12. Mechanical Equipment & Service Utilities

Context & Character

Modern developments in technology have resulted in the increased use of devices such as satellite dishes, solar panels and air conditioning systems. Commercial buildings also require trash and recycling storage areas and other equipment. These elements can be effectively integrated into historic properties without detracting from their historic character as long as property owners are conscientious about their placement and installation.

Design Objective

Minimize the visual impacts of mechanical equipment and service utilities to the historic character of a building and its setting. Locate equipment such that it will not damage historic building fabric.

Satellite Dishes

12.1 Satellite dishes should be installed in inconspicuous areas where they are not readily visible from the street.

- Mounting satellite dishes on key facades of a building should be avoided.
- Existing parapets and roof profiles should be used to screen these additions.

12.2 Satellite dishes that are small in size are more appropriate.

This satellite dish is appropriately placed towards the rear of the building.

Rooftops may be an appropriate location for solar panels.

This low-profile mechanical equipment is situated in an inconspicuous area on top of the building.

Meters are correctly placed on a secondary facade.

Solar Collection Systems

12.3 Solar collection systems should be located where they are least visible and unobtrusive.

- Rooftops, rear and side yards or rear accessory buildings are the preferred locations for solar devices.

12.4 Solar panels that are attached to a building should not be readily visible from the street.

- Solar panels should be mounted on rooftops flush with the roofline or hidden behind cornices or parapet walls.
- Consider appearance and situation to minimize visual impact.

12.5 Install to minimize damage to character-defining features of the building, structure or site.

Utilities

12.6 Mechanical service equipment should be designed and installed where it will not be readily seen from the public way.

- The equipment should be positioned towards the rear of the building.
- If located on top of a building, the equipment should be set back and/or behind a parapet or roofline.

12.7 Window-mounted mechanical systems should be located on the side or rear facades; their visibility should be minimal.

12.8 Meters, conduits, and associated equipment should be designed and located to avoid detracting from the appearance of the building and damage to original facade materials.

Trash & Recycling Storage Areas

12.9 Garbage containers should not be readily visible from the street.

- Consider location.
- Consider well designed screening.

Fire Escapes

12.10 Original fire escapes should be retained when possible.

- A historic fire escape should be repaired rather than replaced.
- If repair is not possible, replace a fire escape to match the original as closely as possible.

12.11 New fire escapes should be located on building facades that are not readily visible from the street.

- Fire escapes traditionally are located on the rear or sides of buildings.

12.12 The addition of a fire escape should not damage or obscure historic architectural features.

12.13 New fire escapes may be either open or enclosed.

- For enclosed fire escape surfaces, materials matching or compatible with those used on the historic building should be selected.
- For open fire escape surfaces, metal or similar materials should be used.

Historic fire escapes, such as the one at 379 S. Main Street, can be decorative as well as functional.

This metal fire escape has been appropriately added to the side facade of the building.