describes the public purposes of preservation and establishes the standards for the review of work affecting historic properties. These include **retaining and enhancing** historic properties, **ensuring that changes are compatible**, and **encouraging adaptation** of historic property for current use.

Design guidelines establish the principles applied for achieving these purposes. In giving more specific advice, these guidelines also reflect several well-established considerations applied in the design and review of work affecting historic property.

These considerations include:

Visibility or prominence from the street. Changes to historic property that are visible to the public are more likely to affect a property's character or the character of the historic district. As a general rule, changes that are prominently visible from a street should be more carefully considered, while greater flexibility should be given for changes that are minimally visible or not visible from the street.

Primary vs. Secondary Elevations
Alterations to primary building elevations are more likely to affect a property's character than those undertaken on secondary elevations. Primary elevations are those that face a street or public open space, or possesses a significant architectural composition or features. A secondary elevation is one that does not face a street or does not possess significant architectural features. Alterations and additions to secondary elevations, particularly for rowhouses, are not uncommon and are often necessary for the adaptation of buildings for current use.

Temporary and additive change vs. permanent and destructive change: Alterations that are temporary or easily reversible have less of a lasting impact on the character of historic property, while alterations that permanently change or remove features have a greater impact. Adding a new element – while retaining significant characteristics – is a better preservation solution than destroying and replacing characteristic features.

Contextual and compatible design: The design of features on historic property should display an awareness of and response to the specific qualities of the property and its environment.

Quality of design and materials: Historic buildings often display a high quality of design and materials that should be retained. Additions and alterations to historic property should exhibit this tradition of building excellence.

Achieving a reasonable balance: Adapting old buildings requires a thoughtful consideration of practical needs and the civic benefits of protecting architectural and historical characteristics valued by the community.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CHARACTER OF BLOOMINGDALE

The proposed Bloomingdale Historic District is a 28-block neighborhood area bounded by North Capitol Street on the east and Second Street on the west, and by Florida Avenue on the south and the McMillan Reservoir on the north, in the mid-city section of Washington, DC. The neighborhood is largely residential in character and readily defined by its intact and cohesive collections of late-19th and early 20th-century rowhouses that fill the area's streets in an uninterrupted manner from one end to the other.

The city squares in Bloomingdale are large, and some are bisected by narrow minor streets. All blocks have alleys running through them. Rowhouses line the long blocks of east-west streets, including both the principal and minor streets, as well as the north-south routes, with the most impressive ones along the neighborhood's central spine of First Street. The intersections of the streets are typically punctuated by imposing corner houses that are often larger and more highly articulated and ornamented than their attached neighbors. Alley buildings, including former stables and garages, are found both in isolation and in clusters within the alleyways.

Bloomingdale was built almost entirely between 1892 and 1916, and the rowhouses are most commonly the product of teams of developers, builders, and architects building rows of coordinated designs. Most of the houses are substantial in size, exhibit quality design and craftsmanship, and remain remarkably intact. The primary building materials are brick and stone, with decorative slate turrets or pent roofs in slate or tile.

The rhythm of repeating and alternating projecting bays, turrets, and rooftop ornaments of the late 19th-century rowhouses, and the front porches and dormer windows of the early 20th-century ones, give the urban neighborhood its human scale and exceptionally rich visual quality.

Rowhouses

Rowhouses are by far the predominant building type, expressed in a variety of architectural styles from the late 19th to the early 20th centuries, and most fall into two broad categories – bay fronts and porch fronts. The primary front elevations (and the side elevations on corner houses) are carefully composed and often exhibit high quality masonry and decorative stylistic features and details. The secondary rear elevations are typically more utilitarian and have often been changed over time with additions and alterations.

Apartment Buildings

There are several dozen apartment buildings in Bloomingdale that range from modest rowhouse flats to large, multi-story buildings. The smaller flats (typically two- or four-unit buildings) can be found throughout the neighborhood, and are often abutting and indistinguishable from the rowhouses in terms of size, scale and architectural style and treatment. The larger apartment buildings are generally located along the district's principal arteries such as Rhode Island Avenue and North Capitol Street, or take advantage of triangular lots or irregular corner sites that add to their visual prominence. Depending upon the siting, the district's apartment buildings may have more than one principal elevation

Institutional Buildings

Bloomingdale contains a former fire house (Old Engine Company No. 12), the former Gage School, and several religious complexes that include church buildings, Sunday schools and other associated buildings. All of the institutional buildings are architecturally notable. The former Gage School and Old Engine Company No. 12 are both D.C. Landmarks.

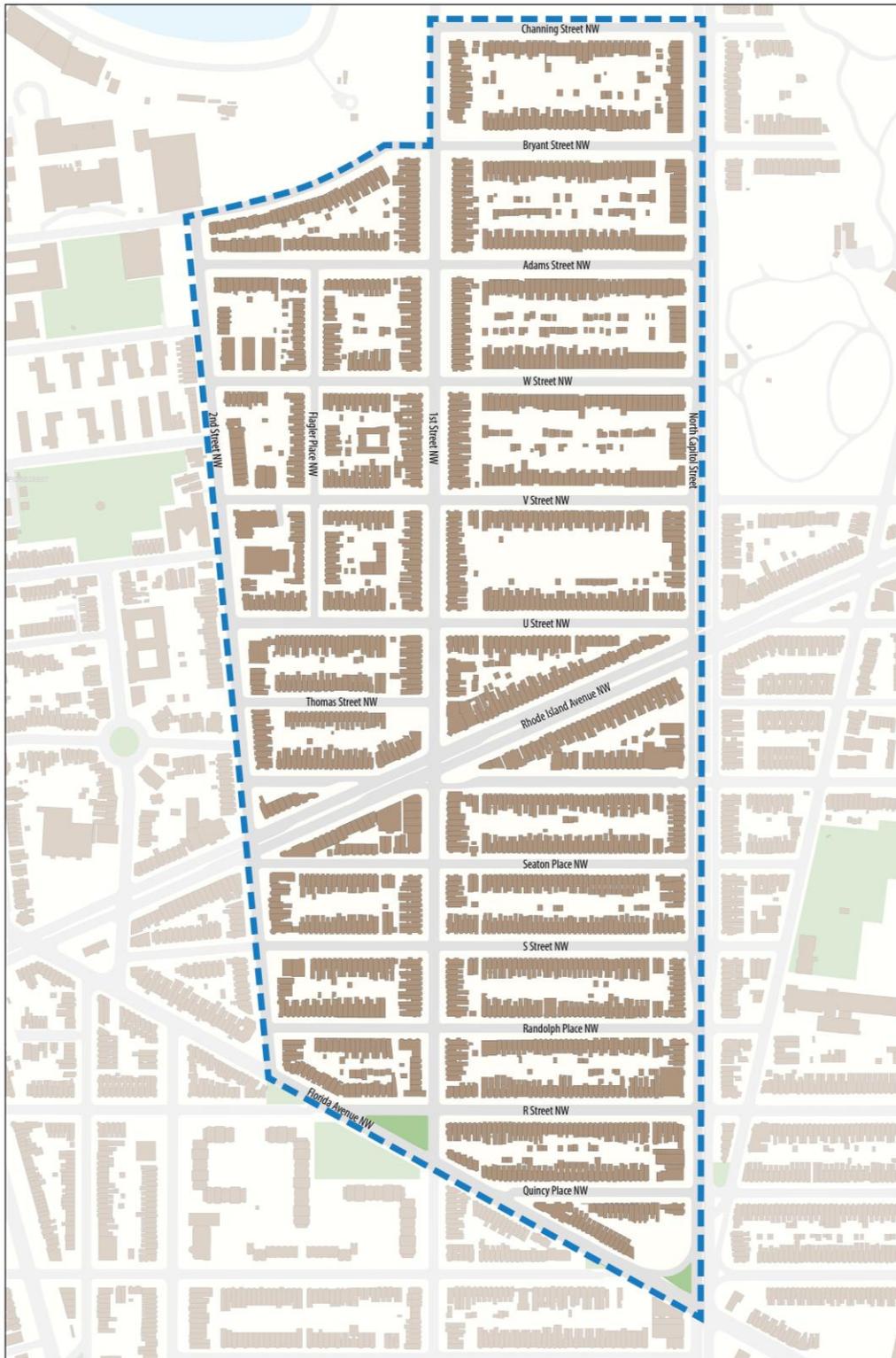
Commercial Buildings

The commercial buildings in Bloomingdale are all neighborhood-scaled buildings, erected to serve the growing residential community during the early 20th century. One-, two- and three-story commercial buildings, as well as former residential buildings converted to commercial use are

concentrated around the intersection of First Street and Rhode Island Avenue and along North Capitol Street at Florida Avenue. The former Sylvan Theater and its attached stores on Rhode Island Avenue is the neighborhood's most architecturally notable commercial building.

DRAFT

Boundaries of Proposed Bloomingdale Historic District



DESIGN REVIEW PRINCIPLES

The Bloomingdale Historic District design guidelines seek to recognize and preserve the important aspects of the neighborhood and its history, while also recognizing that it is a neighborhood that will continue to evolve. The guidelines are based on the following characteristics and principles:

1. Bloomingdale represents an architecturally rich, cohesive and intact collection of late 19th and early 20th century masonry rowhouses. The rhythm of repeating projecting bays, turrets, and rooftop ornaments of the late 19th-century houses, and the front porches, decorative roof forms and dormer windows of the early 20th-century houses, give the urban neighborhood's streetscapes an exceptionally rich visual quality that should be preserved. Particular care should be taken to ensure that alterations and additions do not alter the historic massing, roof height or ornamental features of individual rowhouses, and that alterations and additions are compatible with the rooflines and streetscapes of the street and neighborhood.
2. The architectural character of Bloomingdale is conveyed through the primary, street-fronting elevations of the buildings. The alley elevations are more utilitarian in design and lack the architectural treatment of the facades. While all exterior alterations are subject to preservation review, greater flexibility will be given to the review of alterations or additions that affect only rear elevations or that are not visible from public street view. Alterations to secondary elevations on corner buildings (whether on a street or alleyway) will be reviewed with some flexibility, but the extent of visibility and public impact from street view will be considered in the review process.
3. The small front yards in Bloomingdale, often defined by retaining walls, provide a continuous open space between street and

house. These yards, in a highly built-up neighborhood without significant open space, establish the setting for the rowhouses and provide a softening effect that adds to the character of the streetscape. Front yards should be retained primarily as green space, with paving incidental to the landscape. Fences and walls should follow the historic models, and be kept low and open so as not to disrupt visual continuity across yards.

4. The commercial buildings in Bloomingdale may individually lack the quality of design and architectural treatment afforded the neighborhood's rowhouses, but as an entity, they contribute to the historic sense of neighborhood and community. The rehabilitation of the neighborhood's commercial buildings should balance the dual goals of retaining historic buildings and encouraging high-quality redevelopment that is consistent with the Mid City East Small Area Plan's policies.
7. The individual squares making up Bloomingdale feature alleyways behind the public streets. Although many of the historic alley buildings, including stables and garages no longer survive, small groupings of alley buildings and some individual ones provide important examples of alleyscapes and alley buildings and should be retained. Alterations to alley buildings that occupy independent alley lots, such as those in Bloomingdale Court and the Court in Square 3116 will be reviewed as if the alley were a public street. In addition, alterations and additions to any two-story brick alley buildings, whether located on an alley lot or at the rear of a street-facing lot, will be reviewed as if it were along a public right-of-way.

BUILDING FEATURES

1.0 *Walls*

The rowhouses in Bloomingdale uniformly feature exterior walls of brick. Primary elevations exhibit a rich variety of earth-toned brick colors – red, brown, taupe – and often have distinctive patterns and detailing. Stone and brick window and door framing elements, trimwork, metal cornices and ornamental detailing are common. Secondary elevations are typically constructed of common brick, and are often concealed by porches and additions in other materials.



Brick and decorative stone wall surfaces

- 1.1 No permit or preservation review is required to paint. Painted buildings can be re-painted and any unpainted building can be painted. However, painting unpainted brick and stone is discouraged as these materials have visual and material qualities that contribute to the visual continuity of the neighborhood, and once painted, will require regular maintenance and repainting.

- 1.2 Masonry walls should be repointed with mortar that replicates the general color, texture and tooling of original mortar. Mortar for spot pointing should match and maintain visual continuity with adjacent mortar.
- 1.3 Brick surfaces should remain uncovered. Applying a covering over front façade masonry, such as siding or stucco, is not permitted. Existing coverings can remain, but removal is encouraged.
- 1.4 Decorative masonry and metal wall features, such as window and door surrounds and cornices, should be maintained and repaired. Decorative wall features should not be removed or covered over with alternative materials.
- 1.5 If beyond repair, decorative wall features should be replaced to match the original features using the same materials, or materials that have the same visual appearance.
- 1.6 Secondary (typically rear) elevations do not significantly contribute to the historic character of the neighborhood, and most have been changed over time. Secondary elevations may be re-clad or rebuilt in masonry, stucco, or siding (wood, cementitious or vinyl).

2.0 *Roofs*

Bloomingdale's rooflines are one of its most distinctive visual features, with its rows of houses often punctuated with repeating turrets clad in patterned slate, decorative pent roofs in slate or terra cotta tile with ornamental dormers windows, or detailed parapet walls. The roofs behind these roof features are typically sloped and are not visible from street view.



Slate-clad turret roofs

(including the side elevation for corner houses), typically at a distance at least equal to their height, so they are not prominently visible from street view.

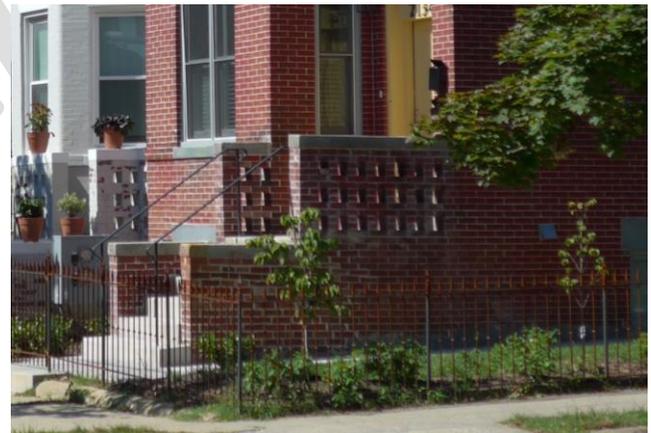


Decorative dormer windows

- 2.1 Decorative roof features, such as turrets, pent roofs, cornices, eaves, and dormers and dormer windows should be preserved, maintained and repaired. Removal of decorative roof features other than for repair or reconstruction is not permitted.
- 2.2 Replacement of deteriorated or missing roofing on turrets and pent roofs should replicate the pattern, color, scale and visual appearance of the original roof finish. Replication of the original material is encouraged but may not be required.
- 2.3 The flat and sloping roofs on rowhouses that are not visible from street view do not contribute to the visual character of the neighborhood and can be replaced with metal, membrane or other materials.
- 2.4 Original dormer windows are ornamental features and should be maintained and repaired. If deteriorated beyond feasible repair, replacement dormer windows should replicate the distinctive pane configuration, profiles and appearance of original windows. Replication of the original material is encouraged but is not required.
- 2.5 Mechanical, solar and communications equipment should be set back from the primary elevation

3.0 Front Steps and Walkways

Front stairs of rowhouses in Bloomingdale are typically constructed of concrete and most often flanked by low masonry walls of brick or stone. On porch-front houses, some front steps only have simple metal handrails. Walks leading from the public sidewalk to the front stairs are typically of concrete. Over time, some concrete stairs and walks have been resurfaced in brick or stone.



Concrete steps with flanking masonry walls

- 3.1 Concrete steps and masonry flanking walls should be preserved, maintained, and repaired. Removal of original concrete steps and masonry walls, other than for repair or reconstruction, is not permitted.

- 3.2 If deteriorated beyond repair, front steps and masonry flanking walls should be reconstructed to replicate the original appearance in form and materials.
- 3.3 Resurfacing existing concrete stairs and walks in brick or stone is discouraged, as these materials typically don't adhere well over the long term and create on-going maintenance problems. If stairs or walks are resurfaced, large monolithic stone pieces should be used to replicate the general appearance of concrete and maximize adhesion of the applied materials.
- 3.4 Replacing or adding metal handrails, even if the stairs did not them originally, is permitted. New metal handrails should be simple in design.
- 3.5 Basement stairs are permitted if designed to be consistent with the principles outlined in the guideline "Basement Entrances and Windows for Historic Properties" (<https://planning.dc.gov/node/594332>).

4.0 Porches

Many early 20th century rowhouses in Bloomingdale feature one-story front porches. Porches are typically supported by round columns or square posts in wood or brick, and have wood crown molding detailing at the roofline. Porch railings are of wood or metal.

- 4.1 Front porches, including their roofs, trim, columns or piers, and railings should be preserved, maintained and repaired. Removal of original porches other than for repair or reconstruction is not permitted.
- 4.2 If deteriorated beyond repair, front porch elements should be reconstructed to replicate the original appearance in form and profile. Replication of original wood elements in-kind is encouraged, but alternative

materials are permitted if they replicate the original profile and finish.

- 4.3 Enclosing front porches is not permitted.
- 4.4 Installing decks and deck railings atop front porches is not permitted unless replicating an original historic condition. Porch roof decks and railings. Need to address adding when not a historic feature and altering existing condition?
- 4.5 Removing, enclosing or replacing a rear porch is allowed.



Front porches

5.0 Windows

The windows on primary elevations of Bloomingdale rowhouses were originally wood double hung sash. Most windows had one pane in the upper sash and one pane in the lower (referred to as 1-over-1 sash), although some buildings had multi-pane sashes in 6-over-1, 6-over-6, or other configurations. Most of the district's original windows have been replaced, many with vinyl units.

- 5.1 Existing windows may remain, be repaired or replaced.

- 5.2 Expanding masonry window openings or blocking them down in size is not allowed on primary elevations.
- 5.3 Replacement windows on primary elevations should fit and fill the original openings.
- 5.4 Replacement windows on primary elevations should replicate the original method of operability, which was almost uniformly double hung windows. Casement and slider windows on front elevations, unless they replicate the original condition, are not permitted.
- 5.5 Replacement windows in round-arched windows on primary elevations should follow the shape of the original opening. Using a square-headed sash in a rounded opening is not permitted.
- 5.6 Replacement of windows on front elevations with wood sash is encouraged but is not required. Replacement windows in fiberglass, aluminum or cladding over wood are allowed if they replicate the general profile and appearance of a traditional window.
- 5.7 The size, material and appearance of replacement windows on rear elevations are not required to match the original appearance, method of operability, or pane configuration. Window openings on rear elevations may be expanded or reduced in size.
- 5.8 Installation of storm windows, screens and security bars is allowed and does not require a building permit or preservation approval.



One-over-one double hung windows

6.0 Doors

Front doors in Bloomingdale were originally wood and designed to reflect the style of the house. Most bay front houses from the late 19th century had an outer paneled door and an interior vestibule with a second inner door opening to the front hall. Porch front houses most typically had a single door with multiple panes of glass that opened directly to the front hall. As with windows, there are relatively few original doors remaining. Existing non-original doors range from those that are solid with no glass to doors with panes in a variety of configuration, and are found in materials that include wood, metal and fiberglass.

- 6.1 Existing doors may remain, be repaired, or replaced.
- 6.2 Expanding or reducing the width of a door opening is not allowed.
- 6.3 Replacement front doors should fit and fill the original width of the opening.

6.4 Replacement front doors that replicate the original appearance are encouraged but are not required. Replacement front doors can be solid, glazed, or a combination of paneled and glazed, and can be of wood, metal or fiberglass.

6.5 The design of replacement front doors should be compatible with the architectural character of the building, and should be consistent with the principles outlined in the guideline “Door Repair and Replacement for Historic Properties” (<https://planning.dc.gov/node/1323021>).

6.6 The size, material and appearance of replacement doors on rear elevations are not required to match the original appearance. Door openings in rear elevations may be expanded or reduced in size. Design flexibility will be given.

6.7 Installation of storm doors, screen doors, and security gates is allowed and does not require a building permit or preservation review.

7.0 *Additions*

Adding to the rear of a rowhouse is typically the best way to add extra space without affecting the architectural character of an historic building or streetscape. Rooftop additions may be possible but should be set back sufficiently so that they are not visible atop primary elevations from public street view.

7.1 In the case of corner lots, or locations where rear additions will be prominently visible from public street view, additions should be compatible with the character of the historic district in terms of wall materials and window sizes.

7.2 Flexibility will be given for the design, materials and character of rear

additions that are not visible from street view.

7.3 Rooftop additions that alter or result in the removal of decorative roof elements are not permitted.

7.4 Rooftop additions may be allowed if they are set back sufficiently to the rear portion of the roof so that they are not visible atop a primary building elevation from street view.

8.0 *Landscape Features*

The open planted front yards that line the public sidewalks provide a unifying landscaped setting to the houses in Bloomingdale. Many front yards are enclosed with low iron fences, and properties that have a change in grade between the yard and public sidewalk have low retaining walls of brick or stone. Rear yards are typically enclosed by chain link or wood privacy fences.

8.1 No permit or preservation approval is required for planting.

8.2 Brick and stone retaining walls should be maintained in good repair to prevent erosion of front yards and avoid the need for replacing them.

8.3 Replacement retaining walls should be consistent in height and materials to other retaining walls on the block. Unfinished concrete block and timber walls are not permitted.

8.4 Front yard fences should be no taller than 36” high, and respect the open character of front yards on the street.

8.5 Chain link, and wood or vinyl privacy fences up to 7 feet in height (8 feet with the consent of the abutting property owner) are allowed, as per the DC Construction Code.

9.0 *Garages and Alley Buildings*

Alleys are a distinctive feature of Bloomingdale, many of which retain a variety of one- and two-story garages and stable buildings. Many garages have been demolished over time and replaced with

parking pads or parking areas enclosed by roll-up metal garage doors.

- 9.1 Two-story alley buildings should be preserved and maintained.
- 9.2 Alley buildings located within clusters of similar buildings, and those on lots independent of rowhouses - such as those in Bloomingdale Court (Square 3119) and within Square 3116) - should be preserved and maintained.
- 9.2 Retention of alley buildings that are more than 50 years old and those in continuous coordinated rows is encouraged.
- 9.3 Roll-up garage doors and new alley buildings and garages are permitted.
- 9.4 Rear yard sheds do not contribute to the character of the historic district and can be removed or replaced.

10.0 *Utility Meters*

Electric and gas utility meters have traditionally been installed in Bloomingdale in a manner that is visually unobtrusive to the house and streetscape.

- 10.1 New and upgraded utility meters should be installed so that they are visually unobtrusive from public view, and should not cover over window openings or architectural detailing.
- 10.2 Utility meters should be consistent with the principles outlined in the guideline “Utility Meters for Historic Buildings” (<https://planning.dc.gov/node/594322>).

11.0 *New Construction*

New construction should be compatible with its site, taking into account the immediate context and the broader character of the historic district. Compatibility does not mean or require duplicating existing buildings, and the review of new construction is not intended to discourage good contemporary design or creative architectural expression.

- 11.1 New construction should be consistent with the principles outlined in the guideline “New Construction in Historic Districts” (<https://planning.dc.gov/node/594262>)

12.0 *Commercial Buildings*

Retail development should be consistent with and reinforce the goals of the Mid City East Small Area plan. These goals include strengthening and expanding the restaurant clusters at Rhode Island and First Street and along North Capitol Street, and improving the appearance and functionality of commercial properties through reinvestment in facades.

- 12.1 Original character-defining features of historic commercial buildings, such as cornices, roof features, and projecting storefront windows should be retained and repaired.
- 12.2 Commercial storefronts and signs should be primarily oriented to and enhance the pedestrian experience.
- 12.3 Design flexibility may be given, such as for alteration of ground level window and door openings, to promote conversion of residential buildings to new uses in commercial zones.

BUILDING PERMIT REVIEW

Work Subject to Review

Exterior work in the Bloomingdale Historic District that requires a DC building permit is subject to historic preservation design review. Interior work, whether it requires a building permit or not, is not subject to historic preservation design review unless such work affects a building’s structural system or support members. The below types of work require a building permit and are thus subject to historic preservation review:

- Roof replacement
- Masonry repair and repointing

- Window and door replacement
- Fences, retaining walls and paving
- Exterior mechanical equipment
- Additions and new construction
- Other exterior alterations

Work Not Subject to Review

The following work on property in the Bloomingdale Historic District is not subject to historic preservation design review:

- Interior alterations, except those involving substantial structural demolition;
- Painting and paint colors;
- Window screens, storm windows, security bars, and removable window air conditioning units;
- Landscaping, including planting, maintenance, or removal of trees and shrubs. However, before removing trees, owners should consult with the DC Department of Transportation's Urban Forestry Division (www.ddot.dc.gov/ufa);
- Impermanent and moveable site features not requiring a foundation, including outdoor furniture, play equipment, seasonal displays, and garden sculpture or ornaments.

Permit applications can be downloaded from the DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs website (www.dkra.dc.gov), and homeowners seeking their own permits can take advantage of expedited service at the Homeowner Center at the DCRA Permit Office at 1100 4th Street, SW on the 2nd Floor (Waterfront Metro). To discuss a project with Historic Preservation Office staff prior to applying for a permit, please call HPO at 442-8800 to speak to a preservation specialist.

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