



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

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Planning & Development Services - Planning (734) 794-6265

Community Services Area

MEMORANDUM

To: Historic District Commissioners

From: Mariana Melin-Corcoran, City Planner

Date: February 12, 2026

Re: Design Guideline Updates – Chapter 4

As part of the ongoing updates to the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines*, commissioners and staff will discuss recommended changes to the Guidelines during the 2026 regular meetings, building upon the discussions from 2024-25.

To continue the process, staff has recommended additional changes for Chapter 4: Design Guidelines for Historic Residential Properties. Two PDF versions of the staff-reviewed chapter are included in the packet – a version showing track changes and a clean version. Both versions have minimal formatting and no images for simplicity. The entire Design Guidelines will be formatted with visuals at the end of the editing process.

Summary of the major changes discussed at the 2024-25 meetings that have already been incorporated into this chapter:

- General language cleanup for clarity, consistency, and brevity.
- Adding the following to Design Guidelines for Residential Doors:
 - Appropriate: The Commission will review the removal and infill of door openings that are not visible from the right of way on a case-by-case basis; infill must be recessed or otherwise distinguished to indicate the former presence of the door.
 - Not Appropriate: Installing a door with leaded glass, a fanlight, or other decorative elements inappropriate for the style and age of the house.
 - Not Appropriate: Infilling or replacing with a window any door opening that is visible from the public right of way or that is a character defining feature of the structure.
- Adding the following to Design Guidelines for Residential Awnings:

- Not Appropriate: "Installing an awning that is wider than the opening unless necessary to avoid character defining features."
- Adding the following to Design Guidelines for Residential Porches:
 - Appropriate: Both railings be placed on flat, with the spindles sandwiched between the railings, not on edge with spindles attached to the side(s).
 - Not Appropriate: Reversing the direction of replacement flooring from perpendicular to the house to parallel to the house, or vice-versa.
 - Not Appropriate: Metal pipe and wrought iron handrail railings are not appropriate for any type of historic porch.
 - Not Appropriate: Unframed skirting is not appropriate in historic districts.
- Adding the following to Design Guidelines for Residential Accessory Structures:
 - Appropriate: Limiting the size and scale of any required additions in relation to the historic accessory structure and locating additions on rear or inconspicuous elevations.
 - Appropriate: Designing any required additions they are compatible with the historic building and historic accessory buildings on the property.
 - Appropriate: Designing any required additions so they do not negatively impact historic materials and character-defining features.
 - Not Appropriate: Relocating a historic accessory structure from its original location to another location on the site.

For the next phase of the discussion, please review the attached Chapter 4 PDFs and consider:

- The changes to the Appropriate/Not Appropriate sections of Design Guidelines for Residential Accessory Structures were suggested at a previous HDC meeting, and staff drafted the language included. Please provide any comments on the proposed language.
- The majority of the changes in this iteration of Chapter 4 are proposed in the Design of Residential Porches section. These changes are intended to simplify the section and include all Appropriate/Not Appropriate points together rather than grouped into individual porch elements. Please provide any comments on the new organization and if all the points are clear and useful for potential applicants.
- Additional changes are proposed to the Mechanical Equipment section due to the evolution of technology. Please provide any comments on the proposed language.