

***Preservation Guidelines and Standards for
OKLAHOMA CITY HISTORIC DISTRICTS
OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA***



**By Urban Prospects with Marcel Quimby Architecture/Preservation
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INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

These Guidelines and Standards are designed to address the architectural preservation and treatment of each building type within the Oklahoma City historic districts. They will assist property owners in understanding the historic character of the buildings and environment in which they live, and assist owners when they are faced with decisions about repair, maintenance, rehabilitation and new construction. The Guidelines and Standards do not require that buildings be restored to a particular historic period or style, but provide guidance when the owner plans a project that alters the exterior appearance of a property.

Because design review decisions are based on appropriateness, the Historic Preservation Commission will address variations from the Guidelines and Standards that may be discovered in individual cases.

The Guidelines and Standards are organized by related topics, as described in the Table of Contents. The Guidelines and Standards apply to all project undertakings that require review by the Historic Preservation Commission and approval of a certificate of appropriateness. Some projects or treatments, such as installation of awnings or canopies, can be reviewed administratively by the staff of the Commission; these treatments are preceded in the Guidelines and Standards by the heading (REQUIRES ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW ONLY). Other possible projects or treatments, such as painting previously painted wood or metal surfaces, do not require any form of review and are noted with the heading (NOT SUBJECT TO REVIEW).

A hierarchy of areas or zones of significance at historic properties is established in these Guidelines and Standards in order to fully protect the architectural integrity of the landmarks or districts while providing greater flexibility for rehabilitation projects at locations not visible to the public. In general, the rear yards and rear elevations of historic dwellings and other buildings – those locations not visible from the public right of way – are regarded as offering greater opportunities for appropriate additions or alterations than front yard or front or side building elevation locations. These Guidelines and Standards describe the locations where such additions and alterations may occur, as well as the standards of appropriateness and level of review required.

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS PRINCIPLES

Thousands of cities and towns across the nation protect historic neighborhoods and landmarks and promote historic preservation as an important tool for improving neighborhood livability and quality of life. Preservation activity in older and historic neighborhoods helps to promote civic pride and yields economic rewards in the form of improved property values, stabilizes the inner-city, creates skilled jobs and increased sales tax revenues, and minimizes negative impacts on the environment by retaining existing buildings and building materials.

The historic districts in Oklahoma City (presently called Historic Landmark Districts or Historic Preservation Districts, but for purposes of these Guidelines and Standards, labeled as “historic districts”) are distinctive areas and places of singular historical flavor. Each of Oklahoma City’s historic neighborhoods is distinguished by its’ buildings, streets, parks and parkways, trees, architectural design and landscape features. Some are large with hundreds of properties; some are smaller. Some neighborhoods contain quite ornate houses while other contain more modest structures, but each district serves as a legacy, linking present and future generations with their heritage and providing diversity to the city’s future quality of life, appearance, and residential living options.

The city’s historic preservation ordinance acknowledges that the historic districts are valuable assets to the city. The ordinance recognizes that change is important to the community’s evolution and an indication of healthy, vital neighborhoods occupied by residents proud of their neighborhood and its history. Development and investment that enhances the character and livability of Oklahoma City’s Historic Districts is encouraged, and these Preservation Guidelines and Standards have been designed to help improve any proposed building project in the districts.

DESIGNATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

Designation of Historic Districts

The City Council may establish historic districts in response to proposals by a neighborhood organization, a preservation group, private citizens, the Historic Preservation Commission or the city. Careful research and evaluation of a neighborhood’s historical significance is required to support the designation process. Historic districts – the first of which was designated in 1969 – are created to protect and enhance the existing character of the neighborhood. Historic district zoning process protects historic neighborhoods from unmanaged, inappropriate change by a thorough review process based on the Historic Preservation Ordinance and these Preservation Guidelines and Standards.

Oklahoma City Historic Preservation Commission

The Historic Preservation Commission, or “Preservation Commission,” serves both the general public as stewards of the special historic places and neighborhoods in the city, and the owners of properties in the districts by helping them to plan alterations to their properties. The Historic Preservation Commission consists of ten members appointed by

the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. The Commissioners should have demonstrated special interest, experience or education in history, architecture and the heritage of Oklahoma City, and several members must be professionals in specialized fields related to historic preservation activity. The Commission has several powers and responsibilities including recommending to the City Council the designation of landmarks and historic districts; granting requests for proposed changes to the exteriors of buildings and properties in the historic districts; conducting educational programs on historic preservation; cooperating with local, state and federal governments in pursuance of its responsibilities; and conducting meetings or hearings necessary to carry out its purpose.

The Preservation Design Process

Historic districts are created to guide, not to prevent change. The Historic Preservation Commission and its staff provide assistance to property owners and tenants in shaping changes and improvements to historic properties while meeting the standards of the city ordinances and these Preservation Guidelines and Standards. The preservation ordinance establishes a process that ensures that changes to properties in the historic districts are consistent with the spirit and character of the historic district while meeting owners' and residents' contemporary needs. In the preservation design and review process, plans are examined and evaluated before construction work begins.

The ordinance does not require property owners to make any changes to their homes or buildings. It does not apply to any interior work or alterations, nor to routine maintenance of exterior features that does not constitute a change in appearance or materials. However, any exterior alterations, demolition, new construction, additions, certain landscape changes or relocation of buildings in the historic districts is subject to evaluation and approval by the Commission and Planning Department through the review process.

The Commission and its staff provide consultation and assistance to property owners about proposed changes to their homes or buildings. In the early planning stages of a project, owners or tenants are encouraged to contact the staff for a copy of these Preservation Guidelines and Standards and to pose any questions or concerns. The staff can assist by interpreting and explaining the ordinance and these Guidelines and Standards, make on-site visits and provide technical assistance for solving problems. For assistance, call 405-297-2576.

Preservation Guidelines and Standards

The historic preservation ordinance established a basic set of preservation guidelines and standards to assist property owners and the Commission in evaluating and successfully completing a preservation project. This Preservation Guidelines and Standards handbook has been created by the Commission to provide an easy to understand, common sense approach to the appropriate preservation and enhancements of historic buildings and districts.

The Guidelines and Standards emphasize the importance of protecting and maintaining historic properties and districts. They promote the repair of historic materials whenever possible, rather than their replacement. They also provide guidance for appropriate and cost-effective maintenance of historic buildings.

Certificate of Appropriateness Application and Review

Following consultation with the staff and review by the Preservation Commission, a certificate of appropriateness (CA) is issued to confirm that the review has occurred, the work is appropriate and meets the Guidelines and Standards, and to provide permission to proceed with work. A CA is not necessary for routine maintenance work, which includes repair or replacement when there is no change in design, materials, color in certain instances, or general appearance. A CA must be obtained for all other projects that affect the exterior surfaces or spaces of properties in the historic districts. A certificate of appropriateness (CA) application form can be obtained from the Planning Department (405/297-2576). A description of the proposed work and drawings and/or photographs depicting the proposed work are usually required as part of the CA application.

Many applications can be reviewed and approved by the Planning Department staff through an Administrative process. Major work projects are reviewed by the full Historic Preservation Commission at a public hearing, held in City Hall. These hearings are held monthly.

HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

Property owners, real estate agents, developers, contractors, tenants and architects should use these Guidelines and Standards when considering any project that will affect the exterior elements of a property in a historic district. The Guidelines and Standards provide suggestions for an appropriate direction for project planning. For any project that is subject to review by the Preservation Commission or staff, the applicant should refer to the Guidelines and Standards at the beginning of the planning process, to avoid efforts that later may prove to be inappropriate and ultimately rejected by the Preservation Commission.

The Preservation Commission will also use these Preservation Guidelines and Standards in its review of proposed projects in the historic districts. In each case, a unique combination of circumstances and preservation variables will require the Preservation Commission to conduct its review and make its decision on the merits of the particular case. In making its determination of the appropriateness of a project, the Commission will determine whether:

- The proposed work complies with the criteria in the historic preservation ordinance and these Guidelines and Standards
 - The integrity of the individual historic building or property is preserved
 - The integrity and overall character of the historic district is preserved
 - New buildings or additions are designed to be compatible with surrounding historic properties
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Each chapter and subchapter of these Guidelines and Standards is organized to provide background information as well as specific regulatory principles and requirements. The broad policy statements found in the background information in italics explain the city's basic approach for treatment of the historic design features being discussed. The background information serves as the basis for determining the appropriateness of a proposed project, even when special conditions or circumstances occur that do not appear to be addressed directly in these Guidelines and Standards.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

BRIEF HISTORY OF OKLAHOMA CITY AND EVOLUTION OF ITS' HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

With the Louisiana Purchase, the young United States obtained the land that would become Oklahoma, and its capital – Oklahoma City. Sixteen years later, the United States Congress created Arkansas Territory that included what would become the states of Arkansas and Oklahoma. The Federal Government prohibited pioneers from settling in Oklahoma in 1825 and reserved the land as ‘Indian Territory.’ The Five Civilized Tribes from the southeastern United States were then relocated by state and federal governments to this territory.

What was then known as Oklahoma Station (and later to become Oklahoma City) was located in unassigned lands in Oklahoma Territory which had been reserved for the Creek and Seminole Indians, but had never been occupied. These lands were thrown open for a land run on April 22, 1889; at the end of the day about 10,000 homesteaders had staked out claims near the Oklahoma Station. No provisions had been made for city government, so leaders had to be chosen to restore order; a provisional government was selected, and elections were held on May 1 to select permanent officials.

Statehood came for Oklahoma on November 16, 1907 with Guthrie as the state capital. Oklahoma City was then a center of commerce with streets lined with fashionable shops, stores and restaurants.

In 1910, there was a petition to move the state capitol from Guthrie to Oklahoma City; a popular vote was held, and Oklahoma City won. That night, Governor Charles Haskell and a group of conspirators gathered at the Lee-Huckins Hotel in Oklahoma City, and undertook a midnight trip to Guthrie to retrieve the State Seal; it was brought back to the Oklahoma City and the governor then declared the hotel the temporary capitol building. The permanent state capitol, located at Lincoln and 23rd Avenue, was dedicated in 1917. The dome included in the original design was not built due to excessive costs and a wartime shortage of building materials. However, construction began on the dome in 2000 and it was completed in late 2002.

During its' early years, Oklahoma City's wealth derived from cattle, growth of the city as a regional center and its' stature as the state capital. While most of the settlers lived on their land, there were several, such as Overholser, who developed commercial and residential property and built one of the first and finest homes in Heritage Hills. Others followed his example, and Victorian, and later bungalow, prairie and revival-style homes were built to house the growing middle-class. These original homes were within walking distance of downtown, but with the arrival of the streetcar in the early 1900's, residential neighborhoods began to extend from downtown. The city's population had grown to 64,000 in 1909 and in the following years, there was unprecedented growth in the city with construction reaching new heights. Jefferson Park, University Addition

