HARC GUIDELINES for NEW CONSTRUCTION IN THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS

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APPLICATION

New construction is a sign of economic health and vitality and it can take many forms including:

- New primary buildings built on vacant sites or lots where an existing structure has been approved for demolition;
- Additions to existing buildings; and
- New secondary structures, such as garages, sheds or other outbuildings.

These HARC Guidelines for New Construction will replace and supersede any and all existing guidelines governing new primary and secondary structures including, without limitation, the guidelines entitled "Additions & Alterations/New Construction on pages 36-38a of the HARC guidelines enacted in May 15, 2002. These will apply to new buildings of all occupancy, use and construction types located within the historic planning zones of Key West. These guidelines are effective MONTH DATE, YEAR.

Prior to embarking upon briefing for or the design of a new construction or addition project, the HARC encourages property owners to develop an appreciation of the unique architectural character of Key West and its neighborhoods and allow that understanding to inform their design. The HARC does not require that historic properties be "copied" in new construction, but operates to support new construction of high-quality design and to ensure that such construction is sympathetic to its distinctive surroundings.

INTRODUCTION

This section addresses how to incorporate new construction without sacrificing the qualities that make the historic areas of Key West unique and how new development can harmonize with existing historic context without disrupting it.

The GNCAs are informed by: a) The U.S Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation[1]("Secretary's Standards"); b) the National Park Service's Preservation Brief 14[2]; c) the work of The Preservation Society of Greater Philadelphia[3]; d) the works of noted preservation architects[4]; e) the guidelines governing other historic districts[5]; f) myriad articles, essays and opinion pieces advocating various philosophies of new construction in historic districts and, not least g) appreciation of and respect for the character, appearance, cultural value and sense of place embodied in the built environment of Key West's historic districts. **The result is a conservation ethic that prioritizes the fabric and character of the whole over individual design preferences**.

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[1] Set forth with explanation and interpretation in §V of these Guidelines. Note the Secretary's Standards do not expressly address new construction; however, reference thereto can enhance the ability to evaluate compatible new construction.

[2] *Preservation Brief 14: New Exterior Additions to Historic Building: Preservation Concerns* initially published in 1986 and revised in 2010. Preservation Brief 14 does not address new construction in historic districts; however, it offers insight into how to evaluate infill projects from the standpoint of how they impact the character of the historic districts in which they are located. The historic properties must remain predominant and the historic character of the district should be retained. Generally, the same recommendations for compatible new additions apply equally to new construction.

[3] *Sense of Place: Design Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts* published in 2007.

[4] Including, without limitation, *The Future of the Past, A Conservation Ethic for Architecture, Urbanism and Historic Preservation* by Steven W. Semes © 2009 and *Preserving the World's Great Cities: The Destruction and Renewal of the Historic Metropolis* by Anthony Max Tung © 2001

[5] Notably, but not exclusively, New Orleans, LA and Salt Lake City, UT

They seek to promote an approach toward new construction and additions that recognize Key West's ever evolving; historic districts have the ability to accommodate change without losing their character. This is particularly important in the Old Town Historic District that was included on The National Register of Historic Places in 1971. In 1983, the district boundary was expanded.

The primary goal of the Secretary's Standards is to preserve and protect the existing historic context. Two of the Secretary's Standards are particularly relevant to new construction:

1) Preserve Historic Character: New construction should not destroy any remaining historic materials, features or special relationships that characterize a property or setting.

2) Differentiate Old From New. A visual distinction should be made between old and new work. An informed observer should be able to distinguish between the new and the historic. While the difference may not be readily ascertainable to the public at large it should not require a trained professional to recognize a contemporary interpretation of an historic style.

Even in an historic district each building site has unique characteristics and vocabulary. Compatible development can have a positive impact on a neighborhood because it can bring into beneficial use redundant sites, provide new land uses and additional floor space thereby helping to maintain and enhance the appeal of an area. Incompatible development, by contrast, can compromise an historic district's desirability and integrity.

It is not the intent of these guidelines to dictate specific architectural styles or design "solutions" because what might be appropriate at one site may not be appropriate at another. That said, there are nevertheless local styles of building that can be extrapolated into new designs that sustain the historic patterns. Designs based on traditional architecture found in the district or invention within the same or related style are approaches to design which are most likely to result in development which will sit harmoniously beside neighboring structures. The purely "modernist" styles (e.g. Bauhaus, Brutalism, European Internationalism, Minimalism, etc.) were intended to oppose that which preceded them and thus are unlikely to be compatible with an historic district firmly grounded in late 19th and early 20th century aesthetics. Inspired by the search for unprecedented solutions and unique

gestures, modernist structures, marvelous as they may be, reject and therefore do not complement or harmonize with antecedent traditions. Modernist elements may; however, be incorporated if the overall structure remains in keeping with the surrounding built environment. Areas in the historic district, where the urban block have lost their historic fabric, may more readily absorb a greater degree of modernist design influence if fundamental design principles are followed.

GUIDELINES

All new construction must comply with the City of Key West's Land Development Regulations and building codes. The design principles below are intended to help residents, contractors, architects and others develop new construction projects that are compatible with their historic surroundings.

Guideline 1: Acceptable proposals will be compatible with the size, scale, color, texture, material and character of the district, sub-area or block and designed so that when completed the urban context in which it stands will not be jarred by the look of the new building. New buildings shall not overshadow the historic properties around it.

Guideline 2: Acceptable development may be designed in a variety of architectural styles, so long as the design preserves or enhances and reflects the sense of place and creates a continuity of character of the area.

Guideline 3: Proposals that are based on traditional architecture must avoid creating a false sense of history.

Guideline 4: Many recent modular homes brought to the historic districts lack a level of detailing (e.g. lack of window reveals) and do not have the proportions of the vernacular style they seek to mimic. Proposals that do not have appropriate proportions or architectural detailing of that style of property are not allowed.

Proposals must respect the distinctive character of the immediate area by following the existing scale, height, building and roof forms, rhythm, proportions and materials. New development can achieve compatibility with nearby architecture through setback, roof pitch and shape, building materials, windows and doors, ratio of solid vs. void, height, width and massing. It must be visually harmonious with adjacent buildings and public spaces.

This chapter addresses one of the common challenges facing historic districts: how to incorporate new construction without sacrificing the qualities that make older buildings and neighborhoods so distinctive.

CONTEXT

High ground was at a premium on a small island vulnerable to hurricanes, tropical storms and their attendant storm surge. Consequently, Old Town evolved with primary streets on a grid pattern with secondary streets, or lanes, leading to the interior of many blocks where additional homes are sited. For the surrounding neighbors these interior homes create a streetscape in addition to that of the main grid.

Key West has a variety of built forms, styles and typologies[6] that vary from area to area. For example, the size, street relationship and buildings typology in the Caroline, Fleming and Southard Streets differ from those buildings found in the Meadows. The residential properties in the Casa Marina area contain a greater number of more modern homes on larger plots – and the commercial corridor along Duval, parts of Whitehead, Truman and White have their own characteristics.

Old Town Key West derives its vibrant urban and architectural qualities through diversity. There are well-defined residential areas, with small lanes, slow traffic streets, and small-scale houses. In many of these residential areas, we still find a corner structure that is used as a neighborhood store. On primary corridors, the streets are wider, houses are of a larger scale, and commercial, institutional, and governmental buildings create a more contrasting urban façade when it comes to mass, scale and building heights.

Today's commercial corridors were designed as mixed-use corridors where residences, commercial, institutional, and governmental buildings were built. Through time the demand for commercial space, tourism growth, and the need for more dwelling units, single family homes were readapted for commercial uses, or sub-divided as apartments or transient use. Still the character of those many historic readapted homes is residential in nature. Residences that were built on historic mixed-use corridors are setback from the front lot line and have front yards. Where dwelling units were located on corner lots, most of the time, they also have a side street setback.

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[6] *Reference in these guidelines to "typology" means how the function of the building is articulated through its exterior design - by its form and architectural expression. As an example a building designed and built as a church and readapted as a house still looks like a church and will be considered a church for the purpose of these guidelines.*

Many commercial buildings were built with zero setback, with retail use on the first floor and residential on the upper. Exceptions to this urban characteristic are historic gas stations, governmental buildings and a great majority of religious buildings. Commercial buildings located on corners on historic residential context, known as corner store also were designed with zero setbacks on the front and side property lines. During the middle of the 1940's the profuse use of automobiles created the need for parking areas on commercial buildings and consequently front and side street yards became open. Since historically the urban façade was not disrupted with large open spaces for parking lots it is not appropriate to create new parking areas on front or side street yards.

Historically, residential structures are one, one and a half, two and two and a half-story, frame structures, either with front or side gables. Sizes and scale of houses varied, depending on their location; houses on lanes were traditionally smaller in size and height than houses fronting a street. Due to their small lot condition, houses built in lanes tend to have minimum front yards. Houses facing mixed-use corridors have larger front setbacks and their scale and size is larger than homes found in strictly residential areas. As an example, in the residential area that is known today as Casa Marina there are larger plots where the main house has larger front and side yards, and in many cases a carport was built in the lot.

Originally, residential buildings had their front façade oriented towards the main street with the majority having full width front porches. Front porches are either one story or two stories, depending on the configuration of the house.

The development of Key West as an urban center did not conform to any specific regulation where institutional and governmental buildings were built on specific zones dedicated to such uses. Historic institutional buildings such as religious structures, hospitals, lodges, and schools as well as governmental buildings, such as courts, city halls, customs, and post office, among others, were built throughout the urban grid. Many of those buildings have survived through time and have been readapted to new uses; others still have the same use. Certainly, the scale, mass and height and sometimes materials, found in institutional and governmental buildings differ greatly from buildings that were built as single-family houses or commercial structures. These types of buildings are taller and truly create the skyline of Old Town Key West and can be found next to a commercial or residential structure.

The construction of the overseas train, the completion of the overseas road and aerial trips positioned Key West as a major tourist destination. Conversion of single houses or apartment buildings into hotels was common in the first half of the 20th Century. The demand of transient lodging bloomed and with it, buildings dedicated to fulfill the needs of tourists visiting a sub-tropical island. The 1940's and 1950's can be considered a boom period of this typology in Key West. The majority of the hotels are concentrated towards the south portion of the district. As an emerging typology, hotel designs did not follow the traditional architectural vocabulary found in frame architecture; rather the modern movement with an emphasis on the use of the car influenced them.

No one single urban block within the historic district is equal; that is why it is paramount to understand the specific context and surrounding buildings when designing a new structure. For the purpose of the guidelines all existing readapted buildings and structures will be considered as they were intended originally, since their scale, mass, setbacks have no relationship to their actual use. This means that churches, houses, carports, etc. that are now or are to be occupied for a different use will still be considered as how they were originally built for.

COMPATIBILITY

A new building must relate to the essential characteristics of the district and setting and complement the character with creative yet compatible new design. Such characteristics would include the way in which a building is located on its site, the manner in which it relates to the street and its scale, height, massing, form and materials.

When these design variables are arranged in a new building to be similar to those seen traditionally in the area, visual compatibility inevitably results.

These basic design relationships are more fundamental than the details of individual architectural styles. It is possible, therefore, to be compatible with the historic context of the district, while creating a design that is identifiable as being newer than the historic buildings of the area.

Buildings that are *compatible* take cues from their immediate context. They attempt to respect—rather than overwhelm or detract from their surroundings. That means, for example, that a compatible new building is not significantly taller, or shorter, than the buildings around it; and does not present a blank wall to any street. The new building site orientation and location maintains a relationship to the urban block, similar to same surrounding typology structures. Compatible buildings may continue a pattern of alternating front doors and windows that reflect the historic rhythm, or they may follow the cornice/eaves lines of adjacent buildings, or use a combination of elements. The design principles and recommendations detailed in this section illustrate ways to achieve compatibility without copying or mimicking existing historic buildings.

Because compatibility is about responding to context, it is crucial to begin with a thorough understanding of the visual and physical characteristics that uniquely define a particular setting. Character-defining contributing historic structures are especially important to study when contemplating new construction include building height and width, building form and massing, setbacks, orientation, facade composition, architectural elements, roof configuration, and materials, among others.

When formulating design proposals consider, for example, the buildings in the immediate vicinity. Are they one story tall or two? Are they narrow with pitched roofs, or are they wider in relationship to their height? Are they built on slabs, or raised off the ground? Are they set back the same distance from the sidewalk? Are the entrances on the front facade or are they around the side? Are the windows and doors' head jambs aligned? Do they have porches? Are there any driveways, carports, or garages? Are the majority of surrounding buildings CBS stucco or wood frame?

STREET AND BLOCK PATTERNS

Most of the city's historic districts were first developed prior to, or during the early years of the automobile and generally buildings have a strong pedestrian orientation. This pedestrian orientation is reinforced by uniform setback patterns, clearly visible facades, narrow driveways and parking areas that are generally to the side or rear of buildings – if indeed any exist at all.

The site design shall maintain and reinforce the pedestrian orientation of the neighborhood by continuing the pattern by which buildings and other site elements relate to the street. In Old Town there is typically minimal visual separation between the public and private realm with active street facades, where open front porches and doors and window fenestrations create a transition between the street and the interior spaces of a home. When it comes to commercial buildings, their facades are mostly on zero front setback with large storefront openings and entry alcoves that recess from the front plane of the main facade.

When designing a new building, the historic settlement patterns of the district and context must be respected.

> ***Guideline 5: New construction proposals for sites on public or private lanes shall be subject to the same review criteria as construction proposals sited on the grid pattern streets.***

Guideline 6: A new building shall be situated on its site in a manner similar to directly adjacent historic buildings of the same typology. This includes consideration of building setbacks, orientation and front and side yards open space. This guideline also applies to new buildings where their adjacent context is non-historic. For residential development, acceptable proposals must be located on the site no further forward than the front façade set back of existing adjacent property.

Guideline 7: The front and the entrance of a primary structure must face the street. Where the width of a lot does not allow a front entrance, the new building front façade shall not be solid and must include openings and fenestrations that cannot be obscured by any architectural element. A new building must be oriented parallel to the lot lines, maintaining the traditional grid and development pattern of the block.

Guideline 8: New development must maintain and reinforce the human scale and pedestrian orientation of the neighborhood by continuing the pattern by which buildings and other site elements relate to the street.

Guideline 9: Acceptable development must keep an active frontage and through space planning encourage the visual link between public and private realms. Where front porches are part of the established context the new design must incorporate such architectural feature.

Guideline 10: Proposals that include garages or carports visible from the public realm can only be located on a site where carports and garages exist on adjacent properties. In any other location any garage or carport must not be visible from the public realm.

BUILDING SCALE, FORM AND MASSING

Building form refers to the shape of major volumes while massing refers to the overall composition of the major volumes, its overall "bulk" and how it sits on the site. New buildings

with similar form and massing to adjacent construction help the new building to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

Guideline 11: New buildings must be of a similar scale, form and massing to buildings on adjacent sites of same land use.

Guideline 12: Roof forms, bays and other projecting elements shall be similar to those of same land use found on the block of the proposed building.

BUILDING HEIGHT, WIDTH, AND PROPORTION

A building's height and width determine its overall size. However, the appropriateness of a building's size depends on its context. New buildings with similar height to width proportions will create a building compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

Scale refers to how one perceives a building's size in relation to adjacent properties. A building that towers over its neighbor may be described as over-scaled, whereas a diminutive building that is significantly smaller than adjacent structures may appear to be under-scaled.

Guideline 13: New buildings should generally be consistent with the existing height of buildings of same land use in the district, sub-area and/or immediate block. Buildings at the corners of major named and numbered streets, may exceed the height of adjacent buildings, particularly if there is a prevailing pattern of such height differentiation in the immediate area and adjacent corners.

Guideline 14: There must be a consistency of scale and proportion. The width and height of new construction shall be similar to those buildings of same land use immediately adjacent to it

Guideline 15: Notwithstanding Guidelines 13 and 14 the height of proposals must not exceed two and a half stories (see figures 1 and 2 on pages 77 and 78- MAY Change)

FEMA IMPACT

Increases in the estimated depth of potential flooding and building code requirements can create a conflict in trying to keep development massing below adjacent eaves and ridge heights.

> ***Guideline 14: When the first floor of a new building has to be higher than existing neighboring structures to meet FEMA standards, floor-to-floor heights shall be reduced, along with a proportionate reduction in width to maintain the established height pattern of neighboring structures and scale of the historic district. Alternately, a second floor may be located partly within a sloping roof form to maintain the established height pattern.***

FRONT PORCHES ON RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

Front porches are part of the established context in many of the residential districts. A front porch shall reflect the established pattern and proportion of front porches on the block while having a simplified or contemporary design.

The following guideline applies to front porches on a new residential building.

> ***Guideline 15: Residential proposals shall include a front porch of broadly the same width as those on adjacent properties. Solid facades with no porches or facades creating a false sense of an enclosed front porch are prohibited.***

ROOF SHAPE, WIDOW'S WALKS, ROOF DECKS, REAR BALCONIES AND DORMERS

The established pattern of roof shapes is an important part of the existing character of the city's historic districts and affects the perception of mass and scale. The roof shape and pitch of a new building must respect those of its neighbors. Introducing a different roof shape, such

as a flat roof on a residential structure surrounded by existing homes with pitched roofs would not be in keeping with the existing character of the street.

Commercial buildings typically have flat roofs embellished with cornices or parapets on the façade.

The following guidelines apply to the roof shape on a new building.

Guideline 18: Use roof forms that appear similar to the established range of roof shapes of same typology in the immediate surrounding area and are compatible with the architectural style of a new building.

Guideline 19: Air conditioning, transformers, satellite dishes, mechanical equipment and related access and safety rails etc. installed on the roof must not be visible when viewed from any public domain.

Guideline 20: Roof decks and widow's walks are not allowed on new residential development. They may be acceptable in exceptional circumstances on commercial development, where immediate adjacent buildings have the same elements. The use of roof decks, rear balconies or widows walks that clearly jeopardize the privacy of immediately adjacent properties are prohibited.

Guideline 21: Any proposed dormers must be compatible and proportionate to the building and its roof. Dormers with a large width that creates a full story are discouraged.

MATERIALS: ROOFS, WALLS WINDOWS AND DOORS

The materials used for walls, windows, sloping roofs, details and other visible elements of historic buildings shall be respected in the design of a new building. In some districts, where most or all of the buildings on a street use the same exterior materials, the new building shall normally use those or similar materials.

Proposals shall avoid large spaces of blank wall or curtain walling on the building's exterior and specifically on elevations visible from any streets.

For new residential buildings, the building's solid-to-void ratio shall echo that of nearby buildings. Solid-to-void ratio refers to the proportion of wall area to window and door area. Upper floors can be distinguished by decreasing the solid-to-void ratio. For example, in a street with predominantly timber sash windows, it would not be appropriate to propose large areas of curtain walling.

Windows shall be set back, typically one to two inches from the siding construction to reflect traditional reveals within the historic district.

On commercial buildings the design shall also follow traditional storefront design with a street-level facade that is as transparent as possible.

Guideline 22: Materials used for roofs, walling and windows etc. shall echo those used on the predominant or adjacent historic structures of same typology.

Guideline 23: New materials that are similar in character to traditional materials may be acceptable with appropriate detailing. Alternative materials shall appear similar in scale, proportion, texture and finish to those used in historic buildings.

Guideline 24: The pattern and proportions of window and door openings establish a rhythm and shall fall within the range associated with historic buildings of same typology in the area including size and reveals. They shall be similar in scale, proportion and character to those used traditionally in the neighborhood.

Guideline 25: Solid to void ratios of walling to windows and doors shall be similar to the typology in the immediate area.

EVALUATION BY GUIDELINES

The design of new buildings within the historic district can be a challenging task. The preceding guidelines are valuable tools used to review if a project is appropriate or not to the context within which it is intended to be built.

In order to help applicants to understand if their new construction proposal meets the guidelines for new construction the following questions shall be evaluated based on the design and its urban context. If all answers are "yes", the new proposed building or structure is likely to meet the preceding guidelines. **This is a tool given to help understanding a new construction project and it is not intended to create a final determination of a project.**

1. Does the new building or structure have a similar height to the immediately adjacent buildings?

2. Is the new building or structure sensitive and harmonious to the immediate urban context in which it will be located?

3. The new building or structure does not parody any existing building within the urban block?

4. The new building or structure does not overpower adjacent buildings or structures?

5. Does the new building or structure maintain the required setbacks and relationship to the street and or site?

6. For new buildings or structures facing a street, does any façade facing a street maintain similar rhythm, and composition found in adjacent buildings and or same typology?

7. The new design does not propose a carport or garage that is visible from any street (unless the immediately adjacent properties have historic garages or carports)

8. Does the new building or structure have a similar scale, mass, and form to the buildings immediately adjacent to where it will be built?

9. Are the exterior materials for the new building or structure similar to those used on the immediate adjacent properties or same typology?

10. The new building or structure does not include elements such as roof decks, balconies, dormers, roof forms, openings, doors and windows, among others, that are incompatible or would unnecessarily intrude on the privacy of the immediate adjacent buildings or structures?