
I. INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the historic preservation community

– you are part of a community of people from all over Lancaster who are dedicated to preserving our city’s historic buildings and neighborhoods. Ownership of a building in Historic Lancaster makes you a steward of Lancaster’s history.

The Historic Lancaster Design Guidelines is your handbook for maintaining, rehabilitating and enhancing the character of your property so that it continues to contribute in a positive way to the historic character of the community.

BACKGROUND

The long-term preservation and enhancement of Lancaster’s historic properties is a local goal that has been established through years of planning and implementation of programs that promote revitalization. Revitalization of historic areas and buildings preserves a sense of place, as well as increases the city’s tax base and promotes economic development.

The Historic Lancaster Commission was originally created in 1977 by Lancaster Codified Ordinances Chapter 1327 to ensure that the character of the city’s historic properties is taken into account in rehabilitation, remodeling, or new construction work. The Commission accomplishes this by reviewing applications for a Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior work that occurs within city-designated Design Review Districts or Listed Properties. *The only Design Review District at this time is the Historic Lancaster District, designated in 1977. The boundaries of this district remain unchanged and are shown on the map on page 12.*

In 1995, the City of Lancaster became a Certified Local Government (CLG). CLG status qualifies the city to participate in a local-state-federal partnership (in cooperation with the Ohio Historic Preservation Office and the U.S. Department of the Interior) to conduct a wide range of preservation activities. These include surveys of historic resources and nominations of properties to the National Register of Historic Places. CLG communities are eligible to apply for Certified Local Government matching grants to further their work in planning, documentation, registration, and preservation education at the local level. Recent ordinance revisions and revision of the Historic Lancaster Design Guidelines were funded by a CLG grant.

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The Lancaster community has adopted programs in recent years that help facilitate revitalization efforts for the commercial area of Lancaster. In 2003, a Downtown Lancaster Special Improvement District or SID was created to assist property and business owners with marketing, business recruitment and maintenance. Then in 2005, Main Street Lancaster was formed when the city was designated a Main Street Community by Heritage Ohio, providing access to resources and assistance for downtown.

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES

These design guidelines are written to assist both the property owner or applicant and the Historic Lancaster Commission in making appropriate decisions regarding the appearance and character of Historic Lancaster's buildings and sites. If your property is located within the boundaries of a Design Review District or is a Listed Property designated by city ordinance, then any exterior architectural change that you wish to make will require a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Commission. See Procedures starting on page 7.

The guidelines help protect the overall character of Lancaster by emphasizing preservation of architectural styles, details and streetscape elements that make up the community's unique historic character. They provide background information and recommendations to help guide appropriate rehabilitation work and alterations of existing buildings. For additions, new construction and site work, they emphasize compatibility of new buildings or features with the area's historic character. While they are intended for use in the city's historic areas, these guidelines offer information and advice that can be useful to anyone who is interested in maintaining and preserving an older or historic property in Lancaster.

ORGANIZATION OF THE GUIDELINES

The Historic Lancaster Design Guidelines are organized according to the Table of Contents found on page ii. Following this Introduction, Section II outlines the procedures for applying for and obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Lancaster Commission. This section outlines the steps to take in that process and includes a flow chart for ease of understanding.

Section III provides background on the history of Lancaster and a "snapshot" of the historic architectural styles and building types that exist in Historic Lancaster. Included here are photographs showing examples of buildings that illustrate the community's rich architectural legacy.

The design guidelines found in Section IV focus on preservation and rehabilitation of existing buildings. Based on the Secretary of the Interior's

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Standards for Rehabilitation, the guidelines recommend appropriate treatments for historic buildings, ranging from their foundations and roofs, to masonry walls or siding, to windows and doors, to special features such as porches. They include guidance for Lancaster’s historic commercial buildings, including recommendations for storefronts, signage, and upper floors. Special situations, such as where to provide access for the disabled or how to approach an adaptive reuse project, are also given guidance.

Finally, historic garages and outbuildings and Lancaster’s distinctive historic landscape features are addressed. Section V looks at new construction including additions to existing buildings; new buildings; site features such as fencing, walls, decks and patios; and issues surrounding parking and streetscape.

The final section of the guidelines, the Appendix, includes a glossary of guidelines terminology, sources to contact for information and assistance, and information about programs and financial incentives that currently exist for Historic Lancaster.

Also located in the Appendix, page 113, is a map showing Lancaster’s listings on the National Register of Historic Places. These include the significant Square 13 Historic District (listed 1972), the West Main Street Historic District (listed 1979), and the Lancaster Historic District (listed 1983, also incorporates the first two districts within its boundaries). A number of individual properties are listed on the National Register as well. *Please note that the boundaries of the National Register Lancaster Historic District are different from the locally-designated Historic Lancaster District that is subject to design review.*

USING THE GUIDELINES

The underlying premise of the guidelines is preservation: retaining and stabilizing the significant buildings and features that define the historic building or the streetscape. That is why terms such as repair, retain, maintain and preserve are used throughout the guidelines. Repairing, retaining, maintaining and preserving original or historic architectural features is preferred to replacing them. For that reason, the rehabilitation guidelines always begin with the most conservative treatment – repair – and then move toward other treatments that may be warranted.

Beyond preservation, the intent of the guidelines is to encourage quality new design of additions and new buildings, compatible environmental treatments, and appropriate use of elements such as signage, awnings and lighting within the historic district. The guidelines are based on the Secretary of the Interior’s ten Standards for Rehabilitation, which can be found on page 38.

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Other terms used in the guidelines are should and should not, or recommended and not-recommended. The use of these terms signifies that the Historic Lancaster Commission expects property owners to follow the meaning and intent of a guideline as written, and gives an indication of whether or not a particular approach will be approved. Each project, however, is reviewed on an individual, case-by-case basis, and there are times when more flexibility or creative solutions are needed in applying the guidelines. When those situations occur, it will be important for the Commission to be clear in stating the reasons for its decision.

The guidelines are intended for use by both members of the Historic Lancaster Commission and applicants for a Certificate of Appropriateness. Following these guidelines will enable the applicant and the Commission to be “on the same page” when determining if a treatment is appropriate for Historic Lancaster, helping to ensure a smooth process of design review.

DON'T RELY ON PRECEDENT

As you begin planning your project, don't rely on precedent as a guide. There are some non-historic or incompatible treatments of buildings and sites in Historic Lancaster that would not be approved by the Commission today. The Historic Lancaster Commission will consider each project that is presented to them independent of projects that may have been done in the past.

Some of those non-historic or incompatible treatments include artificial siding material, altered storefronts, enclosed or altered porch designs, and decreased window sizes. While these treatments may remain through their useful life, any significant change will need to be brought up to the standards of these guidelines.

PROPERTY OWNER AND COMMISSION RESPONSIBILITIES

Property owners in Historic Lancaster have an important role to play in maintaining the significance and character of the District or Listed Property. By following these guidelines and the procedures for obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness, property owners can contribute to the long-term stability and enhancement of their immediate neighborhood. As we know, properties in any area are affected by the actions of their neighbors, as the decisions of one property owner can have an impact on the investment and property values of another.

It is the property owner's responsibility to make contact with the Historic Lancaster Commission and apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness whenever an exterior architectural change (exterior alteration, addition, new

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construction, or demolition) is proposed. Make sure that you are familiar with the process outlined in Section II, become familiar with the city's history and architecture in Section III, and follow recommendations contained in Sections IV and V of these guidelines.

It is the responsibility of the Historic Lancaster Commission to work with local property owners to provide advice, to review applications for Certificates of Appropriateness in a timely fashion, and to use its adopted guidelines and standards in conducting that review. In addition, the Commission has a responsibility to undertake other activities for the community, raising awareness of local history and contributing to preservation and revitalization efforts. Please see the Appendix for contact information for the Historic Lancaster Commission.