

# EMERALD STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

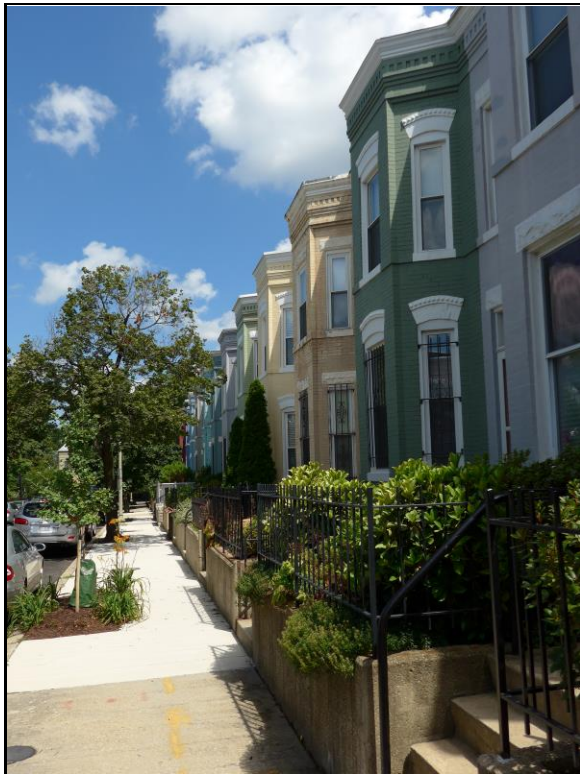


D.C. HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD



## INTRODUCTION

The Emerald Street Historic District is listed in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites as an historic district. This designation recognizes and preserves the special architectural and urban planning characteristics of this one-block-long residential street located between 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> and E and F streets NE in northeast Capitol Hill.



In a designated historic district, work requiring a D.C. building permit, such as exterior alterations, new construction, demolition, and subdivisions, are 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 in character with the historic district.

These design guidelines have been developed to assist property owners in understanding the principles and practices of preserving and

compatibly altering and adding to buildings in the Emerald Street Historic District. These guidelines supplement the policies established by the city's preservation law, regulations and standards.



The preservation review process is administered by the D.C. Historic Preservation Office (HPO) 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 D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) 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 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW, Suite 650, or see our website at [www.preservation.dc.gov](http://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. As a general rule, changes that are prominent or 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.

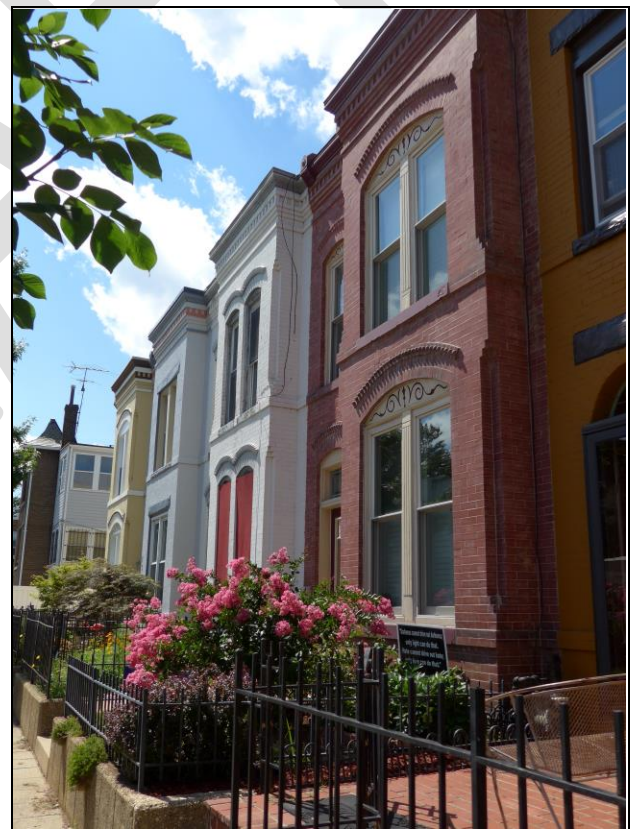
***Temporary and additive change vs. permanent and destructive change:*** Alterations that are temporary or easily reversible have less of a lasting impact on the character of historic property, while alterations that permanently change or remove features have a greater impact. Adding a new element –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

***Contextual and compatible design:*** The design of features for historic property should display an awareness of and response to the

specific qualities of the historic property and its environment.

***Quality of design and materials:*** Historic buildings typically 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.

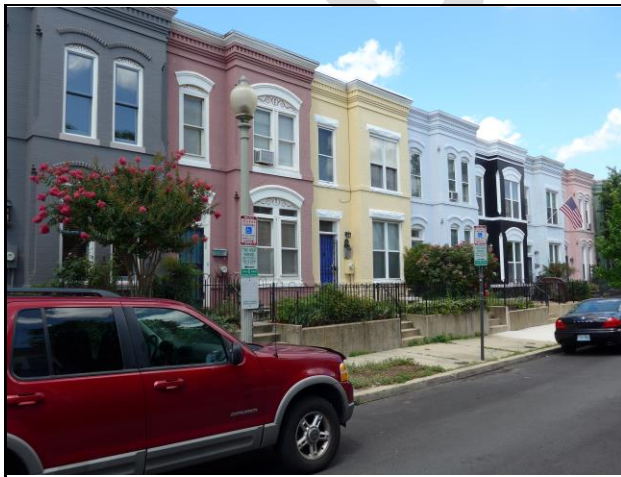
***Achieving a reasonable balance:*** Adapting old buildings requires a thoughtful consideration of practical needs and the civic benefits of protecting architectural and historical characteristics valued by the community.



## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE EMERALD STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Emerald Street Historic District is a 60-foot-wide street on Capitol Hill lined with an intact collection of attached Queen Anne-style row houses built in the 1890s. Located near the eastern end of the L'Enfant Plan, the square was platted in 1797 with 26 large lots and an I-shaped, 30-foot interior alley running east-west through the square. In 1891, the still-undeveloped square was purchased by real estate investors, William Mayse and Louis D. Wine. The partners began re-subdividing the square to accommodate a significantly greater number of lots, and the conversion of the interior alley into a street that bisected the square from east to west.

The plat provided for the new street (originally named Emerson, but later changed to Emerald) with 170 rowhouse-sized urban lots. 75 of these lots have frontage on Emerald Street and are included in the historic district.



The re-subdivision of the square to allow for a new street and greater number of lots came at a time when the population of the city was growing, and when the construction of alley dwellings was being challenged.

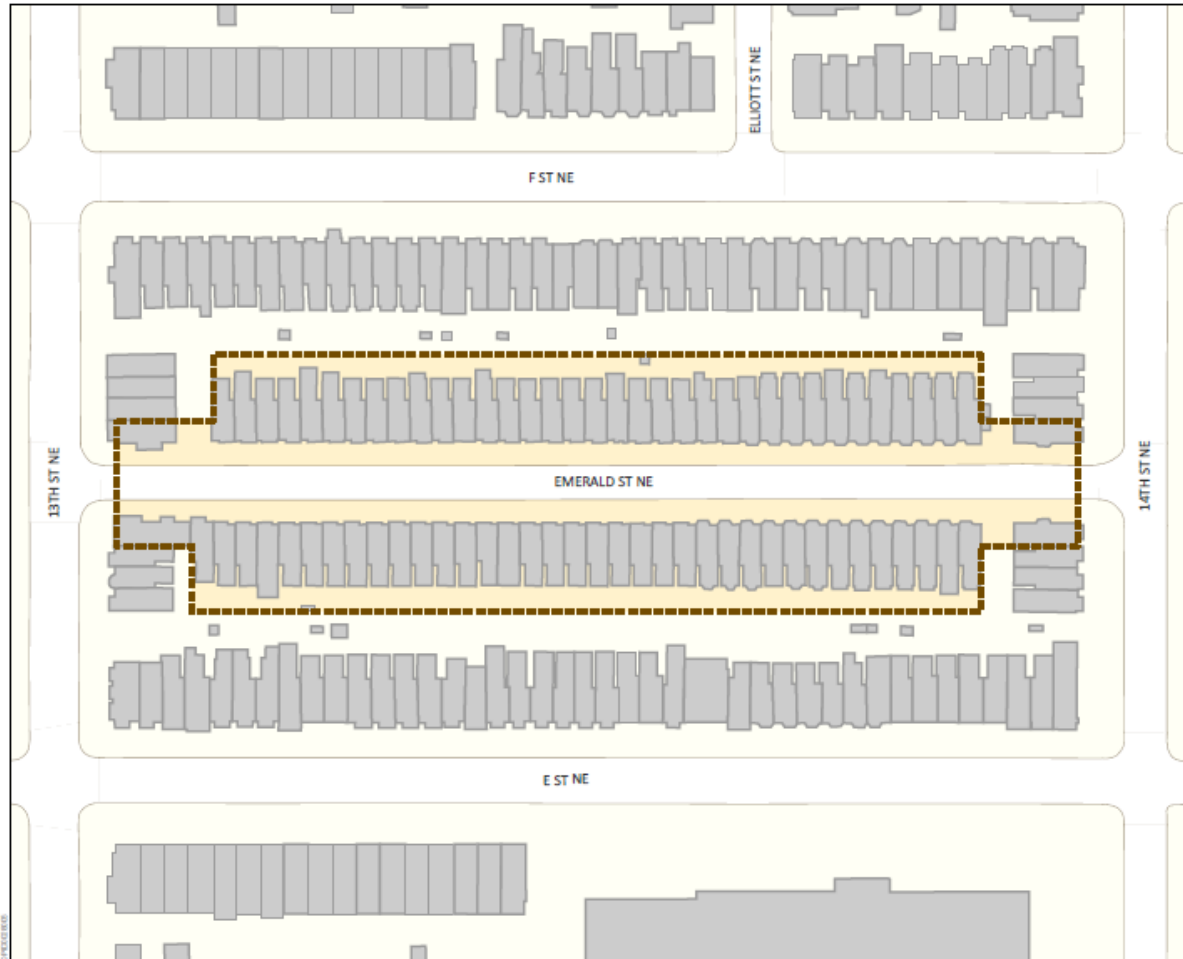
Social and urban reformers sought to eliminate the insanitary living conditions of the city's alleyways and convert the narrow and hidden alleys into 60-foot-wide streets. These streets, called "minor" streets since they were narrower than the standard 90-foot wide residential city streets, are a distinctive element in the late nineteenth-century evolution of the L'Enfant Plan.



Within months of subdividing the square, real estate developers Mayse and Wine put the newly recorded lots on the market. George P. Newton, a recent immigrant from England, bought dozens of lots on the square and began construction of a series of rowhouses, eventually building 62 of the 75 houses on the street.

The dwellings are arranged in several attached but independent groupings of Victorian-era rowhouses executed at a modest and intimate scale, yet with the same massing, architectural treatment and decorative flourishes found in grander examples elsewhere in the city. The rowhouses are all two-stories, unified in their size, scale, materials, and types of details. But each group also offers a variety of treatments and details in projecting bays, brick and stone work, windows and doors. This varied, yet orderly treatment provides a highly artistic and noteworthy rhythm to the small-scale street.

# EMERALD STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY MAP



*The historic district boundaries encompass the 75 rowhouses that have frontage on Emerald Street.*



## DESIGN REVIEW PRINCIPLES

The Emerald Street Historic District Guidelines seek to recognize and preserve the important aspects of the neighborhood and its history. The guidelines are based on the following characteristics and principles:

1. The buildings of Emerald Street represent a cohesive and intact collection of modest-scaled Victorian rowhouses exhibiting a uniformity of scale, quality of design, materials, workmanship, setting and place. Emerald Street retains high integrity with no major additions or alterations to the building facades. The streetscape's consistent two-story roofline, as viewed from Emerald Street, the brick facades and brick ornamentation of the individual houses should be maintained.

2. The buildings of Emerald Street offer a variety of architectural detailing including repeating patterns of different window shapes and types, decorative wood trim, as well as a multitude of ornamental brick and stone work. This array of architectural and decorative treatments is an important part of the street's physical and architectural character and should be maintained.



3. The landscape of the Emerald Street Historic District relies upon the continuity of the building restriction line, raised front yards with retaining walls at the sidewalk, and street trees lining the sidewalk next to the street. This continuous landscape establishes the setting for the houses along Emerald Street and is an important feature of the historic district that should be maintained.



4. The architectural character of Emerald Street is conveyed through the primary, street-facing facades of the buildings. The alley elevations are more utilitarian in design. While all exterior alterations are subject to preservation review, greater flexibility should be given to the review of alterations or additions that affect only rear elevations or that are not visible from public street view.

## BUILDING FEATURES

### 1.0 *Wall Materials*

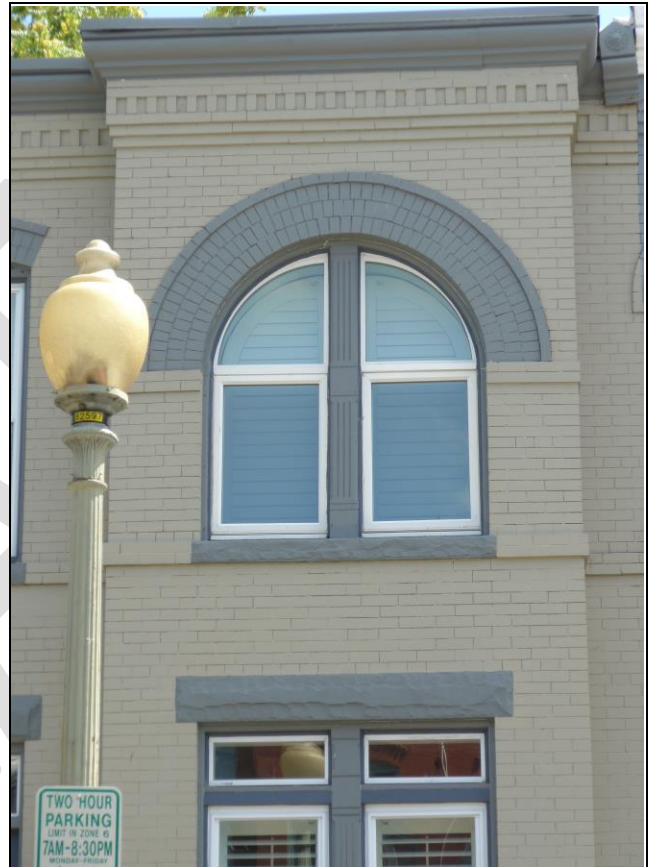
The buildings on Emerald Street are all constructed of brick and feature decorative brick and stone detailing. The façades are all laid with a specialized “pressed brick,” that is characterized by a highly glazed face, crisp edges, and thin mortar joints.

The majority of the brick facades on Emerald Street are painted; however, there are several unpainted facades that are distinguished by “variegated” brickwork laid in a variety of hues ranging from a light to darker buff color. A few of the brick facades have been covered with siding or formstone.

- 1.1 No permit or historic preservation review is required to paint in the Emerald Street Historic District. Painted buildings can be re-painted and any unpainted building can be painted. However, painting unpainted facades is discouraged as the brick has high visual and material quality, and once painted, will require regular maintenance and repainting.
- 1.2 Masonry wall should be repointed with mortar that replicates the thin joints and general composition, tooling, texture and appearance of original mortar joints. Mortar for spot pointing should match and maintain visual continuity with adjacent mortar. Mechanical grinders are discouraged for the removal of old mortar as they can permanently damage masonry by chipping or grinding away the crisp edges of pressed brick.
- 1.3 Brick surfaces should remain uncovered. Applying a covering over masonry such as vinyl or other siding is not permitted. Existing coverings can remain, but removal is encouraged.

### 2.0 *Wall Details*

Emerald Street rowhouses have a variety of embellishments indicative of the Victorian period. For the most part, decorative detailing is limited to around window and door openings and at the roofline at the cornice. However, brick stringcourses across the body of the facades are also common.



*Decorative detailing is found around door and window openings, including brick arches and/or rusticated stone lintels and sills.*

Cornices feature brick corbelling, brick dentils, decorative brickwork that enlivens the rooflines, and windows and doors framed with brick and stone lintels and sills. Stone lintels are typically rusticated, while the brick surrounds are often segmentally arched formed by bricks laid in rowlock or header courses and trimmed with special decorative bricks. These decorative features are valuable in defining the architectural character of the wall surfaces of Emerald Street.



- 2.1 Decorative masonry wall features should be maintained and repaired.
- 2.2 Decorative masonry wall features should not be removed or covered over with alternative materials.
- 2.3 If beyond repair, decorative masonry wall features should be replaced to match the historic features using the same materials, or materials that have the same visual appearance.

**3.0 Windows**

The design, configuration and variety of window openings on the facades of Emerald Street buildings are key elements to the architectural character of the historic district. A range of different openings, from round-arched, to segmentally arched and flat-topped, are found. The variety of window openings occurs within and between the different rowhouse groupings where window variations follow established patterns that create order while also preventing monotony of design.



*The replacement windows on this house replicate the originals. The installation maintains the decorative fluted muntin and lunette panel with ornamental scroll-sawn detailing above.*

Most of the windows themselves, have been replaced. Replacement windows do not follow any consistency, often do not fit the window opening as designed, and in some cases, have either eliminated or obscured decorative features such as molded wood mullions, transom bars and transom lights, lunette panels, decorative wood panels, and other details.



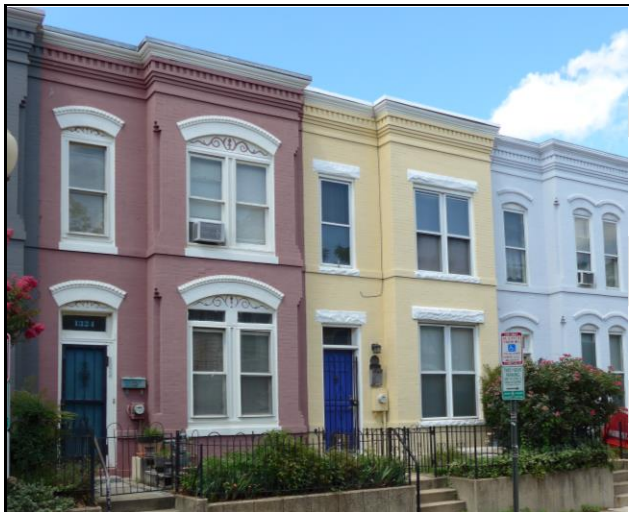
*This window installation resulted in the loss of original decorative framing elements.*

- 3.1 Existing windows may remain, be repaired or replaced.
- 3.2 If remaining, historic window framing elements, such as transom bars, center mullions, and trim molding should be retained. If window framing elements have been capped with vinyl or other coverings, removal of these coverings is encouraged.
- 3.3 Replacement window sash within original or recreated window framing elements should fit and fill the original openings and match the appearance of historic windows in configuration, operation, profiles and dimensions.



- 3.3 If historic window framing elements are not remaining, recreating these missing features is encouraged but not required.
- 3.4 Replacement window sash within openings that do not retain original or recreated window framing elements should fit and fill the openings, and match the general appearance of historic windows.
- 3.6 Replacement windows on rear elevations do not need to match the configuration, operation or appearance of historic windows.

*A guide to the different types of historic windows is provided in the appendix.*

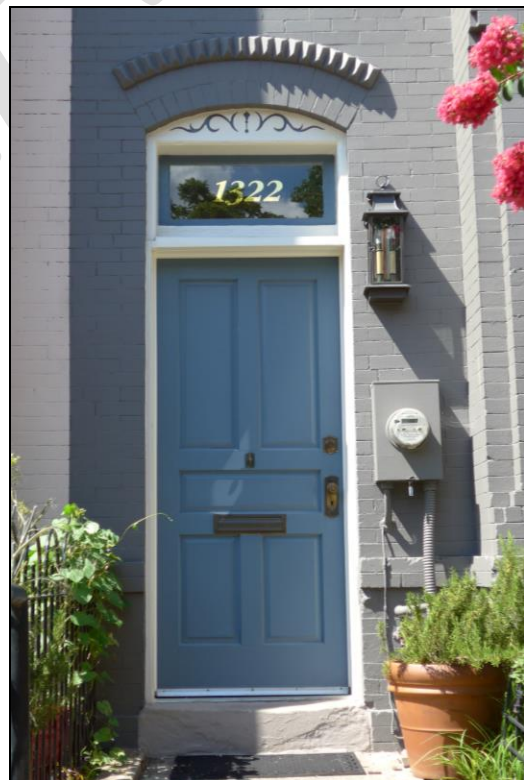


**4.0 Doors**

Front doors on Emerald Street follow a standard pattern of a single door set within a rectangular opening with a transom window above, capped by an arched brick or flat stone lintel. This pattern is generally intact along the street, though in rare instances the transom has been eliminated or the size of its opening altered. There are few, if any, original doors remaining. Existing, non-historic doors range from solid wood, to fully glazed.

- 4.1 Existing doors may remain, be repaired, or replaced with new doors.
- 4.2 Transom windows and transom bars that separate the door from the transom should be retained.
- 4.3 If the transom is missing, it should be replicated based on the proportions of transoms on surrounding houses.
- 4.4 Transom windows can be single or multi-paned, and can include plain or stained glass.
- 4.5 Expanding or reducing the width of a door opening is not permitted.
- 4.6 New front doors should fit and fill the original width of the opening.
- 4.7 New doors should have vertical proportions, and can be solid, fully glazed, or a combination of paneled and glazed.
- 4.8 Replacement doors on rear elevations do not have to match historic doors.

*A guide to the different types of front doors compatible for Emerald Street is provided in the appendix.*



## 5.0 **Roofs**

The roofs of Emerald Street are generally sloped or flat and not visible beyond the cornice lines of the façades. In certain cases, parapet walls cap the roofline. Decorative features at the roofline, including brick moldings, projecting parapets, finials and other details add to the architectural character of the streetscape.



*Decorative cornices and parapets characterize the roofline of Emerald Street houses.*

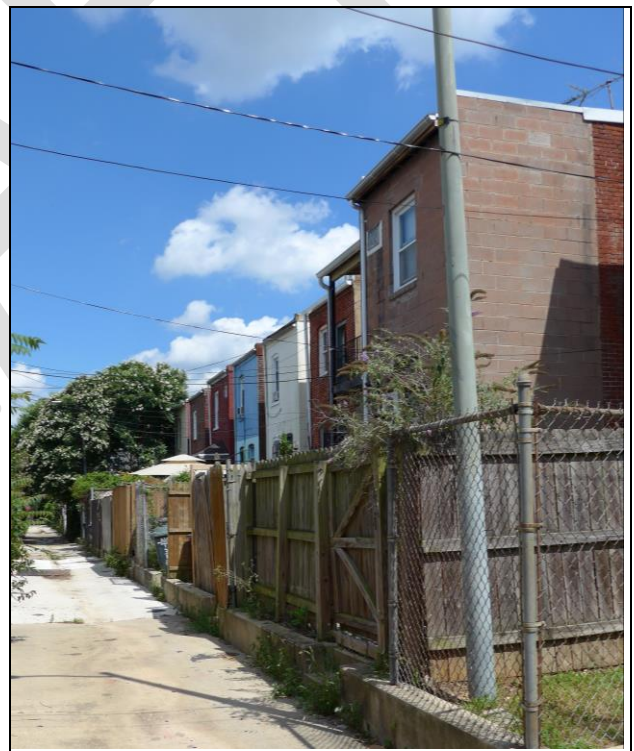
- 5.1 Existing roof heights, as visible from public street view, and decorative roof features should be maintained and preserved.
- 5.2 The roofs themselves are not visible from the street and can be replaced with metal, membrane or other materials.
- 5.3 Mechanical, solar and communications equipment should be set back from the façades, typically at a distance at least equal to their height, so they are not visible from the street.

## 6.0 **Additions and New Construction**

There are limited opportunities for additions on Emerald Street due to the small lot sizes and existing zoning regulations. Emerald Street is located in an RF-1 zone, which limits the height of buildings to 35 feet and lot occupancy to 60 percent with a required 20-foot rear setback. The existing buildings are all two-stories, and approximately 23 feet tall, but the historic building footprints, generally 44 feet deep on lots that are 64 feet deep, are either on or beyond the 20-foot rear yard

setback and exceed the lot occupancy requirement. The options for enlarging the existing buildings are thus limited. Modest rear and roof-top additions may be possible under historic preservation guidelines, but given the existing zoning, such additions may be subject to review by the Board of Zoning Adjustment.

Generally, adding to the rear is the best way to add extra space without affecting the architectural character of an historic building or streetscape. Rooftop additions may be possible, so long as they are not visible from Emerald Street. “Not visible” is defined as not being seen from the pedestrian perspective at any point along the public right-of-way of Emerald Street.



*Rear additions, such as this one at the rear of this Emerald Street rowhouse, are the best way to add space to historic buildings.*

- 6.1 Rear wings (dog legs) that do not span the full width of the main block may be filled in.



- 6.2 In the case of corner lots, or locations where rear additions will be visible from public street view, additions should be compatible with the character of the historic district in terms of wall materials and window sizes.
- 6.3 Rooftop additions may be permitted if they are set back sufficiently on the rear portion of the roof so that they are not visible from any public street view.
- 6.4 Rooftop additions should not in any way alter or result in removal of decorative roof elements.

There are no opportunities for new construction on Emerald Street as there are no vacant or buildable lots. All the principal buildings are contributing resources, and thus cannot be demolished to create a new buildable lot. In the case that a house is destroyed by a natural or other disaster, any replacement building should closely match the original building with particular attention paid to the quality of materials and architectural detailing of street facing elevations.

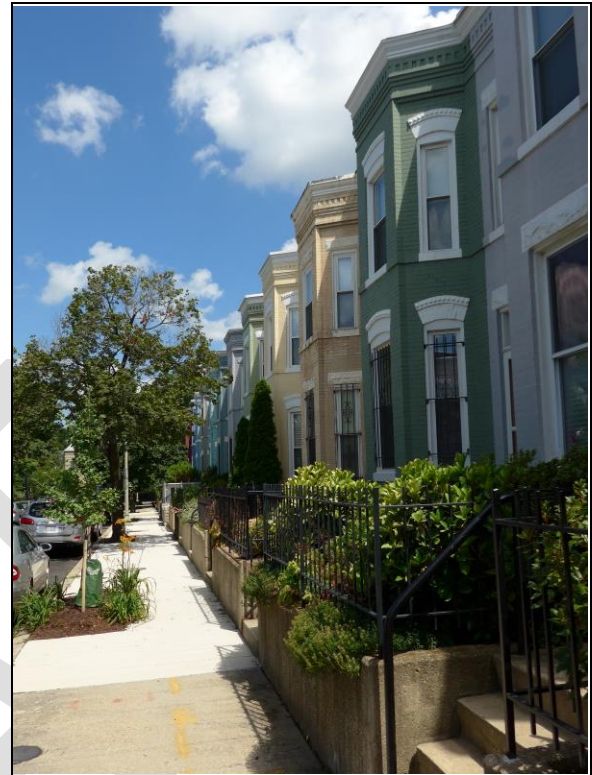
**7.0 Secondary Buildings**

The secondary buildings on Emerald Street are limited to small sheds at the rear of the lots. These sheds are non-contributing resources to the historic district and can be removed or replaced. A new shed may be constructed on the site of an older shed, or on a new site, so long as it is located at the rear of the lot.

**8.0 Landscape Features**

The relationship of front yard to sidewalk to street is a character-defining feature of the Emerald Street Historic District. The raised front yards with an uninterrupted retaining wall lining the sidewalk and street trees on the curb side of the sidewalk provide a unifying setting to the houses and a softening effect to the urban streetscape. Originally, front gardens were not fenced, though many fences

atop these retaining walls have existed for a long time and contribute to the separation of space between front yard and sidewalk.



*The front yards on Emerald Street form a continuous linear greensward.*

- 8.1 No permit or historic preservation approval is required for planting.
- 8.2 The uniform height of front retaining walls along Emerald Street should be maintained.
- 8.3 Replacement retaining walls should be finished in smooth concrete, brick or natural local stone. Concrete block, artificial stone veneers and lumber walls are not permitted.
- 8.4 Front yard fences should be iron, no taller than 36” high, and respect the open, low character of historic fencing on the street.
- 8.5 Replacement stairs and lead walks should be finished in smooth concrete, stone or masonry pavers. Materials should be of a single, unvariegated color that provides a monolithic appearance.

### **9.0 Exterior Lighting**

New or replacement light fixtures should be of a size that is proportional to the scale of the building and finished in a manner that is harmonious with the building's materials. Lighting should be installed in locations that will not cause damage to significant architectural features and the level of illumination should be commensurate to the size and character of the buildings and the residential qualities of the district.

### **10.0 Utility Meters**

Utility meters should be installed so that they are as visually unobtrusive as possible from public view, and should not cover over window openings or architectural detailing. Detailed guidance on utility meter installation is provided in the guideline "Utility Meters for Historic Buildings" on the HPO website.

## **BUILDING PERMIT REVIEW**

### ***Work Subject to Review***

Exterior work in the Emerald Street 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 replacements
- 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 Emerald Street Historic District is not subject to historic preservation design review:

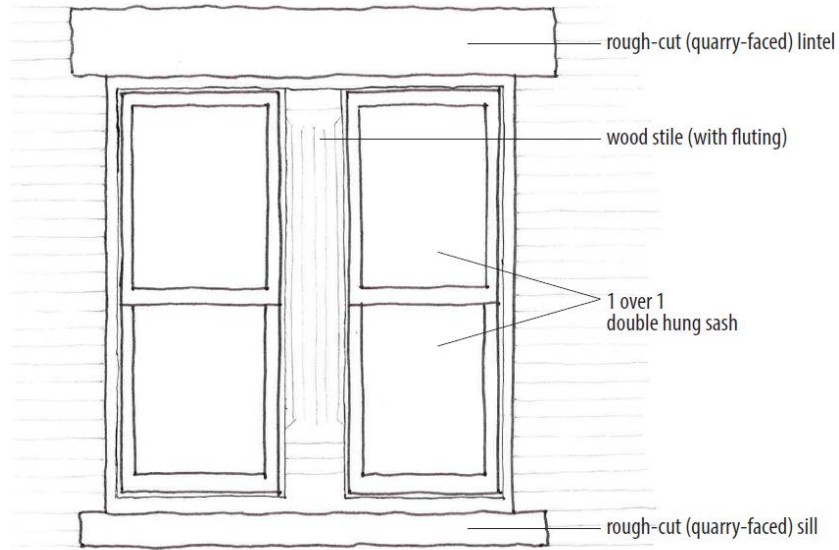
- Interior alterations, except those involving substantial structural demolition;
- Exterior painting and paint colors;
- Window screens, storm windows, security bars, and removable window air conditioning units;
- Landscaping, including planting, maintenance, or removal of trees and shrubs. However,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

Permit applications can be downloaded from the DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs website ([www.dhra.dc.gov](http://www.dhra.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 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW on the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

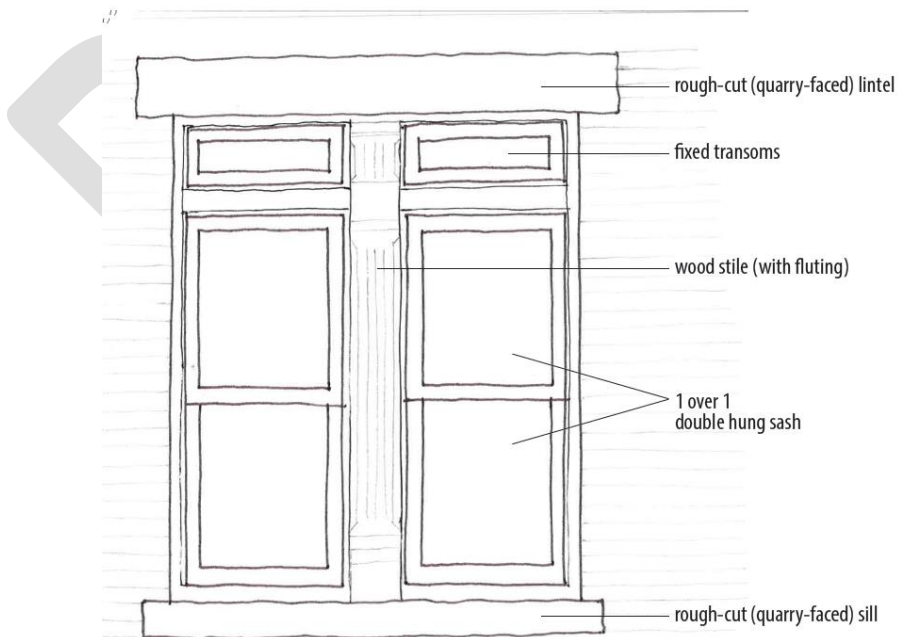


## APPENDIX:

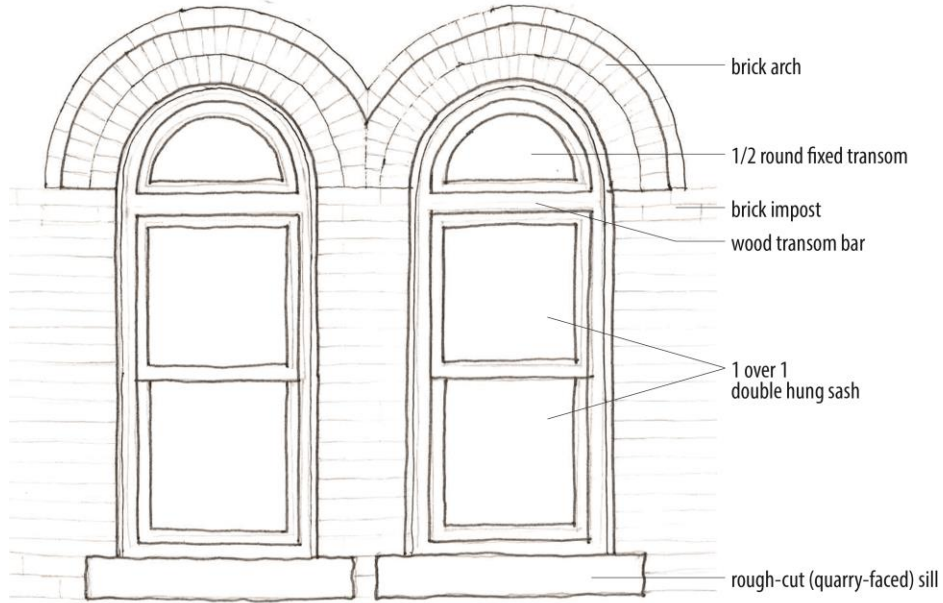
### HISTORIC WINDOW CONFIGURATIONS FOR EMERALD STREET



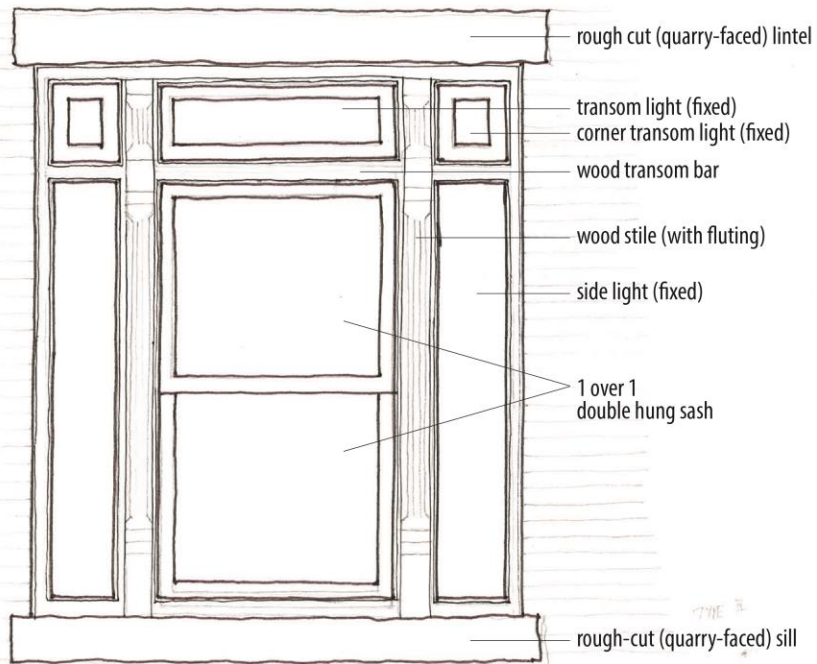
*Paired windows with rough-cut sill and lintel*



*Paired windows with transoms, rough-cut sill and lintel*

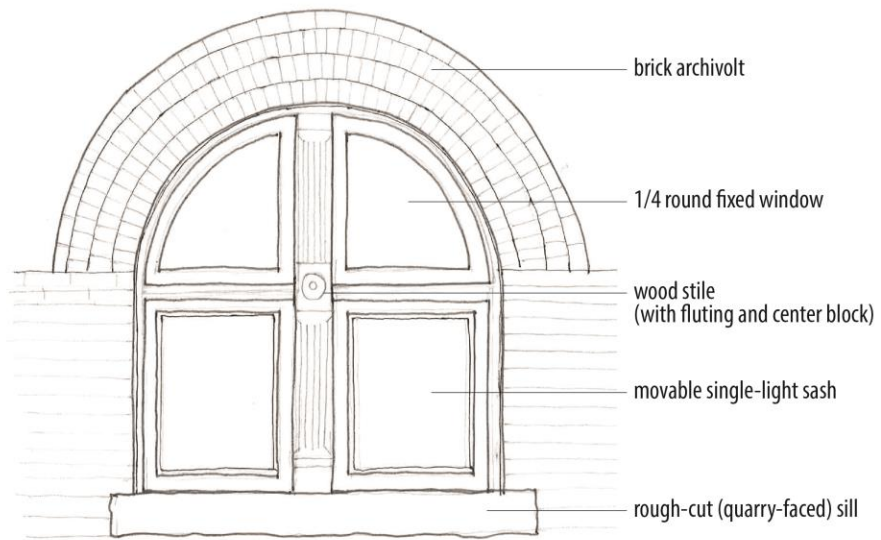


*Pair of double-hung windows with arched transoms*



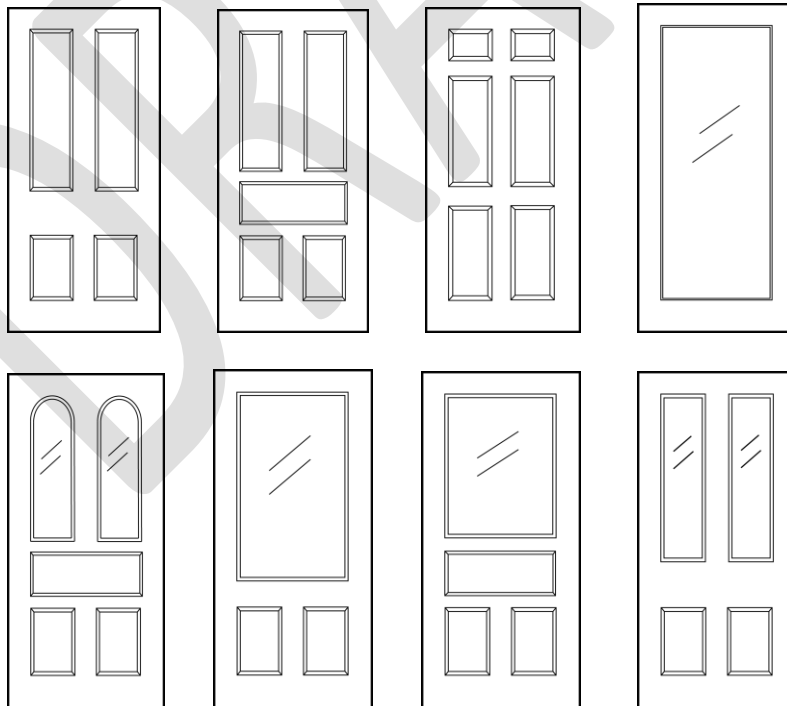
*Single window with sidelights and transoms*





*Round-arched window with quarter-light transoms*

## COMPATIBLE REPLACEMENT DOORS FOR EMERALD STREET



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**District of Columbia Office of Planning – Historic Preservation Office**

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