

Chapter 8. Additions

Context & Character

Over time, additions were made to many historic buildings as residents needed more space. In some cases, an owner would add a wing for a new bedroom, or would expand the kitchen.

An early addition typically was subordinate in scale and character to the main building. The height of the addition was usually positioned below that of the main structure and was often located to the side or rear. The primary facade remained unaltered.

An addition was often constructed of materials that were similar to those in use historically; clapboard siding, brick and vertical, narrow bead boards were the most common. In some cases, owners simply added dormers to an existing roof, creating more usable space without increasing the footprint of the structure.

This tradition of adding onto historic buildings should continue. It is important, however, that new additions preserve the historic character of the original building.

Design Objective

The design of a new addition to a historic building should ensure that the building's early character is maintained. Older additions that have taken on significance also should be preserved.

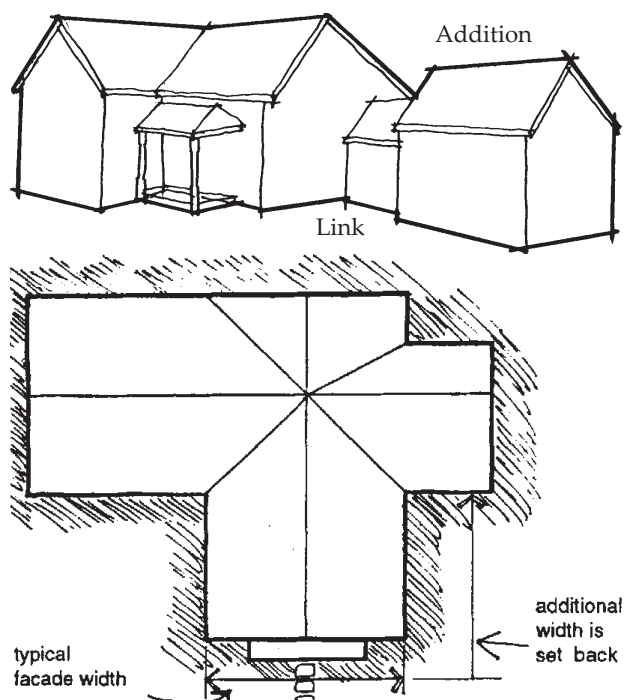
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This addition to the rear adopts similar design language, detailing and materials.



This recent addition reflects the design traditions of the original with a change in material to siding. The change from original to new is emphasized by a break in the wall plane and roof plane.



Set back an addition from historically important primary facades in order to allow the original proportions and character to remain prominent, or set the addition apart from the historic building and connect it with a connecting "link" (Top).



This rear addition respects the principal building by continuation of wall plane, eaves and bracket details, while changing the materials and fenestration.

Existing Additions

Some early additions may have taken on historic significance. One constructed in a manner that was compatible with the original building, and that is also associated with the period of historic significance, may merit preservation in its own right. Such an addition should be carefully evaluated before developing plans for its alteration.

In contrast, more recent additions usually have no historic significance. Some later additions in fact detract from the character of the building through the use of incompatible materials, design and/or location, and may also obscure significant historic architectural features. Where this is the case, removing such noncontributing additions should be considered.

New Additions - Basic Principles

When planning an addition to a historic building or structure, one should minimize negative effects that may occur to the fabric and the character of the building. With the objective of designing an addition which is sensitive to the character and integrity of the building, several considerations should be borne in mind.

All efforts should be made to build within the existing envelope, using basement and attic space whenever possible. If the only option is outside this envelope, then it is preferable to design for a horizontal addition to the rear rather than the side, if possible. If building upward appears to be the only solution, then a house with a steeper roof pitch presents an easier design challenge than a house with a shallow roof pitch.

While some destruction of historic materials is almost always a part of constructing an addition, such loss should be minimized. Locating an addition so that existing side or rear doors may be used for access, for example, will help to minimize the amount of historic wall material that must be removed.

The addition also should not affect the perceived character of the building. In most cases, loss of character can be avoided by locating the addition to the rear. The overall design of the addition also should be in keeping with the design character of the historic structure. At the same time, it should be distinguishable from the historic portion, so that the evolution of the building can be understood.

This record of the building's history can be achieved in a variety of subtle ways. Keeping the size of the addition smaller and subservient, in relation to the main structure, will also help to minimize its visual impacts. If an addition must be larger, it should be set apart from the historic building, and connected with a smaller linking element. This will help maintain the perceived scale and proportion of the historic portion of the building.

It is important that the addition should not obscure significant features of the historic building. If the addition is set to the rear, it is less likely to affect such features.

In historic districts, one should consider the effect the addition may have on the character of the district, as seen from the public right of way. A side addition, for example, may change the sense of rhythm established by the side yards in the block. Locating the addition to the rear could be a better solution in such a case.



Large rear detached addition incorporating garage with dwelling space above.



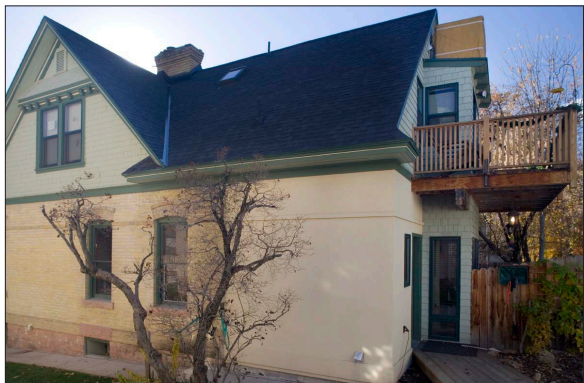
Small rear addition of individual design and materials, though in keeping with the design character and materials of the original building.



Early rear addition following the tradition of continuing the eaves line, stepping back and using contrasting materials and fenestration.



Small staggered rear addition continuing the axis and eavesline of the residence and distinguished by design and materials.



This rear addition continues the design tradition and language of the original with a change in external materials.

Two distinct types of additions should be considered: ground level additions, which involve expanding the footprint of the structure, and attic additions, which are usually accomplished by installing new dormers to provide more living space and headroom in an attic or second floor space. In either case, the addition should be sited and designed so that it minimizes any negative effects on the building and its setting. At the same time, the roof pitch, materials, window design and general form should be compatible with, though subtly distinct from, the original building.

A further form is the rooftop addition, involving increasing the height and scale of the building. Since the height and roof form of the structure are usually primary character-defining elements, it may be difficult to design this form of addition without adversely affecting the character and integrity of the original building. Rooftop additions are consequently generally discouraged because their design requires special care to locate, compose, scale, and detail appropriately in order to maintain or enhance the character of a contributing structure. Some houses, in particular the bungalow, do not easily lend themselves to rooftop additions.

Good examples of rooftop additions however have been built in the city over the years. They are executed in a manner which allows them to contribute in their own right and enhance the significance of the structure. A high bar for design and construction detailing will consequently be required for any rooftop addition.

8.1 An addition to a historic structure should be designed in a way that will not destroy or obscure historically important architectural features.

- Loss or alteration of architectural details, cornices and eave lines, for example, should be avoided.

8.2 An addition should be designed to be compatible in size and scale with the main building.

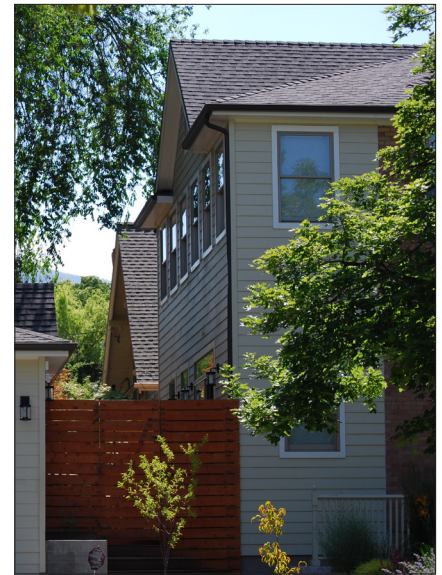
- An addition should be set back from the primary facades in order to allow the original proportions and character of the building to remain prominent.
- The addition should be kept visually subordinate to the historic portion of the building.
- If it is necessary to design an addition that is taller than the historic building, it should be set back substantially from significant facades, with a “connector” link to the original building.

8.3 An addition should be sited to the rear of a building or set back from the front to minimize the visual impact on the historic structure and to allow the original proportions and character to remain prominent.

- Locating an addition at the front of a structure is usually inappropriate.

8.4 A new addition should be designed to be recognized as a product of its own time.

- An addition should be made distinguishable from the historic building, while also remaining visually compatible with historic features.
- A change in setbacks of the addition from the historic building, a subtle change in material, or the use of modified historic or more current styles are all techniques that may be considered to help define a change from old to new construction.
- Creating a jog in the foundation between the original building and the addition may help to establish a more sound structural design to resist earthquake damage, while helping to define it as a later addition.



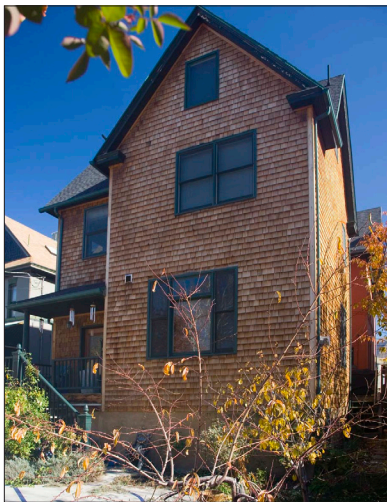
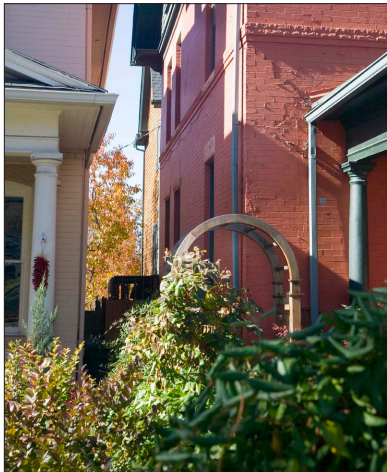
Recent rear addition continuing the eaves line and using contrasting materials and fenestration.



Upper and lower level rear additions differentiated by fenestration and materials.



Rear addition designed to echo the original scale and form.



Front and rear views of substantial rear addition adopting the height, scale and forms of the original house.

8.5 A new addition should be designed to preserve the established massing and orientation of the historic building.

- For example, if the building historically has a horizontal emphasis, this should be reflected in the addition.

8.6 A new addition or alteration should not hinder one's ability to interpret the historic character of the building or structure.

- A new addition that creates an appearance inconsistent with the historic character of the building is inappropriate.
- An alteration that seeks to imply an earlier period than that of the building should be avoided.
- An alteration that covers historically significant features should be avoided.

8.7 When planning an addition to a building, the historic alignments and rhythms that may exist on the street should be defined and preserved.

- Some roof lines and porch eaves on historic buildings in the area may align at approximately the same height. An addition should not alter these relationships.
- Maintain the side yard spacing, as perceived from the street, if this is a characteristic of the setting.

8.8 Exterior materials that are similar to the historic materials of the primary building or those used historically should be considered for a new addition.

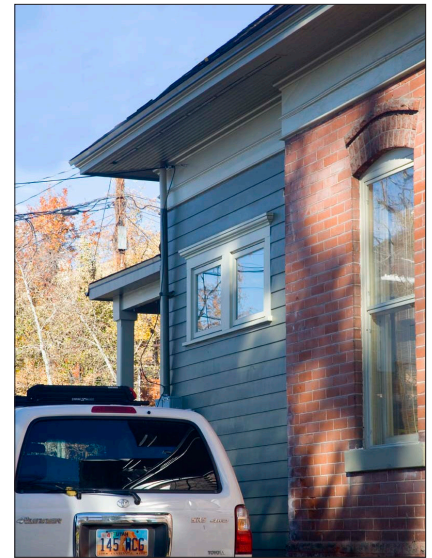
- Painted wood clapboard, wood shingle and brick are typical of many historic residential additions.
- See also the discussion of specific building types and styles, in the History and Architectural Styles section of the guidelines.
- Brick, CMU, stucco or panelized products may be appropriate for some modern buildings

8.9 Original features should be maintained wherever possible when designing an addition.

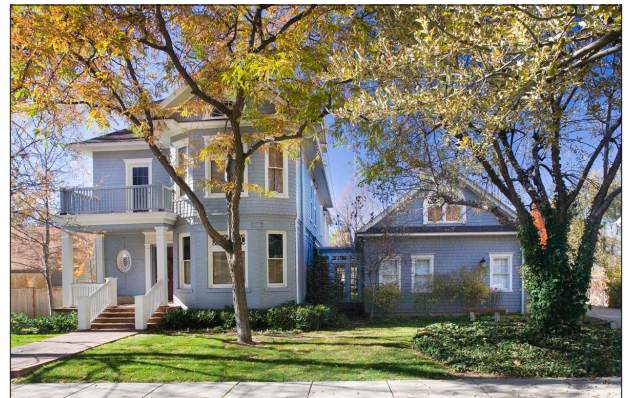
- Construction methods that would cause vibration which might damage historic foundations should be avoided.
- New drainage patterns should be designed to avoid adverse impacts to historic walls and foundations.
- New alterations also should be designed in such a way that they can be removed without destroying original materials or features wherever possible.

8.10 The style of windows in the addition should be similar in character to those of the historic building or structure where readily visible.

- If the historic windows are wood, double-hung, for example, new windows should appear to be similar to them, or a modern interpretation.



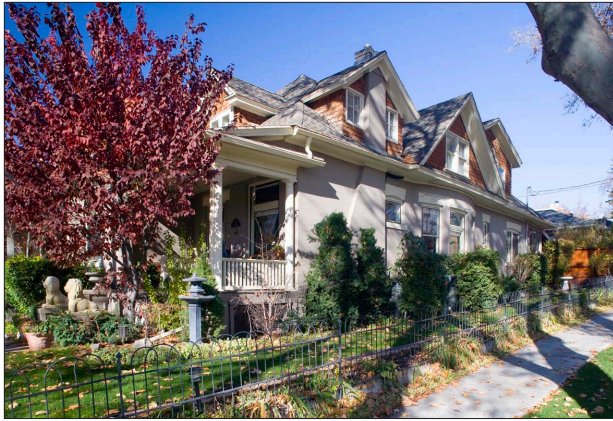
Rear addition reflecting form and scale and distinguished by wall plane, fenestration, detail and materials.



Separate and linked addition including garage and living space.



The addition here takes the form of a new single story wing to the left of the two story earlier building, itself with an early addition of the second floor.



The creative use of dormers provides significant additional space in a way that complements the design of the house.



A rear addition which is subordinate to the house and differentiated by height, materials, fenestration and simpler profiles and details.

Ground Level Additions

8.11 A new addition should be kept physically and visually subordinate to the historic building.

- The addition should be set back significantly from primary facades.
- The addition should be consistent with the scale and character of the historic building or structure.
- Large additions should be separated from the historic building by using a smaller connecting element to link the two where possible.

8.12 Roof forms should be similar to those of the historic building.

- Typically, gable, hip and shed roofs are appropriate.
- Flat roofs are generally inappropriate, except where the original building has a flat roof.

8.13 On primary facades of an addition, a 'solid-to-void' ratio that is similar to that of the historic building should be used.

- The solid-to-void ratio is the relative percentage of wall to windows and doors seen on the facade.

Attic Additions

8.14 When designing an attic addition, the mass and scale of alterations to the rooflines should be subordinate to and compatible with the scale of the historic building.

- An addition should not overhang the lower floors of the historic building in the front or on the sides.
- Dormers should be subordinate to the overall roof mass and should be in scale with those used originally on the building (or on similar styles of building if none are present originally).
- Greater flexibility may be considered in the setback of a dormer addition on a hipped or pyramidal roof.

Rooftop Additions

8.15 A rooftop addition should be situated well back from the front of the building.

- This will help preserve the original profile of the historically significant building as initially perceived from the street.

8.16 The roof form and slope of the addition should be in character with the historic building.

- If the roof of the historic building is symmetrically proportioned, the roof of the addition should be similar.
- Eave lines on the addition should be similar to those of the historic building or structure.

8.16 The composition and detailing of the addition should reflect those of the house.

- Designs for a rooftop addition should derive from a thorough evaluation of the composition of the historic building.
- An inventory of the detailed elements of the building can facilitate the integration of the addition and the historic structure.

Additional Information

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