

DRAFT Compatible New Construction Policy

CITY OF ST. LOUIS PRESERVATION BOARD

ADOPTED [ADD DATE]

Introduction

City Ordinance #64689 states that the Preservation Board shall be responsible for policy with respect to historic preservation in the City, and for establishing and articulating standards with respect to the minimum exterior appearance of improvements within Historic Districts in such a manner as to enhance property in the City, encourage property maintenance and promote development consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The review and approval of new construction in the City's local historic districts is an important component of historic district standards as new buildings are permanent changes in the district. As there is no overall standard for new construction in the City's local historic districts, district-specific standards provide varying degrees of guidance for new construction, particularly for buildings that do not use the historic design vocabulary of the historic district. Nevertheless, many standards support a range of solutions under the broad mandate for compatibility of new construction, although this relationship has been interpreted mainly as comparability providing compatibility. These approaches are summarized in Appendix 1. Therefore, this policy is not in direct contrast to the wording of existing historic district standards; instead it expands the consideration of compatibility beyond comparability, with the intent to encourage high-quality design and building that reflects its time of construction.

The purpose of this policy is two-fold. As a Compatible New Construction Policy, it is intended to be used with existing standards in the assessment of the compatibility of proposed new construction in the City's historic districts when the standards do not require new buildings to be based on a Historic Model Example. As a policy, it does not replace any new construction standards adopted by Ordinance. As an articulation of what is compatible – as opposed to comparable – the policy provides a more open approach to compatibility and provides a vocabulary to use when discussing proposals. As a policy, rather than standards adopted by ordinance, it can be assessed for effectiveness and completeness. The Preservation Board can discontinue the use of the policy or alter it at any time. If the standards in the policy prove to be effective, the text could be incorporated into revisions of historic district standards.

Use of the Policy

The Policy could be used if these conditions are met:

The local historic district standards do not require the use of a Historic Model Example.

In a consensus-building approach, a majority of the main participants in the proposal and review of new construction:

the applicant,
neighborhood group active in a local historic district,
Cultural Resources Office, and
Preservation Board

agree that the Policy is appropriate to use in the review of a project. In this way, no one entity has a veto, yet no one entity can insist on a compatible, rather than comparable, approach to new construction.

Alternatively, if after the adoption of this Policy, historic district standards are revised to include provisions for compatible construction that are more particular to a historic district, that more tailored approach to compatible design would be used.

In addition, the policy will be used to assess compatible new construction in National Register Historic Districts in these instances:

When considering subsequent new construction following the approval of a demolition;
and

When the Cultural Resources Office is reviewing compatible new construction in terms of the requirements of a Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Statement of Intent

The intent of the new construction standards in this policy is to provide a means to discuss and assess the compatibility of proposed buildings within the existing character of an historic district. Each historic district is a resource that conveys a particular place and time of the past; its designation indicates that it is a significant resource to protect from demolition and disinvestment. Yet districts are also evidence of change over time as new buildings are constructed in them. The intent of these standards is to carefully consider how new buildings will be complementary new investments that add to, and not detract from, historic districts. The goal for compatible new buildings in St. Louis historic districts is high-quality design and construction that respect nearby historic buildings.

There is more than one approach to design in historic districts within the overall concept of compatibility. There is a difference between compatibility and comparability, which is a much more restrictive comparison that relies on similarity in concept and details. Some comparability – particularly in scale and placement – provides compatibility for new construction within a historic district streetscape. New buildings do not need to be in a replica historic design to be compatible; new buildings with a similar degree of scale and architectural detail can be compatible and in no way diminish nearby historic buildings. Buildings that provide these qualities can be complementary as compatibility implies variety within some overall unity. A new building in an historic district should be an expression of the design and construction of the

time of development, but have a readily discernable compatibility with forms and patterns of buildings in historic districts.

Visual Compatibility. The characters of the City’s historic districts, which are predominately residential, are that of quite homogeneous neighborhoods with consistent use of materials and colors. For this reason many feel that a proposed new building must pass a “visual compatibility” test within its immediate setting derived from several factors, including materials, design articulation, and scale. Visual compatibility should be readily perceived and not need to be explained.

Reinvention and Reference. Compatible new design that avoids replication of traditional building types and styles can nevertheless sustain a sense of continuity over time, particularly when designs can be perceived to reinterpret historic building types and styles or make clear references to them, or use the same materials. The design of a new building can maintain a balance between a differentiation from historic buildings and comparability with them, having both of these characteristics readily perceivable. This approach to the design of new buildings respects the existing context and uses its underlying principles of space, composition, scale of parts to the whole, ratio of solids and voids, and extent of ornament.

Contrast. For others, the consistency in our historic districts provides the opportunity for new buildings that are more of a punctuation point in the streetscape and introduce contrast and juxtaposition. When a use requires, or preference is the reason for a departure from historic patterns, broader considerations of compatibility can be considered.

Traditions in Building in St. Louis. Many views of compatible new construction extend the tradition of the provision of high-quality, well-designed, sustainable buildings in St. Louis. These are among the reasons the buildings in historic districts remain in use and are significant assets of the City. High-quality design can be a means of affording compatibility. Enabling a sense of dynamic urban life and authenticity in a city, including in historic districts where we are choosing to take historic buildings into the future, are parallel goals.

Form, Articulation and Materials. The popularity of form-based zoning in many cities and the recent adoption of that approach in St. Louis highlights the desirability of standard patterns in various neighborhoods that include scale and orientation, alignment, and location of garages, as well as the form and articulation of buildings. The form-based zoning approach to the regulation of new construction also identifies exterior materials that cannot be used on the premise that new buildings must be of a similar quality. In a similar manner, these standards allow for the use of many materials and recommend the use of those that convey their inherent qualities and do not imitate other materials. New construction should have integrated construction methods and exterior materials, be durable and provide comfort for its occupants. In these ways new buildings will be compatible to the qualities of the original buildings.

These standards acknowledge that what is compatible is hard to articulate once comparability is not a primary consideration. These standards acknowledge new construction may not appear to have a neutral effect in a streetscape if comparability is not required. These standards also acknowledge that different sites warrant different approaches to design.

Table 1 summarizes some approaches to design and types of projects and illustrates why no one approach to design will be articulated in these standards.

Table 1. Design Approaches for Additions and New Construction: Recommendations

| Approach | Highly Visible Additions | New Construction Small of Infill project | New Construction Large project |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Use historic vocabulary or replicate historic design | Possible but not necessary | Possible but not necessary | Not recommended |
| Reinvention within a type or style | Recommended | Recommended | Recommended |
| Abstract reference to the historic | Depends on scale | Possible | Recommended |
| Contrast/ Juxtaposition | Possible; may be justified by uses or requirements | Possible; may be justified use or requirements | Possible; justified in areas of extensive loss and by urban goals and uses |
| Introduce new property types or urban uses* | | Possible | Possible |

New property types that reflect urban uses and goals that have certain physical requirements include but are not limited to:

- use of property for live/work, including urban farming
- intentional community, co-housing
- energy conservation; passive solar; sustainable materials use
- density, public/privacy factors
- institutional use

Principles for New Construction in St. Louis Historic Districts

These principles are another means of stating the intent of this approach to compatible new construction in historic districts. They are supported by the more specific standards.

Design review has a role, mainly to consider the project in the larger district resource and to assess the public's ability to find compatibility in what is proposed.

The district is a resource more important than any of its individual components. It conveys a time and place and also change over time.

Compatibility is not comparability. Compatibility is less similar than comparability yet there are comparisons to consider. Compatible buildings can – and should – be different from their neighbors in historic districts. They do not have to be replicative or dominantly comparable to be compatible.

The sense of what is appropriate infill construction is very local and therefore varies from district to district, place to place, and project type to project type.

Compatibility is often a visual judgement. Compatibility can be achieved in various design approaches, as well as in quality of design and materials, and sustainable, durable, and comfortable buildings suited to modern needs.

Compatibility is an achievable design challenge that allows for creativity and innovation within some parameters.

New construction should have integrated construction methods and exterior materials.

The approval of a design in one location does not mean that it will be found compatible in another location. Design should be site specific and avoid standard solutions. Substantive variations are preferable to repetition when multiple buildings are proposed.

Materials and color are important interrelated factors in selection and placement and can reinforce coherency or introduce contrast in strong, consistent streetscapes as new buildings provide a sense of a vibrant, authentic urban setting.

NEW CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS

General

New buildings shall be sufficiently similar in some of the aspects of size, scale, height, location on the lot, materials or colors to convey a design relationship in the context of nearby historic buildings in the district, sub-area or block.

Designers shall present new construction in terms of the overall approach to design and features that establish compatibility, as articulated in this policy.

A compatible design approved for one location does not mean that it will be found compatible in another. Designs shall be site specific and avoid standard or formulaic solutions. Substantive variations are preferable to repetition when multiple buildings are proposed.

Height

Compatibility in height does not necessarily mean the same height.

Non-residential uses and locations on thoroughfares provide reasons for a taller height than what is generally considered to be compatible.

As one-story buildings in general do not provide the density and urban character of the historic districts, they are not considered to be compatible in height in most locations, but may be justified by use, such as a school or accessible housing.

It is more important that a single infill building be comparable in height to its flanking historic ones than a larger project.

Massing

For additions and infill construction, the massing of the building shall be readily perceived to have some relationship to the buildings in the historic district. This relationship could be massing utilizing a rectangular footprint and similar ratios of width to height of existing buildings, similar complexity or simplicity, or some other factor.

Distinctly atypical or excessively varied massing for the sake of variety is not considered to support the desired compatibility of massing.

Setback and Blockface

The blockface maintained by the setback of buildings shall not be diluted by the placement of new buildings. If there is a consistent setback, the primary mass of new buildings shall address that setback line by being at it.

A single infill building that is flanked by historic ones shall maintain the setback line of one or both of those buildings.

A single infill building shall be positioned to maintain the common distance between buildings on the blockfront on one side and therefore may not be centered on the lot.

Site plans that introduce suburban forms of development, including but not limited to new streets forming cul-de-sacs with buildings facing them or individual driveways leading to front garages, shall not be introduced into a district.

Street-facing Façade Composition

A street façade shall incorporate architectural elements that have a human scale and reflect interior and exterior patterns of use or ownership. If it is a screen of some type, access to the building shall be visible from the street.

A street façade shall have a ratio of solids to voids – walls to windows – that is comparable to nearby buildings or those of the same type in the district.

The design of a street façade shall use window and door placement, as well as vertical plane breaks, to avoid large expanses of solid walls.

A street façade shall not include garage doors in residential buildings.

Materials on Visible Façades

A street façade shall have one primary or dominant material on the façade.

The primary façade material shall be compatible in material or color to the prominent visual character of its blockfront setting or have some other justification for its use.

Compatibility in color may be achieved through the use of another color that is similar in value. The inherent colors of visible non-façade materials shall be of similar value to those of the façade and shall introduce no more than two additional colors. Color may be introduced through small scale features.

Exterior insulated finish systems (EIFS) and vinyl siding are not allowed on portions of buildings visible from streets in the historic district as they are sufficiently different in appearance and quality as to detract from the historic buildings.

In most cases, a building may not have a street façade of one primary material, and three walls of another material, unless the façade material returns a substantial distance on the side elevations and terminates at a logical point, such as a vertical plane break or rear wing. Changes of materials shall relate to the articulation of the building with vertical or horizontal plane breaks and reflect interior and exterior patterns of use or ownership.

Materials for visible roofs of the main block of a building shall be a single material and color.

Windows and Doors

Window and door openings shall relate to interior and exterior patterns of use or ownership.

The street façade shall have window openings that meet the mandate to have a comparable ratio of solids and voids.

The main entrance shall be placed in the street façade or on a side façade near the front of the property.

Solar Panels

Visible solar panels or similar materials, such as solar shingles, may be integrated into the overall design, i.e. as shade devices or awnings or be integral to and cover the entire roof.

Solar panels may be installed if they meet the requirements for visual compatibility in the Solar Panel Installation Policy adopted by the Preservation Board.

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DEFINITIONS

Abstract Reference. The abstract reference design strategy makes reference to an historic building form or style, while avoiding literal resemblance. This approach emphasizes differentiation over comparability, yet can achieve compatibility. Any abstraction, however, should pass a “first glance test” for recognition and of the reference and compatibility within the historic district.

Comparable. As used in this document, an adjective that describes entities that are quite similar, or equivalent, based on physical qualities.

Compatible new construction. This term describes new buildings that are sufficiently similar to nearby existing ones in *some* of the aspects of size, scale, height, location on the lot, materials or colors to convey a design relationship.

Contrast or Juxtaposition. This approach to design introduces new elements into a streetscape in a historic district, often through forms, materials, and colors.

Form-based zoning. This is a type of land development regulation that specifies physical forms and uses and often includes areas of types of development, building types and architectural standards. The intent of form-based zoning, similar to that of historic district standards, is to foster predictable changes in the built environment.

Historic Model Example. A building or element(s) of a single example of architectural type and style used as the basis of a the design of a reconstructed element or new building.

Infill Construction. The construction of three or fewer adjacent buildings on sites flanked by historic buildings.

Invention within a Building Type or Style. This approach to design avoids replication of traditional building types and styles yet sustains a sense of continuity in architectural language and perhaps in the use of materials. This is achieved often by reinterpreting building elements within a familiar frame of reference. A design of this type maintains a balance between differentiation from historic buildings and compatibility with them and both of these characteristics are readily perceivable. This approach to the design of new buildings respects the existing context and uses its underlying principles of space, composition, scale of parts to the whole, ratio of solids and voids, and the extent of ornament.

Visible. A condition wherein something can be seen when viewed from six feet or less above street grade from the street or sidewalk. This is a condition that can be verified, rather than a judgment about the effects of the visibility. Elements such as opaque fences and landscaping that are not permanent do not eliminate visibility, but are taken into account.

Visual Compatibility. This term qualifies the effect of visibility. It is achieved when the element or object to be considered is designed and placed to have clear relationships with its setting.

APPENDIX I
Existing New Construction Regulation Spring 2016

| Historic District | Date Standards Adopted | Existing Regulation New Construction | Recommendation |
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Standards Require Model Example for Residential New Construction

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| Lafayette Square | 2012 | Residential: The use of an Historic Model Example (HME) as a requirement for the reconstruction of building elements of residential buildings or new residential construction has an important advantage. By using the district itself as a source of design and detail, the relationship of a reconstruction or new construction of a building will maintain the historical character of the district. | Policy not applicable with current standards |
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No Guidance in Standards

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| Union Station Landmark | 1979 | All new construction within this Historic District, including parking facilities, must be approved by the Landmarks and Urban Design Commission (now the Cultural Resources Office) | Policy not likely to be applicable |
| Broadway Bluffs Landmark | | No standards have been adopted. | Policy should be used |
| 4100-4300 Lindell | 2013 | Defers to Central West End Form Based Zoning District standards for new construction; tends to encourage New Urbanist-traditional design | Policy should be used |

Most Open to Compatible Design

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| Central West End | 2013 | It is not the intention of these regulations to discourage contemporary design that, through careful attention to scale, materials, siting and landscaping, is harmonious with the existing historic structure. The historic character of the historic district is not enhanced by new construction that attempts to mimic the historic. | Policy could be used |
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Generally Compatible Variations; comments on materials, roofs, details

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| Skinker-DeBaliviere | 1973 | Exterior materials when visible from the street should be of the type originally used when the proposed Historic District area was developed: brick, stone, stucco, wood, and wrought and cast iron. New buildings should be detailed so as to be compatible with existing buildings , respecting scale, rhythm, window proportions, important cornice lines, use of materials, etc. | Policy could be used |
| Visitation Park | 1975 | New dwellings on Enright, Clemens or Windermere are to be similar to the neighboring dwellings on the block in which the construction is undertaken. New dwellings on Cabanne must be at least two-stories in height. It is not the intention of these regulations to | Policy could be used |

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| | | in any way discourage contemporary design which through careful attention to scale, materials, siting and landscaping is harmonious with the historic, existing structures. | |
| Compton Hill | 1978 | All new and rehabilitated structures shall complement the height, scale and proportion of adjacent buildings. Materials for new or rehabilitated structures shall be compatible in type... | Policy could be used |
| Hyde Park | 1978 | Particularly when new construction is proposed, consideration of the "streetscape" and the relationship of the new structures to the existing buildings is of the utmost importance. All new construction should complement and respect existing buildings. Architectural details on new construction need not imitate details on existing buildings but should always be compatible. | Policy could be used |
| Cherokee-Lemp Brewery | 1980 | Location and spacing of new or reconstructed buildings shall be consistent with the existing patterns in the neighborhood respecting depth of front yards, width of buildings and width of side yards. Materials for new or rehabilitated structures shall be compatible in type, texture and color with the original building materials used in the neighborhood. | Policy could be used |
| Kingsbury-Washington Terrace | 1983 | Exterior Materials: The texture and color of basic building materials give continuity to the appearance of the Historic District. These same materials must be used in ... new construction... Architectural details are an important part of building design. Such details related to new, altered or reconstructed construction need not, and perhaps should not, imitate details on existing buildings in the Historic District, but they should always be compatible particularly with respect to the architectural era. | Policy could be used |
| Shaw Neighborhood | 1985 | Some of the guidelines are precise whereas other are, by necessity, more general, allowing a range of alternative solutions, all of which are compatible with the existing neighborhood. | Policy could be used |
| North I-44 | 1987 | Exterior Materials shall be generally consistent over the entire block face and shall be limited to materials that were originally used to construct residences in the neighborhood. On each elevation, window patterns shall reflect the original configuration. Windows, as well as doors and other openings on both new and renovated structures shall be in the same horizontal and vertical size and style as in the original buildings in the area. On blocks where there are different roof shapes and designs, new or renovated structures shall have roof shapes and lines compatible with adjacent buildings. | Policy could be used |
| The Ville | 2006 | Architectural details on new buildings shall be compatible. When there is a strong or dominant roof shape in a block, proposed new construction or alterations shall be compatible with existing buildings. | Policy could be used |

The Souldard Model: Provides for a Continuum

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| Souldard | 1991 | The Model Example concept is not intended to preclude contemporary designs , but to assure that they are compatible with their environment. The Public and Semi-Public Facades of new construction shall be reviewed based on a Model Example taking into consideration the following: | Policy could be used |
| Benton Park | 2006 | The Model Example concept is not intended to preclude contemporary designs , but to assure that they are compatible with their environment. The Public and Semi-Public Facades of new construction shall be reviewed based on a Model Example taking into consideration the following: | Policy could be used |
| Fox Park | 2006 | The Model Example concept is not intended to preclude contemporary designs , but to assure that they are compatible with their environment. The Public and Semi-Public Facades of new construction shall be reviewed based on a Model Example taking into consideration the following: | Policy could be used Policy could be used |
| McKinley Heights | 2008 | The Model Example concept is not intended to preclude contemporary designs , but to assure that they are compatible with their environment. The Public and Semi-Public Facades of new construction shall be reviewed based on a Model Example taking into consideration the following: | |