ANACOSTIA HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

D.C. HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

INTRODUCTION

The Anacostia Historic District was first designated in 1973 and was expanded and listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. This designation was intended to recognize and preserve Anacostia's unique architectural and cultural character. Because Anacostia is a designated historic district, exterior alterations are subject to a design review process under the District's preservation law. The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) and the staff at the Historic Preservation Office (HPO) review building permit applications to ensure that such work preserves important character-defining features of historic properties and that alterations are compatible with the district's character.

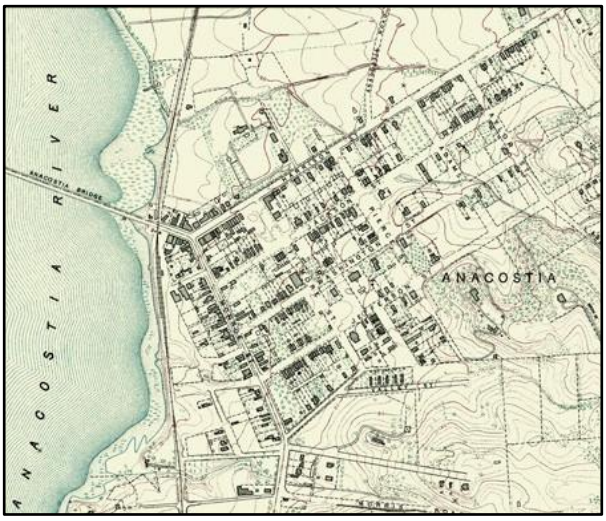
These design guidelines have been developed to assist property owners in understanding the principles and practices of preservation and compatible alterations in the Anacostia Historic District. These guidelines supplement the policies established in the city's preservation law, regulations, and current practices.

HPO has a professional staff of architects and preservation specialists who can provide architectural and technical assistance on appropriate products, services, and techniques relevant to the renovation of older homes and commercial buildings. Property owners are encouraged to consult informally before submitting an application for exterior work, either by phone, email, or in person.

THE ANACOSTIA HISTORIC DISTRICT

With the support of its residents, Anacostia was one of the first District of Columbia neighborhoods designated a historic district. The designation recognized the neighborhood's status as Washington's first suburb and the first large subdivision to attract working-class buyers. The Anacostia Historic District includes the original Uniontown subdivision, Griswold's Addition, Cedar Hill (the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site), and immediately adjacent areas. It recognizes the unique character of the unpretentious frame and brick dwellings constructed in this idyllic, semi-rural setting in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Examples of the architectural diversity found in the Anacostia Historic District



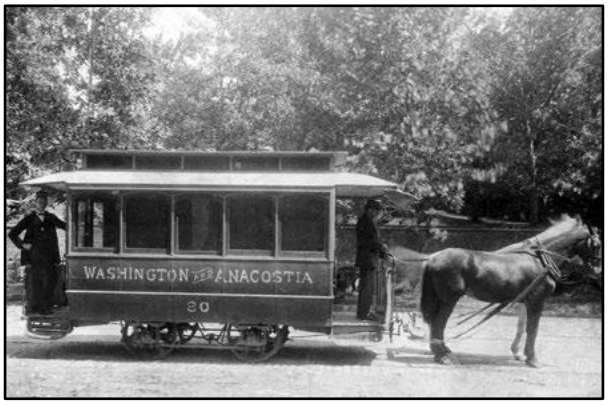
1888 Hopkins Atlas showing early development of Anacostia. NOAA Historical Map & Chart Collection

Laid out in 1854 as "Uniontown," Anacostia was subdivided with the intention of providing large, inexpensive building parcels to workers at nearby Navy Yard. The following year, John Van Hook, one of the developers of Uniontown, erected "Cedar Hill"—later the home of African American abolitionist, orator, and author Frederick Douglass—immediately adjacent to the newly platted town on an eminence commanding views to the river. Griswold's Addition, subdivided in 1879, expanded the footprint of Anacostia to the southwest.

Parcels sold quickly in Uniontown and Griswold's Addition, the easy terms allowing speculators to assemble many lots cheaply. In addition to Cedar Hill, the earliest dwellings were freestanding residences that revealed a preference for rural styles and forms. The affordability of building sites allowed many lots to be combined for a single dwelling, allowing for picturesque rooflines, porches, and massing.

Although Anacostia was initially slow to develop, improvements in transportation to the community fostered a burst of building activity at the turn of the 19th century. The first horse-drawn rail line to reach Anacostia opened in 1875, running along the newly completed Navy Yard Bridge. In 1898, an electrified streetcar improved transportation service and connected Anacostia with the new community of Congress Heights.

The gradual development of Anacostia produced a great variety in building size, form, and architectural character. Nevertheless, the community today is distinguished by its prevalence of frame buildings, by the modesty of its frame and masonry residences, and by their vernacular interpretation of Victorian architectural styles. A focal point of the community was a tree-lined market space planned at the center of what is now Fourteenth Street, creating the boulevard appearance of more affluent suburbs.



Horse-drawn streetcars began operation in 1875, to connect Anacostia with the Navy Yard. Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

The market space along Fourteenth Street has long been a focal point of the community. National Archives

As Anacostia grew, its streets became populated with frame, wood-sided buildings in a variety of styles. The most common housing type was a two- or three-bay house—freestanding, semidetached, or part of a row—with a pitched or gabled roof, and usually a front porch. Into the late 19th and early 20th centuries, masonry row houses became more common, and sometimes featured bracketed cornices, pent or mansard roofs, and projecting bays. Included today in the historic district are several examples of small apartment buildings as well as the "Washington Row" house type.

The arrival of the streetcar also fostered the growth of Anacostia's commercial district, which was first clustered around the intersection of Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue and Good Hope Road. By the turn of the 20th century, bustling commercial corridors had extended along both of these thoroughfares, including a mix of hardware stores, grocery stores, banks, an inn, and other merchants. Schools, churches, and other institutions also found a place in Anacostia, largely away from these streets and on the interior of the seventeen-block grid.

DESIGN REVIEW PRINCIPLES

The Anacostia Historic District Design Guidelines are based on the following principles:

1. Anacostia developed as a working-class neighborhood, whose character was reflected in the modesty of its buildings and simplicity of their architectural ornamentation. The simple and vernacular character of these buildings should be retained and preserved. Where replacement materials are required, excessively ostentatious, expensive, or synthetic options should be avoided.

2. Anacostia contains the city's largest collection of frame buildings, built both as freestanding and attached dwellings. Many of these have retained their significant architectural features, including wood siding; Italianate, Second Empire, and Queen Anne details; simple window and door frames and surrounds; and front porches featuring turned wood posts and low railings. These character-defining elements should be preserved and repaired, or replaced in kind if necessary.

GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING COMPONENTS

WINDOWS

Windows are one of the most important character-defining features of historic buildings. They provide a sense of scale, craftsmanship, proportion, and architectural style. Regular maintenance and repair of existing windows preserves the character and integrity of historic buildings, improves their energy efficiency, and extends their lifespan.

Historic windows in Anacostia reflected the style and character of their buildings. Victorian buildings were usually constructed with two-over-two paned, double-hung wood windows. Less common were one-over-one, double-hung windows. Simple window configurations were enhanced with elaborate surrounds and hoods that mimicked details found elsewhere throughout the building. Queen Anne-style buildings often featured a greater variety of window shapes and glazing patterns.

Historic windows—particularly those with unusual shapes and details or those located on primary elevations—should be retained and repaired whenever possible. Replacement of historic windows should be considered only when repair has been determined infeasible. Selection of replacement windows should be guided by the building's historic appearance. New units should match the size, pane configuration, and material of the originals. Wood windows should be the first choice for replacement. Blocking down or expanding the size of window openings to support differently sized replacements is not appropriate.

WINDOW REPAIR & REPLACEMENT

COMPATIBLE
These examples have successfully replicated the glazing and material of the historic windows.

INCOMPATIBLE
Lacking depth, their original surrounds, and glazing configurations, these replacement windows diminish the character of their buildings.

Minor details—including the size and profile of frames and casing, the depth of the frame reveal, and the width and functionality of muntins—can dramatically alter the appearance of a building. Special consideration should be given to retaining or matching the original composition as closely as possible.

For additional information, see the *Window Repair and Replacement Preservation and Design Guidelines*.

Queen Anne-style buildings often featured a greater variety of window shapes & glazing.

Windows here are being replaced to match their historic appearance and glazing pattern.

DOORS

As with windows, doors located on primary and street-facing elevations should be replaced with doors of a material and configuration that matches the original. While doors on side or rear elevations that are not visible from a street should be generally compatible with the building's character, the precise replication of original conditions is not required.

The proportions of openings are important as they relate to the overall proportions of buildings. Openings should not be widened, lowered, or narrowed. Openings should not be blocked down to fit stock doors that are smaller than the originals. Transoms and sidelights should be retained or replaced in kind as necessary and restored when they have previously been removed. Extant transoms should not be covered or obscured.

Historic wood doors in Anacostia generally had 4- or 5-paneled configurations and sometimes incorporated glazing on the upper panels.

The addition of glazed storm doors allowed these original doors to be seen and protected and improves their energy efficiency.

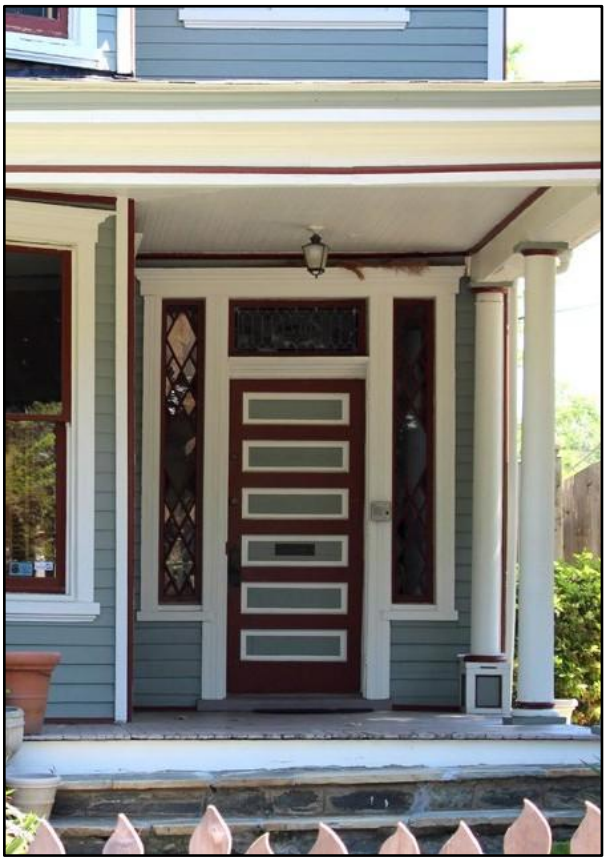
Historically, doors in Anacostia were crafted from wood and featured four- or five-paneled configurations, occasionally incorporating glazing in place of the upper panels. Later and more elaborately stylized houses sometimes featured more decorative, multi-paneled doorways and greater expanses of glazing.

Wood doors should be the first choice when considering replacements. Metal and vinyl doors are not compatible as entry doors or in prominently visible openings. Smooth fiberglass doors may be appropriate if the door will be painted and if the opening is a sufficient distance from the sidewalk.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The regular maintenance of exterior openings, particularly wood windows, can contribute greatly to the energy efficiency of historic homes. Air infiltration or water/moisture damage can occur from paint loss, wood deterioration, or glazing compound damage. To assess the stability and condition of windows, it may be necessary to remove the sashes from their frames and strip the unit to the bare wood surface. Cracked or missing glazing putty and damaged panes can then be replaced. Rotted wood can be treated with fungicide, patched with putty, or more extensively patched with epoxy compounds.

The majority of heat loss through historic doors and windows occurs around the perimeter of the opening. The tighter the seal around the unit, the more energy efficient it will be. Metal, silicone, rubber, and felt weather stripping can be applied to the top and sides of doors, jambs, and window frames, providing a tighter air seal. Studies have shown that adding weather stripping can increase the energy efficiency of a door or window by as much as 50%.



Original doors, transoms, and sidelights should be preserved as important character-defining features.

Doors with an integral arched window or fanlight are not a traditional type and should not be used on portions of a building that could be seen from the street. Fully or predominantly glazed doors are similarly incompatible.

Fanlight-style doors are not appropriate replacements.

ROOFS & CORNICES

The diverse architectural character of Anacostia extended to its rooflines. Historic freestanding buildings typically had sloped roofs in a wide variety of shapes, which ranged from the simple (flat roofs or open gables) to the complex (incorporating dormers and towers). The basic form and profile of a roof should always be retained.

Detached houses with gabled roofs are found throughout Anacostia. Such houses occasionally incorporated towers or cross gables.

A house type fairly common to Anacostia was the detached house with a gabled roof. Sometimes these simple profiles featured cross gables or towers, but only rarely did they incorporate decorative elements like trusses, verge boards, or brackets.

Most Italianate-style row houses had nearly flat principal roofs, typically not seen from the ground. Front mansard or pent roofs featured slate shingles or terra cotta tiles. Cornices—constructed from wood or sheets of tin, zinc, or other metal—featured decorative brackets, modillions, and dentils. These roofs and cornices were often the most highly articulated feature of a building's façade and should be retained. Where features are missing or highly deteriorated, they should be replicated to their original appearance as closely as possible.

Decorative wood cornices or pent roofs were often used to embellish façades and conceal sloping roofs.

Corbelled brick details and dormers enlivened and united rows of houses.

For roofs visible from the ground, it is important that replacement roofing material is consistent with its original character. Roofs in Anacostia were originally covered by sheet metal or pressed-metal shingles, slate, or wooden shingles. These remain the most compatible and preferred materials. Asphalt shingles or faux slates may be suitable for buildings whose roofs are not prominent and for roofs that originally had wood shingles, but they are not suitable for mansard or pent roofs as they cannot replicate the texture, size, or appearance of the original materials.

Houses with highly visible and complex roof forms or where pent roofs form part of a contiguous row should retain their original roofing material. If replaced, they should match the material, texture, size, and pattern of the original. Less elaborate, vernacular buildings (especially those with simple gable roofs) may be re-roofed with appropriate asphalt shingles. For buildings with flat or gently sloping roofs concealed behind parapets and pent roofs, membranous, rolled, built-up, or sheet metal roofing is acceptable.

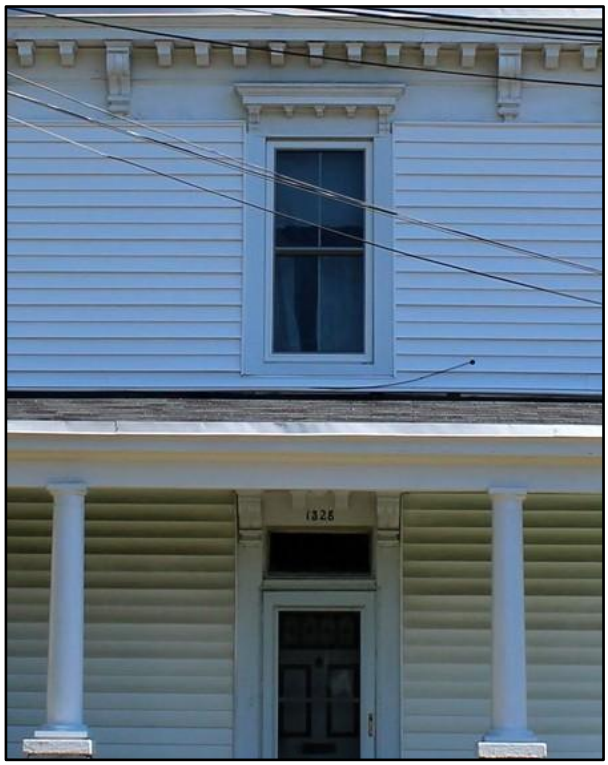
Dormer windows and attic vents should be retained if original. New dormers should not be constructed on primary elevations. New dormers on secondary elevations may be appropriate if designed in size and scale with the building and not prominently visible from the street.

Left: The care paid to the repair or replacement of roofing materials should reflect their relative prominence and visibility.

WINDOW & DOOR SURROUNDS

The architectural details found in roofs, cornices, and porches were often carried into window and door surrounds. Frequently, decorative hoods would reproduce on a smaller scale the brackets and dentils found at the eave.

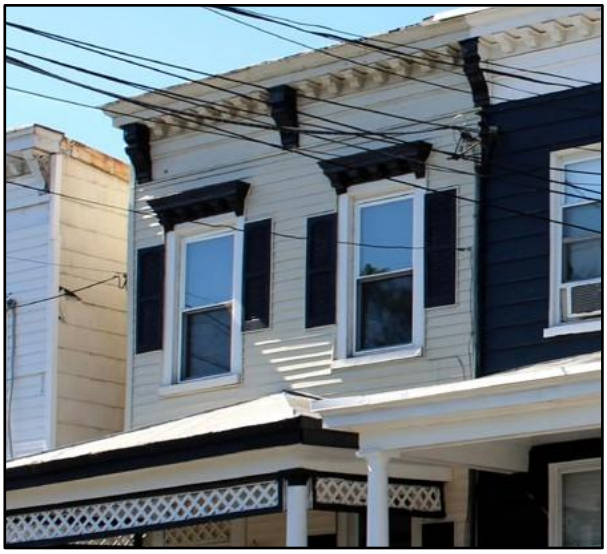
When conducting window or door repair or replacement, these features should be inspected and repaired if necessary. Recommended treatments include the replacement or consolidation of rotting parts; re-glazing and re-puttying as necessary; caulking; and, of course, regular painting. On new construction, window openings should have traditional casings (or brick molds, in the case of a masonry building).



Above: Window and door surrounds often reproduce elements found elsewhere on the building on a smaller scale.

Compatible, operable louvered wood shutters

The windows of Italianate, Cottage, and Queen Anne-style buildings also sometimes featured shutters. If replacement shutters are being considered, operable louvered wood shutters should be used. If operable windows cannot be used, the shutters should be sized to correspond to the width of the window and hung in such a way as to appear operable. Fixed vinyl shutters are not appropriate for historic properties.



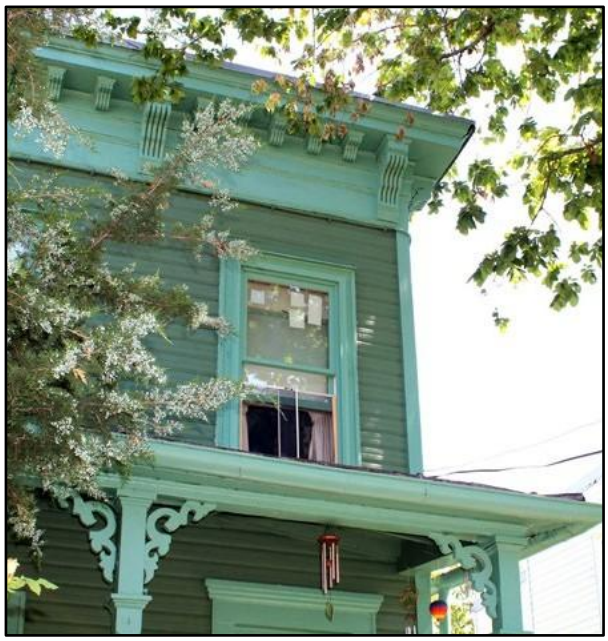
These incompatible, fixed vinyl shutters do not match the height or width of their corresponding windows.

EXTERIOR WALLS & FOUNDATIONS

Most historic buildings in Anacostia had a primary wall that faced a public street. This wall usually contained the front entrance, was formally composed, and featured higher-quality materials. Primary walls also may have contained elaborate ornamentation and intricate details. Altering primary elevations is generally not appropriate, and features should be repaired or replaced in kind.

Primary, street-facing elevations typically featured the most expensive and decorative finishes and features.

Secondary and rear walls were often less formally composed, employed lesser-quality materials, and had less elaborate ornamentation than the primary wall. Changes to secondary walls and foundations, typically on the sides and rear of buildings, should be compatible with the general character of the house but greater flexibility is afforded when changes are not prominently visible from a street.

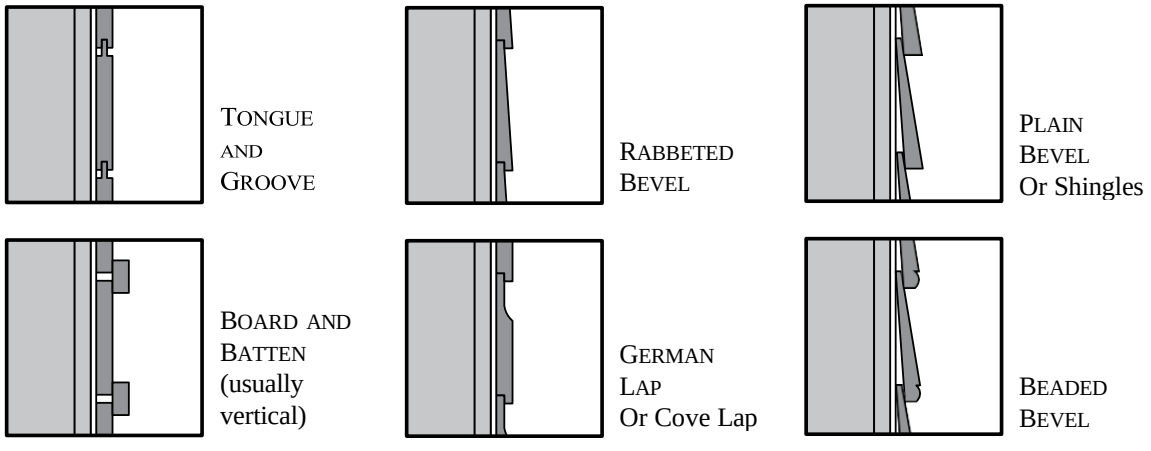


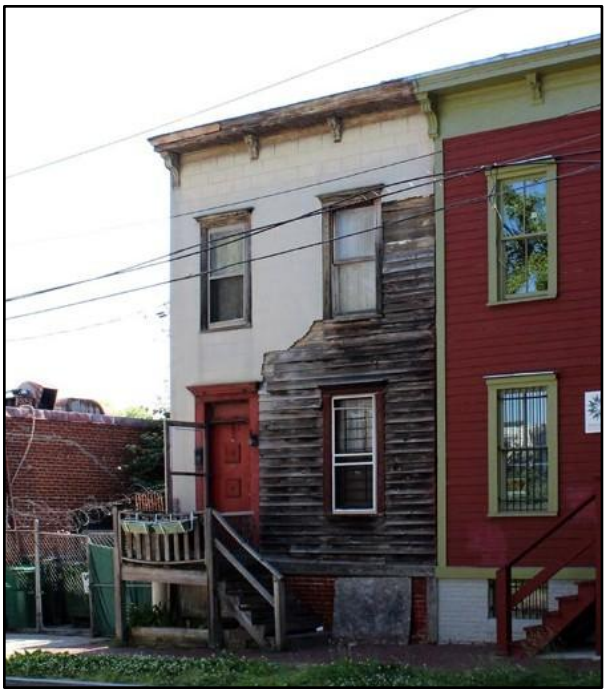
FRAME BUILDINGS

Early in its history, Anacostia was not bound by the same fire-protection standards as other, denser parts of the city. Frame buildings with wood siding, which could be erected quickly and inexpensively, became common. Many varieties and shapes of historic wood siding were used, as well as walls covered in whole or in part by wood shingles. The Queen Anne style embraced a variety of cladding materials, mixing different types and textures of wood cladding with shingles to produce the desired effect.

Original wood siding should be repaired and repainted if possible. If total or selective replacement is necessary, members should be replaced to match the original ones or with a compatible type of wood siding.

TYPICAL WOOD SIDING PROFILES





Here, stucco was applied directly atop the earlier cladding.

Throughout the 20th century, it was a common occurrence for replacement materials to be applied directly atop the existing siding. These materials, including vinyl and aluminum siding, stucco, and formstone veneer, served to encase and preserve the original siding. It is often possible to remove the later cladding and restore the original, repairing or reusing the existing materials.

Few substitute products are appropriate for use on historic frame buildings, and repair or in-kind replacement should be undertaken on primary elevations. Fiber-cement siding may be used on new construction, additions, outbuildings, and on rear walls of historic houses. It may also be applied to side walls fewer than three feet distant from neighboring buildings or in areas that are not prominently visible or easy to access for maintenance. The profiles available in fiber-cement are limited, however, and the thickness is noticeably much less than that of traditional wood siding.

PAINTING

Historically, wood elements were painted to protect them from the weather. When paint blisters, cracks, flakes, or peels, that protection is lost. Loose sections of paint should be removed by hand sanding and the bare wood primed before repainting. If possible, the same type of paint as the existing (oil or latex) should be applied. Using the same type of paint creates a better bond between new and old paint.

Surfaces that are heavily encrusted with paint, particularly when details and ornamentation have been obscured, should be stripped to the bare wood before repainting. This is best done using an appropriate chemical stripper. Use of power sanders or heat guns that may damage finely detailed wood should not be considered.

Many buildings constructed prior to 1978 contain lead-based paint. Before stripping and repainting a historic building, the owner should have paint samples tested by a reputable testing laboratory. If lead-based paint is found, the owner should contact an approved paint contractor to remove and properly dispose of the lead-based paint. In low-wear areas, it is also possible to cover or encapsulate lead-based paint

If wood has not been properly maintained, it is probably deteriorated. In cases where the damage is minor, the affected area may be treated with a wood consolidant, such as epoxy, after the application of a fungicide. If details or ornamentation are damaged extensively, they may be removed and replaced using the same or a similar species of wood, finished and detailed in the same manner as the existing. If structural wood members are damaged and require replacement, the details and ornamentation should be carefully removed prior to replacing the damaged structural members. The existing details should then be reinstalled.

Fiber-cement siding was used on this new building.

Vinyl, aluminum, and masonite siding are not compatible with historic buildings, as they have finishes, textures, and character that are distinctly different from wood. For elements such as corner boards and cornices, materials such as cast epoxy, PVC, polyurethane, fiber-cement, and fiberglass may be compatible. Materials intended to simulate wood should always receive a painted finish.

Stucco is a common cladding material and can be an acceptable material on additions or new construction. Substitute stuccoes should not be used on primary elevations, as they have substantial shortcomings in appearance and durability.

Masonry Buildings

Some historic buildings in Anacostia were constructed of brick, as were most of their foundations and porch piers. The incorporation of corbelled brick detailing around projecting bays and rooflines was extremely characteristic of 19th century masonry row houses, both in Anacostia and across Washington, D.C. Later examples sometimes incorporated additional materials, like cast or natural stone, in their compositions. These features were designed to be integral with the prevailing wall surface and should receive the same level of treatment as the masonry wall.

The façade of this small apartment building incorporated a mix of masonry materials and patterns.

Brick is a durable material that requires little maintenance. However, mortar joints within brick walls are prone to deterioration and require repointing every few decades. Repointing—which involves removing some of the mortar holding the exterior brick with new mortar that matches the color, profile and composition of the original—is necessary to maintain the strength of the wall and to prevent water infiltration.

When masonry walls are repointed, old mortar should be removed with hand tools and not with a saw or grinder, which may damage the surface of the brick. Replacement mortar should be of the same consistency and color as the original mortar, typically made principally of lime and sand. Mortar must be softer than the surrounding brick, allowing it to absorb stresses along the wall surface, therefore protecting the brick from damage. It is important to identify the exact color and composition of the historic mortar before

repointing work is done, and to match those qualities during replacement.

Painting is not necessary to protect brick. Painting brick is not a recommended treatment for unpainted masonry, as it conceals its characteristic warmth and tonal variation and may also damage the wall by trapping moisture inside. Once painted, masonry must be maintained by repainting every few years.

The house on the left was recently repointed. The mortar successfully reproduced the composition and color of the original.

The tone and pattern of the masonry on these houses contribute significantly to their character.

FRONT & SIDE PORCHES

The porches of Anacostia's historic residential buildings were among the most important of its character-defining features. Houses constructed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries often had front porches stretching partially or fully across the façade. Functionally, these porches provided outdoor living areas, sheltered entrances, and cooling shade. Front porches and steps often presented a formal appearance to the street and contained ornate details. In contrast, side and rear porches were often more informal and utilitarian in appearance.

This porch of this house features a spindlework frieze, elaborately turned posts, and masonry piers.

ANATOMY OF A FRONT PORCH

CORNICE & ROOF Cornices varied in their level of decoration and were usually created from wood or sheet metal. Roofs were generally flat or shallow shed or hipped configurations.

POSTS OR COLUMNS Most common in Anacostia were slender, turned wood posts further secured by wood brackets. In some cases, spindlework lined the porch frieze. In this later example, free classic columns were supported by cast-stone piers.

STAIRS & FLOORING Porch floors were usually composed of wood decking, or in some cases concrete slabs. Stairs generally matched the design and material of the porch and flooring.

CEILING The ceilings of porches were usually flat or sloped and covered in painted beadboard.

BALUSTRADE Square-section, turned, and flat, jigsaw-cut balusters were all common. Individual balusters should be attached to horizontal top and bottom rails, never to the wood decking. Historic balustrades were shorter than modern deck railing.

SUPPORTING PIERS & APRON Masonry piers supported the porch structure. Openings between piers were generally spanned by lattice aprons.

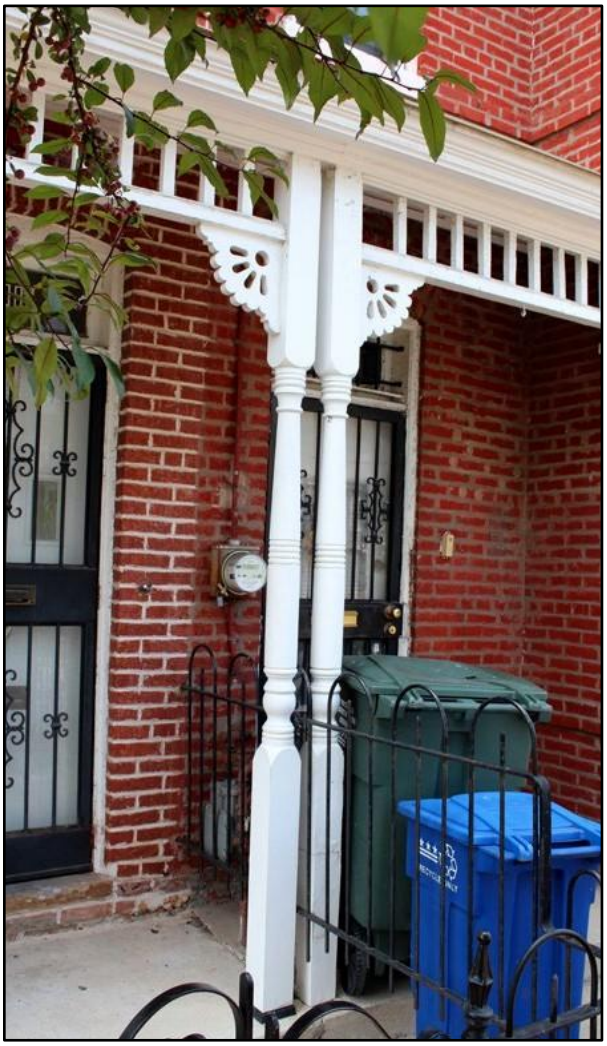
Porches consisted of several primary components: the decking or floor, the supporting piers and apron, the stairs and railing, the supporting posts or columns, and the roof. These components could be found in a variety of materials including wood, brick, metal, stone and concrete. Such parts are not necessarily interchangeable; it is important to carefully consider the compatibility of porch elements with the style and period of a particular house.

In Anacostia, wood was the predominant material, with most houses having front porches supported on brick piers with turned wood posts and decorative millwork. Examples of the latter included spindlework along the porch frieze and jigsaw-cut brackets. In the 20th century, larger, free classic columns became more common, particularly for brick homes.

Railings were usually painted, with low grip rails and square-section balusters. Both turned and splat-type balusters were also occasionally used. Balustrades had a horizontal bottom rail supporting the balusters inches above the deck. Most porch roofs were flat or shallowly hipped, with beadboard ceilings. Detailing on porches ranged from plain to quite elaborate, in character with the size and ornamentation of their corresponding houses.

The appearance of brackets, columns, railings, moldings, and other details contribute significantly to the character of historic porches. Removing original details is not appropriate. Being fashioned from old-growth timber, original wood members will typically last longer than replacement parts if properly maintained. If a deteriorated portion cannot be repaired, the replacement should be in the same material or an appropriate substitute material unless approved by HPO (wood columns may sometimes be replaced with fiberglass, for instance, if painted and otherwise matching the appearance of the originals). Replacements should match the proportion, scale, and texture, of the original.

Wood porch decking is typically three-inch-wide, tongue-and-groove boards, which can be purchased from a lumber yard kiln-dried after treatment (KDAT) and pre-primed. Front porch railings were historically low, between 28 and 32 inches, and should be replaced at the original height (a code waiver is available for historic buildings). For that reason, porch posts had lower bases and a taller central turned section than most modern ones. A little extra effort, such as ordering online from a millwork company, is often necessary to find a suitably proportioned post.



The elements on the left are modern replacements. They were replicated to match existing components on the adjoining house.

Permanently removing a portion of a porch floor or roof—to add a skylight or basement entrance, for instance—changes the character of a building and is almost never appropriate. Adding non-traditional coverings, such as flagstone, to porch floors is also rarely appropriate. If such inappropriate alterations already exist, it is encouraged that they be removed and the porch returned to its original appearance.

Enclosing a front porch is rarely acceptable because it drastically alters the appearance of the porch, the building's façade, and the pattern of open porches throughout the district.

SUBSTITUTE MATERIALS

Off-the-shelf building products provided by contractors and home improvement stores are often incompatible with the scale, character, and detail of original materials.

Special consideration should be given to the choice of new materials for an historic building, especially if they are intended to replicate existing details and finishes. Custom and reproduction elements often come at a premium, although this is not always the case. Through careful planning and an understanding of a building's character, it is possible to reduce costs and respect the integrity of an historic property. HPO staff can provide guidance in the selection of appropriate materials and construction methods.

HPO and the D.C. Preservation League maintain a list of local consultants and vendors with expertise in historic preservation. Visit www.dcpreservation.org/contractors for more information.

GUIDELINES FOR ADDITIONS

Additions to historic buildings should be visually subordinate to the main block in placement, prominence, size, and massing. An addition should almost never be taller, wider, or of a greater footprint than the original building, nor should its massing be more complex or elaborate.

A visual break or transition should be made at the junction of the old and new construction. Techniques for differentiating the new building from the original include narrowing its footprint, lowering its height, changing its material, or simplifying its details. Such a break provides a distinction between new and old and prevents a relentless extension of side or rear walls. Materials used in additions should be complementary to those on the existing building.

FRONT ADDITIONS

Additions to the fronts of historic properties are almost always incompatible, as they obscure and alter the physical fabric of the façade, the most important portion of the exterior. Because of their projection, front additions also tend to break the predominant setback line of existing buildings along a street.

REAR ADDITIONS

Rear additions are traditionally most common because deep, narrow lots provided the most space on which to construct an extension, particularly for houses sited at or near the front property line. If sited and designed to respect the massing and roofline of the existing building, adding to the rear is typically the most compatible way to expand an historic building.

SIDE ADDITIONS

Typically narrow side yards and abutting buildings in Anacostia leave no room for side

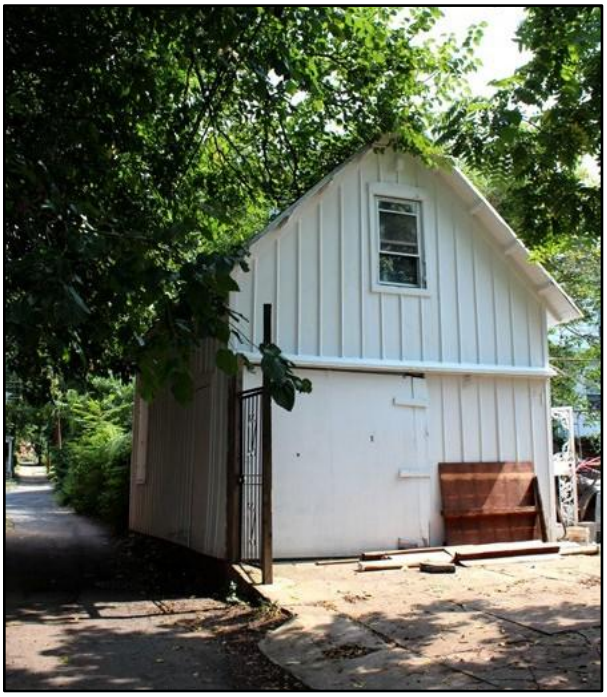
additions. When a detached or semidetached house stands on a wide lot, however, it may be possible to extend sideward, but such an addition should be substantially smaller than the main block and be set well back from the primary façade to allow for a distinct massing from the original building. As they are typically seen in relation to the front elevation, side additions should be designed to be compatible with the main block in materials, massing and proportions.

In this compatible rear addition, altering the profile of the siding, the roofline, and the window size allowed the addition to be clearly defined from the original building.

The prominence and projection of this incompatible addition visually competes with the original building. The addition's side wall should have been aligned with that of the house, set behind the bay.

OUTBUILDINGS

The most common historic outbuildings in Anacostia are garages and sheds. Larger carriage houses and accessory dwellings—common elsewhere throughout D.C.—are not typically found in Anacostia. Often located in rear yards and fronting on an alley, garages often postdate the main building and usually employ less ornate detailing.



Historic outbuildings are rare in Anacostia and should be maintained as important contributing structures.

The few historic outbuildings extant should be treated much like historic homes and commercial buildings. They should not be removed or inappropriately altered.

Most outbuildings face alleys and are utilitarian.

Large, suburban-style garages and driveways are incompatible with the scale and character of Anacostia.

New outbuildings should be constructed only after careful consideration and consultation with HPO regarding placement, size, form and materials. They should be compatible with the existing buildings and neither overwhelm nor detract from the character of the property. Zoning regulations provide restrictions on the allowable size, placement, and use of new outbuildings. Plastic- or vinyl-covered buildings and sheet-metal sheds are discouraged, and the use of frame construction with wood and fiber-cement siding is generally encouraged.

ROOFTOP & OTHER APPURTENANCES

Roof additions and decks are not appropriate for the predominately two-story houses in the Anacostia Historic District. These types of additions would visibly alter the proportions, massing, and rooflines of the underlying historic building in a manner inconsistent with the character of the historic district and the building's immediate context. Roof additions also frequently do significant harm to the physical fabric of the underlying building.

Locate roof appurtenances, such as skylights, antennas, satellite dishes and mechanical equipment so that they are not visible from public street view. For buildings with flat roofs, set solar installations back from the front edge of the roof to eliminate or minimize visibility from street view. For buildings with sloped roofs, locate solar installations on secondary elevations and minimize their visibility from street view. If possible, utilize rear garages and rear additions for solar installations where feasible. For installations that will be visible from public street view, use low-profile panels set flush with the roof and in a complementary color with the roof finish to avoid a discordant appearance.

For more information, please consult the guidelines for roof installations in the *Sustainability Guide for Older and Historic Buildings.*

Satellite dishes and other appurtenances should not be mounted on the fronts of buildings or other prominent locations such as porches, mansard roofs, turrets, etc.

GUIDELINES FOR LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Anacostia was first laid out with substantial front and side yards and planted extensively with trees. This landscape provided the setting for the early suburban cottages. The front yard was sometimes separated from the street by decorative, open, wrought iron or wood fences. Shrubs, trees, and flower beds sometimes ran alongside boundary lines. Changes in topography also influenced the treatment of front yards, which were commonly framed by low, masonry walls that allow for level front yards.

During Anacostia's early days, its rear yards were more utilitarian in character. This was particularly true of modest row houses, where outhouses, clotheslines, or coal storage sheds might have been located. A carriage house or stable, accessed from an alley, may have been located at the rear of the largest houses, but many of Anacostia's blocks contain no alleys at all.

In many areas of the city, including Anacostia, front yards can be partly or wholly public property. Plantings are under the control of the property owner, but there are regulations and guidelines governing the location, dimensions, and materials of paving, fences, and walls.

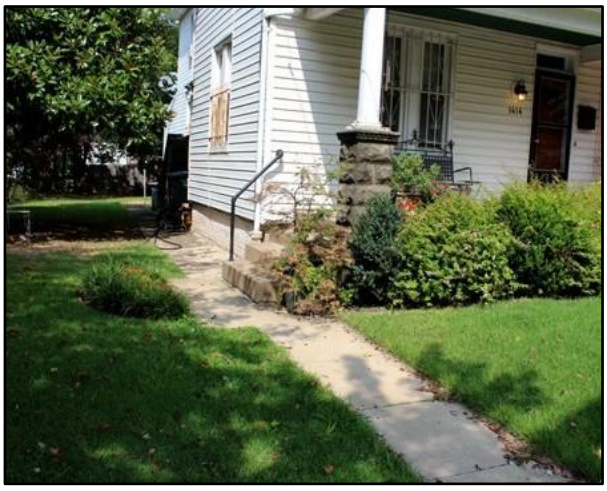
PAVING

The verdant character of this 19th century suburb is best preserved by minimizing the amount of paved surface in front yards. Patios and decks should be confined to rear yards and associated lead walks should be as narrow and direct as possible.

Existing walks and paths should be maintained. If replacement or repair is necessary, new materials should match the material, location, width, and orientation of the original, if known. If new sidewalks or paths are added, they should be compatible with the property and with the pattern of the neighborhood, including that of similarly designed and situated properties from the same era. Lead walks almost always run in a straight line to the front

Much of Anacostia is defined by rows of houses with consistent setbacks and small front yards with low fences or none at all. Privacy, functionality, historic compatibility, and aesthetics are all important considerations for landscape design.

door, although some branch off at a right angle to run around one side of a house and to the rear of a property. Walks were historically no more than three feet wide in this neighborhood and should remain as narrow as possible while permitting necessary passage.



A narrow, direct sidewalk is the preferred type.

Depending on the property, a variety of paving materials may be appropriate. Examples in Anacostia have historically included brick, gravel, and flagstone. Poured concrete has been the most common for buildings erected during the 20th century and is usually the most appropriate material. Stamped or tumbled concrete pavers are only acceptable for walks in rear yards.

Gravel (above) or parallel tracks of concrete divided by turf (below) were common historically.

DRIVEWAYS AND PARKING

Anacostia developed before the widespread use of automobiles. Therefore, driveways located in front yards were not common, allowing green space to flow uninterrupted from one end of the street to the other.

The design, materials, and placement of driveways strongly affect the character of a property and its neighborhood. Adding a new driveway or parking area to a front yard or area of the property that can be seen from a public right-of-way is never appropriate, as it will significantly alter the character of the property and its neighbors. In general, new driveways and parking pads should not be placed in front of houses or accessible

from principal streets, but rather at the rear of properties and accessible through an alley. Only in the district's widest lots should driveways be located in side yards. In these cases, driveways typically lead straight from the street through a side yard and to a garage or parking space in the rear yard.

Many lots are not accessible from the rear via alleys. In cases of new construction, it may be necessary to obtain a variance from off-street parking requirements. Historic buildings are eligible for an administrative waiver of off-street parking and loading requirements.

Historic drives can be found in a range of materials including asphalt, concrete, and gravel. Traditionally, brick, stone, and patterned concrete were not used for driveways in the city's historic districts. Concrete was the typical material used for driveways created in the automobile era. Many early driveways consisted of only two parallel paved tracks, divided by a panel of turf. Traditional concrete was a gray-buff color, with large, exposed aggregate, distinct from the bright white or dull gray concretes with tiny aggregate that are commonly poured today. Rear parking pads may employ a broader range of materials.

Parking spaces should never be located in the front yard. The extensive paving used to create this drive is not compatible with the character of the original landscape.

FENCES

The planners of early Anacostia embraced the concept that buildings should sit behind open greenswards. To preserve this characteristic and keep open lawns visible from the street, front fences should remain low—no taller than 42 inches—and have a small ratio of solid material to open void. Fences meant to enclose side and rear yards and that are higher than 42 inches must be set back rearward of the building's front wall.

Painted wood picket fences are the most compatible with Anacostia's frame houses. The texture, finish, and details of vinyl or other substitute materials are not compatible or acceptable as replacements for wood. Painted, pressure-treated wood may be an acceptable alternative to other durable woods such as cedar and redwood.

In addition to wood, wrought-iron fences were erected in Anacostia, particularly in front of brick houses. The most common type was the hairpin form or a simple, straight vertical picket with a square cross section and supported by horizontal rails. Wrought iron or solid steel are appropriate materials for this type of fence. Tubular steel and aluminum

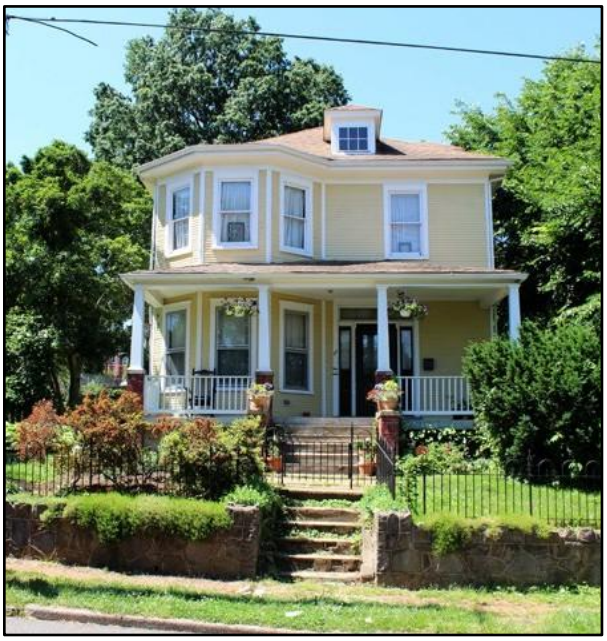
Examples of typical wrought-iron fence patterns

are not compatible substitutes because they deviate greatly from the profile, size, and mechanical connections found in welded, solid-metal fences. Chain-link fences are also not appropriate for front yards, but may be used in rear yards, as can solid board fences. Rear-yard fences are limited by city codes to seven feet in height.

Plank fences can provide privacy for rear and side yards. Where fences face a public street, wood is the preferred material.

RETAINING WALLS

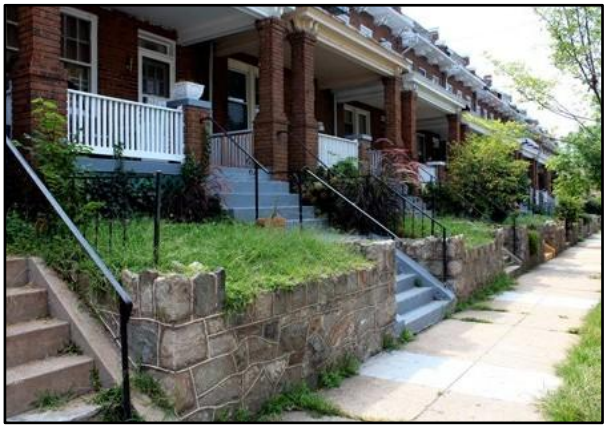
Anacostia's topography varies greatly, particularly as one approaches its eastern and southern edges. Many yards were relatively flat, but others were leveled to provide an even surface on which to build. Low retaining walls sometimes support earthen cut and fill and create level lawns. Although often inconspicuous in their nature, retaining walls significantly contribute to the character of a property and its neighborhood.

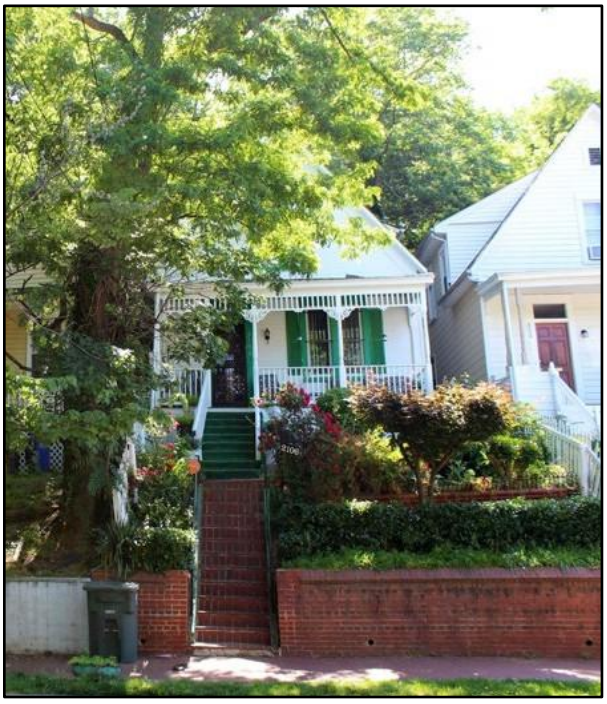


Retaining walls provide space for sidewalks, level lawns, and landscaping.

Retaining walls were most often located on front or side yards where a building faces a street. It was rare for a retaining wall to be built along the rear of a property, where the natural slope was generally maintained. Stone, brick, and cast concrete were common building or facing materials. Considering the prolonged history of development in Anacostia, however, most grades requiring it have been leveled, and there is little need for additional walls, especially in front yards.

For replacement walls, or those few instances where a new wall might be necessary, their design and placement should be based on an existing wall to be replaced, on original walls at nearby properties, or upon documentary or photographic evidence. In addition to the material of a wall, attention should be paid to the masonry coursing, to the profile and width of mortar joints, and to minimizing the height of the wall to only what is necessary to retain an existing grade.



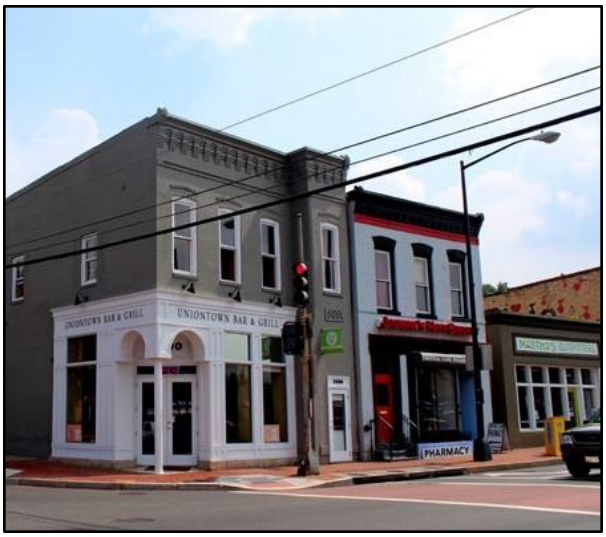


The design and material of new retaining walls should respond to the character of their associated houses.

GUIDELINES FOR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

Early businesses in Anacostia clustered around the intersection of Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue and Good Hope Road. The arrival of the streetcar and the placement of a stop near this intersection spawned even more commercial activity. By the turn of the century, a thriving commercial district had developed as businesses extended down both streets. Hardware, grocery, and drug stores all vying for business emerged to face the main avenues. Businesses diversified in the 20th century to include restaurants, professional offices, furniture stores, and banks, among others.

Commercial buildings on the 2200 block of Nichols (now Martin Luther King, Jr.) Avenue, circa 1919 Library of Congress



Commercial buildings in the Anacostia Historic District

Today, the diversity of contributing buildings in the historic district's commercial corridor represents its prolonged period of development. Oldest among these buildings are Italianate-style houses whose first story was converted to commercial use. Early, purpose-built commercial buildings are formally quite similar to their residential counterparts, but were larger, were more often constructed of brick, and incorporated almost fully glazed first-floor storefronts. Anacostia also features a fine collection of 20th-century commercial buildings, including those in the Art Deco style. These buildings are often only one story tall and feature fully glazed storefronts, patterned brick or stone, and flat roofs concealed behind geometric parapets.

STOREFRONTS

A storefront is the ground-floor section of a commercial building's façade. Often extending to the outer walls of the façade, the storefront functions as a business's public interface through the entryway, store display, and sign. Storefronts are composed of the following parts: window bases that separate the display window from the sidewalk, large display windows, lighting, and signage.

ANATOMY OF A STOREFRONT

SIGNAGE In most cases, signage should be located above the storefront window or transom, integrated into canopies, mounted directly on the building wall, or on projecting signs.

DECORATIVE CORNICE Cornices divide the display window from the upper building face.

TRANSOM WINDOW Sometimes located above the cornice or projecting windows, these windows draw additional light into the interior, and sometimes feature decorative glazing.

DISPLAY WINDOW The most prominent part of a storefront, display windows are used to showcase goods and illuminate the building interior. Signs painted onto glass storefront windows may not cover more than 10% of the total window surface.

WINDOW BASE OR KICKPLATE The base separates the display window from the sidewalk.

RECESSED ENTRY A common storefront feature, recessed entries provide shelter and occasionally include decorative elements like patterned paving.

Display windows were designed to achieve the greatest possible transparency, which improved the visibility of goods displayed within and drew daylight into the buildings' interiors. The size, shape, and proportion of original storefront windows should be maintained, and new windows should match the originals as closely as possible. Unless they are replacing originals in kind, new windows should be fixed (not operable); should not be divided up into smaller panes; and should have a thin window frame profile. Wood was the most commonly used material for display window frames until the twentieth century, when the use of steel and then aluminum became widespread.

Anacostia's Art Deco commercial buildings were usually one or two stories tall and featured decorative masonry relief patterns along the parapet and upper wall surfaces.

Contributing commercial buildings in the historic district are rarely more than one or two stories in height.

Above or around the display windows, commercial buildings in Anacostia also occasionally featured decorative cornices or moldings, recessed entries, awnings, canopies, or transom windows. These elements helped to define the display windows and differentiate them from the floors above. These features should be retained and not filled in or obscured by signage.

CLADDING & ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

Whereas storefronts often evolved to suit changing uses, the surrounding architectural details that comprised the commercial building's façade were less subject to change. Upper-story windows, cornices, cladding (especially character-defining textured or patterned brick or stone) should be retained. If a building's decorative elements are severely deteriorated or damaged beyond repair, they should be replaced by matching the profiles, finishes, and colors of the original materials as closely as possible.

SIGNAGE & LIGHTING

Historically, commercial signage in Anacostia was modest and most often took the form of letters painted on display windows or small placards attached to exterior walls. Masonry buildings, particularly those constructed in the 20th century, sometimes integrated recesses or niches where signage was intended to be placed.

New signage should reflect the scale of the storefront and of the building and should not obscure its architectural features. Graphics should be easy to read, and type styles should reference and reinforce the business's overall marketing image. Digital, flashing, or internally lit signs are not appropriate for the Anacostia Historic District.

New signage on this historic bank building preserves its original architectural detailing and signage.

The District's Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs regulates the installation of signs, controlling the size, location, and materials of signs and other aspects of sign design and placement. More information is available online at *www.dcra.dc.gov*.

Lighting should fit within and complement the overall design of the storefront and the streetscape. Lighting should neither overpower the design of the storefront nor detract attention from neighboring buildings. Signage illumination may be provided from top-mounted or spot-lit external incandescent or halogen lighting, minimizing the number and size of fixtures, hiding conduit, and limiting the amount of wall penetrations. Light sources should be shielded to avoid creating glare for pedestrians and motorists.

Additions & New Construction

Commercial buildings generally abut their front and side property lines, making additions to these elevations infeasible. In most cases, front additions obscure principal, character-defining facades and are not appropriate. Where side or rear additions are possible, they should be subordinate to and compatible with, yet distinguished from, the main block.

New commercial buildings should be contextual in nature, respecting the character of surrounding buildings in such aspects as massing, height, materials, storefront configuration, and upper-story fenestration. New construction should generally be no more than one story shorter or taller than buildings in the existing streetscape.

Most existing commercial buildings are small in scale and two or three bays in width. To match the rhythm and scale of their surroundings, larger buildings should include regular openings and clearly defined bays. New construction in historic commercial areas should enhance vitality along streetscapes, showcase interesting and thoughtful design, and contribute to neighborhood revitalization. For additional information, see *Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial Buildings*.

Accessibility

Commercial and public buildings are usually required to provide accessible points of entry. Some historic buildings—particularly those converted from residential uses—are raised above street level and do not provide easy access. In these cases, new, accessible entrances should be carefully considered. The addition of a ramp or similar retrofit should balance the needs of a business's patrons, the character and setting of its historic building, and the ability to pass on the public sidewalk.

This accessible ramp provided access to a newly installed ATM. Its design and construction respected the Beaux Arts character of this monumental bank building and resulted in a minimal loss of historic fabric.

BUILDING PERMIT REVIEW

Most construction work in the District of Columbia requires a building permit. Permits ensure compliance with construction, zoning, fire, and other applicable codes to protect the safety and well-being of District residents. Building permits are issued by the DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA).

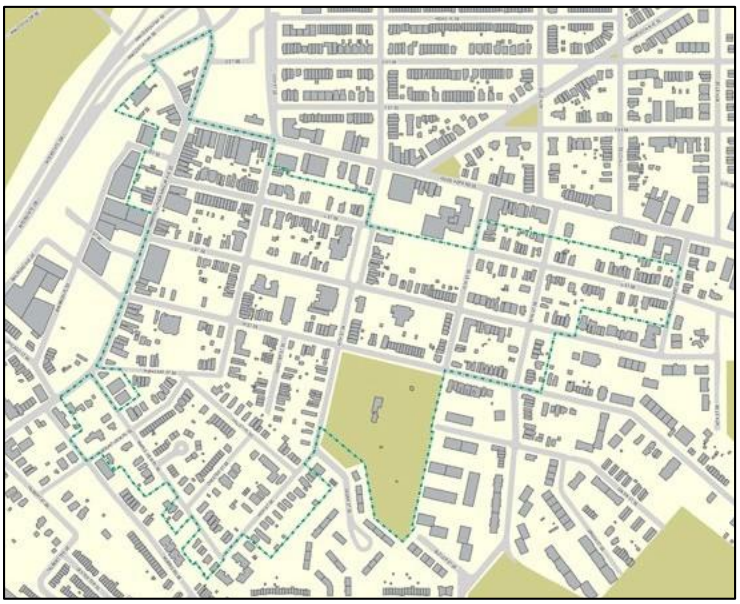
For properties in historic districts, permit applications for exterior work and structural demolition are forwarded to the Historic Preservation Office, which reviews them to ensure compatibility with the site and surrounding neighborhood. Many types of work, such as in-kind repair and replacement and minor rear alterations, can be approved by HPO staff in an expedited, "over-the-counter" permit review. More substantial work, such as new construction or additions, is subject to review by HPRB at one of its monthly meetings.

For further information and full texts of the preservation law and regulations, see the HPO website at *www.planning.dc.gov/hpo*.

Permits are required for the replacement of windows, doors, roofs, and siding; work on front steps, walks, and retaining walls; repointing masonry; installing or replacing fences; and additions and new construction. The following work does not require a permit:

- Minor repair and maintenance of existing elements (not replacement)
- Painting
- Window and door screens, storm windows, security bars, and removable air-conditioning units
- Planting, trimming, and removal of trees and shrubs
- Non-permanent site features, including outdoor furniture, play equipment, and garden sculpture or ornaments on private property.

The DC Permit Center is located at 1100 4th Street, SW on the second floor (Waterfront Metro). For further information on building permit requirements, see the DCRA website at *www.dcra.dc.gov*.



ANACOSTIA HISTORIC DISTRICT

The development of these materials was partially funded by a Community Challenge Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. They were created as a part of the Congress Heights-Anacostia-Saint Elizabeths (CHASE) Planning and Economic Development Strategy.

District of Columbia Office of Planning - Historic Preservation Office
1100 4th Street SW, Suite E650
Washington DC 20024
www.planning.dc.gov/hpo
(202) 442-8800