

5. Guidelines for Site Elements

City of San Antonio Historic Design Guidelines

Office of Historic Preservation



CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Applicability 1

Guidelines 1

Topography 2

Fences and Walls 4

Landscape Design 8

Residential Streetscapes 12

Sidewalks, Walkways, Driveways, and Curbing 14

Non-Residential and Mixed Use Streetscapes 16

Off-Street Parking 18

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance 20

Using the Historic Design Guidelines

The City of San Antonio Historic Design Guidelines (“Historic Design Guidelines”) establish baseline guidelines for historic preservation and design. The Historic Design Guidelines apply to all **exterior** modifications for properties that are individually designated landmarks or within a locally designated historic district. All applicants are encouraged to review the Historic Design Guidelines early in their project to facilitate an efficient review process. In addition to compliance with the Unified Development Code (“UDC”), applicants must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness (“COA”) from the Office of Historic Preservation (“OHP”) for all proposed exterior modifications as described in the Using the Historic Design Guidelines section of the Historic Design Guidelines. The Historic Design Guidelines are comprised of eight sections as follows:

- 1. Using the Historic Design Guidelines
- 2. Guidelines for Exterior Maintenance and Alterations
- 3. Guidelines for Additions
- 4. Guidelines for New Construction
- **5. Guidelines or Site Elements**
- 6. Guidelines for Signage
- 7. A Guide to San Antonio’s Historic Resources
- 8. Glossary

The Historic Design Guidelines as a whole are intended to work congruently with other sections, divisions and articles of the UDC but have been separated into individual sections for ease of use. In the event of a conflict between other sections or articles of the UDC and these Historic District Guidelines, the Historic District Guidelines shall control except in the case of signage where the more strict regulation or guideline shall control. Additionally, if an exception from the application of Chapter 28 of the city code of San Antonio has been approved for signage in historic districts, such exception shall remain unless removed by official action of the City Council. The meaning of any and all words, terms or phrases in the Historic District Guidelines shall be construed in accordance with the definitions provided in Appendix A of the UDC. In the case of a conflict regarding a definition as provided in these guidelines and Appendix A of the UDC, the Historic District Guidelines definition shall control. All images courtesy of the City of San Antonio, Clarion Associates, and Hardy, Heck, Moore, Inc. unless otherwise noted.

For questions and guidance please contact the Office of Historic Preservation: Email: ohp@sanantonio.gov | Phone: 210.215.9274

Why Preserve?

A message from Historic Preservation Officer, Shanon Shea Miller

We strive to preserve San Antonio's historic buildings and neighborhoods for many reasons. We recognize and celebrate the cultural, aesthetic, environmental and economic value historic preservation brings to San Antonio. It is by definition sustainable and is a proven economic development tool. No example in this country of successful central city revitalization has occurred without preservation as a component.



- Preserving our built environment helps tell the **story** of San Antonio's long, rich and diverse history. Taking care of our older buildings and neighborhoods provides a sense of belonging, a collective memory, and a sense of pride in our past. Preservation is about understanding that historic buildings are limited resources and we must be careful to preserve those that tell our many and varied stories. This includes not just major historic sites but neighborhood schools and parks, streets lined with bungalows, theaters, small-scale commercial buildings, shot gun houses, gas stations, and towering downtown landmarks.
- Preservation helps build strong **neighborhoods** by protecting their character. Preservation programs foster community pride, appreciation of history, learning, creativity, and a sense of place, thus making historic neighborhoods desirable places to live and work.



- Preservation is good for the **economy**. Reinvesting in our historic buildings and neighborhoods helps to stabilize our property values and community, and promotes tourism and economic development. Historic preservation is more labor-intensive than new construction and generally utilizes more local materials. Every time a building is rehabilitated or reused, specialized trades and skilled laborers are employed. This creates jobs and puts more money into our local economy.
- Additionally, historic preservation contributes to the **tourism** industry in our city. Studies have shown that the heritage visitor stays longer and spends more than any other category of visitor. These people are looking for the jewels that locals cherish...often it's our historic buildings and neighborhoods that provide that sense of place and community that attracts visitors, while contributing to the quality of life for local citizens. As Donovan Rypkema says, "Place is not a synonym for location. Place is a location that has been claimed by feelings." For that and many other reasons, historic preservation is good for the local economy!

- Preservation helps protect the **environment**. Reusing and adapting historic buildings and neighborhoods reduces our consumption of raw land, new materials, and other resources. Rehabilitating existing buildings and maintaining existing materials are sustainable solutions and are most often more cost effective over the life of the building than replacement or new construction. Fortunately the green movement is recognizing that the greenest building ever built is the one that already exists! Stewardship of the built environment is sustainability as well as preservation.



We want our neighborhoods and commercial districts to continue to tell the story of San Antonio's history to those who come after us. This can best be done by preserving the condition of our historic resources and giving them new life and new purpose by making them our homes and places of business. The Historic Design Guidelines are intended to serve the community as we work together to preserve San Antonio's historic resources to provide a quality environment for future generation ***Preservation is not about longing for the past or resisting progress. It's about building on the past toward the future.***

Sharon

"Historic preservation has become a fundamental tool for strengthening American communities. It has proven to be an effective tool for a wide range of public goals including small business incubation, affordable housing, sustainable development, neighborhood stabilization, center city revitalization, job creation, promotion of the arts and culture, small town renewal, heritage tourism, economic development, and others."

- Donovan Rypkema, *Measuring Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation*, 2011



5. Guidelines for Site Elements

Introduction

These guidelines provide general guidance to property owners, design professionals, homeowners, and decision-makers regarding the exterior maintenance of and alterations to historic site elements; they are not intended as a substitute for consultation with qualified architects, contractors, attorneys, City staff, and/or the Historic Design and Review Commission (“HDRC”). All applicants are responsible for the professional, legal, and/or other services required for their project. Countless variables in the design and character of site elements exist within San Antonio’s historic districts. District-specific guidelines should address issues or elements that are unique within individual historic districts.

Applicability

The Historic Design Guidelines generally apply to all site element modifications on properties that are located within a locally designated historic district or that are individually designated landmarks. This section specifically applies to all modifications to site elements (as defined by UDC Section 35-611).

Guidelines

This section contains guidelines for residential and non-residential site elements as follows:

- Topography
- Fences and Walls
- Landscape Design
- Residential Streetscapes
- Non-Residential and Mixed Use Streetscapes
- Sidewalks, Walkways, Driveways, and Curbing
- Off-Street Parking
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance

These guidelines contain numerous pictures, illustrations, drawings, and examples of projects that have successfully met, or failed to meet, the qualities that the guidelines address. Examples are provided only to illustrate and show context. They shall not be construed as the only possible design solutions allowed.

In considering whether to recommend approval or disapproval of an application for a COA for site elements, the HDRC shall be guided by the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, the UDC, the Historic Design

Guidelines, and any additional design guidelines adopted by the City.

General Principles

The following General Principles for Site Elements will be considered during the review process in conjunction with the guidelines contained in this section.

Principle #1: Respect the Historic Context

New site elements should complement, not detract from, historic site elements, the character of the historic structure they serve, and the surrounding district. When considering specific site elements (e.g., streetscape, topography) the surrounding context is important, since the integrity of various elements varies from block-to-block.

Principle #2: Routine Maintenance is Essential for Preservation

With proper maintenance, many historic site elements can last for centuries. Routine maintenance of walls, sidewalks, monuments, landscaping, curbing, and other decorative and functional site elements is essential to prevent deterioration.

Principle #3: Preservation of Features in Place is Preferred Over Replacement

Maintaining and repairing historic site elements is preferred over replacing those elements as to maintain the character of the public right-of-way and district. However, if elements are deteriorated beyond repair (more than 50%), in-kind replacement using new components that match the original in form and materials is favored while replacement with comparable substitutes will be considered.

Principle #4: More Flexibility in Treatment and/or Replacement May be Considered in Locations Not Visible from the Public Right-of-Way

Site elements that are not visible from the public right-of-way are less likely to detract from views of the historic structure or the overall character of the district. More flexibility in the treatment and/or replacement of site elements located in rear yards and other areas of the site that are partially or wholly concealed from the public right-of-way may be considered.

1. Topography

Why is this Important?

Topographic features, such as sloped front lawns, raised lots, and other distinctive site design elements, help define the unique character of each district and of individual streets or blocks within each district. Altering these features, such as through the installation of a retaining wall, interrupts the visual continuity of the historic streetscape and detracts from the character of the district.



Sloping lawns and raised lots similar to the examples above are typical in some of San Antonio's historic districts.

Guidelines

A. TOPOGRAPHIC FEATURES

- i. **Historic topography**—Avoid significantly altering the topography of a property (i.e., extensive grading). Do not alter character-defining features such as berms or sloped front lawns that help define the character of the public right-of-way. Maintain the established lawn to help prevent erosion. If turf is replaced over time, new plant materials in these areas should be low-growing and suitable for the prevention of erosion.
- ii. **New construction**—Match the historic topography of adjacent lots prevalent along the block face for new construction. Do not excavate raised lots to accommodate additional building height or an additional story for new construction.
- iii. **New elements**—Minimize changes in topography resulting from new elements, like driveways and walkways, through appropriate siting and design. New site elements should work with, rather than change, character-defining topography when possible.

This

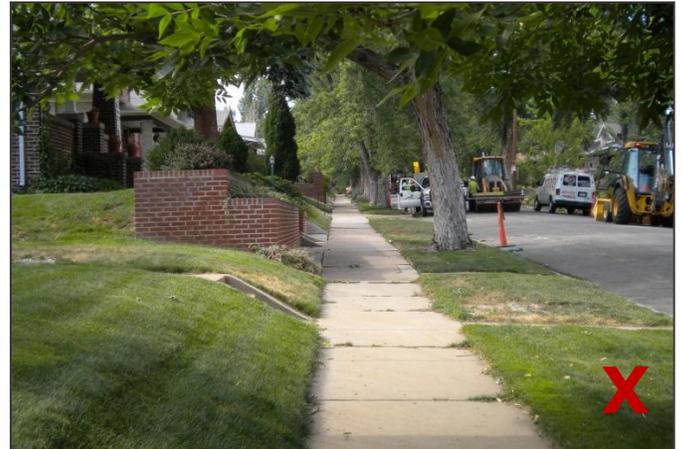


A pattern of raised lots along the street frontage increases the visual prominence of historic structures.

Not This



Excavating a historically raised lot to accommodate an additional story for new construction disrupts the visual continuity of the historic streetscape.



Retention of historically consistent topographical features, such as these sloped front lawns, gives the street frontage a distinctive character.

Replacing historically sloped front lawns with retaining walls interrupts the visual continuity of the street frontage.

2. Fences and Walls

Why is this Important?

The historic use of fences and low retaining walls to identify front yard boundaries and provide privacy and security varies dramatically from district to district and from block to block within San Antonio's historic districts. The types of fences and walls that are used are similarly eclectic. Where historic fences and walls do exist, they are important character-defining features that help reinforce the age and style of the principal building and often times the block. Front yard fences and walls play a large role in defining rhythm and pattern along the street edge. In some districts, non-historic fence materials, such as chain link, have been introduced over time.



Ornamental, wrought iron fences with an open character and low height are just one of the many styles of historic fences found in San Antonio's historic districts.



Stone walls of varying heights and designs are found in many of San Antonio's historic districts. In some locations (as illustrated above), the walls are used to enclose and screen a yard. In other locations, lower stone walls are used for retention purposes on sloped sites.

Guidelines

A. HISTORIC FENCES AND WALLS

- i. **Preserve**—Retain historic fences and walls.
- ii. **Repair and replacement**—Replace only deteriorated sections that are beyond repair. Match replacement materials (including mortar) to the color, texture, size, profile, and finish of the original.
- iii. **Application of paint and cementitious coatings**—Do not paint historic masonry walls or cover them with stone facing or stucco or other cementitious coatings.

B. NEW FENCES AND WALLS

- i. **Design**—New fences and walls should appear similar to those used historically within the district in terms of their scale, transparency, and character. Design of fence should respond to the design and materials of the house or main structure.
- ii. **Location**—Avoid installing a fence or wall in a location where one did not historically exist, particularly within the front yard. The appropriateness of a front yard fence or wall is dependent on conditions within a specific historic district. New front yard fences or wall should not be introduced within historic districts that have not historically had them.
- iii. **Height**—Limit the height of new fences and walls within the front yard to a maximum of four feet. The appropriateness of a front yard fence is dependent on conditions within a specific historic district. New front yard fences should not be introduced within historic districts that have not historically had them. If a taller fence or wall existed historically, additional height may be considered. The height of a new retaining wall should not exceed the height of the slope it retains.
- iv. **Prohibited materials**—Do not use exposed concrete masonry units (CMU), Keystone or similar interlocking retaining wall systems, concrete block, vinyl fencing, or chain link fencing.
- v. **Appropriate materials**—Construct new fences or walls of materials similar to fence materials historically used in the district. Select materials that are similar in scale, texture, color, and form as those historically used in the district, and that are compatible with the main structure.
- vi. **Screening incompatible uses**—Review alternative fence heights and materials for appropriateness where residential properties are adjacent to commercial or other potentially incompatible uses.

C. PRIVACY FENCES AND WALLS

- i. ***Relationship to front facade***—Set privacy fences back from the front façade of the building, rather than aligning them with the front façade of the structure to reduce their visual prominence.
- ii. ***Location***—Do not use privacy fences in front yards.

Front Yard Fences—Appropriate Materials

The appropriateness of a front yard fence is dependent on conditions within a specific historic district. New front yard fences should not be introduced within historic districts that have not historically had them. Where historic precedent does exist, construct new fences or walls of materials similar to fence materials historically used in the district.



Select materials that are similar in scale, texture, color, and form as those historically used in the district, and that are compatible with the main structure. (Photos by Mike Pecan, ASLA)

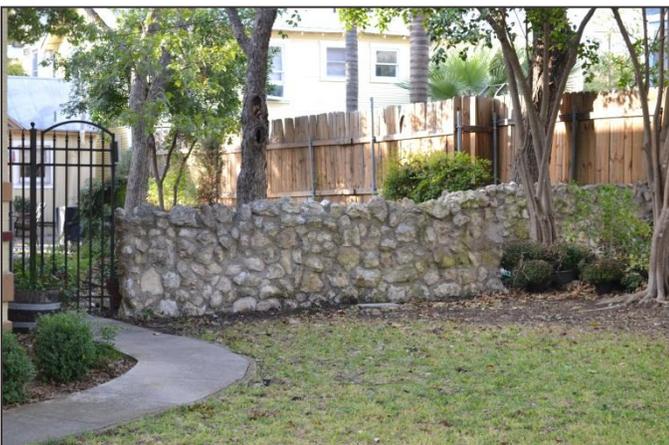
This



Preserve historic fencing, such as this unusual ornamental wire fence with wood posts.



Wood slats, decorative posts, and scalloped lines complement the character of this home.



Privacy fencing is limited to the rear yard, preserving the historic stone wall and wrought iron gate at the side yard.

Not This



Although many exist in some districts, the installation of new chain link fences is not permitted.



New keystone or similar interlocking retaining wall systems are prohibited.



Applying new stone facing to cover a historic stone wall is not permitted.

This page blank.

3. Landscape Design

Why is this Important?

Landscape designs in San Antonio's historic districts vary depending on their setting and period of construction. Historic landscapes provide clues to the past and aid in the overall interpretation of our historic districts. While some districts feature sweeping historic lawns and formal elements, many districts feature a diverse palette of landscape features, such as more informal xeric plantings, which are often appropriate within the historic context. Water conservation strategies should be implemented in a manner that responds to the historic context while meeting present day conservation needs.



Landscape designs and plant palettes vary among historic districts and contribute to the uniqueness of the districts.

Guidelines

A. PLANTINGS

- i. **Historic Gardens**— Maintain front yard gardens when appropriate within a specific historic district.
- ii. **Historic Lawns**—Do not fully remove and replace traditional lawn areas with impervious hardscape. Limit the removal of lawn areas to mulched planting beds or pervious hardscapes in locations where they would historically be found, such as along fences, walkways, or drives. Low-growing plantings should be used in historic lawn areas; invasive or large-scale species should be avoided. Historic lawn areas should never be reduced by more than 50%.
- iii. **Native xeric plant materials**—Select native and/or xeric plants that thrive in local conditions and reduce watering usage. See UDC Appendix E: San Antonio Recommended Plant List—All Suited to Xeriscape Planting Methods, for a list of appropriate materials and planting methods. Select plant materials with a similar character, growth habit, and light requirements as those being replaced.
- iv. **Plant palettes**—If a varied plant palette is used, incorporate species of taller heights, such informal elements should be restrained to small areas of the front yard or to the rear or side yard so as not to obstruct views of or otherwise distract from the historic structure.
- v. **Maintenance**—Maintain existing landscape features. Do not introduce landscape elements that will obscure the historic structure or are located as to retain moisture on walls or foundations (e.g., dense foundation plantings or vines) or as to cause damage.

B. ROCKS OR HARDSCAPE

- i. **Impervious surfaces** —Do not introduce large pavers, asphalt, or other impervious surfaces where they were not historically located.
- ii. **Pervious and semi-pervious surfaces**—New pervious hardscapes should be limited to areas that are not highly visible, and should not be used as wholesale replacement for plantings. If used, small plantings should be incorporated into the design.
- iii. **Rock mulch and gravel** - Do not use rock mulch or gravel as a wholesale replacement for lawn area. If used, plantings should be incorporated into the design.

C. MULCH

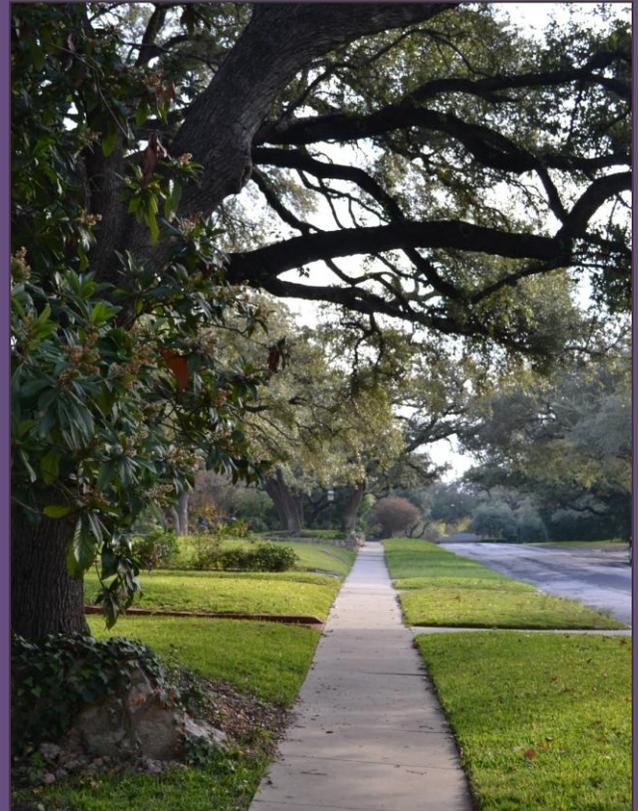
- i. **Organic mulch** – Organic mulch should not be used as a wholesale replacement for plant material. Organic mulch with appropriate plantings should be incorporated in areas where appropriate such as beneath a tree canopy.
- ii. **Inorganic mulch** – Inorganic mulch should not be used in highly-visible areas and should never be used as a wholesale replacement for plant material. Inorganic mulch with appropriate plantings should be incorporated in areas where appropriate such as along a foundation wall where moisture retention is discouraged.

D. TREES

- i. **Preservation**—Preserve and protect from damage existing mature trees and heritage trees. See UDC Section 35-523 (Tree Preservation) for specific requirements.
- ii. **New Trees** – Select new trees based on site conditions. Avoid planting new trees in locations that could potentially cause damage to a historic structure or other historic elements. Species selection and planting procedure should be done in accordance with guidance from the City Arborist.
- iii. **Maintenance** – Proper pruning encourages healthy growth and can extend the lifespan of trees. Avoid unnecessary or harmful pruning. A certified, licensed arborist is recommended for the pruning of mature trees and heritage trees.

Tree Protection

Trees are important resources in San Antonio's historic districts that affect many site elements, ranging from streetscapes to landscape design. In addition to being aesthetically pleasing, trees help define public and private spaces, cleanse and cool the air, and reduce the amount of pollutants entering streams and the local ecosystem. Trees also provide protection from the sun for pedestrians as well as buildings. Consultation with the City Arborist is required for projects that affect mature trees and heritage trees.



This



Historic landscape designs in some districts were formal in character with a limited palette of plant materials, allowing historic structures to remain the focus. This distinctive landscape design was based on historical research, and contributes to the associated structure. (Photo by John Laffoon, ASLA)



These front yards incorporate a restrained palette of xeric plant materials within a historically appropriate design. These schemes reduce water usage while not detracting from the character of the historic properties.

Not This



Avoid vines and other plantings that obscure the historic structure from view and contribute to the retention of damaging moisture against building walls and foundations.



Overgrown or out-of-scale xeric plantings (middle) can detract from the character of historic structures when used in the front yard. Alternatively, removing all plant material in favor of rock or organic mulch (bottom) can also create a stark contrast which detracts from the historic street pattern.



San Antonio Water System

Aquifer Level 645.6 | Stage Two: wtr on ur day

PAY YOUR BILL ONLINE

Restriction Details | Report Water Waste

Q

Who We Are

Your Water

Conservation

Service

Infrastructure

Education

Environment

Jobs

Business Center

OUTDOOR PROGRAMS & REBATES

HOME > CONSERVATION > OUTDOOR PROGRAMS & REBATES > MAIN



CONSERVATION

- Main
- Drought Restrictions
- Outdoor Programs & Rebates
 - WaterSaver Home Checkup
 - 7 Steps to Xeriscaping
 - Dressed for Success
 - WaterSaver Landscape Rebate
 - Irrigation Design Rebate
 - Rain Harvesting
 - Watering Efficiently
 - WaterSaver Lane
 - WaterSaver Landscape Care Guide
 - WaterSaver Plant List
 - WaterSaver Newsletter
- Indoor Programs & Rebates
- Commercial Programs & Rebates
- Your Role in Conservation
- Ordinance

Outdoor Conservation Programs & Rebates

Through outdoor conservation programs such as our WaterSaver Landscape rebates and educational programs that reach out to all San Antonians, we want to encourage citizens to conserve, saving you money on your water bill while preserving our precious water supplies.



WaterSaver Home Checkup

Hear that? That's the sound of your money going down the drain. Not to mention the thousands of gallons of water being wasted because of household leaks.

[READ MORE](#)



7 Steps to Xeriscaping

Xeriscaping. What in the world does that word mean and how on Earth do you pronounce it?

[READ MORE](#)



WaterSaver Landscape Rebate

Create a WaterSaver Landscape and enjoy a lot of color while saving a lot of green.

[READ MORE](#)



Irrigation Design Rebate

Through our Residential Irrigation Design Rebate you can identify design flaws that can result in healthier landscapes.

[READ MORE](#)

QUICK LINKS

- Indoor Programs & Rebates
- Commercial Programs & Rebates
- Ordinance

TOP 10 Fall Projects

After a parched summer, it's time for a landscape revival.

Low Water PLANTS

SAWS approved low-water plant list.

WaterSaver NEWSLETTER

Are you a WaterSaver?

San Antonio Water System (SAWS) offers a variety of outdoor conservation programs, information, and rebates to promote water efficiency in landscaping and irrigation. Resources including species selection and xeriscaping techniques are available on their website at:

<http://saws.org/Conservation/Outdoor/>

4. Residential Streetscapes

Why is this Important?

Residential streetscapes in the many of San Antonio's historic districts are characterized by a detached sidewalk and planting strip landscaped with mature street trees and lawn or low plantings. This pattern creates a pedestrian-friendly environment, maintains continuity along the street frontage, and frames historic structures set back from the street. In some districts, the integrity of historic residential streetscapes has been compromised through the introduction of non-historic streetscape elements, such as hardscape and xeriscape plantings, over time.



Several of San Antonio's Historic Districts feature decorative gateway monuments.



Detached sidewalks and planting strips are common on residential streets in many of San Antonio's historic districts. Parkway and planted medians—such as the central median lined with palms, above—are also found in more limited locations.

Guidelines

A. PLANTING STRIPS

- i. **Street trees**—Protect and encourage healthy street trees in planting strips. Replace damaged or dead trees with trees of a similar species, size, and growth habit as recommended by the City Arborist.
- ii. **Lawns**— Maintain the use of traditional lawn in planting strips or low plantings where a consistent pattern has been retained along the block frontage. If mulch or gravel beds are used, low-growing plantings should be incorporated into the design.
- iii. **Alternative materials**—Do not introduce impervious hardscape, raised planting beds, or other materials into planting strips where they were not historically found.

B. PARKWAYS AND PLANTED MEDIANS

- i. **Historic plantings**—Maintain the park-like character of historic parkways and planted medians by preserving mature vegetation and retaining historic design elements. Replace damaged or dead plant materials with species of a like size, growth habit, and ornamental characteristics.
- ii. **Hardscape**—Do not introduce new pavers, concrete, or other hardscape materials into parkways and planted medians where they were not historically found.

C. STREET ELEMENTS

- i. **Site elements**—Preserve historic street lights, street markers, roundabouts, and other unique site elements found within the public right-of-way as street improvements and other public works projects are completed over time.
- ii. **Historic paving materials**—Retain historic paving materials, such as brick pavers or colored paving, within the public right-of-way and repair in place with like materials.

This



Planting strips and street trees have been maintained, contributing to the park-like character of these residential streetscapes.

Not This



Replacing lawn with pavers, rock mulch, or raised planting beds in planting strips detracts from the character of these residential streetscapes and increases stormwater runoff.

5. Sidewalks, Walkways, Driveways, and Curbing

Why is this Important?

The repetition of historic sidewalks, walkways, driveways, curbing widths, and materials serves as a unifying feature in San Antonio's historic districts. The introduction of new materials and patterns interrupts the consistency of these elements and detracts from the historic character of the streetscape.



Date or street name stamps are found in many of San Antonio's historic districts.



Consistent sidewalk, walkway, and driveway placement, width, and materials reinforce the formal streetscape character typical of San Antonio's historic districts. Every effort should be made to retain lawn and other plantings along historic sidewalks to avoid the over use of concrete.

Guidelines

A. SIDEWALKS AND WALKWAYS

- i. **Maintenance**—Repair minor cracking, settling, or jamming along sidewalks to prevent uneven surfaces. Retain and repair historic sidewalk and walkway paving materials—often brick or concrete—in place.
- ii. **Replacement materials**—Replace those portions of sidewalks or walkways that are deteriorated beyond repair. Every effort should be made to match existing sidewalk color and material.
- iii. **Width and alignment**—Follow the historic alignment, configuration, and width of sidewalks and walkways. Alter the historic width or alignment only where absolutely necessary to accommodate the preservation of a significant tree.
- iv. **Stamped concrete**—Preserve stamped street names, business insignias, or other historic elements of sidewalks and walkways when replacement is necessary.
- v. **ADA compliance**—Limit removal of historic sidewalk materials to the immediate intersection when ramps are added to address ADA requirements.

B. DRIVEWAYS

- i. **Driveway configuration**—Retain and repair in place historic driveway configurations, such as ribbon drives. Incorporate a similar driveway configuration—materials, width, and design—to that historically found on the site. Historic driveways are typically no wider than 10 feet. Pervious paving surfaces may be considered where replacement is necessary to increase stormwater infiltration.
- ii. **Curb cuts and ramps**—Maintain the width and configuration of original curb cuts when replacing historic driveways. Avoid introducing new curb cuts where not historically found.

C. CURBING

- i. **Historic curbing**—Retain historic curbing wherever possible. Historic curbing in San Antonio is typically constructed of concrete with a curved or angular profile.
- ii. **Replacement curbing**—Replace curbing in-kind when deteriorated beyond repair. Where in-kind replacement is not be feasible, use a comparable substitute that duplicates the color, texture, durability, and profile of the original. Retaining walls and curbing should not be added to the sidewalk design unless absolutely necessary.

This



The retention of historic sidewalks alignment and materials helps to preserve the visual continuity of this streetscape.

Not This



The introduction of new diamond shaped paving materials interrupts the visual continuity of the historic streetscape.



Replacement curbing matches the curvature of historic curbing, creating a consistent line.



The profile of the replacement curbing in the foreground does not match that of the adjacent historic curbing.



Historic ribbon driveway has been retained, reinforcing the continuity of the street frontage and minimizing stormwater runoff.



Historic ribbon driveway has been filled in, interrupting the continuity of the street frontage and increasing stormwater runoff.

6. Non-Residential and Mixed Use Streetscapes

Why is this Important?

Historic streetscapes in commercial and non-residential districts were designed to provide a safe and comfortable pedestrian environment that complements the historic character of the district. Consistency in streetscape elements helps create a unified appearance, reinforce the historic character of the district, and distinguish it from adjacent residential districts.



The design, scale, and character of San Antonio's non-residential and mixed-use streetscapes vary significantly by location. Houston Street, above, is designed to accommodate the high volumes of pedestrian traffic typical in downtown.

Guidelines

A. STREET FURNITURE

- i. **Historic street furniture**—Preserve historic site furnishings, including benches, lighting, tree grates, and other features.
- ii. **New furniture**—Use street furniture such as benches, trash receptors, tree grates, and tables that are simple in design and are compatible with the style and scale of adjacent buildings and outdoor spaces when historic furnishings do not exist.

B. STREET TREES

- i. **Street trees**—Protect and maintain existing street trees. Replace damaged or dead trees with trees of a similar species, size, and growth habit.

C. PAVING

- i. **Maintenance and alterations**—Repair stone, masonry, or glass block pavers using in-kind materials whenever possible. Utilize similar materials that are compatible with the original in terms of composition, texture, color, and detail, when in-kind replacement is not possible.

D. LIGHTING

- i. **General**—See UDC Section 35-392 for detailed lighting standards (height, shielding, illumination of uses, etc.).
- ii. **Maintenance and alterations**—Preserve historic street lights in place and maintain through regular cleaning and repair as needed.
- iii. **Pedestrian lighting**—Use appropriately scaled lighting for pedestrian walkways, such as short poles or light posts (bollards).
- iv. **Shielding**—Direct light downward and shield light fixtures using cut-off shields to limit light spill onto adjacent properties.
- v. **Safety lighting**—Install motion sensors that turn lights on and off automatically when safety or security is a concern. Locate these lighting fixtures as discreetly as possible on historic structures and avoid adding more fixtures than necessary.



While specific design characteristics vary throughout San Antonio's historic districts, this non-residential/mixed-use streetscape in St. Paul Square contains elements typical in most examples.

Maintenance and Alteration Checklist for Non-Residential and Mixed Use Streetscapes

- 1** Preserve historic site furnishings, including benches, lighting, tree grates, and other features.
- 2** Maintain historic street lights
- 3** Protect and maintain existing street trees. Replace damaged or dead trees with trees of a similar species, size, and growth habit.
- 4** Repair stone or masonry pavers using in-kind materials whenever possible.

7. Off-Street Parking

Why is this Important?

Without proper siting and screening, off-street parking areas detract from the pedestrian-oriented streetscape character typically found in San Antonio's historic districts and can negatively impact adjacent residential districts.



Off-street parking must be carefully sited and screened within San Antonio's historic districts to minimize visual impacts and to maintain a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Guidelines

A. LOCATION

- i. **Preferred location**—Place parking areas for non-residential and mixed-use structures at the rear of the site, behind primary structures to hide them from the public right-of-way. On corner lots, place parking areas behind the primary structure and set them back as far as possible from the side streets. Parking areas to the side of the primary structure are acceptable when location behind the structure is not feasible. See UDC Section 35-310 for district-specific standards.
- ii. **Front**—Do not add off-street parking areas within the front yard setback as to not disrupt the continuity of the streetscape.
- iii. **Access**—Design off-street parking areas to be accessed from alleys or secondary streets rather than from principal streets whenever possible.

B. DESIGN

- i. **Screening**—Screen off-street parking areas with a landscape buffer, wall, or ornamental fence two to four feet high—or a combination of these methods. Landscape buffers are preferred due to their ability to absorb carbon dioxide. See UDC Section 35-510 for buffer requirements.
- ii. **Materials**—Use permeable parking surfaces when possible to reduce run-off and flooding. See UDC Section 35-526(j) for specific standards.
- iii. **Parking structures**—Design new parking structures to be similar in scale, materials, and rhythm of the surrounding historic district when new parking structures are necessary.

Additional Resources

Changes to Historic Site, ITS #39, by Michael J. Auer.
<http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/its-bulletins/ITS39-HistoricSite-Changes.pdf>

This



Off-street parking should be screened from the pedestrian right-of-way and adjacent uses.

Not This



Insufficient screening of this large off-street parking area detracts from the streetscape character.



Off-street parking areas should be located to the side or rear of the structure they are intended to serve and screened from adjacent uses.



Providing off-street parking in the front yard setback detracts from the character of the historic structure it is intended to serve and the overall character of the historic district.



Parking structures should complement the historic character of the district they are intended to serve.



New modern parking structures should not detract from the historic character of the district they are intended to serve.

8. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance

Why is this Important?

Most historic buildings and sidewalks were not designed to be accessible to people with disabilities. Proper siting and design of accessibility features, such as wheelchair ramps, can help minimize the potential visual impacts to historic structures and districts while providing safe and accessible routes that are compliant with ADA requirements. The Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations (TDLR) enforces the Texas Accessibility Standards (TAS) which echo the 2010 ADA design standards. TAS applies to new construction and substantially renovated facilities that are publicly owned or leased or are public accommodations. Single family residences are exempt from ADA/TAS requirements. Alternative designs may be used when strict compliance with the TAS would threaten or destroy the historic or architectural significance of the facility. Any alternative design must substantially reflect the letter and spirit of the ADA.



Successful adaptations to historic buildings increase accessibility while minimizing visual impacts and damage to the historic structure, such as this convenient ramp located to the side of the building.

Guidelines

A. HISTORIC FEATURES

- i. **Avoid damage**—Minimize the damage to the historic character and materials of the building and sidewalk while complying with all aspects of accessibility requirements.
- ii. **Doors and door openings**—Avoid modifying historic doors or door openings that do not conform to the building and/or accessibility codes, particularly on the front façade. Consider using a discretely located addition as a means of providing accessibility.

B. ENTRANCES

- i. **Grade changes**—Incorporate minor changes in grade to modify sidewalk or walkway elevation to provide an accessible entry when possible.
- ii. **Residential entrances**—The preferred location of new ramps is at the side or rear of the building when convenient for the user.
- iii. **Non-residential and mixed use entrances**—Provide an accessible entrance located as close to the primary entrance as possible when access to the front door is not feasible.

C. DESIGN

- i. **Materials**—Design ramps and lifts to compliment the historic character of the building and be visually unobtrusive as to minimize the visual impact, especially when visible from the public right-of-way.
- ii. **Screening**—Screen ramps, lifts, or other elements related to ADA compliance using appropriate landscape materials. Refer to Guidelines for Site Elements for additional guidance.
- iii. **Curb cuts**—Install new ADA curb cuts on historic sidewalks to be consistent with the existing sidewalk color and texture while minimizing damage to the historical sidewalk.

Additional Resources

Designing New Additions to Provide Accessibility, ITS #53, by Liz Patrella. <http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/its-bulletins/ITS53-Additions-Accessibility.pdf>

Making Historic Properties Accessible, Preservation Briefs #32, by Thomas C. Jester and Sharon C. Park, AIA. <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief32.htm>

This



As ramps are added to San Antonio's historic districts over time, care should be given to ensure consistency with existing historic walkways and curbing.

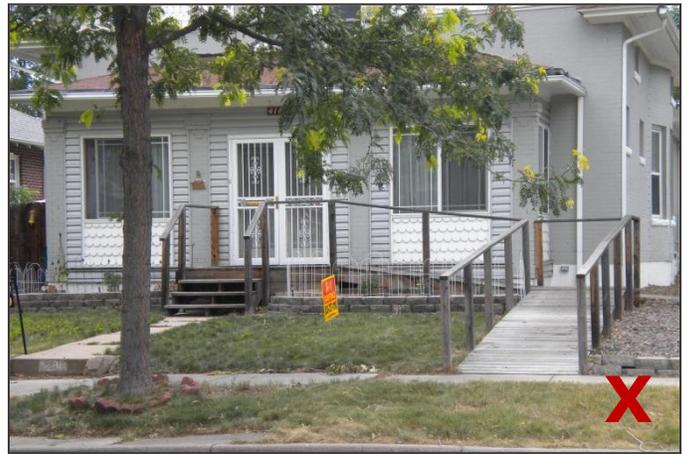
Not This



The accessibility of San Antonio's historic districts should be improved over time through the addition of ramps at all intersections.



A simple ramp was added to the rear of this historic structure.



A large wood ramp located at the front of this home visually dominates the property.



A ramp that is simple in design and does not damage the historic structure.



This poorly located ramp blocks the sidewalk and dominates the front faced of this historic church. (Source: www.amramp.com/edmonton-ab-pictures)

