Preface: This document communicates formal Design Guidelines, which are regulatory and enforced by law. It also offers supplemental information through an Introduction, Preservation Principles, Maintenance Tips, Appendices, photographs, illustrations, and captions. This supplemental material explains the concepts and intent underlying the Design Guidelines, and exemplifies or depicts how the Design Guidelines have been -- or might be -- applied in Clifton. All examples and depictions are meant to educate and illustrate, only. Examples deemed appropriate within one context may be deemed inappropriate for another. An applicant should consult with Landmarks staff regarding any questions about how to interpret these supplemental clauses, illustrations, and examples.

Introduction

Clifton welcomes new homes that acknowledge and complement Clifton’s character-defining historical features, including its architecture and its traditional building size and spacing patterns. These guidelines assure that designs for new residential structures will blend with neighboring buildings along the street, and also will sustain the integrity of the overall Preservation District.

One general principle merits emphasis: a new structure can look new. New construction in Preservation Districts often spawns misconceptions that new buildings should always “look” historic. In fact, unique and creative designs are not discouraged, provided that other design criteria are met. What is discouraged is false historicism – designing a new building to appear old as a pretense, or adding conjectural or anachronistic architectural features that conflict with a building’s age or style.

Among the most frequent examples of new construction in Clifton are garages and other secondary structures. Guidelines for these buildings are not included here; for convenience, they are separately presented and elaborated in the set of guidelines entitled Garages and Secondary Structures.

Preservation Principles

These excerpts from the “The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, 1995” express the key points:

- “Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.”

- “New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.”
Please Note: “In a local preservation district, physical alterations or changes to the exterior of a building or property require review and approval by the Landmarks Commission in the form of a Certificate of Appropriateness, based on compliance with these Clifton-specific design guidelines, and pursuant to Louisville Metro Ordinance 32.250. Consultation with the Landmarks staff is encouraged to achieve a creative solution that complies with the intent of the guidelines. Rarely is a project pursued in this manner denied.”

NCR1  New construction designs should conform to all applicable regulations including the Land Development Code, Zoning District Regulations, Building, and Fire and Safety codes, MSD, and any other regulatory agency. All new construction architectural designs will be reviewed by the Clifton ARC.

NCR2  No structure should be demolished to make way for new or large-scale construction. All structures in the district will be identified as either contributing or non-contributing at time of application. The Landmarks staff and ARC will evaluate and review all demolition permit requests. See the Demolition guidelines for more details.

NCR3  Building height, scale, massing, volume, directional emphasis, and setback should reflect the architectural context established by surrounding structures.

NCR4  The scale of new construction should not conflict with the historic character of the district.

Considerations for Designing New Construction in a Historic Residential District

- Do buildings in that location have a consistent setback from the street?
- Do buildings share a consistent height, cornice line, or roof form?
- Are existing buildings vertical or horizontal in character?
- How do buildings relate to one another? What is the spacing between them?
- What building materials or design features do existing buildings have in common?
- How will construction affect existing pedestrian and vehicular circulation patterns, streetscape issues, and parking?
NCR5 Building materials and design elements in new construction design should be sympathetic with surrounding historic buildings in the district. Materials should be of a complementary color, size, texture, scale, and level of craftsmanship.

NCR6 Creative design is encouraged. Examples of materials to avoid include: ornamental pierced concrete masonry screens and walls, "antiqued" brick, wrought-iron porch columns, exterior carpeting, jalousie windows, glass block, picture windows, unfinished wood, and asphalt siding. Chain-link fences should not be installed where visually incompatible.

NCR7 New construction design should reflect and reinforce the human scale of the neighborhood, which is a character-defining feature of the preservation district.

NCR8 Important public views and vistas should not be disrupted by new construction design. See the Cultural Landscape guidelines for more details.

NCR9 Existing spatial patterns created by circulation routes, fences, walls, lawns, and allees of trees, should be reinforced in new construction design.

NCR10 The spatial organization established by surrounding buildings should be reinforced in infill construction design. The character of historic streetscapes relies heavily on the visual continuity established by the repetition of similarly designed façades.

In terms of its size, siding material, floor-to-floor height, roof pitch, setback, and front porch design, this Pope St. new construction (2nd from the right) fits in well with the adjacent historic homes, as well as with most of the houses on the street (COA: 2012).

In Fitting In

Too Low and Horizontal

Too Tall and Vertical

Buildings that are too tall and narrow or too low and expansive for their surroundings disrupt the streetscape. Carefully assess existing conditions around a lot before planning a new design.
The façade's organization should closely relate to surrounding buildings in infill construction design. Cornice lines and columns are other important character-defining façade elements. Imitating an historic style or period of architecture in new construction is not recommended.

NCR12 A new building's mass should have a similar sense of lightness or weight as surrounding historic structures. Mass is determined by the proportion of solid surfaces (walls) to voids (window and door openings).

NCR13 Window patterns should be sympathetic with those of surrounding buildings. Compatible frame dimensions, proportion, panel and light, and muntin configurations are encouraged. Historic window proportions are generally two-and-one half (height) by one (width).

NCR14 Front door design should be sympathetic to the door patterns of surrounding buildings in new construction design. Use of comparable frame dimensions, proportion, and panel and light configuration is encouraged.

NCR15 The orientation of the main entrance should be the same as the majority of other buildings on the street in new construction design.

The visual continuity established by the rhythm and repetition of façade elements is one of Clifton’s character-defining features. On the Saunders Ave. infill at left (COA: 2006), the porch cornice reinforces the streetscape’s “stair step” effect created by Saunders’ steep slope. That same site slope, combined with its comparatively flatter-pitched, hipped roof, keeps its two-story height more in tune with its one-story neighbors. On the right, this Haldeman Ave. development project (COA: 2005), through its spacing, setback, gables, and other façade elements, echoes the patterns found throughout the District.

Look to see how windows, doors, porches, and roofing create a pattern that unites buildings along a given block. Then, design a building that extends that pattern.
NCR16 Paved walks should be installed between public sidewalks and front entrances where this is a character-defining feature on the street.

NCR17 Handicapped access ramps should be located on secondary elevations (side or rear) wherever possible. If the only option is to install the ramp on the street address façade, it should be installed in a manner that does not damage historic fabric and is as unobtrusive as possible. Removable or portable ramps may also be used.

NCR18 Infill construction design should be compatible with the average height and width of surrounding buildings.

NCR19 Horizontal elements such as bandboards, brick coursing, window sills or lintels in new construction design should be within 10 percent of adjacent historic construction where the similar height of the horizontal elements is relatively consistent, and a character-defining feature.

NCR20 The historic rhythm of the streetscape should be maintained.

NCR21 Historic building setback patterns should be maintained. To maintain the continuity of the streetscape, front setbacks for new construction should either match that of adjacent buildings where all share the same setback or be within 20 percent of neighboring structures in areas with varied setbacks.

NCR22 Roofs of new buildings should relate to neighboring historic structures in pitch, complexity, and visual appearance of materials.

NCR23 Rooflines for infill construction design should follow the precedent set by adjacent buildings. Where the predominant form is flat, built-up roofs are preferred. Where the predominant form is complex and steeply pitched, that is preferred. In blocks characterized by shallow-pitched roofs and pronounced overhangs with exposed rafters, these elements should be incorporated.

NCR24 The orientation of the main roof form in new construction design should be parallel with the majority of other roofs on the street where roof forms are relatively consistent and a character-defining feature.

When considered from the design perspectives of:
- Height
- Street orientation
- Floor-to-floor height
- Window arrangement
- Roof pitch and gable orientation
- Parking and garage placement

this 70’s infill construction clearly stands apart from adjacent homes, from others on the street, and from most in Clifton. These Guidelines help assure that infill will be more compatible with Clifton’s character.

LINE UP—SETBACKS ESTABLISH BLOCK CONTINUITY

Too Far Back

Shared Setback Line

Too Far Forward
NCR25 The existing cornice line on each block should be emphasized in new construction design where this is a character-defining feature.

NCR26 Rooftops should remain uncluttered and mechanical systems should be obscured from public view in new construction design.

NCR27 Trash receptacles should be screened from public view with a four-sided enclosure.

NCR28 Exterior sheathing should be compatible with surrounding historic buildings. Painted wood siding or fiber cement board is preferred. Vinyl siding may be used for new construction on streets where the predominant historic construction material is wood. See Siding and Trim guidelines for additional details.

NCR29 Masonry types and mortars should be compatible with surrounding buildings. Red brick is the most common masonry material found in the district. See Masonry guidelines for additional details.

NCR30 Stone or cast-stone sills and lintels should be incorporated into new construction design on streets where these elements are character-defining features.

NCR31 Raised masonry foundations which are compatible in proportion and height with surrounding buildings should be used. Foundation materials may be of a warm-toned poured concrete or stuccoed concrete block that has a uniform, textured appearance.

NCR32 New front porches should be built on streets where they are a predominant character-defining feature, and are allowed on other streets, and should be compatible with the form, scale, and detailing of surrounding buildings. New columns should consist of a base, shaft, and capital, and convey the appearance of actually holding up the porch roof.

NCR33 Porches on newly constructed buildings should be designed so the floor is even with or a maximum of one step below the corresponding floor of the house, the ceiling is even with that of adjacent rooms, the floor is at least 6’ deep, the rhythm of the porch bays matches the façade’s pattern of solids and voids, and the porch fascia board matches the height of the window head.

NCR34 Storm-water management systems in new construction design and water runoff should not adversely impact nearby historic resources.
A unique site – a steep slope overlooking Bingham Park with no flanking structures – offered an opportune location for this profoundly contemporary (i.e., of its time) Coral Ave. home (COA: 2010). While most façade features are modern, its height, volume, and scale are compatible, its main door and orientation address the street, and its parking hides at rear – all character-defining features of Clifton.

These two examples of compatible new construction are on Sycamore Ave (COA:2013). Clifton-related character-defining features reflected here include siding material, floor-to-floor height, roof pitch, setback, and front porch design. The ground-level front-façade garage doors – not typical of Clifton – have been recessed within the front porch elements and trimmed and painted to diminish the visual impact often associated with large, plain, monolithic garage doors.