

ADDITIONS & ALTERATIONS/ NEW CONSTRUCTION

Alterations, additions, and new construction can permanently damage the design of historic buildings and streetscapes by introducing out of scale, poorly designed changes, which alter the symmetry and beauty of historic districts. Poorly constructed additions may lead to the deterioration of a building by altering the functional design of a historic structure redirecting water into areas, which produce wood rot and decay. Modern additions commonly deteriorate before historic original portions of structure and if deemed necessary, should be carefully planned and constructed to minimize impact on the structure's health and appearance.

Key West's historic district's tightly spaced blocks contain a wide variety of architectural styles, which relate well to each other. The relationships between the buildings create much of the character of the district. Their height, detailing, mass roof forms, and landscaping all contribute to its visual harmony. It is important that new construction harmonize with the existing historical building stock and streetscapes.

Traditional wood-frame buildings in Key West were constructed on low piers that provided a crawl-space under buildings to allow air circulation and to provide protection from flooding. The City also recognizes that conformity with current FEMA regulations with regard to elevation is important. However, the elevation of buildings to allow people and cars to pass underneath is not traditional, and the insertion of such structures into historic neighborhoods might interfere with the essential form and integrity of historic properties and their environment.

The historic areas of Key West are traditionally low-rise. Nineteenth-century buildings, having no elevators, were limited in height by the elevation that could reasonably be reached by stair. Single-family houses are traditionally no more than two or two-and-a-half stories. Only church steeples, important civic buildings with clock towers, the lighthouse, and other notable landmarks break the skyline. The City Commission finds that the preservation of this traditionally low-rise cityscape in Old Town, interrupted only by significant, symbolically important structures, is a matter of public policy benefiting the people of Key West and the long-term stewardship of historic neighborhoods in Key West.

1. **Siting** – New construction must conform to all current city easement, setback and building requirements. No existing building shall be relocated and no new structure shall be placed closer to the sidewalk, street or visible alley, than the distance of pre-existing historic structures. Areas reserved for parks or open space must be retained.

2. **Elevation of finished floor above grade** - Applications for buildings with the first finished floor above the minimum height necessary to comply with federal flood regulations will not be approved unless the applicant demonstrates that such elevation does not interfere with the essential form and integrity of properties in the neighborhood. In situations wherein parking is proposed below the first finished floor, HARC shall consider how visible the parking is from the public right-of-way; whether the parking area is enclosed or otherwise concealed by walls, louvers, lattice, landscaping or other features; and whether fill and/or berms are used to minimize the gap between the first finished floor and the crown of the nearest road.

3. **Height** – must not exceed two and a half stories (see Figures 1 and 2 pages 77 and 78). There must be a sympathetic relationship of height between new buildings and existing adjacent structures of the neighborhood. New buildings must be compatible with historic floor elevations. The height of all new construction shall be based upon the height of existing structures within the vicinity.
4. **Proportion, scale and mass** – massing, scale and proportion shall be similar to that of existing historical buildings in the historical zone. No new construction shall be enlarged so that its proportions are out of scale with its surroundings. No new construction shall be more than two and a half stories. No structure shall outsize the majority of structures in the streetscape or historic zone.
5. **Compatibility** – Design must be compatible with Key West architectural characteristics in the historical zones. All new construction must be in keeping with the historic character in terms of size, scale, design, materials, color and texture.
6. **Building Detail** – All new buildings shall incorporate a level of detail that assures compatibility with the surrounding historic context. New construction shall not precisely mimic the details of historic buildings but should have features that are compatible with the lines of historic architecture.
7. **Relationship of materials** – Materials used on new construction shall be of similar color, dimension, texture, and appearance as historic fabrics. The predominant exterior finish in historic zones is wood weatherboard, clapboard, drop siding, or board and batten. Exceptions for the use of composite materials may be permissible. Roofing is primarily sheet metal or metal shingles. New construction shall establish a relationship with existing historic structures by utilizing similar finishes and metals.