

## **Historic Neighborhood Infill Design Guidelines**

These design guidelines are not intended to discourage new construction in the historic neighborhoods of St. Joseph; rather, the intent is to provide guidance so that new construction is in keeping with the historic character of the surrounding neighborhood. These guidelines are not binding; they are provided for guidance only.

During the design process for new construction in a historic neighborhood care should be taken to ensure that the overall appearance of the building is in conformity with the context of the surrounding streetscape. The features that should be considered include but are not limited to: height and width of the building; chimney placement and construction; appearance and placement of windows, doors, and porches; roof pitch and materials; and location of garage and/or accessory buildings. Overly simple buildings with little or no detailing should be avoided as should buildings that are overly ornate striving for a false sense of historicity. *Infill structures in historic neighborhoods should strive to be compatible yet distinct.*

## Scale, Height, & Massing

The size and proportion of new buildings should be in keeping with the scale of existing buildings in the neighborhood. Any accessory structures visible from the public right-of-way should be of a compatible architectural style and relate to the main building in terms of material. The depth of a building in relation to its lot and the adjoining building should be considered. Facades should be varied in style, but compatible with surrounding structures in terms of mass and detail. Maintain the relationship of “solids” and “voids” (i.e. massing) in new construction that is found in surrounding structures. Design the height of the proposed building to be compatible with the height of surrounding structures.



*Infill housing should be proportionately similar to surrounding structures.*

## Form & Rhythm

Create form and rhythm in new construction through the use of details. Elements found on neighboring historic structures such as porches, columns, bracketed cornices, towers, and corbelled chimneys when viewed collectively help to establish a level of form and rhythm that should be emulated in new construction.



*The facades that comprise this streetscape are each distinctive, yet they share similar features. It is the details such as the use of the lintels above the entry doors that make this harmonious.*

## Materials

Keep the predominant material of the new building within the palette of materials traditionally found in the city's historic districts. These include, but are not limited to, brick, rusticated and smooth face stone, wood, and stucco. Materials such as aluminum and vinyl siding, asbestos shingles, artificial brick and stone sheathing, and other imitation/synthetic sidings should not be used as the principal sheathing materials on new buildings. Limit the use of contemporary and synthetic materials. Vinyl, aluminum, exterior insulation finish systems, fiberglass, and other materials may be used for such things as window and door units and trim, architectural ornamentation, and cornice treatments. Use materials in traditional ways. New materials should appear as if they were applied in a traditional manner so as to convey the same visual appearance as historically used and applied building materials.



*The use of a common palate of materials allows the infill building to fit in with its surroundings*

## Setbacks

Setbacks (the distance that the structure must be from the property line) of infill housing should be similar to those of the other structures in the neighborhood. Setbacks in modern developments are often much larger than those found in historic neighborhoods. The zoning code of the City of St. Joseph allows for “contextual setbacks” in older neighborhoods allowing for infill housing to match the setbacks of the neighborhood.

## Rooflines

The roof forms of new constructions should be compatible with and relate to other buildings in the neighborhood. It is preferable if the roofs on new construction replicate existing and/or traditional roof shapes and pitches. Roof pitches of 7/12 or greater are generally characteristic of residential properties in the historic districts. Exceptions include many of the Greek Revival and Italianate style buildings which typically have low hipped roofs with pitches of 4/12 or less. Roofing materials should replicate the appearance of traditional materials. Use rooftop appurtenances such as spires, parapet cornices, and towers, when appropriate, to articulate the roofline and provide varieties in height. Such features should be used sparingly and should be scaled to both the building and the streetscape as a whole.



*The rooflines (as well as other features) of these infill houses are not compatible with those found on the older neighboring structures.*

## Foundations

Foundation material as well as the height of the exposed area between ground level and the finished floor of the building should be consistent with that found on buildings in the surrounding area. Four feet from the ground to the finish floor is a recommended starting point for design purposes.

## Doors & Windows

Maintain percentages of window and door openings that are similar to those of neighboring historic structures. Openings which vary significantly from that which exists in the area will tend to have a disruptive effect and draw undue attention to the new structure. The primary entrance to the building should face the street. It is appropriate to use recessed entryways. Transoms and sidelights can be used and should match the overall style of the building and conform to the style of surrounding structures. The style of door should replicate the appearance of traditional doors. The window design utilized for new construction should relate to the window configuration on existing structures in the neighborhood. Multi-light windows must have true divided lights or three-dimensional permanent grilles on the interior and exterior of the glass.



*The doors and windows on this infill structure vary dramatically from those found on adjoining houses.*

## **Details**

Ensure that the architectural details of the new construction complement those of the historic structures in the surrounding neighborhood. Creative reinterpretation of traditional detailing and ornamentation is encouraged. Avoid using ornamentation and detailing that is not found in the historic district. Do not attempt to create a false sense of history.



*The ornamentation and detailing give this new-build structure a false sense of history.*

## **Mechanicals**

Locate mechanical and rooftop appurtenances such as skylights, antennae, and HVAC equipment on side or rear elevations that are not highly visible from the public right-of-way.

## **Neighborhood Infrastructure**

Many older neighborhoods have historic infrastructure elements that are important to the character of the area and should be preserved. If the infill site has features such as a historic stone retaining wall, brick sidewalk, or stone curbing care should be taken to retain and preserve those features.

## **Summary**

High quality infill housing does not pretend to be what it is not – it does not set out to be a replica of historic housing stock. However, high quality infill housing does aim to be a good neighbor; it should be compatible in form and function with the other structures in the neighborhood.