Chapter 16. Zoning

Article XVI. Single-Family and Two-Family Residential Design Guidelines

§ 16-98. General provisions.

A. These guidelines (hereinafter "guidelines") are intended to help maintain the high quality of Whitefish Bay's neighborhoods by providing guidance for the design of new houses, additions and/or remodels in existing neighborhoods. These guidelines are intended to focus on the characteristics of neighborhood compatibility and to provide individual homeowners flexibility to build, expand or remodel to meet their own needs and objectives.

B. All new house construction, additions and remodel projects must conform to the development standards of the zoning districts in which they are located. The single-family and two-family design guidelines presented below are intended to go beyond the basic requirements of the Zoning Ordinance and, in greater detail, address issues specifically related to neighborhood character and compatibility. These guidelines apply in all neighborhoods but will perhaps be particularly important in neighborhoods with established historic or architectural merit and for individual buildings with historic or architectural merit.

C. Applicability. The guidelines apply to all new single-family and two-family structures on individual lots, including new subdivisions located within or adjacent to existing neighborhoods, and all additions and remodels requiring a building permit.

D. Application. These guidelines are provided for the use of homeowners, builders, contractors, architects, designers, Village staff and Village decisionmakers.

(1) Homeowners, builders, architects and other designers are encouraged to consult the guidelines prior to designing new houses, additions or remodels for ideas and advice.

(2) The guidelines can be used as an informational resource by homeowners, builders and/or designers.

(3) The guidelines will be used by Village staff and decision makers as the criteria for making permit decisions.

(4) Neighborhood residents should consult the guidelines to understand the neighborhood compatibility concepts which will apply to new construction.

E. Definitions. The following definitions shall apply under these guidelines:

DESIGN AREA

The design area of a property shall be as outlined in Subsections **(1)** through (3) below, and/or subject to such refinements as might be made by the Building Inspector to deal with unique circumstances such as curved streets, culs-de-sac, subdivision or zoning district boundaries, and the like. All homes in the design area must be homes located within the Village boundaries. The design area should include a minimum of eight homes.
[Amended 1-21-2019 by Ord. No. 1845]

(1) For parcels abutting Lake Michigan, the design area shall consist of six residential parcels on both sides of the subject parcel. Homes only abutting Lake Michigan shall be considered in the design area.

(2) For interior lots, the design area shall consist of all abutting residential parcels and all interior residential parcels on both sides of the street within the block of the subject parcel. In no case should residential parcels abutting Lake Michigan be considered in the design area.

(3) For corner lots, the design area shall consist of all abutting residential parcels, all corner residential parcels within 300 feet of the subject parcel, and any residential parcel located directly across the street. In no case should residential parcels abutting Lake Michigan be considered in the design area.

F. These single-family and two-family residential design guidelines are organized in four sections:

(1) Neighborhood patterns. The first section identifies those common building characteristics which are most apt to define a neighborhood's appeal and identity. Not all pattern themes will be present in every neighborhood.

(2) Elements of building design. This section addresses design integrity within the individual building.

(3) Relationships to adjacent properties. This section deals with the interfaces between new construction and adjacent existing single-family houses.

(4) References to treatise. Reference to McAlister: A Field Guide to American Houses (Knopf 1984) (hereinafter "McAlister") is provided as a resource for homeowners and builders who wish to understand the architectural origins of houses and the representative elements of their style. All references to architectural style or elements in these design guidelines are to be interpreted and understood by reference to that book.

§ 16-99. Neighborhood patterns.

[Amended by Ord. No. 1705]
Because the major objective of these guidelines is to ensure that new homes, additions and remodels are appropriately compatible with the design area, compliance with the guidelines in this article is essential for the preservation of the neighborhood character, and consistency with them will be an important component of those projects which qualify for approval. While compatibility with neighboring structures is required, a proposed project should not be so similar in design, materials, style or exterior appearance to structures in the design area that excessive monotony is created. In the event of any conflict between these design guidelines and Article **XIII**, Historic Preservation, of this chapter, Article **XIII**, Historic Preservation, shall control.

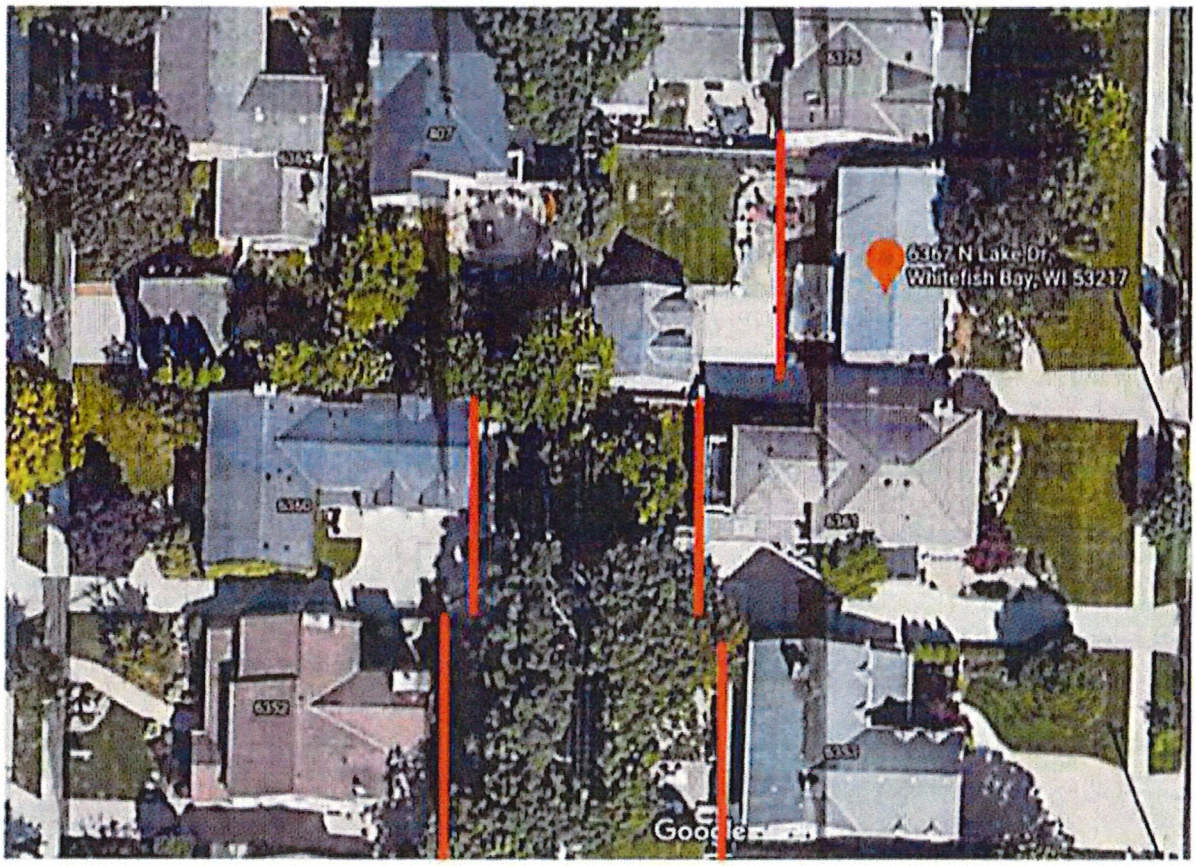
A. Setbacks (see Figure 1).

(1) At a minimum, setbacks must conform to the standards of the applicable zoning district.

(2) In addition, front setbacks should be compatible with existing front setbacks in the design area or on adjacent properties, whichever is less.

(3) Side setbacks should generally be compatible with the side setbacks of adjacent properties if there is a design area pattern of larger side setbacks than is required by the zoning district.

(4) Rear termination of the dwelling should generally be compatible with the rear termination of the dwelling of the properties in the design area, unless the Architectural Review Commission finds that the scale, massing, architectural design, and detail of the proposed structure are such as to mitigate to a substantial degree any negative impacts on light, air, views and privacy of properties in the Design area. The rear termination of each dwelling is depicted in red in the following image:
[Amended 8-29-2022 by Ord. No. 1895]



B. Height.

(1) The height of new houses and additions should be limited to 25 feet in most design areas. Few design areas in Whitefish Bay have houses that are taller than 30 feet and even fewer have a significant pattern of such houses.

(2) Heights of up to 35 feet, however, may be considered for sites where the architectural style of the house is a traditional one that is characteristically tall (for example, Victorian, Gothic, etc.) and where any two of the following conditions are found:

(a) The new house or addition is consistent with a design area of houses which are more than 25 feet tall.

(b) The new house or addition is not out of scale relative to the homes in the design area with primary consideration given to the adjacent homes and the available remedial approaches as noted in § **16-101**.

(c) The new construction is an addition which adds a minor amount of mass above 25 feet to a house which is already more than 25 feet tall, primarily for consistency with the architectural style, ceiling height or roof characteristics of the existing house.

(d) The house has side setbacks of 25 feet and a minimum rear setback of 50 feet.

(3) For purposes of this Subsection **B**, height shall be calculated as described in the definition of "building height" in § **16-3** of this chapter.
[Added 8-29-2022 by Ord. No. 1895]

C. Entries and porches.

(1) In design areas where there is a dominant pattern of front porches for existing houses:

(a) New houses should have front porches consistent with the style of the house.

(b) Existing porches should be retained with remodels.

(2) Main entries should be prominent and oriented to the street unless another pattern is well established in the design area.

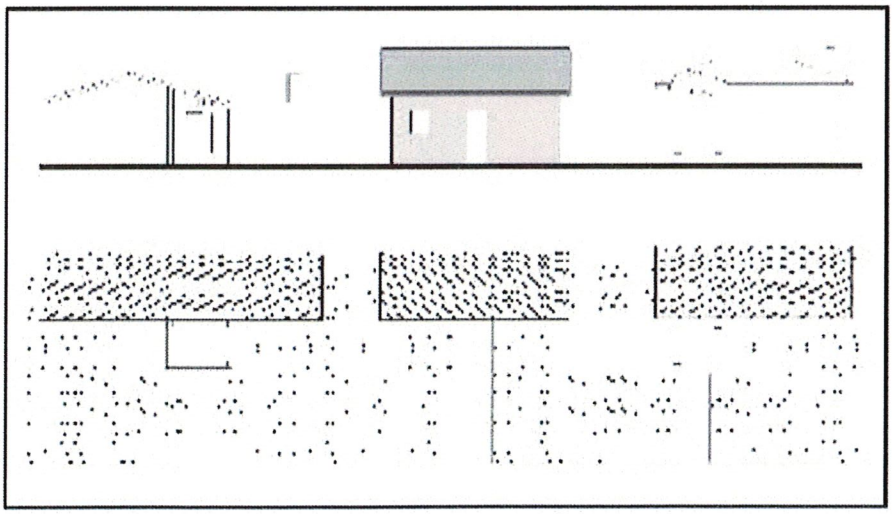


Figure 2. The house without any entry feature lacks the architectural interest and sense of welcome of the other houses.

D. Garages and parking areas (see Figures 9 through 15).

(1) Garages should be consistent with those in the design area and should not be the dominant feature of the facade of a house.

(a) In design areas with an established pattern of detached garages located in the rear yard, new garages should also be located at the rear of the house. Garages on such blocks may be attached if they are located behind the house, or face the side yard with no garage walls included in the front facade of the house. Only for properties with insufficient room due to setbacks the requirements of this section may be waived by special exception, provided mitigating design elements are employed.

(b) In design areas with an established pattern of attached garages, unless the predominant pattern in the design area for any of the following requirements is to the contrary:

[1] The front line of any garage should be set back from the majority of the front line of the structure a distance sufficient to reduce the relative overall scale of the garage as compared to the house front facade and insure that the front house facade is the dominant feature when observed from the street.

[2] Attached garages located at the front or side facades of the house should be no wider than 1/2 the width of the total structure facade which includes the garage doors. [Amended 8-14-2017 by Ord. No. 1832]

[3] In addition, in design areas where the predominant pattern is attached two-or-more-car garages, new or expanded attached garages for three cars should be either turned sideways to the street, configured as two tandem spaces and one single space, or split or offset as two distinct garages, a two-car garage and a one-car garage.

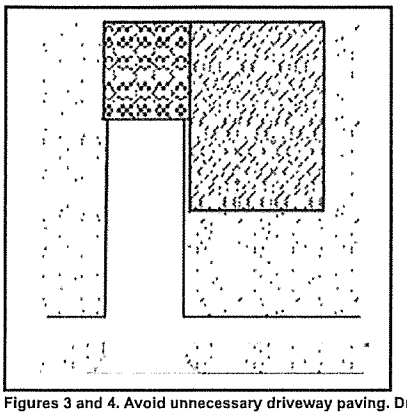
[4] Attached garages on corner lots should be located to avoid driveway paving at or near the corner unless the paving forms an entry court of superior design.

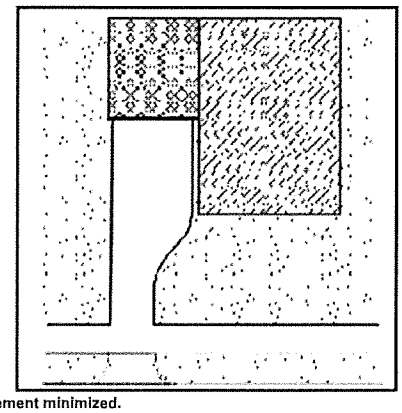
[5] No single vehicle entry door of an attached garage which faces the front yard shall in width exceed 30% of the width of the total combined residence and garage structure.

(2) The least amount of paved surface necessary on a lot for driveways and parking is encouraged. Curb cuts, driveways and parking surfaces should be no more than the width of two cars, except as follows:

(a) Paved areas may be flared to allow access to three-car garages.

(b) Curb cuts or paved surface connection of up to three car widths per lot are permitted along alleys.





Figures 3 and 4. Avoid unnecessary driveway paving. Driveway pavement minimized.

§ 16-100. Scale, massing and elements of house design.

[Amended by Ord. No. 1705]
This article addresses the scale, massing and design integrity of the individual building. While scale, massing and design integrity are important to the appearance of individual buildings, their importance in the context of these guidelines is equally related to the building's impact and "fit" in its neighborhood or on its block. The guidelines in this article will be applied most rigorously in design areas with distinct architectural character.

A. Scale and massing (see Figures 5 through 7).

(1) The scale and massing of new houses and additions, including proportions, roof lines, and slopes, should be consistent with the general scale and shapes of adjacent houses. Where necessary, the appearance of excessive scale may be minimized by employing one or more of the following techniques:

(a) Limiting the building profile (see Figure 5) of the new house or expanded house to an area generally consistent with the profiles of homes in the design area with primary consideration to the adjacent homes and the available remedial approaches as noted in § **16-101**.

(b) Setting the second story back from the front and sides of the first story a distance sufficient to reduce the apparent overall scale of the building.

(c) Significantly limiting the size of the second story relative to the first story, including any addition to the first story.

(d) Significantly increasing the front and/or side setbacks for the entire structure.

(e) Sloping the new roof back from adjacent houses.

(2) The scale and mass of any portion of a new house or addition facing a public street should be compatible with those of adjacent houses and/or with the predominant scale in the design area.

(3) Scale and massing compatibility should include the elevation of floor plates (including certification by the owner of such proposed elevations relative to adjacent streets). For example, in design areas with houses set high on their foundations, new houses and additions should be set similarly high. In addition, compatibility of scale and massing should be maintained by:

(a) Avoiding flat roofs in design areas with a predominant pattern of peaked roofs unless the building profile area of the flat-roofed structure is no larger than the profile areas of the adjacent houses.

(b) If large blank surfaces are proposed, they should serve some compelling design purpose, and the design should incorporate mitigating features to enrich the appearance of the structure and provide a sense of scale at ground level that is inviting to the observer.

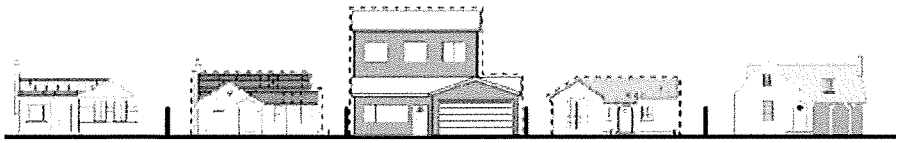


Figure 5. Middle building profile area is significantly larger than adjacent building profiles.

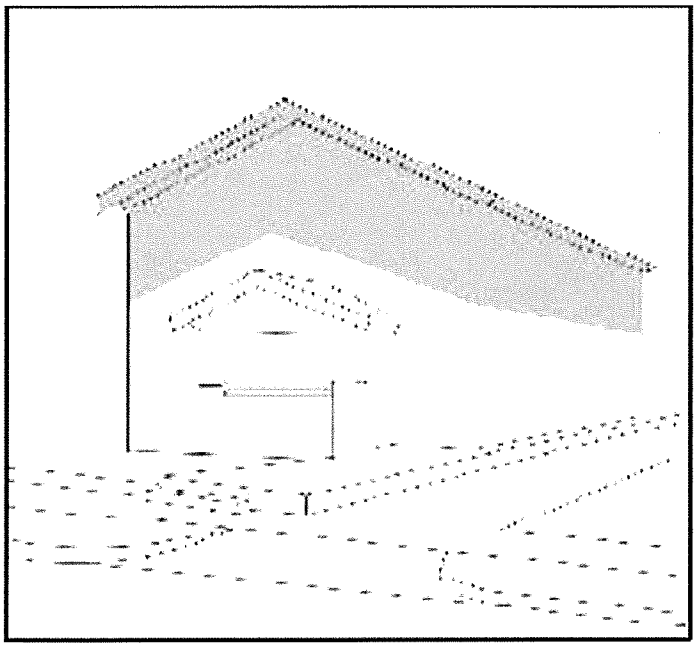


Figure 6. Large block second story overwhelms the original house and streetscape.

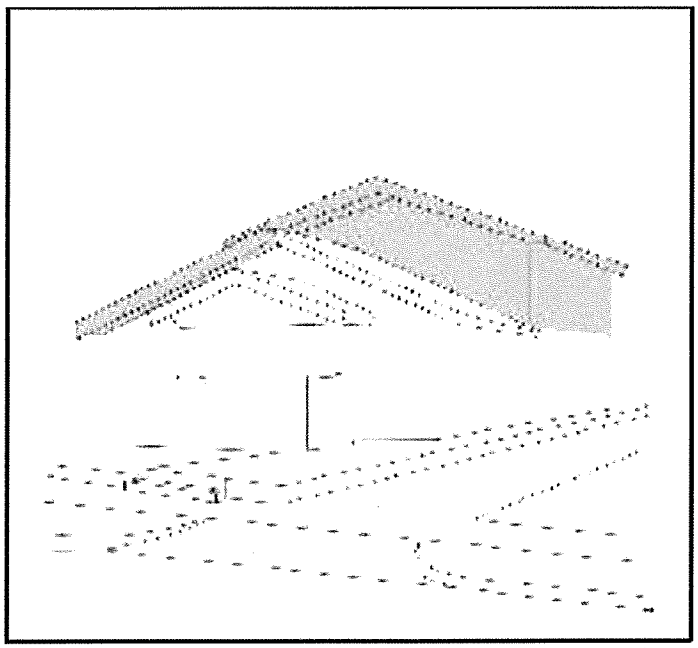


Figure 7. Smaller setback second story in scale with and preserves streetscape lines of the original house.

B. Architectural style.

(1) Architectural styles of new houses and substantial remodels should be compatible with the architectural styles found in the design areas and for remodels consistent with the existing house (unless the existing architectural style is to be changed). Compatibility can be achieved with the use of any architectural style, provided it employs building scale, massing, and roof lines, materials and building orientations that are commonly found in the design area.

(2) For additions and remodels, the architectural design of the building elements listed below should be generally consistent with that of the existing dwelling, unless an objective of a remodel is to change the existing style to another one or to upgrade one or more of the building elements, for example, to replace wood window frames with aluminum ones. (For definition and interpretation with regard to architectural styles and elements, reference is made to McAlister, which is incorporated into these design guidelines by reference.) For new houses or houses with substantial remodels constituting a change in architectural style, individual building elements should be employed for architectural consistency. In general, the following building elements should be stylistically consistent for each building:

(a) Overall style. The overall style of each house should be consistent on all sides of the building as well as among all portions of the roof. Particular care should be taken that building elevations and roof elements visible from streets and other public or quasi-public spaces are stylistically consistent. Consistency should be determined by evaluating each of the building components below. For example, details such as divided-lite windows, scale and proportion of windows, matching trim, matching siding exposure, matching siding corners, maintaining masonry lintels, and maintaining roof pitch and style should all be replicated on additions and remodels.
[Amended 8-29-2022 by Ord. No. 1895]

(b) Siding materials. Natural building materials are encouraged. Synthetic siding/trim materials will be considered based on quality and appearance. Siding materials should be appropriate to the style and style era of the house. For example, materials developed after the establishment of a particular architectural style are not appropriate on buildings of that style unless the new material is a high quality and deliberate reproduction of the original material. The same siding material should be used on all building elevations unless multiple materials are a legitimate expression of the particular style.

(c) Roof materials.

[1] Acceptable sloped roofing materials include:

[a] Cedar shake.

[b] Slate.

[c] Fiberglass.

[d] Shingles, concrete.

[e] Shingles, tile.

[f] Dimensional asphalt shingles.

[g] Copper.

[h] Standing seam metal, provided a physical sample of the material is provided to the Architectural Review Commission for review and approval.
[Added 8-29-2022 by Ord. No. 1895]

[i] Materials appearing to be derived from natural settings, as approved by the Architectural Review Commission in its discretion. For such materials, a physical sample of the proposed material is required to be provided to the Architectural Review Commission for review and approval.
[Added 8-29-2022 by Ord. No. 1895]

[2] Roof materials should be appropriate to the style of the house and (except for flat roofs or flat roof portions) should be the same product for the entire roof system. New materials designed for fire resistance are appropriate as long as they replicate the traditional material (e.g., composition or concrete products designed to look like wood shingles or shakes, non-copper metals designed to look like copper, synthetic products designed to look like slate or tile).

(d) Roof lines and roof slopes. Roof lines and slopes should be generally the same over all parts of a single building. Exceptions are roof styles or architectural styles that traditionally involve varying slopes such as gambrel roofs, or, architectural styles that sometimes mix flat and sloped roofs, such as the Mediterranean style. In addition, gable and hip roof elements are often used in combinations and very small gable or shed roof elements used over dormers or to highlight or shield a prominent window or windows are generally appropriate.

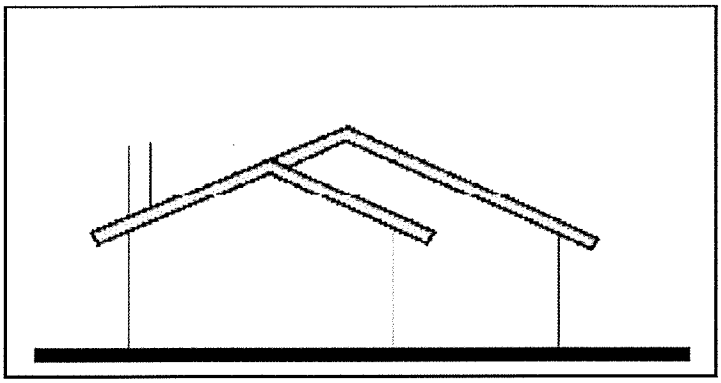


Figure 8. Roof elements should generally have the same slope.

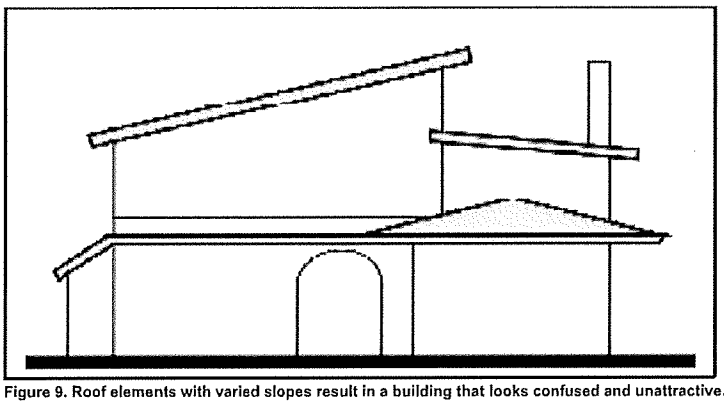


Figure 9. Roof elements with varied slopes result in a building that looks confused and unattractive.

(e) Window styles and frame materials. Window styles (double hung, casement, sliding, fixed, etc.) and frame materials (aluminum, wood, steel, etc.) are particularly important expressions of architectural style and should be compatible among all elevations of a building. Window styles may vary depending on the specific use or size of the window for some architectural styles. Window frame materials should not vary on a single building, except in some limited cases where the frame material is being upgraded. See McAlister for examples of appropriate window styles and frame materials. Windows in garden rooms, greenhouses, and solaria may vary from the existing house in style and materials, provided the style and size of windows on such structure are not significantly incompatible with the existing house.

(f) Window sizes and proportions. Window sizes and proportions are also important expressions of architectural style and should be consistent with the architectural style of the house. For example, Victorian windows are typically tall and slender, Ranch-style windows are most often wider than they are high, International Style windows are often square, etc. While windows' sizes on a single house most often vary by the purpose of the room, several styles, e.g., Craftsman Bungalow and American Revival styles, typically include largely uniform window heights all around the building. Several styles also traditionally employ the same window repeated in groups of two, three or four as a fundamental expression of the style.

(g) Decorative features.

[1] Decorative features such as corbels, bargeboards, porch or balcony rails and columns, other columns and capitals, windowsills, carvings and any other decorative elements should be consistent, as appropriate, over the entire building. Some elements such as corbels, bargeboards and decorative window trim should be consistent on all parts of the house, while others such as porch and balcony rails may apply only to those individual structures, typically those located at or near the front of the house. For purposes of decorative features, consistency means the same materials, dimensions and design elements. Decorative consistency is perhaps most critical for additions to houses with architectural styles which include decorative features as important elements of the style. Simple decoration added to a house previously without decorative features is not precluded.

[2] It is important that exterior details, such as shutters, corner boards, quoins, cupolas, wing walls, cornices and cornice returns, gable vents, fanlights, trim boards, lintels, sills, etc., be designed into the facade together with the other design features. These elements, where repeated, should be consistently applied throughout the project.

(h) Chimneys. Masonry chimneys (or chimneys faced with real or artificial stone, brick or stucco which is satisfactory to the Architectural Review Commission) will generally be required, even if the fireplaces themselves are not masonry. Consideration to frame chimneys will be given based on the context of the project. Frame chimneys not covered with real or artificial stone, brick, or stucco must be consistent with the architectural style of the structure and any existing structure and, to the maximum extent practicable, should not be visible from the street.

(i) Garages and sheds. Garages and sheds should be of an architectural style and detail to be consistent with the residence on the property.

§ 16-101. Relationships to adjacent properties.

(See Figures 25 through 28.) This section contains additional guidelines in the form of recommendations intended as suggestions for application in the single- and two-family design review process to minimize the impact of new houses or additions on neighboring houses. Taking care to avoid noise, light, shade, privacy and aesthetic impacts on neighboring properties will always be appreciated and will often make the difference between support for and opposition to the new house or addition. While not mandatory design features, the guidelines presented in this section are highly desirable for incorporation into all new residential construction.

A. Guidelines.

(1) Balconies and decks. New balconies or decks located more than one foot above grade on new or existing houses should be built in accordance with these architectural guidelines and preferably no closer than 20 feet to adjacent rear property lines.

(2) Exterior lighting.

(a) Lighting should not be installed in such a manner or at such total capacity as to shine directly onto adjacent residential properties.

(b) To the extent practicable, the view of light sources should be shielded from adjacent residences.

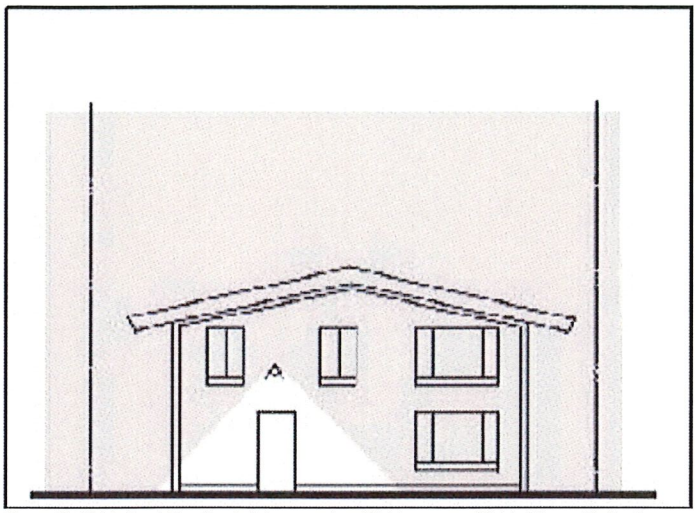


Figure 10. Light should be directed downward and light sources shielded from off-site view.

(3) Site plan. Siting of the project should not impair the lot's natural beauty or that of the neighborhood. It should respect the shape and physical attributes of the lot and of the neighborhood, including drainage matters, mature trees, sun penetration and views as much as possible. These aspects should be taken into consideration with respect to the project's effects on neighboring properties. The site plan should attempt to address drainage, to eliminate or minimize the loss of mature trees and vegetation and to minimize or reduce alteration of natural topography.

(4) Air-conditioning equipment. Air-conditioning equipment can create noise that is irritating to neighbors. The location of such equipment should be designated to minimize noise impacts to adjacent properties.

B. Remedial approaches. If appropriate, the Architectural Review Commission may require remedial approaches to mitigate impacts on adjacent properties, including, but not limited to, the following:

(1) Setting second-story balconies and decks back from property lines a distance greater than intended by the basic guideline above can help avoid direct views into adjacent residential windows, patios and rear yards.

(2) New windows can be placed to avoid direct views into existing neighboring windows.

(3) Views into neighboring buildings and yards can be further minimized by adding structural screens, such as trellises or wing walls, to interrupt those views.

(4) Encouraging smaller building masses at the sides and rear of adjacent single-family rear yards in order to help preserve privacy and sunlight access for the neighboring property.

(5) Avoiding large second-story windows overlooking adjacent rear yards can limit views into those rear yards.

(6) (Reserved)[1]

[1] *Editor's Note: Former Subsection B(6), regarding incorporating grading modifications and other techniques, was repealed 8-29-2022 by Ord. No. 1895.*

(7) Avoiding destruction of mature trees and vegetation.

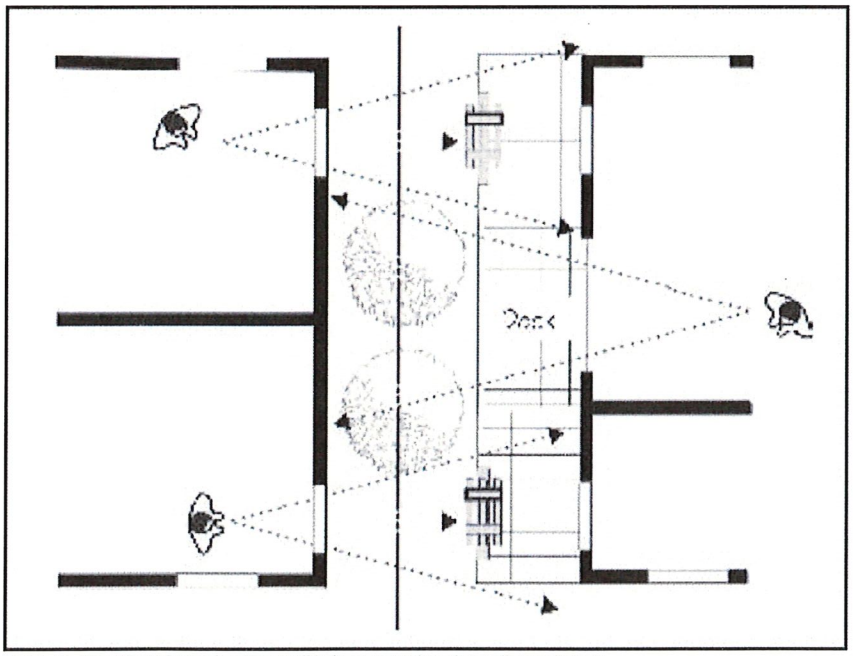


Figure 11. Offsetting window locations will help prevent views into adjacent houses.