

WARREN VOLUNTARY HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM
STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES
(recommended draft 9/3 after 9/2 Workshop)

Prepared by

WARREN VOLUNTARY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMITTEE

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(underlined paragraphs, words and/or sentences indicate where changes were made to
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**WARREN VOLUNTARY HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM
STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

Section 1	GENERAL PROVISIONS	PAGE
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	References	1
1.3	General Standards	1
Section 2	CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS	
2.1	Exterior Wood	3
2.2	Masonry	3
2.3	Paint Removal/Lead Paint/Stain	4
2.4	Porches and Steps	4
2.5	Roofing and Gutter Systems	4
2.6	Windows	5
2.7	Doors	5
Section 3	MINOR ALTERATIONS	
3.1	Shutters and Blinds	5
3.2	Doors	6
3.3	Window Sash	6
3.4	Gutters and Downspouts	6
3.5	Fences and Gate	6
Section 4	MAJOR ALTERATIONS	
4.1	Replacement of Features	8
4.2	Wall Materials	8
4.3	Complete Door Units	8
4.4	Complete Window Units	8
4.5	Ornamentation	9
4.6	Roof Form and Elements	9
4.7	Porches, Stairs and Entryways	9
4.8	Grade Level/Foundations	9
4.9	Regulatory Codes	9
Section 5	ADDITIONS AND SECONDARY STRUCTURES	
5.1	Review Process	10
5.2	Changes to an Approved Project	10
5.3	Design Criteria	10
Section 6	PROJECTS NOT REQUIRING CONSTRUCTION PERMITS	
6.1	Hardware and Electrical Devices	11
6.2	Storm Doors and Storm Windows	11
6.3	Maintenance	11
6.4	Removal	11
6.5	Reconstruction	11

Section 6	(cont)	PAGE
6.6	Painting	11
6.7	Windows	11
6.8	Doors	11
Section 7	EMERGENCY EGRESS	
7.1	Introduction	11
7.2	Fire Escapes	12
7.3	Fire Doors	12
Section 8	BARRIER-FREE ACCESS	
8.1	Definition	12
8.2	Exceptions for Historic Properties	13

SECTION 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.1 **Introduction:** The Warren Voluntary Historic District Committee (WVHDC) was established by the Town Council

“To develop a program to encourage the voluntary preservation, restoration and protection of the architectural heritage of the Town of Warren’s Historic District and other properties for future generations.”

A tax credit program has been adopted that provides an incentive for owners of historic properties to preserve the exterior appearance of their property, site, or its appurtenances including construction, alteration and maintenance. **A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS IS REQUIRED BEFORE WORK COMMENCES ON THE EXTERIOR OF A CONTRIBUTING PROPERTY WHEN THE PROPERTY OWNER WISHES TO OBTAIN A TAX CREDIT FOR WORK PERFORMED. CONSTRUCTION PERMITS, IF REQUIRED, FOR EXTERIOR WORK ON PROPERTIES ELIGIBLE FOR A TAX CREDIT CANNOT BE ISSUED WITHOUT A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS.**

These Standards and Guidelines have been adopted (in accordance with Chapter Four, Article VIII of the Code of the town of Warren) to assist the property owner and the WVHDC in processing applications for Certificates of Appropriateness.

The intent of these Standards and Guidelines is to guide the inevitable changes to the exteriors of structures and sites of the Town’s contributing historic properties. The most important features of historic buildings are roofs, exterior walls, windows and their openings and trim, doors and entries, porches, steps, stairs, railings and foundations. As each historic structure and its site are unique, each application is considered on its own merits in accordance with these Standards and Guidelines.

1.2 **References:** The documents referenced below provide a general technical background for historic preservation and restoration work. The WVHDC and individuals planning work on eligible historic residential properties should consult these documents when guidance on specific topics is required. IN the event that there is a conflict between the recommendations of references listed below and this set of Standards and Guidelines, the requirements of these Standards and Guidelines will take precedence:

- 1.2.1 “The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings,” revised 1990
- 1.2.2 “Easy Guide to Rehab Standards,” Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, dated 1992
- 1.2.3 “Fixing-Up; Bilingual Handbook for Older Homes,” Massasoit Historical Association, Warren, Rhode Island, dated 1979

1.3 **General Standards:** These Standards and Guidelines are to be applied when acting on an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness. Eligible properties are those residential historic structures in the Voluntary Historic District and outlying properties, and those mixed-use properties that dedicate not less than 50% of the property’s usable floor space for residential use. Only work performed on that portion of the exterior of the mixed-use building which houses residential units is eligible for a tax credit. Applicants also should refer to WVHDC Rules & Regulations Section 5.1 for specific application categories.

- 1.3.1 Existing or historically significant materials and/or features of a structure or site shall be maintained and repaired rather than replaced when possible.
- 1.3.2 If replacement of existing materials or features is necessary, the new feature shall match the old in design, texture and other visual qualities. Vinyl, aluminum and PVC materials which may cause damage to historic buildings are not appropriate and shall not be approved.
- 1.3.3 Replacement of missing features should be based on historical, documentary, physical, pictorial or other evidence.
- 1.3.4 Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its own time. The design of new construction need not be an exact or modified copy of historic styles and could be totally different in concept. However, all proposals for additions and new construction shall be compatible with the surrounding buildings in size, scale, materials and siting, as well as with the general character of the Warren Voluntary Historic District.
- 1.3.5 Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
- 1.3.6 Changes to a building or site which have taken place over time are evidence of its history and development. Those changes that have acquired significance in their own right shall be recognized and preserved.
- 1.3.7 Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
- 1.3.8 Additions, exterior alterations, or new secondary structures shall not destroy historic materials or general features that characterize the property. The new work may be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features of the property and the surrounding neighborhood, to protect the historic integrity of the property and the site.
- 1.3.9 Whenever possible, additions or alterations to structures shall be done in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure and the site would be unimpaired.
- 1.3.10 In reviewing all applications for Certificates of Appropriateness, in light of these standards, the WVHDC shall weigh into its findings a building's historical and architectural value.

SECTION 2: CONSTRUCTION GUIDELINES

The following construction guidelines attempt to address the most common issues regarding the preservation of historic properties. These sections are informational and instructional in nature and are provided here as an aid to the property owner. If your project is not listed here, check with the Program Manager or Committee members about appropriate guidelines and/or refer to Section 6 of these Standards & Guidelines. If your project is listed here and it is determined that you do need a construction permit, you are required to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness in order to qualify for a tax credit.

2.1 **Exterior Wood:** The decorative patterns, spacing, beaded edges, and visual textures of wood shingles and clapboards are character-defining features of historic buildings which should be retained and preserved. Shingles and clapboards should be repaired wherever possible, and if replacement is necessary they may be replaced to match. Wood trim elements such as corner boards, belt courses, window and door surrounds, brackets, moldings and other decorative features should likewise be repaired or replaced to match. Wood features should not be stripped of paint to bare wood if they were painted historically; paint protects the surface from moisture and light. Chemical preservatives should be applied only to those features that are prone to decay and/or are traditionally unpainted. Pressure-treated wood may be used for structural elements but is not an acceptable replacement material for wood railings, trim elements and decorative details, due to its tendency to shrink and warp. The removal of existing artificial sidings and restoration of original siding materials and details is encouraged.

2.2 **Masonry:** Brick, stone, stucco and concrete should be repaired with a material closely matching the existing in color, texture and dimensions; patching materials should have integral color.

2.2.1 **Surface Coatings:** Sealers and waterproofing materials are not encouraged, as they can trap moisture within walls and lead to further deterioration; however, they may be used in cases of severe deterioration, provided they do not change the color of the masonry or leave a shiny residue. Test patches or material samples may be required. Masonry that has not previously been painted should not be painted unless deterioration has progressed so far that a protective surface coating is needed. In such cases, use breathable masonry paint in a color consistent with the natural masonry. Masonry that has been previously painted may be repainted, colors should be consistent with natural masonry colors.

2.2.2 **Repointing:** Repointing should preserve original mortar colors and joint profiles; samples may be required. Old mortar should be removed by hand to avoid damaging the surrounding masonry. On 18th and 19th century brick buildings, the soft brick can be damaged by mortars with high concentrations of Portland cement. Repointing mixes should include a high lime content.

2.2.3 **Cleaning:** Cleaning methods can damage historic materials and remove the irreplaceable patina of age. Buildings should be cleaned only when necessary to halt deterioration or to remove heavy soils. Use the gentlest method possible. Usually detergent and a low pressure water wash (under 600 pounds per square inch) and scrubbing with natural bristle brushes will clean surface soils.

All cleaning methods should be tested in an inconspicuous location on the building to make sure no damage will ensue. Chemical cleaners should be used with care. Determine the weakest possible solution which will do the job without damaging historic materials, and neutralize afterwards. Abrasive mechanical cleaners, such as sandblasting, rotary sanding disks and rotary wire strippers are not permitted because they can erode masonry surfaces and shred wood surfaces, leaving pits and scars and increasing the chance of water damage. Check with the RI Department of Environmental Management's Division of Air Resources (401-222-2808) about requirements for containing residues and airborne particles resulting from some cleaning methods.

- 2.3 **Paint Removal/Lead Paint/Stain:** Painted surfaces require periodic maintenance, but stripping all paint off an historic structure is often unnecessary. Removing trouble spots, priming and repainting with one (not thick) layer of new paint will often suffice. Stripping paint can damage wood and masonry materials and remove evidence of early paint schemes, resulting in a loss of important information about the history of the structure. Penetrating stains generally do not require the maintenance of painting although it is recommended that a stain should be applied only to new wood.

Paint removal also can contribute to lead contamination. Compliance with the Department of Environmental Management's Regulation No. 24's requirements for notification, site preparation, approved removal techniques and site clean-up is required of all persons conducting any lead-based paint removal. Contact DEM's Division of Air Resources (401-222-2808) for more information.

From the perspective of environmental safety and historic preservation, the least damaging method of preparing a painted surface for repainting is to wet the surface with water and then to hand-scrape and hand-sand failing paint layers, down to a sound layer (dry manual scraping and sanding are not permitted). Other acceptable methods of paint removal include heat guns or heat plates (temperatures not to exceed 1000 degrees F).

- 2.4 **Porches and Steps:** Existing materials, configurations, designs and dimensions should be retained. Railings should have a molded cap and balusters inserted between a top and bottom rail. Pressure treated wood should not be used for railing balusters because of its tendency to warp and twist. Nosing profiles on original stair treads should be retained. Pressure treated wood may be used for substructures, porch decks, and steps; exposed elements should be painted or stained as soon as possible.
- 2.5 **Roofing and Gutter Systems:** Existing roof materials should be retained, repaired and preserved wherever possible. Replacement in kind is encouraged where replacement is necessary; existing historic materials, shapes, colors, patterns and textures should be matched. Roof colors should be medium to dark in tone and should complement the building's color and define the outline of the roof against the sky. Asphalt roof shingles are not encouraged as a replacement material for slate. Rolled rubber roofing is an acceptable substitute for tar and gravel roofs.

A weather-tight roof with a functioning water run-off system is essential to the preservation of the entire structure. Regular maintenance of gutter systems is encouraged. Built-in gutters should be retained wherever possible, as they are character-defining features of certain architectural styles such as Greek Revival, Italianate and Mansard. Existing materials such as wood or copper or galvanized steel should be maintained and preserved, but may be replaced in kind. New copper flashing, gutters and downspouts may be allowed to weather naturally. Alternative materials i.e., vinyl, aluminum or PVC downspouts and gutters do not qualify for a tax credit.

- 2.6 **Windows:** The number, location, size and glazing patterns of existing windows, as well as unique features such as curved or bent glass, leaded glass, and unusual shapes, should be retained and preserved wherever possible. Windows may often be repaired rather than replaced; even if some windows are deteriorated, it is seldom necessary to replace all windows in a building. Historic wood windows that are properly repaired, caulked and weather-stripped, and provided with well-fitted storm windows, can be as energy efficient as new thermal (double glazed) windows.

Where replacement is necessary due to deterioration, new windows should match the existing in materials, design, dimensions, configuration, and number of panes. Avoid replacement windows that don't fit the existing window openings. (If an interior ceiling must be dropped below the height of a window, provide a setback in the ceiling design to allow the full height of the window to be preserved.) Muntins dividing panes of glass in existing windows should be retained. Multiplane replacement windows should have true divided lights (muntins penetrating the glass); applied muntins and muntins sandwiched between panes of glass are not acceptable. Double-glazing may be acceptable if the muntins widths and profiles match the existing. Window glass should be clear, not tinted or frosted. Low-E glass with minimal reflectivity may be acceptable.

- 2.7 **Doors:** The number, location and dimensions of existing doors should be retained and preserved wherever possible. Repairing existing doors is encouraged over replacement. The number and configuration of replacement door panels should be consistent with the architectural style of the building.

SECTION 3: MINOR ALTERATIONS

This section addresses minor changes to architectural features. The property owner therefore is required to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness in order to obtain a tax credit. Unacceptable minor alterations that are not eligible for a tax credit are noted where appropriate. A minor alteration is a small change in one of the essential criteria such as material, dimensions, design, configuration, texture or visual appearance. If your project is listed here and it is determined that you do not need a construction permit, you are required to complete a Certificate of Appropriateness in order to qualify for a tax credit.

- 3.1 **Shutters and Blinds:** Shutters (with solid panels) and blinds (with louvers) were traditionally used to control light and ventilation, and to improve privacy. Today, their primary purpose is decorative. Shutters and blinds were common on houses built before 1860 and were sometimes found on Italianate and 2nd Empire styles of the 1860s-1880s. They also were exhibited on Colonial Revival and Neoclassical styles of the early 20th century.
- 3.1.1 **Materials:** Wood (painted a dark color) is the traditional material. Vinyl, aluminum, PVD do not adequately replicate the appearance of wood and are not eligible for a tax credit.
- 3.1.2 **Dimensions and Configuration:** Each shutter or blind should match the height and one-half the width of the window opening. Shutters are generally inappropriate on windows that are wider than they are tall, such as picture windows. Shutters and blinds for arched windows should follow the shape of the window opening.

3.1.3 **Installation:** Proper shutter hardware and placement is important. Shutters and blinds can be hung from a variety of hinges, slide bolts, pintels and shutter dogs. Historic hardware is still available. Tacking shutters and blinds onto the face of the building is not appropriate because shutters and blinds should appear to be operable. Blinds should be hung so that the louvers point upward when the blinds are open; the louvers on blinds point downward only when the blinds are closed.

3.2 **Doors:** This section relates to door replacement only. Replacement of a door and its casing is considered a major alteration. Refer to section 4.3 for guidance.

Doors provide not only a means of entering or existing a building, but a real architectural connection to the style and period of the structure. In the case of glazed doors, a visual connection is made between the interior and the exterior of the building.

3.2.1 **Materials:** Wood, painted a color appropriate to the period of the building, is the traditional material. Vinyl, aluminum, PVC or metal do not adequately replicate the appearance of wood and are not eligible for a tax credit.

3.2.2 **Installation:** The installation of this new door may require a minimum modification to the existing door casing. The rough opening of the door cannot be enlarged.

3.3 **Window Sash:** This section relates to window sash replacement only. Replacement of a window and its casing is considered a major alteration, refer to Section 4.4 for guidance. Taken as a whole, windows provide significant character-defining features of buildings. Sashes with their unusual shapes, number of lights, muntins, and glazing are important visual architectural details.

3.3.1 **Materials:** Wood, painted with a coordinating trim color, is the traditional material. Vinyl, aluminum, or PVC do not adequately replicate the appearance of wood and are not eligible for a tax credit.

3.3.2 **Installation:** The installation of this new door may require a minimum modification to the existing door casing. The rough opening of the door cannot be enlarged.

3.4 **Gutters and Downspouts:** Built-in gutters are character-defining features of certain architectural styles such as Greek Revival, Italianate, and Mansard. Built-in gutters along with existing materials such as wood, copper or coated metal should be preserved and maintained.

3.4.1 **Alternate Material Usage:** The removal of built-in gutters, and existing materials, and replacements with systems made of alternative materials, such as aluminum, vinyl and PVC are not eligible to receive a tax credit.

3.5 **Fences and Gates:** While complete privacy is often not possible in densely built urban areas, a fence can mark the boundary line between one property and another, or distinguish public spaces (streets and sidewalks) from semi-public spaces (front yards). Fences are often character-defining features and should be treated sensitively. It is important that the fence design harmonize with the character of the historic structure and the surrounding district.

Fences and gates, however, are not eligible to receive a real estate tax credit. The WVHDC may on a case-by-case basis approve a special exemption to this article if it is determined that the maintenance of an existing fence and/or gate is of historical significance or when new construction follows the accompanying guidelines:

- 3.5.1 **Materials:** Fences and gates made of cast iron, wrought iron, wood pickets and solid, vertical board wood with a flat cap are appropriate. Fences may be painted, stained, or left to weather naturally. Woven wire (chain link) and stockade (jagged top) are not eligible to receive a tax credit.
- 3.5.2 **Design:** Front yard fences should be designed to allow views of the yard and building. While fences for the side and rear yards may be more opaque, be aware that tall, solid fences that obscure the building and yard also can hide intruders. Consider a compromise between privacy and security. Gates should be compatible with any existing fencing, walls or landscaping, and should be designed to swing onto the private walkway or driveway and not onto the public sidewalk.
- 3.5.3 **Impact on Abutting Properties:** Fences on common property lines can have a negative impact on abutting properties. To avoid conflicts, and permit fence applications to be reviewed without a hearing, any applicant proposing to alter or install a fence along a common interior lot line should contact the owner(s) of property directly abutting said lot line to confirm that the proposed fence is acceptable before an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness is filed. If the proposed fence is acceptable to the direct abutter(s), they should be asked to waive in writing their right to a public hearing (abutter may sign a WVHDC waiver form or write a letter). The waiver shall then be submitted as part of the application documentation.

SECTION 4: MAJOR ALTERATIONS

The primary purpose of the Voluntary Historic District ordinance is to promote preservation of buildings, sites and appurtenances with historic and architectural significance. It is important to identify character-defining features such as height, setback from the street, shape, roof form, wall cladding, trim and ornamentation, windows and doors, porches, stairs and siteings. Alterations which recognize, maintain and preserve distinctive features, materials, finishes, construction techniques, and examples of craftsmanship will help to protect the integrity of the historic property and district.

In reviewing proposed plans, the WVHDC shall consider: the historic and architectural significance of the structure and its appurtenances; the way the structure and its appurtenances contribute to the historical and architectural significance of the district; and the appropriateness of the proposed general design, arrangement, texture, materials, and siteing, in relationship to the existing structure.

Examples of alterations requiring WVHDC review include, but are not limited to, those listed below. Check with the Program Manager or WVHDC if you do not see your project listed. An approved Certificate of Appropriateness must be approved prior to construction in order to qualify for a tax credit. If your project is listed here and it is determined that you do not need a construction permit, you are required to complete a Certificate of Appropriateness in order to qualify for a tax credit.

4.1 **Replacement of Features Resulting in a Change:** Any change which requires a construction permit that results in a change in material, dimension, design, texture or visual appearance, including work ordered by any regulatory agency to correct code violations, must be reviewed by the WVHDC. If existing features are character-defining elements of a historic structure, they should be replaced in kind to match as closely as possible. If existing features are not appropriate to the style of the building, consider replacement with a more appropriate design. Avoid creating a false sense of historical development.

4.2 **Changes in Wall Materials and Surfaces:** Changes including installation of alternate material siding, installation of through wall vents and air conditioners, and additions of projections and recesses must be reviewed by the WVHDC. Original or historic bay windows and oriels should be retained and preserved.

Aluminum and vinyl siding are not appropriate and do not qualify for a tax credit because: 1) their installation usually results in the covering or removal of clapboards, shingles, window and door surrounds, cornices, corner boards and quoins, belt courses, brackets, and other character-defining elements; 2) installation of artificial siding on top of existing siding changes the relationship of the elements in the vertical plane of the wall, often eliminating projections and recesses; 3) artificial siding will not halt deterioration and thus is not a substitute for proper repairs.

Removal of existing artificial sidings and restoration of original wall surfaces is encouraged and is eligible for a tax credit. Through wall vents should be located inconspicuously on secondary elevations. Through wall air conditioners are discouraged, particularly on primary elevations.

4.3 **Complete Door Units:** This section relates to the replacement of doors and their associated casings. Replacement of the door only is considered a minor alteration. Refer to that section for guidance. For entryway ornamentation, refer to Section 4.5 Changes in Ornamentation and Section 4.7 Changes to Porches, Stairs and Entryways are described below.

Repairing existing doors and their associated casings is encouraged over replacement. Existing doors should be repaired, glazed, caulked and weather-stripped.

Where replacement is necessary due to extensive deterioration, the new door and casing should match the original in material, design and configuration or be judged architecturally appropriate for the building. Replacement of existing doors and their associated casings with door/casing units made of alternate materials such as steel and aluminum, etc. are not eligible for a tax credit. The rough opening of the door cannot be changed or altered.

4.4 **Complete Window Units:** This section relates to the replacement of windows and their associated casings. Replacement of a window sash is considered a minor alteration. Refer to that Section 3.3 for guidance.

Repairing existing windows and their associated casings is encouraged over replacement. Existing windows and their casings should be repaired, glazed, caulked and weather-stripped.

Where replacement is necessary due to extensive deterioration, the new window and casing should match the original in material, design and configuration or be judged architecturally appropriate for the building. Replacement window/casing units made of alternate materials such as aluminum and vinyl are not eligible for a tax credit. The rough opening of the window cannot be changed or altered.

- 4.5 **Changes in Ornamentation:** Changes in ornamentation, including installation or removal of trim, brackets, cornices, belt courses, corner boards and other decorative elements, must be reviewed by the WVHDC. Generally, the removal of character-defining trim and ornamentation is discouraged. New trim should be consistent with the architectural style of the building.
- 4.6 **Changes in Roof Form or Elements:** Changes in roof form or elements including construction or removal of dormers, monitors, cupolas, skylights, cresting rails and balustrades, and decks must be reviewed by the WVHDC. These existing elements should be retained and repaired. Consider locating new roof top elements so that they will be out of view from the street level. Skylights should not be located on front roof slopes, and flat profiles are preferable to rounded profiles.
- 4.7 **Changes to Porches, Stairs, and Entryways:** WVHDC review and approval is required for changes to porches, stairs and entryways, including enclosure with glass or screens and the installation, alteration or removal of railings, steps, handrails, door hoods, transoms, and sidelights. Porch enclosures should be located inside the railings and columns, minimizing the visual impact. Removal of original porches, stairs and entryways is discouraged.
- 4.8 **Changes in Grade Levels and Foundations:** Major grade changes and the permanent raising or lowering of a structure that would change the historic setting of the property are generally discouraged. Cladding existing exposed foundation materials with another material is generally discouraged. These changes do not qualify for a tax credit.
- 4.9 **Changes to Meet Other Regulatory Codes:** Changes to meet other codes, including installation or removal of fire escapes, construction of accessibility ramps, etc., are not eligible to receive a tax credit.

SECTION 5: ADDITIONS AND SECONDARY STRUCTURES

For the purpose of these guidelines, “new construction” refers to new secondary structures including garages as well as substantial additions to existing structures. The WVHDC’s philosophy regarding new construction is to promote high-quality new design, often contemporary in nature, that fits within the context of the historic district. Additions may be designed in the spirit of the existing architectural style, or be clearly differentiated from the historic structure but compatible with it and with the surrounding historic district. It is not necessary to replicate historic architectural styles. Designs should be contextual but should not seek to create a false sense of historical development.

It is strongly recommended that the applicant retain the services of an architect, design professional, or engineer for the design and construction of any eligible new structure or addition.

- 5.1 **Review Process:** Review of an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for new construction is generally held after a conceptual project’s hearing or a pre-application hearing. Either hearing should be held prior to obtaining any necessary zoning variances; however, any zoning variances should be granted before the WVHDC will proceed with reviewing the Certificate of Appropriateness application.
- 5.2 **Changes to an Approved Project:** Any change to an approved Certificate of Appropriateness must be brought to the attention of the WVHDC before construction proceeds on those details.
- 5.3 **Design Criteria:** Historic districts contain a wide variety of building types and styles. While some streets demonstrate a great similarity of building sizes, shapes, materials and setbacks, others are characterized by great diversity, demonstrating how a neighborhood has grown over time or how different activities were carried out in the same area. This variety makes it impossible to mandate a specific design for new construction. These guidelines therefore deal with general issues of building height, mass, scale, siting, rhythm, materials, etc. They are intended to provide a framework within which design, creativity and the needs of the property owner can co-exist with respect for designated districts.

New construction should reflect the design trends and concepts of the period in which it was created, while recognizing that a new building or addition must fit into an existing framework of a variety of older buildings. New structures should harmonize with existing older structures, and at the same time be distinct from the old so that the evolution of the district can be interpreted correctly.

When designing an addition or a new building, consider the following architectural and site features in relationship to the existing structure and/or the surrounding structures. (Applicants also should consider any requirements for “Barrier-Free Access” and “Emergency Egress;” see those Sections for guidance.)

- | | | | |
|-------|--|--------|-------------------------------|
| 5.3.1 | Height | 5.3.9 | Roof shape |
| 5.3.2 | Scale | 5.3.10 | Texture of materials |
| 5.3.3 | Massing, form, proportion | 5.3.11 | Architectural detail |
| 5.3.4 | Directional expression | 5.3.12 | Development patterns |
| 5.3.5 | Siting and setbacks | 5.3.13 | Views |
| 5.3.6 | Height of foundation platform | 5.3.14 | Topography |
| 5.3.7 | Sense of entry, porches, stairs, doors | 5.3.15 | Parking |
| 5.3.8 | Rhythm and size of openings | 5.3.16 | Known archaeological features |

SECTION 6: PROJECTS NOT REQUIRING CONSTRUCTION PERMITS

Certain projects do not require a public hearing before the WVHDC and may not require a construction permit. A Certificate of Appropriateness must be approved, however, in order to qualify for a tax credit. The applicant need not attend a meeting of the WVHDC in order for the Certificate of Appropriateness to be approved. The following is an attempt to identify certain of these projects.

- 6.1 **Hardware and Electrical Devices:** Door hardware, buzzers, mailboxes, small louvers, registers, exhaust fans, alarm devices, cable boxes can be replaced without the need for a construction permit.
- 6.2 **Storm Doors and Storm Windows:** Storm doors and windows of historic or architectural significance should be retained, especially on the street-facing side of the structure. New or replacement units should blend and be compatible with existing architecture.
- 6.3 **Maintenance:** All general maintenance and repair of any of the existing features of a structure or building that does not involve a change in design, material or outward appearance.
- 6.4 **Removal:** The removal of deteriorated, damaged or dangerous building features which can be removed but not replaced includes but is not limited to porches, stairs, shutters, porticos, car parks, fences and walls.
- 6.5 **Reconstruction:** The non-structural reconstruction in the same design of exterior architectural features damaged, deteriorated or destroyed by fire, storm or other disaster, provided such reconstruction is begun within one year and is continued to completion without substantial intervention.
- 6.6 **Paint Removal/Lead Paint/Stain:** The removal of paint from a historic structure and the repainting of these structures are maintenance projects that require the proper care in order to qualify for a tax credit. Refer to Sections 1.3.5 and 2.3 for guidance in complying with these Standards and Regulations.
- 6.7 **Windows:** Existing windows can be replaced provided that the window opening is not altered. Although the original window opening may have been changed, the new window can be the same size as the unit replaced. Correcting the size of the window to its original configuration is encouraged but not considered mandatory.
- 6.8 **Doors:** Existing doors can be replaced provided that the door opening is not altered. Although the original door opening may have been changed, the new door can be the same size as the unit replaced. Correcting the size of the door to its original configuration is encouraged but not considered mandatory.

SECTION 7: EMERGENCY EGRESS

7.1 **Introduction:** State building and fire codes require that in case of emergency, a second means of egress must be provided from all buildings. Accommodation of egress from historic buildings requires careful planning so that public safety may be provided while protecting significant architectural features. Ideally, both means of egress should be provided inside the building.

Be cautious about fire escape installation ordered by a non-regulatory entity, such as when a bank requires it as a condition of issuing a mortgage. If a building has less than four residential units, for example, the state fire code does not require that exterior fire escapes be provided for every unit. Always check with the Warren Building Official to confirm that fire escapes are required, and for information about other fire safety requirements.

Many buildings within the historic district have been converted from original single-family use to multi-family use. In such cases, fire escapes will only be considered for buildings with legal densities.

Before submitting an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness, obtain certification from the Warren Building Inspector that the proposed fire escape design and location are acceptable.

- 7.2 **Fire Escapes:** Where necessary, fire escapes should be located on secondary elevations, with escape routes oriented toward the rear of the building. The least intrusive design is preferable; for example, a ladder has less visual impact than a scissors stair. Brackets and supports for fire escapes should not be attached to decorative elements such as window and door surrounds, quoins, and cornices. Consider painting the fire escape to match the background color of the building, to reduce its visual impact.
- 7.3 **Fire Doors:** Conversion of double hung windows to casement windows for egress and enlargement of window openings to accommodate fire doors are discouraged, especially on primary elevations. In many historic buildings, upper floor double-hung windows are tall enough to permit egress to a fire escape through a raised lower sash. Avoid installing fire doors in door openings on primary elevations wherever possible.

SECTION 8: BARRIER-FREE ACCESS

- 8.1 **Definition:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Rhode Island Civil Rights of Individuals with Disabilities Act (RI General Law 42-87) extend comprehensive civil rights to individuals with disabilities and require that equal access be provided to all citizens in places of public accommodation, commercial facilities, and state and local government. Although ADA exempts religious entities, private clubs and private residences from compliance, RI GL 42-87 covers all entities in Rhode Island, exempting only private residences. These laws require that:
- 8.1.1 (1) All new public and commercial buildings and facilities be accessible; (2) that if existing elements, spaces or common areas are altered, then these shall be made readily accessible, consistent with ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG); and, (3) that all barriers to accessibility in existing buildings and facilities be removed, on an on-going basis, when it is “readily achievable” to do so (that is, accomplished without much difficulty and/or expense). Generally, normal maintenance, re-roofing, painting, asbestos removal, and changes to mechanical and electrical systems do not trigger compliance to ADA and RI GL 42-87.
- 8.1.2 For more information about ADA and RI GL 42-87 requirements, contact the Accessibility Coordinator of the R.I. Building Code Commission at 401-222-1043, or the Governor’s Commission on Disabilities at 401-222-3731. These agencies, along with the R.I. Historical Preservation Commission (401-222-2678), also may have review authority over accessibility improvements for properties in historic districts. All of them encourage applicants to seek joint consultation and review whenever possible.

8.2 ***Exceptions for Historic Properties:*** While historic properties are not exempt from ADA, the law does recognize the national interest in preserving historic properties. ADA Accessibility Guidelines provide alternative minimum requirements for qualified historic structures, such as those listed on the National Register of Historic Places or located within local historic districts that cannot be made physically accessible without threatening or destroying their historic significance. These alternative requirements may only be used after consultation with the R.I. Historical Preservation Commission. These alternative minimum requirements are:

- 8.2.1 One accessible route must be provided from a site access point to an accessible entrance.
- 8.2.2 One accessible entrance must be provided, preferably at a public entrance but possibly at a secondary, unlocked entrance. Directional and notification signage must be provided.
- 8.2.3 Where toilets are provided, one unisex accessible toilet must be provided.
- 8.2.4 Public spaces on the level of an accessible entrance must be accessible, and other public levels should be accessible wherever practical.
- 8.2.5 Displays and written information should be located where they can be seen by a seated person.

If the RIHPC determines that even the alternative requirements will threaten or destroy the significance of the structure, then alternative methods of access may be used, including audio-visual materials and devices, and guided tours. This last exception is intended to be narrow and will be applied to a very small group of historic structures. Owners may initiate the consultation process by contacting RIHPC.