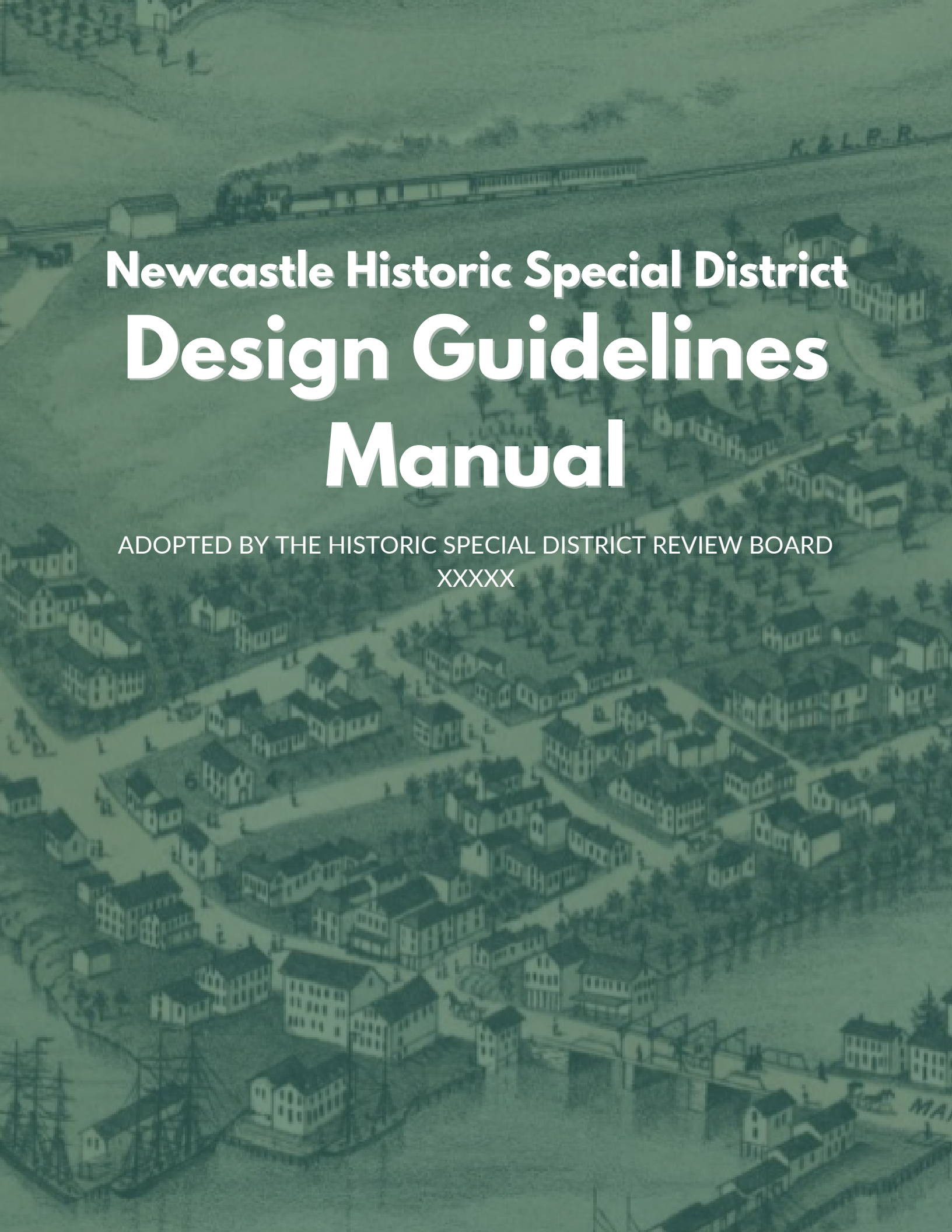


Newcastle Historic Special District

Design Guidelines Manual

ADOPTED BY THE HISTORIC SPECIAL DISTRICT REVIEW BOARD
XXXXX

Newcastle Historic Special District Design Guidelines Manual

Prepared for the Town of Newcastle
by Isabelle Oechslie,
IOV Community Planning + Consulting

2023

Unless otherwise credited, all contemporary photographs included in this Manual were taken by the author. Credit for historic photographs are provided under the photos as they appear.

Table of Contents

Introduction

This Design Guidelines manual was prepared for two separate but equally important audiences. The first audience is the Historic Special District Review Board, a regulatory body appointed by the Town's Selectboard charged with the responsibility of protecting Newcastle's historic, architectural, and cultural heritage by assisting property owners with maintaining the architectural integrity of the district (by providing resources such as this one and by reviewing proposals to alter existing buildings or sites within the identified SD-Historic zoning districts), preventing the demolition or removal of buildings or structures within the designated historic districts, and accepting new buildings and structures which are designed and built in a manner which is compatible with the character of the districts. The second audience is property owners within the designated historic districts, as well as their consultants, builders, architects, and others who may be assisting in the development of an application under the provisions of the Historic Special District Review Ordinance.

The first objective of this manual, therefore, is to provide the Historic Special District Review Board (hereinafter the "Review Board") with illustrated guidelines to assist in their deliberations regarding the standards of review as outlined in Article 2 of the Historic Special District Review Ordinance.

The second objective is to provide advisory guidance on how to develop an application that will comply with the relevant review standards. That said, while this document is provided as a courtesy, it is advisory only. It should not be construed as the only way to comply with the review standards, nor shall it be construed as a regulatory document. The only provisions which may be used by the Review Board in determining compliance with the standards of review are the standards themselves, as outlined in Article 2 of the Ordinance (as may be amended).

In addition, this Manual does not provide guidance on how to comply with other standards of review that may apply to a proposed project and which are found in other Town Ordinances, such as but not limited to, the Core Zoning Code and any of its modules. The Historic Special District Review Ordinance does not abrogate or annul any other codes, ordinances, regulations or standards.

If there are any questions, don't hesitate to contact the Town's Planning Department at (207) 563-3441.

Using this Manual

This Manual is organized into six sections. The first four sections are devoted to each set of standards for projects which require a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA), with one page devoted to each standard that the Review Board will consider in determining if an application for Certificate of Appropriateness is to be granted. If you know what kind of project you're proposing, you can utilize these sections to assist in the development of your application. Please note that additions to buildings located within the Historic Special District, including decks and patios, are subject to the standards for New Construction and Additions (Section 3) as well as the standards for Additions and Alterations (Section 1). The installation of Renewable Energy Systems, including but not limited to solar panels and windmills, have their own set of standards which can be found in Section 4.

In addition to the above, Section 5 is provided, which includes definitions for terms used throughout the Ordinance (and this Manual). Finally, Section 6 includes a list of common architectural styles found in Newcastle's historic districts and their character-defining features.

Certificate of Appropriateness: A document issued by the Town's Historic Preservation Review Board (or Planning Department, for certain designated projects) that assures compliance with the relevant provisions of the Historic Special District Review Ordinance. A Certificate of Appropriateness must be issued prior to beginning most kinds of work on buildings in the Town's historic districts.

Section 1: Standards for Alterations & Additions

Reference: Article 2, Section 1

These standards are used when any of the following is proposed on a property located within the Historic Special District or on a Local Landmark property:

- The addition of a deck or patio;
- Any improvement which would increase the square footage of a structure;
- Any change in foundations, gutters, door and window sash and character-defining decorative elements, such as, but not limited to, cornices, brackets, window architraves, doorway pediments, railings, balusters, columns, cupolas and cresting and roof decorations. This definition also includes the addition of skylights, utilities, and similar when seen from the Public Realm.

Standard 1: The character-defining qualities of a structure and its site (including but not limited to: architectural features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of skilled craftsmanship) shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material (for the purposes of this Ordinance, pre-1930) or character-defining architectural features should be avoided when possible. If removal of historic material or a distinctive feature is proposed, an analysis shall be submitted which identifies: (1) what considerations were taken before ultimately deciding on removal and why the other considerations were not feasible; (2) if an alternative material is proposed, how the alternative material is considered a similar substitute in durability, longevity, and appearance.

Older buildings were typically products of a deliberate design process where each feature or characteristic is planned to contribute to the appreciation of the whole. Section 6 notes common architectural styles found across Newcastle's three historic districts, and the attributes that define each style's character. This standard is primarily concerned with the loss of, or major changes to, these character-defining architectural components since the destruction of character-defining features (or the replacement of them with dissimilar substitutes) compromises the original design intent. Even though the removal of one or more architectural features may seem to have little impact on the overall character of the building, the cumulative impact of many "small" changes can end up being dramatic.

This standard encourages retaining character-defining features, including historic materials, unless the applicant can demonstrate the need for removal (and why retaining them is not technically or economically feasible). In addition, if an alternative material is proposed, the applicant must demonstrate how the alternative material is considered a similar substitute in quality (namely, permanence and longevity) and appearance.

Windows may be a common example here. Historic wood windows can last for over 100 years, if properly maintained and reglazed about every 20 years. Meanwhile, vinyl and aluminum will only last up to 40 and up to 20 years, respectively. However, there are a variety of new, cladded windows on the market that may match the durability of historic wood with less upkeep.

Standard 2: All Primary and Accessory Buildings shall be recognized as products of their own time period, place and use. Alterations that have no historical basis or create a false sense of historical development such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other time periods shall not be undertaken.

Just as there is a tendency to update and modernize buildings with inappropriate replacements, there is a parallel tendency to try to make buildings look older than they are. This second approach is equally as misleading. Conjectural designs that make a building appear older than it really is, or attempt to imitate features that never existed but would change the character of its original architectural style to another style should be prohibited. Some examples are included to the right.

Instead, it is always advisable to do research prior to beginning a rehabilitation project. A review of historic photographs or of buildings in the neighborhood of similar architectural style may reveal historic features that have been removed or are otherwise missing and will help set a direction for current or future projects.

Conjectural Features: Features added based only on availability or added without research into what would be the historically accurate feature for a type of architectural style.

Standard 3: Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a structure and its site. Changes that have acquired significance in their own right shall not be destroyed.

Many buildings evolve over time, reflecting changes in use and in architectural trends. These changes may, in some cases, be important in understanding the overall history of a building and its site. However, not all changes have significance in their own right and not all need to be retained. Just as some modern renovations and additions obscure, overwhelm, or generally detract from the original appearance of a historic building, earlier changes may have done the same. The Ordinance does not opine on when changes may have become significant in their own right. In order to determine if an alteration should be retained, its own architectural merit must be assessed and evaluated in the context of its effect on the historic character of the original structure.

It should be noted that cases do exist where an alteration or addition has as much (or more) architectural or historical significance as the original structure. This would be the case if there are relatively few examples of the addition's style in the area, or if the change records a significant chapter in the history of Newcastle, the State of Maine, or even more broadly.

For example, in rural areas, houses were frequently built as connected farms (inspiring the book *Big House*, *Little House*, *Back House*, *Barn* by historian and architect Thomas Hubka), where the big house was built first followed by the little house and back house over the next century as living situations changed. In instances where this occurs across Maine, the connected little house and back house might be even more architecturally and historically significant than the original big house because it explores the way that New Englanders changed their farms to fit their needs in the 19th century. These types of homes are able to be seen across Newcastle, especially in Sheepscot Village.

Standard 4: Damaged historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced wherever economically or technologically feasible, as demonstrated by the applicant. Where the severity of damage requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the feature being replaced in composition, design, texture and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Repair or replacement of damaged historic features shall be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by documentary, physical or photographic evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other structures or objects.

This standard was developed not only to encourage the retention of original materials and architectural features, but also to ensure that when replacement is proven necessary (by affirmative showing of the applicant), the design and material of the replacement features match the old as close as possible. Of course, routine maintenance and repair (exempt from the standards of this Ordinance) is the best way to avoid the need to replace. However, when a feature is beyond repair, replacement must be considered.

While the replacement of the exact same material is not made necessary by this standard, the replacement should be based on accurate duplications of features and not just on the availability of architectural elements (even if made out of something else). Hopefully, the essential form and detail of the feature remains to serve as a template for the replacement. When this is not possible, photographic or other kind of documentary evidence should be sought (such as from the Newcastle Historical Society, the Lincoln County Historical Association, or records available at the Skidompha Library, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, or (in some cases) even the Town Office.

If photographic or other physical evidence is not available, the applicant may consider substituting with a feature commonly found on that kind of architectural style.

In any instance, the applicant should submit the evidence that they used in determining the replacement feature to the Review Board for consideration as part of their application.

Standard 5: The surface cleaning of structures and objects, if appropriate, shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be undertaken.

This standard mostly applies to brick buildings, for reasons explained below. Any mechanical method of removing paint, atmospheric carbon deposits, graffiti, or even simple dirt (including wet and dry grit blasting with sand, walnut shells or abrasive) must be avoided. These kinds of treatments can remove the fired outer face of a brick wall, making the brick porous, and allowing water to be absorbed within the brick or even behind the wall. It is also extremely destructive to softer older mortars (pre-Portland cement) that would have been used to construct the wall, meaning that much of the mortar may be lost (thus necessitating an expensive repointing project). Water that is trapped within a brick will freeze and then cause the brick to flake off in chunks. In addition, water that has permeated through the wall can cause serious damage to the interior of a structure.

For removing general dirt and grime, consider water (under low pressure) and soft bristle brushes. For graffiti, paint spillage, soot, tar or grease, it may be possible to clean the affected areas using a non-toxic chemical solution (usually applied under the direction of a contractor licensed to use such materials). If chemical cleaning is considered, a small, barely visible test path should be cleaned first to test the chemical's reaction with the masonry surface.

Standard 6: Every reasonable effort shall be made to protect and preserve significant archeological resources affected by or adjacent to any project. If resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken by the applicant.

Just as above ground resources, such as buildings, contribute to our understanding of the past, below ground archeological resources enable us to understand significant patterns and events in history and prehistory that are no longer visibly evident. Before excavation as part of a project, contact the Town's Planning Department or the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to understand the likelihood of archeological resources being present at the project site. If archeological resources are found, work will need to be stopped and trained archeologists should be called in to make recommendations regarding the recording or protection of any artifacts.

Standard 7: Contemporary design for Additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such Additions do not destroy significant cultural, historical, architectural or archeological materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property, neighborhood or site.

Recognizing that buildings are continually evolving in responses to changes in use, ownership, or the ways in which we live, this standard provides guidance in evaluating proposed additions. The new work should be compatible with the old in the use of materials, height, massing and details. The Standards for New Construction and Additions (see Section 3 of this Manual or Article 2, Section 3 of the Historic Special District Review Ordinance) must also be followed. While being compatible, the addition should also clearly read as new work. The new work may borrow details from the old to insure compatibility, but should not attempt to duplicate the appearance of the original. Contemporary design is expressly encouraged for this type of new construction, while borrowing details or materials from the old building.

There is no formula or prescription for designing a compatible new addition, nor is there generally only one possible design approach that will meet this standard. The following pages provide some illustrative examples that may help in deciding if a proposed addition would meet this standard.

A new addition was added to this Greek Revival library in another Maine community in 2003. While the new addition is clearly distinguishable from the old due to the use of updated materials (brick rather than stone), it is also compatible with the overall character of the original building. The addition employs a strong cornice line similar to that on the existing structure, and its scale is such that it cannot be viewed from the street when facing the library head-on. The window shape on the new addition even mimics that of the original structure's windows, while clearly being made of a newer, aluminum material.

Standard 8: New Additions or Alterations to structures shall be undertaken in such a manner that, if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and structural integrity of the historic property would be unimpaired.

The general idea behind standard is that such additions or alterations should be reversible. Additions or other new work should be designed so that the work is attached to the earlier building in a way that causes the least possible damage to the original fabric of the building. If the new work were to be removed, what damage would be revealed that will detract from the character of the original structure?

The Secretary of the Interior has published a number of Technical Preservation Briefs which may be helpful to applicants in planning their projects. In this instance, Technical Preservation Brief #14: *New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns* may be a helpful resource.

8.a. Additions should be made on a side or rear elevation, not on the Primary Façade, unless in the determination of the Permitting Authority an addition to the side or rear elevation is not technically or economically possible due to unique constraints of the project.

Related to the idea expressed above, additions should generally be made on a side or rear elevation to maximize the ability to reverse the addition and minimize the impact to the building when viewed from the public realm.

Unique constraints of the project may include, but are not limited to, a small lot size or the inability to meet setback requirements on the side or rear of the building.

Section 2: Standards for Demolitions & Relocations

Reference: Article 2, Section 2

These standards are used when Demolition or Relocation of an existing Primary Building is proposed within the Historic Special District, or when the Demolition or Relocation of a designated Local Landmark is proposed.

A note on ***"Stay Provisions"***: It is in the best interest of the applicant if, in developing an application, they elect to explore reasonable alternatives on their own (including asking for an opinion from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission or a structural engineer, or soliciting quotes from experienced professionals) *prior to submitting a Certificate of Appropriateness application* for demolition. A complete application will provide sufficient information for the Review Board to consider your application at the initial meeting, rather than electing to employ a 90-day stay provision (available to them in Article 2, Section 2.C). The purpose of the stay provision is to allow the Review Board to explore reasonable alternatives to demolition; if the applicant proves that they have already explored reasonable alternatives, the Review Board will look more favorably on rendering a decision at the initial meeting.

In order to approve an application to relocate or demolish a building within the Historic Special District, or the Demolition or Relocation of a designated Local Landmark, the Review Board must find that the proposal meets at least one of the following standards for approval:

The purpose of these standards is to afford the Town, local historic societies, other preservation organizations, and others interested in preservation the opportunity to acquire or arrange for the preservation of historic buildings and structures, or important portions and features thereof, or proper removal of historic artifacts, or the proper recordation of the building, structure and/or site prior to demolition. These standards will attempt to encourage relocation of the building rather than demolition.

Standard 1: The Review Board determines that the structure is not of historic significance based on findings from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission or an architectural historian meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards (36 CFR Part 61).

This standard requires that *either* the applicant obtains a letter from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (or State Historic Preservation Office staff) regarding the eligibility of the structure to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or that the applicant escrows funds with the Town to hire a qualified architectural historian (as defined above) to make a determination as to the eligibility of the structure to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In either case, the structure may be considered for listing on its own or as a contributing structure to an eligible Historic District. If the structure is considered eligible for listing by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and the applicant formally applies to the National Register and is declined, the status of the property may be reconsidered by the Review Board.

In order for this standard to be used to approve a demolition, the property must not be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, either as a standalone property or as a contributing structure to an eligible Historic District.

Standard 2: The structure, or predominant portions thereof, has been determined to represent an immediate hazard to the public health or safety because of severe structural deficiencies, which hazard cannot be abated by reasonable measures.

In order for this standard to be employed, it requires that the applicant escrows funds with the Town sufficient for the Town to hire a structural engineer to opine on the structural integrity of the building. If, in the determination of the hired consultant, the structure or predominant portions thereof is an immediate hazard to public health or safety, the Review Board may employ this standard in granting approval to demolish the building.

Standard 3: No prudent or feasible alternative exists.

Frequently utilized in this Ordinance is the requirement that an applicant submits an analysis demonstrating what alternative measures were considered before an action is taken. Feasible, as used in this Ordinance, is taken to mean economically or technically feasible. This means that an applicant's analysis will typically include quotes from experienced or qualified professionals to demonstrate cost of various alternatives. Technically feasible may include information around construction techniques or practices sufficient to rehabilitate the building. Lack of tradesmen specializing in historic construction techniques may lead to a rehabilitation not being technically feasible in today's day and age; however, the burden of proof would be on the applicant to demonstrate what steps were taken in exploring alternatives.

If this standard is applied in granting a Certificate of Appropriateness, relocation will be encouraged through the use of Conditions of Approval (rather than outright demolition).

Section 3: Standards for New Construction & Additions

Reference: Article 2, Section 3

These standards are used when any of the following is proposed on a property located within the Historic Special District:

- The addition of a deck or patio;
- Any improvement which would increase the square footage of an existing structure;
- New Construction of either a Primary or Accessory Building.

Overview

The placement of a new building or building addition into an existing historic context presents design problems often very different from those for new construction on vacant or open sites. Simply put, the goal is to design a building which is both distinct from and compatible with the neighboring buildings. In order to achieve good design within a historic context, the scale, form, composition and articulation of an infill building or addition should be compatible with that of the buildings that surround it.

Broadly stated, compatibility refers to the recognition of patterns and characteristics which exist in a given setting, and a responsiveness in new design or renovation which respects these established patterns and characteristics. Although similarity of design is one way of achieving compatibility in a historic context, a creative and distinctly contemporary addition is both permitted and encouraged, within existing parameters.

Infill development: Building on land within an existing, built-up area

Each infill project will have a unique context of surrounding structures and sites, likely with some strong, unifying characteristics and some that are more subtle and less obvious. There will usually be one or more definite and easily discernable traits, such as a uniform scale and rhythm of window openings or consistent roof shapes, or a uniform architectural feature such as a bay window, that should serve as a basis for new designs.

Pictured above: A set of approximately uniform Greek Revival capes on Glidden Street.

Pictured above: Properties within the Damariscotta Mills historic district.

Within a context (a neighborhood or part of a neighborhood) where building characteristics are fairly consistent (such as the set of capes on Glidden Street pictured on the previous page), the new building should reinforce this existing character. In this setting, utilizing the same width, height and roof shape would be most appropriate. It would be a challenge to design a decidedly modern addition or new building in this area.

On the other hand, the Damariscotta Mills historic district (for example) has a greater variety of existing building shapes and types (pictured above). This area, and others like it, would allow for greater freedom in new design (though the designer should still attempt to identify any unifying characteristics among the disparate building types and relate the design of the new building to these aspects).

Even within the same historic district, design considerations for a new structure will vary from street to street and block to block. Consider the following two photographs, both from the same street in the Sheepscot Village neighborhood.

The home pictured above is a 2 or 2 ½ story, Italianate structure with a full facade front porch.

The home pictured above is a 1 or 1 ½ story, vernacular structure with a central chimney. While at first glance it may appear that there are no unifying characteristics between this house and the Italianate structure down the street, there are in fact some consistencies. For example, the orientation of each house is directly facing the street on which they front. Their entrances are both predominant, maintaining a pedestrian-oriented streetscape. The front yard setback, or the width of the yard between the front facade and the street, is roughly the same.

The diversity of this setting offers much more flexibility and unique opportunities for in-fill development than the row of capes in the Glidden Street neighborhood shown on the first page of this section, which resemble a pretty remarkable homogeneity. New construction on that block would need to essentially match the capes in scale and proportion. On the other hand, orientation and maintenance of the pedestrian streetscape would be the most important factors in new construction on the Sheepscot Village street shown in this page's examples.

It is clear that individual blocks within historic districts can call for distinctly different buildings. The guidelines that follow would allow new buildings constructed on these and other sites within Newcastle's historic districts to be dramatically different from each other while still fitting comfortably into their respective contexts.

Standard 1.a: The proposed height of the building shall be visibly compatible with immediately adjacent structures and the neighborhood as a whole when viewed from the public realm.

As shown on the preceding pages, buildings may vary considerably in height from district to district, and even within districts. When designing a New Construction project, the applicant may find it helpful to begin by reviewing the height of buildings immediately adjacent to their site as well as buildings in the neighborhood as a whole in an attempt to identify unifying patterns.

While the Town's Core Zoning code establishes the overall height limit for the SD-Historic zoning districts, the Historic Special District Review Ordinance indicates that within allowable height limits, a new building's height should be configured and articulated so as to relate to its immediate neighbors and the neighborhood as a whole, when viewed from the public realm.

This means that, if there is a unifying development pattern with immediately adjacent structures (such as the row of capes example on Glidden Street) when viewed from the street, the new construction should follow that development pattern.

When existing, immediately adjacent buildings do not follow a uniform development pattern, the applicant may instead look to the whole neighborhood for inspiration, providing greater opportunity for varying design.

New construction or additions may be taller or shorter than existing buildings, but creative design techniques such as multiple building setbacks, different fenestration patterns, strong intermediate cornices, arcades, or similar should be utilized such that the character of the streetscape and the scale and character of the pedestrian-oriented lower portions (e.g. porches) of the building are preserved.

Standard 1.b: The width of a building shall be visually compatible with immediately adjacent structures and the neighborhood as a whole when viewed from the public realm.

Similar to the above, before design a new construction project, the applicant may find it helpful to review the width of existing structures immediately adjacent to the proposed new construction site as well as structures within the neighborhood as a whole. Width of structures may be measured as feet, but also may be measured as *bays*.

While the Town's Core Zoning Code also establishes the overall width for structures, the Historic Special District Review Ordinance notes that the proposed width of a building shall be visually compatible with both immediately adjacent structures and with the neighborhood as a whole, when viewed from the public realm.

If a unifying development pattern exists (e.g. there is a row of similar five bay houses immediately adjacent to the proposed building site), the applicant should construct a house of similar width. For more varying areas, the applicant has more freedom in drawing inspiration from the overall neighborhood.

Bays are a unit of measurement on buildings, used when there are no columns or divisions. For example, the Greek Revival house in Sheepscot Village shown below would be considered five bays wide (sometimes also referred to as five-ranked).

Pictured above: A property within the Sheepscot Village historic district, with a more contemporary screen porch addition.

Standard 1.c: New construction shall be compatible in proportion [of principal facades] with existing buildings in the neighborhood.

Proportion is the relationship of one dimension to another, most commonly the width to height of a building façade. The proportion of façades, particularly those fronting on streets or other publicly-accessible open space, is frequently one of the strongest visual and physical characteristics found in historic districts. The characteristic proportion of existing facades should be respected and new construction should be compatible in proportion with existing buildings. An analysis of the proportions of immediately adjacent buildings as well as buildings within the neighborhood should be undertaken when designing infill construction. Large buildings should be broken down into smaller units to correspond with typical proportions of surrounding facades.

Similar to the height and width standards outlined above, when there is one characteristic proportion along the block, the applicant should attempt to match that proportion. In areas where building proportion is more varied, the applicant has more discretion in proportions.

This infill construction project in neighboring Damariscotta (pictured at right) was an example of adjustments made to design a building that would fit in with the overall characteristic proportions of the neighborhood. While it is a large, multi-family development, the varying projections give the visual illusion that the building is multiple, separate single-family homes.

It should be noted that proportion is not only height and width. If all houses on the street have full-façade front porches, that would be another characteristic proportion that the applicant should integrate into their new design. This is explored further in New Construction Standard 2.a on page 27.

Pictured above: Salt Bay Apartments in neighboring Damariscotta was an example of adjustments made to fit with the character of the surrounding neighborhood, including varying projections and proportions of the principal façade.

Standard 1.d.1: The proposed roof shape shall fit in with the established context of the neighborhood and of immediately adjacent structures.

In some areas, rooflines are the same for an entire block. In this case, a new building's roof should draw its character and shape from the existing context by utilizing a similar roof shape and form. Section 6 of this Manual notes common architectural styles found in Newcastle and the rooflines that are character-defining to them, however, the applicant should start by walking through the neighborhood in an attempt to understand existing roof shapes before designing a new construction project.

In other areas, no two rooflines are the same. The applicant should submit an analysis demonstrating how the proposed roof shape will fit with the established context of the neighborhood and of immediately adjacent structures as part of their application. This will detail if there is a unifying roof shape found on immediately adjacent structures (preferably through photos), or if roofs abutting the proposed new construction site are more disparate.

Standard 1.d.2: Rooftop decks shall be designed so that they cannot be seen from the public realm.

While rooftop decks are allowed, they should be screened from view of the public realm by being placed, for example, an addition that is lower than the tallest roofline or in such a way that existing architectural details would block the deck from view.

Standard 1.d.3: When rooftop utilities, including but not limited to communication antennae, satellite dishes, mechanical units, elevator towers, and vents are proposed, the utility shall be placed in such a way that they are not visible from the public realm, such as on the side or rear of the building. Alternatively, rooftop utilities shall be visually screened from view from the public realm by the placement of decorative elements that are in keeping with the established context of the neighborhood and of immediately adjacent structures.

Existing rooftop utilities are allowed to remain in place if they were in place at the time that this Ordinance was adopted (per Article 1, Section C: Exempt Activities). When new rooftop utilities are proposed, the applicant should seek a Certificate of Appropriateness from the relevant Permitting Authority. Rooftop utilities should be placed in such a way that they would not be visible from the public realm, such as on the side or rear of the building. If this is not technically or economically feasible, the Review Board may alternatively approve the placement of utilities in such a way that they are visually screened from view by the placement of decorative elements (e.g. placed behind existing cupolas). In no case shall a rooftop utility be placed on the primary façade of a building.

This standard does not apply to Renewable Energy Systems, including windmills or solar energy systems, which are given their own special standards, outlined in Section 4 of this document.

Standard 2.a: The characteristic sizes and proportions of window and door openings, and the rhythm of entrances, porches and other projections to public ways shall be consistent with the proportions of openings found either within the established neighborhood context and/or on buildings to which it is visually related.

Characteristic sizes and proportions of window and door openings, created by repeated patterns of design elements which are found on adjacent buildings on the block (such as residential projections that create patterns of light and shade such as overhangs, porches or bay windows) shall be incorporated into the new building's primary facade. As with the other standards for new construction, this requires that the applicant first undertake an analysis of the existing neighborhood and determine if there is an prevailing pattern of development.

Standard 2.b: Building materials shall be reflective of and complementary to existing buildings within the historic district. Materials shall be durable and of high-quality.

This Ordinance does not specifically require the use of historically accurate materials, especially on new construction. The applicant should feel free to explore materials that will work best for their project but which are durable and of high-quality. As noted elsewhere in these Guidelines, high-quality is generally concerned with permanence and longevity. There are a variety of composite materials that match the look and feel and wood but which may be much cheaper. Applicants should provide information on all of the materials that they are seeking to use on their project, including the expected lifetime of the material. The U.S. Department of Interior's Preservation Brief #16, *The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors*, may be a helpful resource for applicants to review while planning their project.

Standard 3.a: Façades and site structures, such as masonry walls, fences and landscape masses, should, when it is a characteristic of the area, form cohesive walls of enclosure along a street to ensure visual continuity with the structures, public ways and places to which such elements are visually related.

There are only a few places in the community where low stone walls form a wall of enclosure along the street. However, if the new construction is to be placed in one of these areas, a low stone wall should be constructed in order to maintain visual continuity. If no existing masonry walls, fences or landscape masses exist, or they are disparate among properties (not providing any visual continuity), the applicant does not need to construct one in order to meet this standard.

Standard 3.b: The new construction shall maintain any unifying development pattern such as orientation of buildings, setbacks, and building coverage.

The Town's distinct historic neighborhoods tell the story of how Newcastle developed. All three areas existing at the time of the drafting of this Manual are characterized by a relatively random mixture of lot sizes because of a general lack of regulation in the community for many years which allowed the gradual sale of parcels from original large lots. While the underlying Core Zoning Code regulates minimum and maximum building setbacks, if there is a unifying development pattern of orientation or setbacks on the block where the new construction is to be placed, the applicant should maintain this pattern.

For example, because everyone used to walk within Sheepscot Village, the arrangement of homes is fairly compact but they are oriented towards the roads that they front on. There are large backlots where farming or other agricultural activities likely occurred. On the other hand, Damariscotta Mills has no unifying pattern of setbacks or building orientation. Certain blocks of the Glidden Street neighborhood have uniform building orientations (where all homes are facing the street), while other blocks have more disparate orientations where some homes face the street they front on and others face a side property line.

The infill building shall reflect the characteristic rhythm of facades along the street, if one exists. If a typical house in the neighborhood sits in the center of a large lot, with its entrance to the side, a new house should have a similar orientation. Thus the rhythm of the side yard open space to building to side yard on the street will be maintained. If sideyards are small or non-existent, new construction should be based on the same rhythm. Finally, if every house is oriented towards the street that it fronts on, the new construction should be as well.

Standard 4.a: Non-residential uses shall not alter the character-defining features of the structure such that it would not be recognizable as its original residential use.

Some low-impact non-residential uses are allowed within the SD-Historic zoning districts. These are regulated by the Core Zoning Code. While these may be allowed, this standard would not provide for the addition of shop windows or other major changes to the building to accommodate the non-residential use, unless they were not visible from the public realm. Signage may be allowed but is not considered under the Historic Special District Review Ordinance. See the Town's Sign Ordinance for additional detail.

Standard 4.b: The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building shall not be destroyed. If a distinguishing original feature is proposed to be altered or removed, an analysis must be submitted which indicates the reasons for alteration or removal.

The distinguishing original qualities of a building depends on the architectural style of the building as well as the existing conditions of the building at the time of Certificate of Appropriateness review. For example, a distinguishing original quality of Greek Revival structures like the one pictured below is the enframement around the door. Destruction or alteration of this enframement to construct a large front porch addition, for example, would not be allowed under this Ordinance without good reason.

Pictured at left: The enframement of the front door on this Greek Revival home in Sheepscot Village is a character-defining feature of Greek Revival architecture and would not be allowed to be removed under this Standard.

Standard 4.c: Every reasonable effort shall be made to protect and preserve significant archeological resources affected by or adjacent to any project. If, on the basis of an archeological site survey or other information, the Permitting Authority determines that there is an archeological resource on or immediately adjacent to the parcel, it may limit excavation or building to preserve or protect the site or may approve a plan or conditions to provide for appropriate evaluation, excavation or protection of the resource. If resources must be disturbed because no feasible alternative exists, documentation of the resource shall be undertaken and provided to the Town and to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

Just as above ground resources, such as buildings, contribute to our understanding of the past, below ground archeological resources enable us to understand significant patterns and events in history and prehistory that are no longer visibly evident. Before excavation as part of a new construction project, contact the Town's Planning Department or the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to understand the likelihood of archeological resources being present at the project site. If archeological resources are discovered, work will need to be stopped and trained archeologists should be called in to make recommendations regarding the recording or protection of any artifacts.

Section 4: Standards for Renewable Energy Systems

Reference: Article 2, Section 4

These standards are used when the installation of Renewable Energy Systems are proposed on either:

- Any property located within the Historic Special District, or;
- Any Local Landmark building.

Standard 1: All Renewable Energy Systems shall be placed in such a way that they are unable to be seen from the public realm. When this is not economically or technologically feasible, one of the following alternatives may be approved:

Recognizing that historic properties may need to adapt to changing technologies, the purpose of this Standard is not to discourage the installation of Renewable Energy Systems, but to ensure that historic resources and the overall character of historic districts is protected to the extent practical. That said, applicants should endeavor to place Renewable Energy Systems in such a way that they will not be visible from the public realm. If, in the determination of a qualified professional, this is not technologically feasible (e.g. because the configuration of the roof does not allow the sun to hit the solar panels for long enough to produce any energy benefits) or it would be cost prohibitive to do so, one of the following alternatives may be approved, in order of priority.

Location on an accessory building.

The property owner should consider the installation of roof-mounted solar systems on accessory structures (outbuildings, barns, garages, etc.) or non-historic buildings (constructed post-1930). This will protect the primary resource on the property.

Location on rear roof slopes, behind existing architectural features or parapets, where such visibility does not detract from the overall historic character of the property.

The intent here is to located the panels in such a way where, even if they are visible from the public realm, they don't detract from the overall character of the property. Photos below are provided to show examples of installations that would likely be found to meet the Standard.

Pictured at left: A property in a Vermont community where solar collectors are installed on a rear roof slope on a newer addition, minimizing impact to the original, historic portion of the building. This would meet the Ordinance standards. Photo c/o U.S. Secretary of the Interior Technical Preservation Services.

The placement of Ground-mounted Renewable Energy Systems located in the rear yard.

In the more densely developed neighborhoods, the use of freestanding solar systems is less likely due to the size of the typical lot and the existing tree canopy. However, when feasible, ground-mounted arrays may be the best alternative choice because they would have no impact on the historic building or its materials. The installation of such systems should be located in the rear of the property to minimize visibility from the public realm.

Only in instances when the Review Board determines, based on information provided by the applicant, that none of the above are technologically or economically feasible, the Renewable Energy System may be placed in such a way where it will be seen from the public realm. The standards in subsection C.2 must be met.

Pictured at left: A property in a Vermont community where low-profile solar collectors are installed on the sloped roof on the south side of the gable. Though visible, these few panels have relatively little impact on the historic character of the property. However, if the roof had been a more prominent feature of the property (e.g. with a greater slope or decorative finishes), this installation may not have been appropriate. Photo c/o U.S. Secretary of the Interior Technical Preservation Services.

Standard 2: The following standards shall be met when the installation of Renewable Energy Systems is proposed on the roof of a structure:

Removal of historic roofing materials as part of the installation of solar panels on portions of a roof visible from the public realm shall not be undertaken.

For the purposes of this standard, historic roofing materials are considered slate or clay tiles. Asphalt shingles are allowed to be removed as necessary. The replacement of asphalt shingle roofs with solar shingles (building integrated photovoltaics) on roofs is allowed, but the removal of original slate tiles is not allowed.

Permanent removal or otherwise altering a historic roof element and configuration (e.g. dormers, chimneys, or other features) on portions of a roof visible from the public realm shall not be undertaken.

Typically, dormers, chimneys, and cupolas are character-defining features of the building and thus, they should not be removed. Non-historic (post-1930) pipes or vents, skylights, or other rooftop appurtenances may be removed if needed.

Any installation procedure that will cause irreversible changes to historic features or materials on portions of a roof visible from the public realm shall not be undertaken.

Again, for the purposes of this standard, historic roofing materials are considered slate or clay tiles. Asphalt shingles are allowed to be removed or changed as necessary. Typically, dormers, chimneys and cupolas are character-defining features and thus they should not be impacted.

The placement of solar panels on top of visible slate or clay tile roofing shall not be undertaken in any instance.

Under this standard, placement atop visible slate or clay tile roofing may be allowed on the rear of the property or on ells that cannot be seen from the public realm, but would not be allowed to be seen from the public realm in any circumstance.

The color of conduit and all attachment mechanisms for Renewable Energy Systems shall match the existing building materials to which it is attached or directly adjacent, including roof, siding, or similar.

The visibility of solar panels and support structures (and thus the impact on historic resources) can be substantially reduced if the color matches the historic building and roof and reflectivity is minimized.

The placement of panels in an array shape that does not echo that of the visible roof plane shall not be undertaken in any instance. The slope of solar panels must match the slope of the roof to which they are attached or located on.

Panels should be set at angles consistent with the slope of the supporting roof. For example, avoid solutions that would set panels at 70-degree angles when the roof slopes at a 45- degree angle. The addition of structures atop the roof in order to accommodate solar panels (as shown in the photo to the right) would not be allowed.

Pictured above: A property in another community where solar collectors are popping up from the roof, negatively impacting the character of this mid-twentieth century house. This would not meet the Ordinance standards. Photo c/o U.S. Secretary of the Interior Technical Preservation Services.

Section 5: Definitions

Reference: Article 4

Accessory Building: Same as the definition found in Article 8 of the Core Zoning Code.

Addition: An improvement that increases the square footage of a structure or the addition of decks or patios. These include lateral additions added to the side or rear of a structure or vertical additions added on top of a structure.

Additional Structure: Same as the definition found in Article 8 of the Core Zoning Code.

Alteration: For the purposes of this Ordinance, this includes any change in foundations, gutters, door and window sash and character-defining decorative elements, such as, but not limited to, cornices, brackets, window architraves, doorway pediments, railing, balusters, columns, cupolas and cresting and roof decorations. This definition also includes the addition of skylights, utilities, and similar when seen from the Public Realm.

Applicant: Same as the definition found in Article 8 of the Core Zoning Code.

Architectural Feature: The architectural elements embodying style, design, general arrangement, and components of the exterior of any building or structure, including, but not limited to: decorative elements, the kind or texture of the building materials, and the style and type of all windows, doors, lights, and porches.

Certificate of Appropriateness: The approval documentation indicating compliance with the relevant standards of this Ordinance.

Character or Character-Defining: The visual aspects and physical features that comprise the appearance of a building, which may include the overall shape of the building and its materials, craftsmanship, decorative details, and unique aspects of its site or environment.

Conjectural Features: Features added based only on availability or added without research into what would be the historically accurate feature for a type of architectural style.

Demolition: The razing of a building or a structure or the removal of any exterior architectural feature or structure or object.

Frontage Zone: Same as the definition found in Article 8 of the Core Zoning Code.

Hazard Building(s): Any building which, because of inadequate maintenance, dilapidation, physical damage (including damage from a fire, flood, or similar), unsanitary condition, or abandonment, constitutes a fire hazard or a danger to public health.

Historic Preservation: Broadly, this is a conversation about the past for the purposes of planning for the future. For the purposes of this Ordinance, this means identifying and regulating buildings, structures, sites or districts with cultural, social, architectural or historic value in order to communicate with future generations those places (including individual buildings or sites and whole neighborhoods) which have been important or significant to the broader story of the Town of Newcastle and its inhabitants.

Historic Resource Inventory: An inventory, maintained by the Town, of sites, buildings and resources within the Historic Special Districts, and, if applicable, their Character-Defining features.

Historic Special Districts: Those shown on the Official District Map of the Town of Newcastle, Maine as may be amended from time to time. The Official District Map is included in Article 1 of the Core Zoning Code.

Legislative Body: Voters of the Town of Newcastle at a duly-noticed Town Meeting.

Local Landmarks: Those properties, which may be located outside of the Historic Special Districts but which have significant architectural, social, cultural or historical value in their own right, and which have been designated as Local Landmarks through the process outlined in Article 3, Section 3 of this Ordinance. Only property owners or their agents/assigns may initiate a petition to designate their property as a Local Landmark.

Minor Alteration: Incidental changes or additions to a building which will neither result in substantial changes to any significant historic features nor obscure such features. In no event shall any change be deemed minor when, in the determination of the Planning Department, such change shall alter the historic character of the building.

New Construction: New construction includes the placement of a new Primary or Accessory Building on a site, whether the new building is post-and-beam construction or factory-built/manufactured.

Permitting Authority: The Planning Department or the Historic Special District Review Board, as may be applicable.

Planning Department: The Town Planner or their designee.

Primary Building: Same as the definition found in Article 8 of the Core Zoning Code.

Principal Facade or Principal Elevation: The front of a building facing the street.

Proportions: The relationship of the size, shape, and location of one building element to all of the other elements; each architectural style typically has its own rules of proportion.

Projections: A part or feature of a building which extends out beyond the enclosing walls (for example, steps, porches, or enclosed entries, or bay windows, balconies, and cornices).

Public Realm: All public or civic lands including publicly-owned parks and open spaces, roads, sidewalks, rights-of-way, frontage zones, and water bodies.

Reconstruction: The act or process of depicting, through new construction, the form, features, and details of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time (usually using documentary or photographic evidence).

Renewable Energy Systems: Systems that harness energy from solar, geothermal and/or wind sources.

Repointing: To repair the joints of brickwork or masonry with mortar or cement.

Review Board: The Newcastle Historic Special District Review Board, as established by Article 3 of this Ordinance.

Rhythm: An ordered, alternating, recurring pattern of solids (walls) to voids (windows and doors) in building facades along the street. The recurrent alternation of walls to windows and doors (solids to voids) along the front facade of a building establishes a pattern which can be perceived when observing the building from a distance.

Temporary: For the purposes of this Ordinance, the term Temporary shall have the same meaning as Temporary Structure, as outlined in Article 4, Section 9 of the Core Zoning Code.

Section 6: Architectural Styles Present in Newcastle & Their Character-Defining Features

This section is intended to provide a brief overview of architectural styles commonly found in Newcastle. Many buildings are influenced by multiple styles. This list is intended to help users of this Manual recognize common architectural styles and their character-defining features.

Each page has one architectural style and a description of character-defining features found on that style. These descriptors make up the so-called “character-defining” features that the Ordinance seeks to regulate. Following the descriptor page is one page of photos showing how that particular architectural style was interpreted in Newcastle. The discussions of styles is primarily concerned with residential construction, since that is the majority of properties within Newcastle’s SD-Historic zoning district.

This information should be of benefit to property owners by providing a framework of reference during the project planning phase, prior to submittal of a specific project to the Review Board.

Pictured above: an Italianate style home in Sheepscot Village.

Federal (1780-1820)

Identifying Features

Semi-circular or elliptical fanlight over front door, which is typically incorporated into a more elaborate door surround (sometimes including a decorative crown or, as with the Kavanaugh Mansion, a small entry porch).

Cornice emphasized with tooth-like dentils or other decorative molding.

Double-hung windows, usually with six panes per sash. Windows are aligned both horizontally and vertically in strict symmetrical rows. Windows are typically surrounded by shutters.

Typically five bays wide (less common in Newcastle would be three bays wide).

Pictured above: the Federal-style Kavanaugh Mansion in Damariscotta Mills. Photo c/o Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS-ME22).

Greek Revival (1825-1860)

Identifying Features

Gabled or hipped roof of a low pitch.

The cornice line of the main roof, and typically the porch roof, is emphasized by a wide band of trim, divided into two parts. This is an almost universal feature of Greek Revival homes.

Most have porches or entrances that are actually slightly recessed into the facade. In Newcastle, the porches are typically only over the entry and are less than the full height of the front facade.

In some examples, the door is also surrounded by a narrow band of rectangular panes of glass held in a delicate, decorative frame. The door and small windows are then typically surrounded by a larger wood frame (or, if there are no small windows, the door will still be framed).

Double-hung windows, usually with six panes per sash. Windows may be surrounded by shutters.

Usually contain a shallow half-story (whether the main house is one or two stories).

Pictured above: a Greek Revival home in Sheepscot Village.

Italianate (1840-1885)

Identifying Features

Rarely ever one-story tall, typically two- or three-stories.

Low-pitched roof with moderate to widely over-hanging eaves with decorative brackets underneath.

Tall, narrow windows that are sometimes arched or curved. The windows are typically framed, at minimum, or have elaborate crowns above them.

Italianate houses may be wide and generally symmetrical, or skinnier and asymmetrical. When asymmetrical, they may be balanced by a bay window on one side.

Bay windows are also common features.

Single-story porches, either partial or full-width, are also common.

Pictured above: an Italianate home in the Glidden Street neighborhood.

Pictured above: an Italianate home in Sheepscot Village.

Second Empire (1855-1885)

Identifying Features

The mansard roof is the distinguishing characteristic, with dormer windows. Eaves of roof have decorative brackets (and the decorations may look similar to those on the Italianate style).

Window, door and porch details are similar to those used in the Italianate style.

Note: there are few Second Empire style homes left in Newcastle.

Pictured above: a Second Empire home in the Glidden Street neighborhood, characterized by its mansard roof.

Queen Anne (1880-1910)

Identifying Features

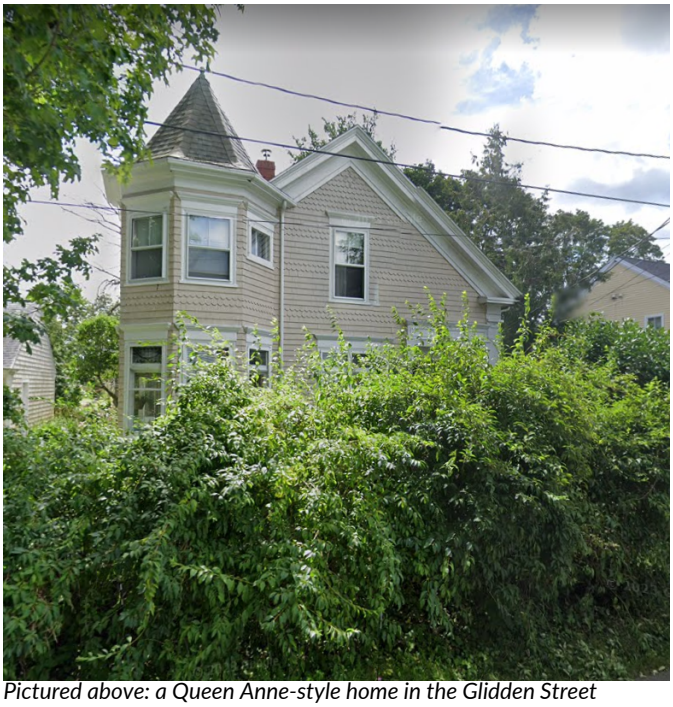
Steeply pitched roof of an irregular shape, usually with a dominant front facing gable.

The primary facade is asymmetrical, sometimes with a partial or full-width porch at least one-story high.

Towers are common, as are dormers and bay windows. Differing projections and recesses are also common to break up the horizontal planes of facades.

Differing wall textures are a hallmark of Queen Anne houses. These are most commonly achieved with pattern wood shingles.

Note: there are few Queen Anne style homes left in Newcastle.



Pictured above: a Queen Anne-style home in the Glidden Street neighborhood. Google Maps Image.

Vernacular Construction (circa 1770-present)

The house pictured above, in the Damariscotta Mills neighborhood, is an example of vernacular construction in Maine from the 1700s.

The house pictured at left, in the Sheepscot Village neighborhood, is a prime example of vernacular construction in Maine in a newer build.

Identifying Features

This style of construction is by definition "a mode of building based on regional forms and materials" (Cyril M. Harris, Historic Architecture Sourcebook). The main distinguishing characteristic is that it has no distinguishing characteristics, either because it is so simple that it lacks enough detail to be categorized as one specific architectural style, or it combines many elements of many different styles. Vernacular architecture is the everyday building form used by builders throughout history who were concerned with providing shelter rather than a work of art. Despite its relative simplicity compared to the other styles, it should not be dismissed as a style. Vernacular, as the background for the stylistic buildings that surround it, represents the typical building style of a working class community.

Chimneys: Typically brick.

Siding: Wood shingle may be the most common in Maine.

Additional Resources + Further Reading

This section is intended for those interested in learning more about architectural styles and how to identify character-defining features of buildings as well as those planning their own projects.

The Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: Rehabilitation as a Treatment and Standards for Rehabilitation* (upon which Newcastle's reviewing standards are based), available online here: https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-rehabilitation.htm

The Secretary of the Interior's *Technical Preservation Briefs*, which are intended to help historic building owners recognize and resolve common problems prior to work. These are available to be viewed online here: https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/preservation-briefs.htm

A Field Guide to American Houses (revised edition 2015), book by Virginia Salvage McAlester.

Get Your House Right: Architectural Elements to Use & Avoid, 2008 book by Marianne Cusato & Ben Pentreath.

Restoring Your Historic House: The Comprehensive Guide for Homeowners, 2019 book by Scott T. Hanson.


TOWN OF NEWCASTLE, MAINE
Established JUNE 19, 1753