

SENSE OF PLACE: DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS

A Publication of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

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The opinions expressed in this publication are solely those of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia. Case studies of specific buildings have been used to test and illustrate design guidelines for new construction in historic districts. Comments about the compatibility of some buildings with their historic settings is not intended to be critical of the property owners, developers or architects.

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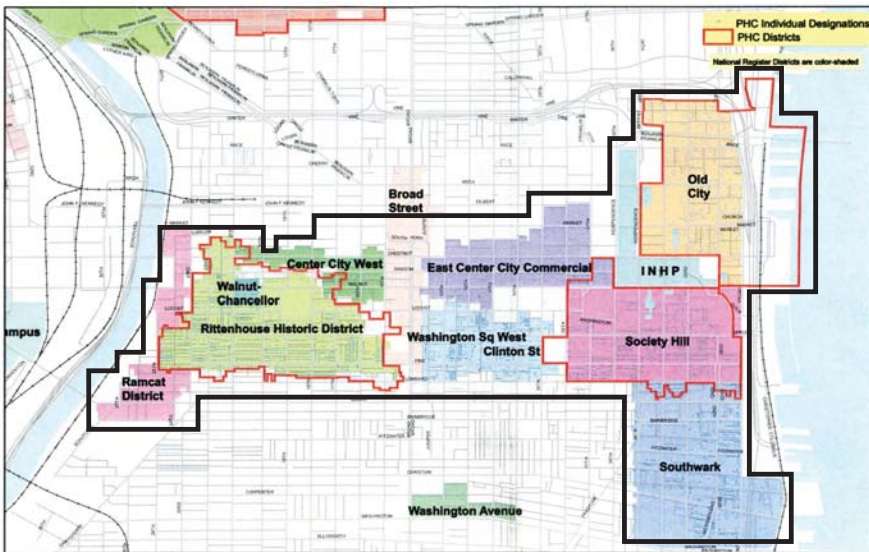
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Introduction

The passage of legislation by City Council in 1997 providing a ten-year tax abatement for conversion of older buildings to residential use and the subsequent passage of a ten-year tax abatement program for new construction in 2000 contributed to a dramatic increase in residential development in Center City and adjacent neighborhoods. The tax abatement program for

conversion of existing buildings resulted in the adaptive use of many historic properties. According to the Center City District, 75% of all residential units produced or proposed in the period from 1999 to 2005 were created through the conversion of existing buildings. Many of which were listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places or located in National Register Historic Districts.

The extension of the tax abatement program to new construction, coupled with the strong interest in condominium development, also proved to be a strong incentive for residential development. Because almost all of Center City and some adjacent neighborhoods are local or National Register Historic Districts many new residential projects invariably, have been located



Center City and adjacent historic districts

in historic districts. Many of these projects have been of concern to community organizations and preservation organizations. Larger projects have often been significantly different in height, architectural style and materials from their historic context. Smaller projects, such as single-family houses and row house developments, have introduced features not found in historic districts such as first floor parking garages.

The Preservation Alliance's mission is to preserve and protect Philadelphia's historic buildings *and communities*—that is, to preserve and protect sections of the city that have been designated as local or National Register Historic Districts or that have a consistent or distinctive physical character or history. The Alliance has found that much of its advocacy work during the past five years has focused on evaluating the impact of new construction on historic areas and trying to mitigate that impact. The Alliance's comments on these projects have expressed a preference for designs that reflect and relate to the context in which the new development is located more than for designs whose architectural style and character tries to be distinctly different and in contrast to the historic setting. This does not mean that the Alliance opposes contemporary design. Our support of such projects as the Western Union Building, 10 Rittenhouse, the addition to the Perelman Building and the addition to the National Products building all indicate that the Alliance has a high degree of respect for contemporary design when there is a serious attempt to relate a new building to its historic context.

As the Alliance has examined new construction projects over the past five years we have tried to determine what factors most result in new designs that harmonize with their historic settings. This has been an empirical process: we have examined proposals for new buildings and

visited completed buildings to observe how and why they fit well or poorly into their historic context. We have also drawn guidance from a variety of other sources: from the section of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* that discusses new additions and new buildings in districts (Standard 9), from the Philadelphia Historical Commission's guides for property owners in historic districts, from design guidelines established by community organizations in historic neighborhoods and other advocacy organizations, and by careful observation of the characteristics of Philadelphia's historic districts themselves. As part of the process of preparing this publication, we also convened a focus group of professionals in the preservation and architecture fields to examine a series of recent buildings and evaluate their appropriateness for their historic setting.

PURPOSE OF THE PUBLICATION

This publication describes the results of the process outlined above and the design criteria and approach that the Alliance has concluded is likely to produce new designs that are most sympathetic to historic districts. The publication has three objectives:

- *first*, it is intended to guide the Alliance's evaluation of new construction projects and to assist community organizations and regulatory agencies in their review of proposals for new construction in historic districts;
- *second*, it is intended to assist architects and developers planning and designing projects in historic contexts; and
- *third*, it is intended to stimulate debate about the design of new buildings in historic districts. It is a work in progress that the Alliance expects to refine as we continue to review proposals for new construction in historic districts.

The design criteria and the approach recommended here are specifically intend for *historic areas*—those districts listed or pending listing on the Philadelphia Register and the National Register, as well as neighborhoods of the city that are not historic districts but have a high degree of continuity in their physical environment. The design criteria are *not* intended to apply to individual buildings in neighborhoods or settings where there is no historic context to relate to or to neighborhoods with no consistent physical character. However, since many neighborhoods throughout the city have a consistent physical character, the guidelines and approach described here may be applicable to many neighborhoods.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PUBLICATION

The Alliance recognizes that our preference for buildings that fit in more than for those that stand out may appear to be a pre-determined point of view or an expression of personal taste. We recognize that there are other points of view and have tried to take those into consideration in developing our approach. We have been aided particularly Steven W. Semes article, "*Differentiated' and 'Compatible': Four Strategies for Additions in Historic Settings*" published in the summer issue of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's *Forum* Journal, and by an expanded presentation of the concepts in this article by Steven W. Semes at the 2007 National Preservation Conference. The article presents a framework for evaluating new design in historic settings that the Alliance feels is very relevant to Philadelphia. Because we have found this framework to be so useful this article is reprinted in **Part one** of this publication followed by comments on Mr. Semes' presentation at the National Trust Conference. The four strategies identified by Mr. Semes are also used in evaluating case studies.

Part two summarizes criteria other organizations have suggested for the design of new buildings in historic districts. This includes guidelines suggested by the Historical Commission, by neighborhood organizations in Queen Village and the Rittenhouse Fidler Historic District, more general neighborhood urban design guidelines suggested by the Design Advocacy Group, and comments of the focus group of design professionals convened by the Alliance.

Part three examines the general physical characteristics of Philadelphia's locally designated and pending historic districts and summarizes the design criteria that can be derived from them. The information from this and the proceeding section is then used in **Part four** to suggest preliminary design criteria that are used to evaluate case studies of recent new construction in historic districts.

Part five summarizes the application of the design criteria to the case studies, each of which is described in more detail in the appendix. **Part six** a revised statement of the approach and the design guidelines that the Preservation Alliance recommends be used for new construction in historic district.

Part One: Differentiated and Compatible: Four Strategies for Additions to Historic Settings

“DIFFERENTIATED” AND “COMPATIBLE”: FOUR STRATEGIES FOR ADDITIONS TO HISTORIC SETTINGS

By Steven W. Semes

In the postwar period, an important issue for preservation has been defining how new construction might appropriately support and enhance, rather than detract from, historic buildings and districts under regulatory protection. So long as new additions or infill buildings were likely to be designed in the same styles as their historic neighbors, “fitting in” was rarely an issue. But since the ascendancy of modernist architecture in the United States in the 1950s—a style which defined itself in terms of opposition to traditional styles and assumptions about design—an important part of the preservationist’s mission has been to tame the ambitions of modernist architects and their penchant for setting off historic structures with contrasting new ones. At the same time, many preservationists either acquiesced in or actively embraced modernist aesthetics for new buildings, especially as a means of distinguishing new and old construction, which has been a preservation goal since John Ruskin called for it in the nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, much attention has been focused on the question of how we ought to manage the relationships between historic buildings and contrasting new additions in the context of contemporary architectural debates about style.

The 1964 Venice Charter—considered the founding document of the modern preservation movement—declares that the purpose of conserving and restoring historical monuments is to “safeguard them no less as works of art than as historical evidence.” But it also says any addition to the landmark must be “distinct from the architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp¹.” The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, first issued in 1977, were closely based on the Charter and called for additions to be at the same time “differentiated” from the historic fabric and “compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment².” Both the Charter and the Standards assumed that any new work would be modernist in style and would need to be monitored to ensure compatibility. But today contemporary architecture has reintroduced traditional styles and the focus of some preservation authorities has shifted to defending the differentiation of new and old construction as a means of preventing confusion in the public’s perceptions of the historic building and its site. Consequently, some preservation commissions and architectural review boards have seemed to prioritize differentiation over compatibility in numerous recent decisions. For example, all the New York City projects mentioned in this article were approved by that city’s Landmarks Preservation Commission, some of which have proved highly controversial.

Moreover, both the Charter and the Standards assume a narrow definition of the “resource”—the built work to be protected—that emphasizes the tangible, physical material of the historic structure over more intangible factors, such as the original architect’s design intent or the historic style, typology, or building culture embodied in the protected structure or district. This interpretation of the resource, in combination with potentially contradictory require-

¹ Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, “International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites” (The Venice Charter), Venice, 1964. See in particular Articles 3 and 9.)

² *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, 1995. (As amended and annotated. First published 1977. See in particular the “Standards for Rehabilitation,” Standard 9.)



Figure 1. Jewish Museum, New York, formerly Warburg Mansion (C.P.H. Gilbert, 1908) with addition (left two bays) by Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates, 1993.



Figure 2. Kennedy-Warren Apartments, Washington, D.C. (Joseph Younger, 1929) with addition (right) by Hartman-Cox Architects, 2004, completing Younger's original design.

ments for differentiation and compatibility, has resulted in considerable confusion as both national and local bodies grapple with changing ideas and tastes among architects and the general public. This article will consider how these conflicting values have played out, both historically and in current practice.

A designer or preservationist contemplating new construction in a historic setting may adopt one of four strategies based on four possible attitudes toward the existing setting or resource: 1) literal replication, 2) invention within the same or a related style, 3) abstract reference, and 4) intentional opposition. These options represent a range of responses to the call for “differentiated” yet “compatible” designs for additions or infill construction in historic settings found in the Secretary’s Standards. Let’s consider each of these strategies in relation to both the Standards and historic practices and with respect to the differing views of the resource implied by each strategy.

LITERAL REPLICATION

The strategy of replication prioritizes compatibility and minimizes differentiation. This strategy will likely sustain the character of an existing setting so long as the historic elements to be replicated are well understood, the technical means to effect replication are available, and so long as the scale of the replication is modest relative to the original building. Despite frequently-expressed disapproval of this strategy by many contemporary preservation theorists and officials³, it has the sanction of history. Architects have often chosen to add to existing buildings by reproducing a previous architect’s work, sometimes even centuries afterward, usually for the sake of completing an intended but unrealized symmetry or extending a pattern already established. In such cases, the resource is defined as the design concept as a whole rather than any isolated part of it as it appears at a given time.

Many great European monuments visible today were completed not by the original designers but by a series of successive architects willing to realize their colleagues’ designs. Filippo Brunelleschi completed his Ospedale degli Innocenti in Florence (1425) on the southeast side of the Piazza Annunziata. Over the course of the next two centuries the disparate buildings around the square were unified by a series matching arcades that appear to be the work of a single hand. In mid-17th century Paris, Jacques Lemercier replicated Pierre Lescot’s century-old facade on the Cour Carré of the Louvre to maintain the symmetry of the expanded elevation we see today.

The recent Jewish Museum addition in New York, designed by Kevin Roche and completed in 1993, continued the fabric of the existing Warburg Mansion by adding two bays to the north and replicating the materials, general design, and much of the ornament of the original building. Although this “seamless” addition was criticized by some preservationists, the resulting unity of the composition would not have been achieved had the architect introduced a different architectural style or material for this modestly-scaled addition. (Figure 1)

For the Kennedy-Warren Apartments in Washington, D.C., Hartman-Cox Architects designed a new wing for the building that completed the unbuilt designs of the original architect more than seventy years after construction was interrupted by the Depression. (Figure 2) With a few almost imperceptible exceptions the new wing replicates the forms, materials, details, and character of the original building. The National Park Service declined the project’s application for historic rehabilitation tax credits, however, finding that the new wing violated the proscription in the Secretary’s Standards’ against additions that create “a false sense of historical develop-

³ See, for example, James Marston Fitch, *Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World*, McGraw-Hill, 1982, (reprinted by University Press of Virginia, 1990) and Paul Spencer Byard, *The Architecture of Additions: Design and Regulation*, W. W. Norton & Co., 1998.



Figure 3. New Commercial Buildings, Merchants Square, Williamsburg, VA, by Quinlan & Francis Terry, 2003.



Figure 4. 500 Park Avenue, New York, formerly Pepsico Building (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1960) with office tower addition (right) by James Stewart Polshek and Partners, 1985.

ment⁴.” National Park Service publications and guidelines strongly discourage additions that might confuse the public’s perception of new construction as distinct from historic fabric and make no exceptions for delayed completion of a historic design. The wing completing the Kennedy-Warren’s originally intended courtyard was seen as changing the historic character of the site because it changed the way the public “perceives what is genuinely historic,” which is to say “the way the building came down to us in history⁵.” This literal and rather materialistic reading of the resource has been superseded in recent European conservation theory, which takes into account “intangible” aspects of cultural heritage—including the architect’s designs, or relevant historic styles and building cultures—as well as the “tangible” historic building fabric⁶.

While the recent construction of the missing east stairway at New York’s Grand Central Terminal would have been an appropriate occasion of replication—the original stair is plainly visible across the room—the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission required the architects to alter the design for the new stair. The carved ornament was omitted from the newels and the profile of the balusters was simplified, resulting in a blocky and inelegant appearance. In this case, the Commission’s insistence on differentiation needlessly resulted in an inferior design that diminished the primary resource—the integrity of this historic interior.

Many historic preservation officials oppose replication, believing that new construction must, as the Venice Charter expressed it, “bear a contemporary stamp⁷.” But a broader view of the resource would permit replication when the formal properties of the setting and the modest scale of the proposed construction make it appropriate. The “contemporary stamp” might then be supplied by a literal stamp on the added material, such as an inscription or other interpretive device identifying the addition and its date.

INVENTION WITHIN A STYLE

This strategy, while not replicating the original design, adds new elements in either the same or a closely related style, sustaining a sense of continuity in architectural language. The intention is to achieve a balance between differentiation and compatibility, but weighted in favor of the latter. This strategy also has a long history: In fact, *it is what most architects have always done*.

Leon Battista Alberti, in his 15th-century treatise, urged architects adding to a preexisting building to work in the same style as the original builder and complete the work in the same spirit⁸. He followed this principle to complete the facade of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, adding to its medieval first story in kind, then subtly transforming the style into a Renaissance flourish at the top. Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola and other Renaissance designers followed Alberti’s lead in their competition designs for the facade of San Petronio in Bologna, extrapolating the existing gothic language without replication⁹. Back at the Louvre, two hundred years after Lemercier, Louis Visconti and Hector Lefuel designed the monumental facades on the Cour Napoléon in conscious imitation of his work. Our own United States Capitol in

⁴ *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, 1995. (See in particular the “Standards for Rehabilitation,” Standard 3.)

⁵ See National Park Service publications such as “New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns,” in *Preservation Briefs* 14, no date.

⁶ See, for example, “Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment,” English Heritage, 2007.

⁷ The Venice Charter, 1964, article 9.

⁸ Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, (Translated by Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavenor), MIT Press, 2001. (Originally published in Venice, 1486)

⁹ See Rudolf Wittkower, *Gothic vs. Classic*, G. Braziller, 1974 and Marzia Faietti and Massimo Medica editors, *La Basilica Incompiuta*, Museo Civico Medievale Bologna, 2001.



Figure 5. Seamen's Church Institute, South Street Seaport Historic District, New York, NY. James Stewart Polshek and Partners, 1992.



Figure 6. Addition to the Harvard Club (McKim, Mead & White, 1892-1902) by Davis Brody Bond, 2003. New York Yacht Club (Warren & Wetmore, 1899) is at left.

Washington, D.C was greatly expanded in size over the course of two centuries without changing its style.

More recently, Quinlan Terry's group of four new buildings at Market Square in Williamsburg adopts the language of Virginia's 18th-century colonial capital but includes elements not previously seen in the restored town. (Figure 3) Similarly, the New York townhouse by Zivkovic Associates with John Simpson & Partners illustrates how a new building can display a traditional style and make a strong statement of its own identity without subverting the character of its setting¹⁰. Modernist landmarks also benefit from this strategy. For 500 Park Avenue, a 1960 "glass box" by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in New York, James Stewart Polshek and Partners designed a sympathetic high-rise addition 25 years later that knits the older building more strongly into its urban setting without replication. (Figure 4) In these cases, the resource is defined as the continuity through time of the historic setting itself, which is then sustained through the use of similar or congruent formal language.

Invention within a style—so long as it is an informed and fluent exercise—leads naturally to new work that is *both* differentiated and compatible with respect to its pre-existing context. Unfortunately, some preservation authorities continue to resist the very approach most likely to yield the results called for by the Charters and Standards they are charged with applying.

ABSTRACT REFERENCE

The third strategy seeks to make reference to the historic setting while consciously avoiding literal resemblance or working in a historic style. This approach seeks to balance differentiation and compatibility, but with the balance tipped toward the former. This is a difficult strategy to execute because it requires an artistry and skill that are not often available.

The abstract referencing of historic architecture is a modernist innovation in which the compatibility of the new and old is suggested by the reduction of composite form to abstract shape. An early example, Adolf Loos's 1910 Goldman & Salatsch Building on the Michaelerplatz in Vienna makes reference to its setting through massing, size, materials, and very restricted articulation, allowing it to be both "modern" (in the sense of using a minimum of historical detail) and "contextual" (in the sense of "fitting in" physically with the scale, materials, and massing of the surrounding buildings). Loos's building may be the earliest—and is perhaps still the best—example of the differentiated-yet-compatible formula enshrined in the Secretary's Standards some six and a half decades later.

A more recent example of abstract reference in a historic setting is the Seamen's Church Institute, an infill building in the South Street Seaport Historic District in New York, designed by James Stewart Polshek and Partners. (Figure 5) The new building's brick and metal facade approximates the massing of the adjacent 19th-century structures, but its pipe railings and exposed steel connections recall early modern maritime design, the rounded corners of its windows resembling portholes. The flatness and industrial imagery of the building clearly differentiate it from its historic pre-industrial neighbors, but the general massing and color pass the "first glance test" for compatibility—the building does not jump out of its context or attract immediate attention.

Beyer Blinder Belle Architects took a similarly referential approach in their unbuilt design for the East 95th Street townhouse, in which similarities of abstract composition and alignments of horizontal features are used to relate the new and old buildings in the absence of a shared formal language¹¹. But this reduction can only be carried so far: In the Davis Brody Bond addition

¹⁰ See Steven W. Semes, "The Art of Conversation," *Period Homes*, October 2006, pp. 18-21.

¹¹ See Semes, 2006.



Figure 7. Greenwich Village Townhouse, New York, NY, by Hardy Holtzman Pfeiffer Architects, completed 1978.



Figure 8. Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY (McKim, Mead & White, 1897) with addition by the Polshek Partnership Architects, 2003.

to the landmark Harvard Club in New York, compatibility is sought through alignments of curtain wall mullions and limestone projections alone, but such abstract references do little to mediate a conspicuous disparity in formal composition, predominant material, and scale. (Figure 6)

This strategy is limited by the fact that a formal language—classicism, for example—cannot be reduced to abstract shape and still retain its distinctive “composite” quality—its ability to subdivide into coherent sub-parts or to join with other parts to become a larger whole¹². Furthermore, many modernist architects resist compromising for the sake of “fitting in,” which is undoubtedly why the contextualism of the 1980s has been abandoned in favor of a newly aggressive oppositional posture toward historical architecture in the recent works of Frank Gehry, Rem Koolhaas, Steven Holl and others. In any event, the strategy of abstract reference sees the historic urban setting as a resource to be conserved by means of deferential massing, but is typically unwilling to engage traditional formal language at the scale of the building or its constituent elements.

INTENTIONAL OPPOSITION.

Finally, the fourth strategy is one of conscious opposition to the context and the determination to change its character through conspicuous contrast, prioritizing differentiation at the expense of compatibility. Modern architects did not invent this idea. Andrea Palladio, who famously loathed gothic architecture, wrapped the medieval town hall of Vicenza with elegant arcades to conceal the geometric irregularities of the older building. Palladio’s arcades became a model of urban amenity and there is no question that the center of Vicenza is the richer for this facelift. Sometimes contrast *is* the appropriate response to a context that is weak or otherwise unsatisfactory, but we must be careful making such judgments. The most suitable use of this strategy is to repair damage to the historic setting brought about by previous insensitive or oppositional interventions. The use of this strategy intentionally to diminish a valued historic context is usually inappropriate.

For example, Hugh Hardy’s cubistic reconfiguration of a bombed-out Greek Revival townhouse on West 11th Street in New York’s Greenwich Village is a dissonant interruption in the civility of the historic street, perpetuating the violence that destroyed the original facade in the 1970s. (Figure 7) Norman Foster’s *mediateque* in Nîmes opposite the Maison Carré or his glass tower above the Hearst Building in midtown Manhattan confront older masonry landmark buildings with contrasting metal and glass structures that have been widely imitated in historic settings worldwide. The Polshek firm, whose reputation was made by deferential additions like those at 500 Park Avenue and the Seamen’s Church Institute in the 1980s, embraced the new oppositional stance in their more recent entrance pavilion at the Brooklyn Museum, a discordant intervention that deliberately violates the classical composition of the landmark building. (Figure 8) In these cases, the resource is seen as an artifact from a vanished world, something to be isolated in a museum setting or set off by contrast with a radically different modernist expression. Such designs are inherently incompatible with adjacent traditional buildings and inevitably lead to the erosion of historic character as increasing numbers of intrusive and alien forms challenge the qualities that made our protected settings valuable in the first place.

¹² For a discussion of classical formal composition, see the author’s comments in “Raising the Standards,” *Traditional Building*, February 2007, pp. 13–18. There is an extensive literature on classical composition: see for example Nathaniel Curtis, *Architectural Composition*, J. H. Jansen, 1935 and A. Trystan Edwards, *Architectural Style*, Faber and Gwyer, 1926. More recent discussions include Steven W. Semes, “The Art of Composition” in Georges Gromort, *The Elements of Classical Architecture*, (Henry Hope Reed and W. Stafford Bryant, editors), W. W. Norton & Co., 2001; Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, *Classical Architecture: The Poetics of Order*, MIT Press, 1986; and Nikos Salingaros, *A Theory of Architecture*, Umbau Verlag, 2006.

RETHINKING DIFFERENTIATION AND COMPATIBILITY

These four strategies represent four variations on the relationship of differentiation and compatibility, two terms that represent a logical contradiction if we treat them as equally important values. In my view, the fundamental interests of preservation can only be served if compatibility is given greater weight, since it alone allows us to sustain valued historic character in the face of the many forces threatening it. To insist on differentiation by means of a contrasting modernist style for new construction, as some authorities have in recent years, condemns historic buildings and districts to change in ways alien to their historic patterns and typologies. When consistently applied, this policy leads to the gradual erosion of historic character as the inevitable consequence of the preservation effort itself—an unacceptable contradiction in contemporary preservation practice.

The doctrine of differentiation has too often been used to mask simple stylistic bias. The Secretary's Standards and the Venice Charter both assumed that the modernist aesthetic would remain normative for contemporary building indefinitely. But current practitioners have revived traditional architecture and urbanism so that "contemporary" no longer necessarily means "modernist." Preservation regulations, including the Secretary's Standards, should not be construed to support the acceptance or rejection of any proposed project *solely on the basis of style*. Consequently, alterations or additions to historic settings that improve or strengthen the pre-existing character should be welcomed, regardless of their style; changes that weaken or diminish the historic character should not be permitted, again regardless of style. Additions or new construction *may* be in the same style as the historic buildings, provided that the new construction is consistent with the typology, composition, scale, proportion, ornament, materials, and craftsmanship typical of the setting. Violation of these attributes for the sake of a questionable principle of differentiation leads inevitably to the loss of historic character and, thereby, loss of the resource in its truest sense.

When additions or new construction are appropriate at all, they should be added in such a way that the new is distinguishable from the historic fabric *by informed observers or trained professionals*. No differentiation should be made that would result in an incongruous appearance or a ruptured integrity. Where the new construction might not be readily distinguishable by the public at large, interpretive materials should clarify the construction history of the site rather than expecting this to be self-evident from the appearance of the new construction alone. De-emphasizing differentiation and prioritizing compatibility would allow historic buildings and districts to grow and change in accordance with their historic patterns and styles, thereby assuring a continuity of character through time. This, in my view, is the proper way to protect the resources to be conserved in our historic buildings and districts.

Compatibility requires more than similarities of massing or abstract references; it must be a primary objective of the designer and an integral part of the design process for projects in historic settings. What makes buildings from different eras and styles compatible is that they share the same underlying principles of space, structure, elements, composition, proportion, ornament, and character. If these principles are consistent among the buildings along a street or around a square, they will be compatible, regardless of style. Compatibility is not uniformity; however, if the principles embodied by neighboring buildings are antithetical, no alignment of cornices or adjustments of massing will be sufficient to maintain a relationship of civility among them.

The decision about which of the four strategies to follow cannot be made lightly. It is a question of what is most respectful of the existing architectural and urban conditions or, if these are not suitable, what will produce the greatest degree of harmony and wholeness in the built

environment. Such decisions cannot be made one building at a time, but must recognize the potentially exemplary nature of every architectural act. If we pay more attention to the historic urban setting than to the individual building and move beyond an obsessive concern with the chronology of construction, our choice of strategy can fulfill our obligation as citizens to make the city more beautiful, sustainable, and just. If we adopt this ethic, we will naturally seek not the architecture of our time but, more importantly, the architecture of our place.

Comments on Steven W. Semes presentation at the 2007 National Preservation Conference

In his presentation at the National Preservation Conference, Steven W. Semes emphasized the concept stated at the end of his article that new buildings in an historic setting should focus more on the “sense of place” than the “sense of time.” This comparison refers to the language in the *Secretary of Interior’s Standards* (9) that the design of new buildings should be of “our time.” Semes notes that when the standards were first introduced in 1977 there was a specific reference to a preference for contemporary design that was removed when the standards were revised in 1990. Although the National Park Service appears to continue to prefer differentiated designs when reviewing additions to historic properties seeking federal investment tax credits, Semes notes that the Park Service is beginning to be more flexible, accepting designs that are in a more traditional style. This may reflect that fact that at the end of the 20th century the architectural style of “our time” had become the post Modern style, a style that included more traditional elements of architectural design (variations in materials, greater detail and ornamentation) than had the Modern style prevailing at the time the *Secretary’s Standards* were originally written.

Semes’s point of view regarding the idea of “sense of place” is that historic districts usually contain buildings in many different styles, but most follow an approach to design that reflects the sense of the specific place and create continuity over time rather than contrast and disruption. It is this continuity over time that is important to creating and maintaining the character of historic districts. Thus, from Semes’s point of view, any style would be acceptable in an historic district provided it draws on the influences of the place and harmonizes with, rather than ruptures, the continuity of architectural character. However, the inherent objective of the Modern movement was to create rupture with the styles of the past. The use of glass and steel, lack of ornamentation and traditional detail and other characteristics of the Modern style were deliberately intended to create this break with the past. Thus, for Semes, no building designed in the Modern style would be appropriate for an historic district. While buildings designed in the post Modern style use materials more similar to traditional building design and incorporate details and ornamentation in what is sometimes referred to as a “simplified classical style,” such buildings can also be disruptive to historic districts when they select “classical” elements not directly relevant to the district in which they are located. The issue, from Semes perspective, is not using the “style of our time,” but using the influence of place to create continuity of character *regardless* of the style.

Of the four approaches outlined in his paper, Semes believes that “intentional opposition” is the least acceptable in an historic district. On the other hand he notes that “literal replication” is not used very often and, therefore, poses a much lesser threat to the integrity and continuity of an historic district than does intentional opposition or a design that is indifferent to its setting. In fact, he offers the helpful perspective that literal replication, often feared by preservationists for creating a “false historicism,” has its place in certain circumstances. In Philadelphia, literal replication has been used infrequently for the design of new buildings in historic districts.

There are examples of literal replication among some houses built in Society Hill in the 1950s and 1960s (1). Benjamin Franklin's tenant houses (2) are literal replications, but intended to help create an opportunity for interpretation of Independence National Historical Park and based on relatively reliable information about the probable design of the houses.

Semes also points out that "invention in a style" is also less frequently used. This also seems true of Philadelphia. Edwin Brumbaugh's house for Mayor and Mrs. Richardson Dilworth on South 6th Street (3) might qualify as an example: it is in the Colonial Revival style—a style which historian Richard Guy Wilson declares as relevant in American architecture of all periods, including today—but has sufficient differences from a colonial house to demonstrate that it is of a later period.

Semes's four strategies provide a useful framework for examining recent buildings in historic districts in Philadelphia and are used as a reference point in the discussion of case studies. However, Semes does not address the question of what specific elements of design enable a new building to have a "sense of place" relevant to an historic district and to create continuity of character. That issue is the focus of this publication.



Part Two: Design Guidelines of Other Organizations

The Preservation Alliance has tried to learn from the experiences of others in developing its approach to the evaluation of new buildings in historic districts. This section describes those findings.

A. DESIGN CRITERIA DEVELOPED BY PHILADELPHIA ORGANIZATIONS

1. Philadelphia Historical Commission

Although the Historic Preservation Ordinance—Section 14-2007 of The Philadelphia Code—limits the Historical Commission’s jurisdiction over new construction in historic districts to a non-binding 45-day review and comment, the Commission’s role in the review of new building projects is not that simple.

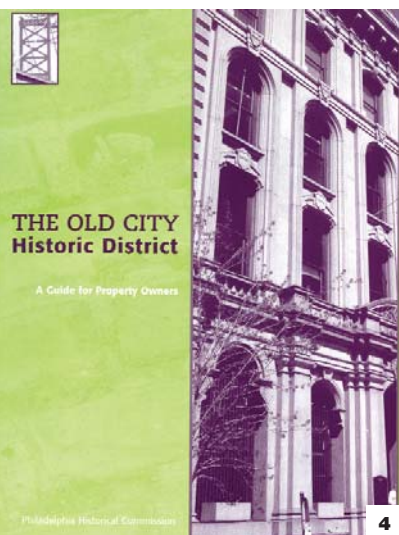
Section 14-2007 states that the Commission’s design review in historic districts is limited to review and comment on *undeveloped* sites. The Commission has defined an undeveloped site as a parcel of land that had no building on it at the time the historic district was designated or that has no significance on its own as a site. Thus, a parcel of land that was used as a parking lot at the time the historic district was designated would be considered an undeveloped site.

On the other hand, if a building in an historic district were destroyed by fire or even demolished with the Historical Commission’s approval, the resulting vacant parcel of land would not be considered undeveloped at the time the district was designated and therefore, any new construction on the vacant parcel of land would come under the Commission’s full jurisdiction for review and approval unless the listing on the Register had been rescinded. This also applies to individually listed properties destroyed by fire, collapse, or demolished with approval: those sites also remain under the Commission’s full jurisdiction unless the listing is rescinded. Other new projects may also come under the Commission’s full jurisdiction when the project involves a vacant parcel of land and an historic building on an adjacent site to be included in the project.

In recent years there have been a number of new construction projects in historic districts meeting the conditions described above. Thus, although it would appear that the Commission’s jurisdiction is limited, its jurisdiction over new projects in historic districts has been more extensive than the ordinance would suggest.

Since the Commission has, at a minimum, authority to review and comment on new construction in historic districts, general guidelines regarding such projects have been included in the guides published for property owners in each district (4). These guidelines follow Standard 9 of the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards*. The Historical Commission’s guidelines (worded slightly differently for each district) state the following (emphasis added):

- All new construction should be **compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character** of the property and the neighborhood. Taking cues from the surroundings is a good way to ensure sensitive new construction in the district.
- Building **height** is one of the strongest design guidelines for new construction. ... The height of adjacent buildings will help dictate the height of new construction.
- Brick [or some form of masonry] is the most common building **material** found in the district. .. Try to use brick that is similar in **color** to that found in adjacent buildings.



- A uniform **setback** of buildings as they line the street creates the “street wall” and is essential to preserving the character of the district. New construction should respect the street line created by its neighbors. The cornice line should remain consistent with adjacent buildings.
- Windows and doors establish a **rhythm** for the street and any new construction should be harmonious with this established rhythm. Windows should be of similar size and overall placement as adjacent buildings.

These comments are summarized in a list of recommended and not recommended design concepts:

Recommended:

- Alignment with adjacent building height and cornice line.
- Alignment with adjacent window sills and heads.
- Materials similar to adjacent buildings.
- Similarity in roof profile.
- Doorway design, dormers, and bay windows can differ in design, if not overall scale, from adjacent buildings.

Not Recommended

- No alignment with adjacent building height and cornice line; some variety is okay
- Window height size and design radically different from adjacent buildings.
- Use of materials not found in adjacent buildings and neighborhood.
- Dissimilar roof profile and design.

The guides for property owners make it clear that the Historical Commission follows Standard 9 in encouraging contemporary design for new construction in historic districts: “it is better for new construction to reflect our time than to give a false historical impression.” But it is equally clear that the guidelines emphasize that new construction should be compatible with and harmonize with the size, scale, color, material, rhythm and character of the district.

2. Conservation District Design Guidelines: Queen Village

Conservation Districts were created by City Council in 2004 as an overlay district in the zoning code. The purpose of Conservation Districts is to preserve the existing character of neighborhoods that have a high degree of architectural integrity, especially neighborhoods that are not designated as historic districts. A central feature of a Conservation District is the creation of design guidelines for new construction to be developed by the neighborhood residents working with the City Planning Commission and then implemented through design review by the City Planning Commission.

As of September 2007, no Conservation District has been approved by City Council. However, the Queen Village Conservation District has been approved by the City Planning Commission and is expected to be approved by City Council in 2007.

Queen Village is a National Register Historic District and a very high percentage of the individual properties in Queen Village are listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Thus, the design guidelines developed for Queen Village are directly relevant to historic districts. These design guidelines for new construction include the following:



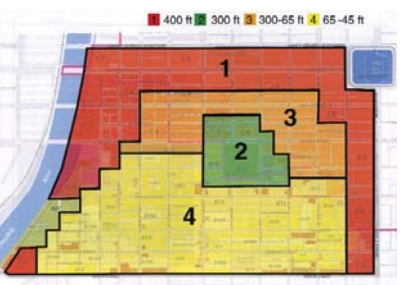
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- **Height:** On narrow streets, new construction shall not exceed 22 feet to cornice line before sloping back a minimum of 45 degrees or stepping back 8 feet (5).
- **Width/ Rhythm:** For new houses with street frontage of 20 feet or more, the plane of the facade shall be broken up by offsets, roofline variations or other architectural features or setbacks (6).
- **First Floor Facade:** 33% of each facade on the first floor must consist of windows, in addition to a door (7).

These guidelines are clearly intended to ensure that new construction will be compatible in size, scale, rhythm and character with the existing character of the neighborhood.

3. Rittenhouse Fitler Neighborhood Plan

The Center City Residents Association adopted a neighborhood plan in 2007 that includes the Rittenhouse Fitler Historic District, as well as all or part of several National Register Districts. The plan divided the neighborhood into different development zones (8), reflecting the differences in existing patterns, use, and scale of development. For each development zone the plan recommends Design Standards.

Development Zones 2, 3 and 4 correspond most closely to the historic district. Zone 4 consists of the area generally south of Chancellor Street, which consists predominantly of three-and-four story row houses, the physical form most associated with the Rittenhouse Fitler district (9). Design Standards for this area include (emphasis added):

- Building **heights should be consistent** with the height of other buildings on the same block.
- The **height** of new buildings should be consistent with adjacent rooflines or should not exceed adjacent rooflines by more than one story.
- Buildings should maintain a **consistent building wall** or built-to-line along the sidewalk.
- Buildings should have a **tripartite building facade** divided into three sections—a base, middle and top—a cornice line at the top and windows throughout.
- Facades should include design elements, such as bays, changes in plane or materials, at approximately 25' intervals, to maintain a **street friendly pedestrian scale**.
- Large expanses of blank mirrored, or opaque facades should be avoided.

These guidelines also emphasize that new construction should be compatible in size, scale, rhythm and character with this part of the historic district.

The design guidelines for Zone 2, the area around Rittenhouse Square, are quite similar in spite of the fact that the height of buildings in Zone 2 is considerably greater than most of Zone 4 (10). These guidelines state:

- Maximum building **height** of 300 feet (except for certain stated exceptions). (Since the height of buildings around Rittenhouse Square is in the range of 250 to 300 feet, this guideline essentially says that new buildings should be consistent with the height of existing buildings around the Square.)
- Buildings should maintain a **consistent building wall** or built-to-line along the sidewalk.
- Towers may extend to street level, but the remainder of the building podium should have a tripartite building facade divided into three sections—base, middle and top—a cornice line at the top and windows throughout.



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- Decorative details, high quality materials, textures, colors and lighting should be used on the lower levels of the building to **enhance the “close-up” view for the pedestrian.** All ground level facades should have architectural detailing to break up the scale of the facade.
- Large expanses of blank, mirrored or opaque facades should be avoided.

The design guidelines for Zone 2 also make reference to massing—the relationship of podium to tower and similar features—and issue more relevant to taller buildings than to three or four-story buildings.

The division of the Rittenhouse Fitler neighborhood into sub-areas presents an important guideline for historic districts. Larger districts are not always uniform in physical character and use and often contain a number of sub-areas each with its own distinct physical character. In the cases of the

Rittenhouse Fitler district Zone 4 (the residential area south of Chancellor Street) clearly has a consistent character of its own quite different from Zone 2 (the area around Rittenhouse Square), which also has a distinctive character of its own. This approach suggests that it is useful to examine each historic district to see if it is composed of sub-areas that have their own distinctive “sense of place” and to adapt guidelines to those differences.

4. Design Advocacy Group: Urban Design Evaluation Criteria

The Design Advocacy Group has created an Urban Design Evaluation tool to be used to evaluate the relationship of proposed new projects to their immediate surroundings. While this evaluation tool was not developed explicitly for historic districts, many of the issues to be considered and many of the questions to be asked about a new project are applicable to historic districts.

The list of questions is divided into three categories: neighborhood context, street life and building character. Although stated as questions, each implies that new construction that responds affirmatively to the questions posed is more likely to be appropriate to its context than new construction that does not. Among the questions listed most applicable to historic districts are the following:

- **Neighborhood Context**

History: Does the proposed design appropriately incorporate or respond to any historic assets or would it destroy or compromise such assets?

- **Street life**

Continuity: Would the proposed development maintain or strengthen the existing street edge or would it create an interruption to urban continuity?

- **Building Character**

Height: Would the height and form of the building have a positive relationship with the street and surrounding buildings as viewed from both near and far?

Massing: Would the massing of the building be an appropriate response to the context? Would the height and width of the building be appropriately subdivided into component parts?

Architectural vocabulary: Does the architectural vocabulary relate to the existing context or create a meaningful juxtaposition?

Composition: Does the design of the facade form a sophisticated composition of component parts? Does the architectural vocabulary relate to the existing context or create a meaningful juxtaposition?

Materials: Would the building materials be attractive and appropriate to the surroundings?

Openings: Would the scale of entrances be appropriate to the neighborhood context? Would the scale and proportion of the window openings and their articulation form a positive relationship with the architectural character of the surrounding buildings?

Roof: Has the roof edge been designed to express the termination of the building in an attractive or meaningful manner?

Although developed as a general urban design tool for evaluating new construction projects, the Design Advocacy Group's design criteria are consistent with those of other organizations in Philadelphia in emphasizing relationship to the existing context. Even when the evaluation tool makes reference to designs that differ from the existing context a "*meaningful* juxtaposition" is emphasized, not a startling contrast or disruption.

5. Review Panel

The Preservation Alliance invited a group of individuals to examine some of the case studies described in the appendix. The panel included representatives of the Design Advocacy Group, historic preservation planners, staff of public agencies and individuals involved in general planning and design review. The purpose of this exercise was to see what types of design guidelines might emerge by considering specific projects proposed or constructed in historic districts.

Certain general issues raised by the panel are worth mentioning:

- Design guidelines can often be too limiting and constrain a good architect from an innovative response to site and context.
- Historic districts vary in character; no single set of design guidelines is likely to fit all districts. Design guidelines need to recognize the character that is specific to each district.
- Achieving good design in an historic context is often the result of a process more than explicit guidelines, a process that includes a dialogue between community and preservation interests and the project architect. The design review processes used in Philadelphia—review by the Architectural Committee of Historical Commission, the Art Commission and, to some degree the Design Review Board of the Redevelopment Authority—are all characterized by a process of dialogue. Even without design guidelines the results of these processes have generally been good and have resulted in improvements to the design of buildings in an historic context.

Comments by the panel on individual case studies indicated that there was a preference among all participants for designs that had an explicit relationship to the historic context. In general, most participants favored an approach that might be characterized by Semes's "abstract reference;" some favored a more general relationship to context while others favored a closer adherence to the character and architectural style of the historic district. Some members of the panel felt that there was a potential validity to a contrasting approach to design when there was a high degree of architectural integrity in the surrounding context; others felt that when there was a high degree of integrity this required a response that was more consistent with and con-

nected to the design integrity that existed. However, no recent examples of contrasting designs in historic districts could be identified that seemed appropriate to the panel.

In evaluating individual case studies the panel focused on most of the same issues identified by others: height in relation to its immediate context, massing, materials, relationship to the street line and to the wall surface of the block, rhythm, richness of detail, and patterns and proportions of fenestration.

B. DESIGN GUIDELINES OF OTHER CITIES

Although Philadelphia's historic preservation ordinance does not provide full jurisdiction for the review of new buildings in historic districts, this is not true of all other cities. Many include the review and approval of new construction in their historic district procedures. This is especially true of those cities that designate historic districts as overlay zones in their zoning code and place responsibility for the implementation of historic district regulations in the City Planning Department (procedures much like Philadelphia's Conservation Districts).

Cities that require approval of new construction in historic districts usually adopt design guidelines for those districts. Most of the guidelines address issues similar to those described above. Those created by Oregon City for its historic districts are illustrative of those created by other cities and include a concept not often found in other guidelines that has potential relevance for Philadelphia. Oregon City's Design Guidelines for New Construction in its historic districts begin by stating, "a compatible design [for a new building] supports the integrity of the district." The design guidelines include four design principles:

- *Style Compatibility:* New construction shall compliment **one of the [existing historic] styles** to support the historic context. be compatible with adjacent properties, the block and neighborhood.
- *Citing:* Residential buildings are to face the street squarely, and to be set back from the lot lines and spaced from one another similar to the immediate neighborhood.
- *Building Form:* The building form needs to relate to the buildings in the immediate neighborhood and to take into account both similarities and changes on the block. The new building form shall reference the principles, proportions and scale of an historically appropriate style.
- *Design Composition:* Design composition principles relate to the detailed design of the exterior, and include historically appropriate materials, finishes, and unobtrusive integration of new technology.

The recommendation in the guideline on Style Compatibility to compliment "one of the existing historic styles" of the district is interesting and relevant to Philadelphia. Most historic districts in Philadelphia do not consist of buildings of a single architectural style. The Historical Commission's guides for property owners for each district often identify as many as a dozen different styles present in a district. Oregon City's guidelines to select an existing style to relate to is an interesting way of responding to the variety of historic styles found in most districts.



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Part Three: Guidelines Suggested by Historic Districts

Philadelphia has designated ten historic districts. One of these is an historic street paving district; another is Roosevelt Park in South Philadelphia; another is a group of extensively modified row houses on the campus of Temple University. The remaining are residential districts are:

Diamond Street, Girard Estates, Rittenhouse Fittler, Society Hill, Old City, Spring Garden, and Greenbelt Knoll



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In addition to these districts, five other neighborhoods have been nominated to become historic districts. These pending districts are Spruce Hill, Overbrook Farms, a section of East Falls, Parkside and the Awbury Arboretum neighborhood. The Historical Commission has also given preliminary approval of a boundary for the submission of an historic district nomination for the Washington Square West neighborhood.

In addition to these local districts, there are 75 other National Register Districts in Philadelphia, many of which are characterized by architectural continuity. These include such neighborhoods as Queen Village, Powelton Village, Garden Court, Chestnut Hill and many others.

The following examination of the design characteristics of existing historic districts focuses primarily on the listed and pending Philadelphia historic districts. However, many of the National Register districts and many other neighborhoods are similar in character to listed and pending historic districts.

A. Greenbelt Knoll, East Falls and Parkside

Greenbelt Knoll, the section of East Falls that has been nominated and Parkside, all share a characteristic that is different from the other designated and pending historic districts: the buildings in these district are generally all designed in a limited number of architectural styles. Greenbelt Knoll consists of one architectural style (11); the section of East Falls that has been nominated essentially consists of two sub-areas each of which has its own architectural styles (12,13). Parkside contains two sub-areas defined by building size, but both sub-areas are characterized by the same architectural style (14,15). This consistency of design includes not only the architectural style of the buildings, but also building heights, relationship to the street line, porches, materials, and treatment of landscape.

Each of these districts has such a high degree of environmental and architectural consistency and continuity of character that the construction of a new building in any pattern and style different from that of the district would be an intrusion. Using Semes's framework the only appropriate approaches to design in these districts would consist of "literal replication" or "invention within a style." For example, if one of the English Tudor row houses on Midvale Avenue, or one of the or Greenbelt Knoll houses were to burn down, compatibility with the historic district and continuity of the "sense of place" would suggest that reconstruction in the same or a very closely identical form would be the most appropriate response.

To some degree this can be seen in modifications being made to one Greenbelt Knoll house where a higher-ceilinged living room was added to an existing house in an essentially similar design—what the original architect might have done had a higher ceiling been desired (16). The case for close compatibility and continuity of character can also be seen in the Parkside district. The one new building constructed in the district designed in a contemporary character



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stands out as intrusive and out of character with the district (17).

In these neighborhoods, the sense of place, the design characteristics and consistency of the district takes precedence over the use of a “contemporary” architectural style that is unrelated to the characteristics and patterns of the district. The design principles and guidelines for new construction are easy to derive from the characteristics of the districts because of the high degree of uniformity.

B. Overbrook Farms and Chestnut Hill

Overbrook Farms and Chestnut Hill are both National Register Historic Districts. Both exhibit environmental design characteristics that are similar to one another, but distinctly different from other historic districts. Both Overbrook Farms (18) and Chestnut Hill consist primarily of single-family houses set back from the street on well-landscaped sites. Houses vary in design but can generally be classified as being of “traditional design”—that is derived from many different revival architectural styles. Each district has a high degree of consistency in terms of height, relationship to street, landscape setting and traditional design as the architectural style, even though there are some sub-areas defined by different patterns and styles.

Chestnut Hill has a number of houses designed in a contemporary style. Notable are the Vanna Venturi house by Venturi and Rauch, Louis I. Kahn’s Esherick House (19) and the Dorothy Mitchell White house by Mitchell / Guirgola Associates. Two of these houses are located on sites that are quite isolated from other houses in Chestnut Hill and the White house is in a section of entirely new houses. To some degree, none are in an historical setting in spite of being in the district. Recent new houses in Chestnut Hill that are in proximity to the typical character of the district have been designed in a “traditional style” or a style that makes an abstract reference to the traditional design styles of the district.

In spite to the different design character of the environment and buildings in Overbrook Farms and Chestnut Hill from other historic districts, new construction in these two districts has generally tried to be compatible with the character of the districts in terms of building heights, relationship to street, landscape settings, and architectural style.

C. Other Districts

Most of the other locally designated and pending districts, especially those in Center City and adjacent neighborhoods—as well as many neighborhoods in North, West and South Philadelphia gave similar design characteristics. This is because these districts generally adhere to the city’s historic property lot size and are composed predominantly of row houses or twin houses. Although these districts contain a variety of architectural styles and building types, they have a high degree of consistency and continuity of physical character. Many of the elements that contribute to this consistency and continuity are similar in all districts. These include the following:

- **Height:** Each of the historic districts has a consistent dominant height throughout the district. Some districts have sub-areas with different heights, but generally speaking height is consistent within each sub-area. For example, Society Hill (20), Spring Garden, Girard Estates, Diamond Street and Queen Village consist primarily of two and three story row houses, Old City of four or five story commercial buildings, and Rittenhouse Fidler Zone 4 of three and four story row houses. Zone 2, around Rittenhouse Square, and the blocks surrounding Washington Square in Society Hill both have heights distinctly greater than the rest of their district, but heights are consistent within these sub-areas.



• **Relationship to Street and Property Line:** Buildings in each district have a predominant way of relating to the street or property line. Because the underlying property format of Philadelphia is based on narrow lots facing major streets typical of row house development, in most districts buildings are built right on the front property line creating a continuous building line for the entire block and generally consistent throughout the district (21). Often there may be some variation of this set back: in sections of Rittenhouse Fittler some houses are set back from the property line allowing a front set of stairs. However, when this occurs the pattern is generally consistent for the entire block.

• **Continuity of Wall Surface:** Because most buildings adhere to the front property line and are of similar height, they create a continuous building wall for the entire block. The continuity of this building wall is one of the most important unifying features of these historic districts. Some blocks within the Rittenhouse Fittler District have bay windows, but when this occurs it occurs for the entire block and there is a continuity of wall surface even though the surface varies rather than remaining flat. The continuity of the wall surface is also maintained by the treatment of windows as openings cut into the larger wall surface the continuity of which predominates.

• **Materials and Details:** There is generally a high degree of consistency of building materials within each district. For most districts the common material is some form of masonry, usually brick. Even in instances where brick does not predominate—the brownstone blocks of Rittenhouse Fittler or stone of Awbury—the material is masonry and consistent within a block, group of houses or sub-area. Materials are used in a manner that creates details and small-scale elements of interest on the building. Brick provides



detail due to the size of the individual brick and the mortar joints. Brick is often used in patterns to create texture, or is supplemented by elements of terra cotta or stone that range from windowsills and door surrounds to decorative features and cornices. Buildings are rich in architectural details that give scale and visual variety and a three-dimensional character to the facade.

- **Facade Composition:** As previously noted, because the underlying property unit in Philadelphia is a narrow lot, most buildings in historic districts have vertical facades, with elements of the facade composition that reinforce this vertical emphasis. For example, the proportion of windows is generally vertical and doorways are often given a vertical emphasis through the use of transom windows. Because of the extensive use of masonry as a building material, window and door openings are cut into the facade, occupying perhaps as little as 25% of the total facade and allowing the building wall surface to predominate.

Building facades are generally divided into three elements: a base, a mid section, and top or cornice feature. Often a base of a building may be of a different material and color. However, usually all three elements are expressed in a three dimensional manner—the base may be a few inches forward of the main facade; the cornice may project out from both the main facade and base.

- **Pedestrian Experience/ Rhythm:** One of the characteristics of historic districts in Philadelphia—and of most Philadelphia neighborhoods—is that they are interesting places to walk. The pedestrian experience is rich because the architectural expression as experienced by pedestrians is rich. This is a result of a number of factors.



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- Because buildings in most districts generally conform to the approximately 16 foot width of lots in Philadelphia, there is a frequent **rhythm** of change along the block, even when buildings are of the same design, through the repetition of such elements as doors, steps, and windows.
- Even in districts where buildings occupy larger lots, as in Old City, there is still a **rhythm** of change along a block created by the architectural elements of the first floor such as doors, store windows or other features (22).
- Architectural elements on the first floor have a strong **three-dimensional quality**. Doors and windows are set in to walls and often have articulated surrounds, sills or lintels, often of contrasting materials; water tables or bases project out slightly; commercial store fronts may have columns or pilasters; and the materials themselves—especially brick—have a tactile quality when seen close up.
- There are interesting things to see at the street level—windows to look in and architectural features that give buildings in historic districts what is often referred to as a “human scale.”



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These characteristics are generally true of high rise buildings as well three-and-four story buildings. Many historic high rise buildings follow the same design principals, use similar materials and are rich in details and therefore fit into their historic contexts with relative ease in spite of the difference in height (23).

Conclusion

It is not surprising that the design characteristics found in most historic districts are essentially the same as the design guidelines recommended by the Historical Commission, by the Queen Village and Rittenhouse Fidler neighborhood plans or suggested by the Design Advocacy Group. Each of these organizations recognizes that compatibility with the character of the district is to be highly valued. In Semes’s terms, each of these guidelines emphasizes that the sense of place creates a continuity of character in spite of a variety of architectural styles.

Part Four: Preliminary Design Guidelines

The examples summarized above suggest that compatibility with the existing character of an historic district is more to be valued than significant difference. They also suggest a composite list of design criteria that are likely to enable new buildings to be designed in manner that is consistent with the character of an historic district regardless of their architectural style. This list of composite criteria is as follows:

- **General**
 - compatibility with the size, scale, color, material and character of the district, sub-area or block (preferred) or
 - creating meaningful juxtapositions with the existing context
- **Height**
 - consistency with the existing height of the district, sub-area and/or immediate block
 - consistency with adjacent rooflines by not exceeding rooflines by one story, or stepping back from a prevailing roof or cornice line
- **Street line**
 - maintaining the relationship to the street or property line characteristic of the district or block, including porches
 - continuity of the building wall of the block
- **Facade composition**
 - maintaining a tripartite building facade composition divided into base, middle and top
 - maintaining a vertical orientation to the facade
 - defining the top edge of a building by a cornice line or similar articulation
 - fenestration patterns and proportions, and a percent of the facade devoted to fenestration that is consistent with the district or block
 - avoidance of blank mirrored or opaque facades
 - providing a sufficient percentage of windows and door openings particularly at the first floor, so as to create a pedestrian friendly scale
 - alignment with cornice lines or window sills and heads of adjacent buildings
- **Rhythm / Pedestrian experience**
 - inclusion of architectural elements that divide facade into intervals that maintain a pedestrian friendly scale
 - using windows and doors in a manner that is harmonious with the established rhythm of the district or block
- **Materials and details**
 - use of materials similar to those in the district or on the block, including similar color
 - use of materials in a manner that creates details, incorporates textures or small scale elements that give buildings a three-dimensional character and a “human scale”



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25

Before considering how these guidelines apply to recent examples of new construction in historic district, it is useful to look at how these guidelines apply to an historic example characterized by interesting differences in architectural styles.

Most of the 1900 block of Delancey Place consists of three and a half story brick row houses with Mansard roofs and dormer windows. The composition of the facades is vertical, all the houses adhere to the property line and create a continuous flat wall surface, all are of identical height. There is some variation of architectural style, but overall there is a high degree of continuity of details and materials except for two buildings.

Instead of being red brick the house illustrated in figure 24 is white marble. Instead of being a restrained architectural style similar to the rest of the block it is designed in a Beaux Arts style with more explicitly classical elements and details including a pediment at the top of the facade. It is clearly a different style, but nonetheless it maintains a continuity of character on the block because it treats so many of the elements of its design in a manner that is consistent with the rest of the block: it is the same height, it has a vertical orientation, it adheres to the property line and continues the wall surface of the block, windows are openings cut into the wall, it has a base and top and an articulated cornice aligned with adjacent buildings, and the material are masonry. It maintains the continuity of the block even though the architectural style is different.

The house illustrated in figure 25 is an even greater departure in architectural style. Designed in 1950 by George Howe it is clearly what would be called a “contemporary style,” even a Modern style. It lacks almost all ornamentation and detail and by virtue of that alone is a contrast to the rest of the block. But once again, the design has more in common with its neighbors than it has differences. It is the same height, has a cornice line aligned with adjacent buildings, the facade is vertical with a base and top, it continues the continuity of the wall surface, window openings are cut into the wall, and the material is masonry, although of a different color. By today’s taste, the design may seem a bit austere as a result of its almost total absence of detail. But it is compatible with the block and district and maintains the continuity of character of the block even in a different style by relating to the elements of design that give the block and district its sense of place.

Part Five: Summary of Case Studies

Case Studies of 15 examples of new construction in historic districts are included in the appendix. Each case study examines one building using the preliminary design guidelines and relating the approach to design to one of Seme's four strategies. In order to test the concept of "sense of place vs. sense of our time" some case studies of mid-20th century buildings are also included.

The case studies examine four different building types: single family infill housing, row houses, mid-rise residential and high-rise residential. In order to illustrate the application of the methodology and to bring out certain design issues that emerged from the case studies, four case studies are included here. In each case study the word "yes" or "no" after the guideline indicates whether the building responds to that guideline or not. A summary of lessons learned from the case studies is included at the end of this section.

The Preservation Alliance recognizes that the property owners, developers and architects of these projects sincerely tried to produce the buildings they felt were most suitable to their needs and locations. The Alliance also acknowledges that these buildings were reviewed and approved by public agencies responsible for review of projects in historic districts or requiring other approvals. These case studies were chosen to test and illustrate the application of the proposed design guidelines. To the extent that comments are made about the incompatibility of certain projects with their historic settings, the Alliance does not intend this to be a criticism of the building owners or architects.

A. CASE STUDY EXAMPLES

1. Single Family Infill Housing: House in Society Hill Historic District



This single family house is built on a three lot wide site in Society Hill, opposite Three Bears Park (26).

Evaluation by Criteria

Height: *Yes.* The house is the same height as other houses in this part of the district and on the block and is therefore consistent with the guidelines.

Relationship to the street line: *Yes.* Two thirds of the house is built directly on the property line, as are other houses on the block and in the district. One third is set back to provide an entry courtyard, but even here the street line is reinforced by a one-story high wall and ornate gate.

Continuity of wall surface: *Yes, with qualification.* The house maintains the continuity of wall surface for the eastern two thirds, but then steps back leaving a break in the wall surface that is particularly noticeable from

the east since the east wall of the adjacent house is stucco as it would be if there were an adjacent vacant lot. The windows are openings cut into the wall surface.

Facade composition: *Yes.* The house successfully addresses the guidelines for facade composition. The facade has a tripartite design of base, middle and top with the top defined by cornices that interpret historic forms. The three-lot wide house is divided into three elements, thus retaining a vertical character almost resembling three separate houses. Fenestration patterns are consistent with the block.

Materials and details: *Yes.* The house is brick with contrasting trim. The brick includes a variety of patterns including Flemish bond, typical of many of the older colonial homes in the district. The openings and other elements are trimmed in contrasting materials, also found in the district.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *Yes.* The house maintains the rhythm of the block by breaking the three-lot facade into three distinct elements. At the street level, the house presents a rich three-dimensional experience: a pier sticks out, windows are recessed, and the screen wall and gate provide interesting views. Even the garage door opening is in scale and character with the historic form of carriageways.

Approach: The house is a good example of abstract reference, with a strong reference to the traditional design elements of the district that would probably lend it to be categorized as being in the post Modern style.

Assessment: Although some of the details of the Cohen House may seem a little elaborate, overall the house is compatible with the district and block and contributes to the continuity of the district. It responds successfully to all the design guidelines while at the same time being a clearly contemporary interpretation of the design guidelines.

2. Single Family Infill Housing: House in the Washington Square West Historic District



This single family house is built on a three lot wide site in the Washington Square West National Register District (27).

Evaluation by Criteria

Height: *No.* The house is lower than other houses in the district and on the block.

Relationship to street: *Yes.* The house is built along the property line. It appears to stick out only because the adjacent properties are slightly set back. In this case, compatibility with the block might have suggested maintaining the street line of adjacent properties. However, building to the property line is consistent with the overall intent of this design to stand out from its neighbors.

Continuity of wall surface: *No.* The slight difference in the relationship to the property line, the height as well as the difference in materials and fenestration result in a lack of continuity with the wall surface of the block. Windows consist of horizontal bands rather than openings cut into the surface.

Facade composition: *No.* The facade composition is inconsistent with the guidelines and the character of the district. The main entrance door appears more like a service door; the projecting balcony is atypical as is the projecting second floor. The difference in materials gives the house a horizontal emphasis incompatible with the vertical characteristics of the district and block. The design makes no attempt to relate to its context and is intentionally different.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *No.* The house does not follow the rhythm of the block or district. The pedestrian experience is very unfriendly; the first floor consists of a continuously blank wall and a wide, industrial character door.

Materials and Details: *No.* Although the materials are masonry, the type of materials, their color, the strong division between one material and another and the way they are constructed are incompatible with the district. While the materials show some evidence of how they are applied, the facade is lacking in details that give a three dimensional character.

Approach: This house clearly fits Semes's category of intentional opposition.

Assessment: This house is a good example of a house intentionally designed to be different from its historic context. In itself, the house is a very interesting design and a distinctive example of an industrial aesthetic. But it could have been designed for any location and makes no attempt to connect with its context in any way. It is incompatible with the guidelines and an intrusion in the district.



3. Row Houses: Society Hill Historic District

A continuous block of row houses all designed in the same style (28)

Evaluation by Criteria

Height: *Yes.* The height of the row and each house is consistent with the district. The height appears to be different due to the uncharacteristic roof profile.

Relationship to the street: *No, with qualification.* The row of houses is built to the property line consistent with the practice in the district. However, the relationship to the street is most influenced by the inclusion of a two-car garage on the first floor of every house. This is uncharacteristic and incompatible with the character of the district.

Continuity of wall surface: *Yes.* Since the houses were built as a unified row there is a continuity of wall surface.

Facade Composition: *No.* The facades have a base created by the line of garage doors and accentuated by a stone band in the brick piers. The facade is topped by a roofline that consists of two different elements, one of which is a roof with a circular window. This roofline is uncharacteristic of the area. The row as a whole lacks the rhythm of the other blocks in the district by virtue of the much wider houses and by a rhythm created by the unusual double height entry way. Overall the houses seem out of scale with their context.

Materials and Details: *No.* The brick material is common to the area. Within the brick are various bands, patterns and accent features. In spite of these, the wall surface has a very flat character lacking in detail and three-dimensionality.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *No.* The row is decidedly unfriendly to the pedestrian. The garage doors present a blank and uninteresting wall; the entry grills add to the unfriendly feeling. The row also illustrates the impact on the public environment created by a block with continuous garages that preclude any on-street parking—a factor that appears to increase the barren feeling of the block.

Approach: The general design would be categorized as abstract reference, leaning toward the Modern style in spite of certain post Modern details. However, the inclusion of the two car garages continuously for the whole row and the unusual roof line of the facade can only be considered intentional opposition.

Assessment: The row does not meet the guidelines. It is most incompatible with the district with respect to the roofing and the inclusion of garages.

4. Mid-Rise Residential : The Beaumont, Old City Historic District



The Beaumont is a 14-story condominium tower located on a narrow lot on Front Street facing I-95 and Penns Landing (29).

Evaluation by Criteria

Height: *No.* The Beaumont is dramatically higher than the commercial buildings that line Front Street and most other buildings in the Old City Historic District.

Relationship to the street: *Yes.* The building is located on the property line of both Front and Sansom streets.

Continuity of wall surface: *Yes.* The base of the building continues the wall surface of the adjacent commercial buildings. The continuity is reinforced by the use of brick, consistent with the rest of the block, although somewhat disrupted by the inconsistent treatment of windows and the projecting balconies.

Facade Composition: *No.* The facade has no articulated base, a podium of brick, and a glass and masonry facade above with a highly articulated roof structure. Window openings appear applied to the facade rather than cut in, and are different in character and proportion from the adjacent buildings. Had the single windows been similar in scale and character to the historic buildings the transition from the old to the new would have been stronger.

Massing: *No.* Although the change in materials and fenestration pattern makes a distinction between the base and the tower, the massing of the building in relation to the context would have been enhanced by a stronger distinction between base and tower, either by setting the tower back from the facade or introducing a recessed break between the base or tower.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *No.* The first level of the building lacks the scale and architectural detail of adjacent buildings and creates an unfriendly pedestrian experience.

Materials and details: *Yes, with qualifications.* The base of the Beaumont continues the brick facades of adjacent commercial buildings and thereby creates continuity with the rest of the block. Above the base materials on the Front Street facade are both masonry and glass; the Sansom St facade is entirely glass. The base of the building has modest detailing in the brick articulating floor levels relatively consistent with adjacent properties. However, these details as well as sills and lintels are very subtle and create little richness on the facade.

Special Issues: This building illustrates a special issue not covered by the design guidelines, that of the blank north wall. Other new tall buildings also have similar walls. This is attributed to the requirements of both the building code and the zoning code that limit windows on party walls. This north wall has a negative impact on the overall historic district as it is highly visible from many locations.

Approach: This design is also an example of abstract reference.

Assessment: The Beaumont is excessive in height for the district. The building base misses the opportunity to create continuity with the adjacent commercial buildings. Overall the design is not compatible with the district in size, scale, or character.

5. High-Rise Residential: 218 Arch Street, Old City Historic District



Several designs were proposed for 218 Arch Street. Each consisted of a four-story brick base with and glass condominium tower above. The total height of the building proposed is 275 feet.

Height: *No.* The proposed height of 275 feet exceeds the 65-foot height limit established for the Old City Historic District by City Council. It significantly exceeds the general height of buildings in the district and also exceeds the height of Christ Church steeple, a major landmark in the area, and only one two blocks away. From certain critical viewpoints the tower would appear directly behind the steeple.

Relationship to the street: *Yes.* The design includes a four-story brick base that continues the scale and character of adjacent buildings on the block. This portion of the building is built to the street line and continues the wall surface of adjacent buildings.

Continuity of wall surface: *Yes.* The four-story base continues the wall surface of the adjacent buildings. In the version of the design illustrated windows on the second and third floors are cut into the masonry surface, but the fourth floor is designed in the style of the tower.

Facade composition: *No.* The facade of the tower is inconsistent with the character of the area. It is entirely of glass with no variations, no cornice line termination of the building and no details. The base building is divided into four intervals similar to the width of other buildings on the block, giving a vertical emphasis to the composition. However, the similarity of the facade to the area is disrupted by the change in design at the fourth floor to a glass facade consistent with the tower. This is uncharacteristic of buildings in the district.

Massing: *No.* The building is divided into three elements: the four-story base, and two towers slightly offset from one another. The two towers are set back so as to diminish their impact on Arch Street. However, since there are no other buildings of this height in Old City the massing is inconsistent with anything else in the district.

Materials and details: *No.* Although the material of the base is proposed to be brick, the glass tower dominates the character of the building. The material of the tower and the lack of any kind of detail are inconsistent with the district.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *No.* Although the facade at the street level is divided into four bays, one of the bays is a wide garage entrance; another is an entrance to an arcade within the building and the others windows for stores entered from the arcade. At the first floor the design does has little of the three-dimensional character of older buildings in the district. The area along Little Boys Way presents a blank wall to the street.

Special issue: The height of the proposed building dramatically changes the entire character of the district by introducing a building that alters the dominance of the Christ Church steeple on the skyline of the neighborhood. This project indicates the importance of evaluating new buildings in relation to their impact on important landmarks as well as on the district and block.

Approach: Although the base attempts to reflect the character of the district, the design of the tower-the dominant element-is in intentional opposition to the character of the district.

Assessment: The proposed tower is incompatible with the district in terms of height, design character, materials and scale. It alters the historic meaning of the district by conflicting with the historical position of the steeple of Christ Church on the skyline of this part of the city.

B. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM CASE STUDIES

The evaluation of the case studies summarized above, and the complete selection of case studies included in the appendix, indicate that buildings that adhered most closely to the design guidelines were the ones believed to be most compatible with their historic settings. Not all buildings considered compatible with the districts met every one of the design guidelines, thus indicating the need for some flexibility in applying the guidelines. To test the validity of these findings, each of the case studies was examined by the panel convened by the Alliance as part of the process of creating this publication. The panel evaluated the case studies without benefit of the design guidelines as developed here. The consensus of the panel with respect to compatibility of the designs with the districts, and the elements that contributed to that compatibility, was consistent with the findings of the evaluations using the design guidelines. It is interesting to note that buildings whose design was categorized as “intentional opposition” were considered incompatible with the historic settings. All buildings considered compatible were designed according to the “abstract reference” strategy, with references varying from general relationship to context for buildings closer to the Modern style to references much closer to the character of the district for more recent buildings.

Several important issues emerged from the case studies not reflected in the preliminary version of the guidelines:

- Massing is an important design guideline for mid- and high-rise buildings. The massing of larger buildings and the way the scale of these buildings is broken down into smaller elements is a critical factor in designing taller buildings that are consistent with their historic districts.
- In addition to the impact of new construction on the district and the block, it is also important to give consideration to the impact of new buildings on landmarks of special significance in the district or to the city. It may be appropriate to establish a “zone of respect” around such landmarks, similar to that established around City Hall, with special design guidelines that apply only or most strongly in that zone.
- Construction of mid- and high-rise buildings on the typical narrow property lots that are the basis of property subdivision in most of Philadelphia may result in buildings with large blank walls as a result of provisions in the City’s building and zoning codes. It is important to find a way to include windows in these walls, as well as considering the way in which materials, textures and details can alleviate their adverse impact on historic districts.

Part Six: Recommended Approach and Design Guidelines For New Construction in Historic Districts

The examination of case studies indicated that there were some issues not addressed in the preliminary design guidelines listed at the end of Part Four. In addition, the case studies also indicated that the way the guidelines are applied to specific districts is dependent on first examining the overall characteristics of the districts, the presence of sub-areas and of significant landmarks.

The Preservation Alliance recommends the following approach and design guidelines for evaluating, and for designing, new buildings in historic districts.

APPROACH

1. Determine whether the district has a single overall environmental and architectural style or whether there are sub-areas.
2. . If the district or sub-areas have a single overall environmental and architectural style, identify and document that style through photographs of typical environmental patterns and architectural character. Adopt a guideline that requires new construction to adhere to that environmental and architectural style or to do so with only minor variations consistent with the environmental and architectural style. (Semmes's literal replication or invention within a style.)
3. For districts with a variety of architectural styles, identify the common approach to the design characteristics listed in the guidelines below and apply those characteristics to the evaluation (or design) of new buildings in the district. These designs may take the form of literal restorations, inventions within a style or abstract reference depending on the particular circumstance and location of the new building.
4. Identify significant landmark buildings in the district whose importance justifies the creation of a "zone of respect" around those buildings. Determine the appropriate size of the zone of respect and the special design guidelines that should apply in this zone of respect. Height may be the most significant factor of the guidelines for these zones of respect.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

- **General:** New buildings should be compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the district, sub-area or block.

New buildings may be designed in a variety of architectural styles including styles that are intentional restorations, inventions within an historic style, or abstract reference to styles present in the district, so long as the design reflects the sense of place of the specific district and creates a continuity of character.

- **Height:** New buildings should generally be consistent with the existing height of buildings in the district, sub-area and/or immediate block. Absolute alignment with the rooflines or cornice lines of adjacent buildings is not essential, but buildings should not exceed the height of their neighbors by a significant amount. Buildings at the corners of major named and numbered streets, however, may exceed the height of adjacent buildings, particularly if there is a prevailing pattern of such height differentiation in the immediate area.

- **Massing:** Mid-rise and high-rise buildings should relate the massing of the building to the heights and character of the immediate area. The base or podium of the building should relate to the scale of other buildings in the area, and the design of towers should include elements that reduce the overall scale and impact of the size of the building.
- **Street wall:** New buildings should maintain the relationship to the street or property line characteristic of the district or block
- **Continuity of wall surface:** New buildings should maintain the continuity of the wall surface of the block, with wall surface predominating over window openings and window openings appearing to be cut into the wall surface. The introduction of bay windows should not disrupt the feeling of continuity of the wall surface.
- **Facade composition:** Facade composition should include the following elements:
 - a tripartite building composition divided into base, middle and top
 - a vertical orientation to the facade;
 - a top edge of a building defined by a cornice line or similar articulation
 - fenestration patterns and percent of facade devoted to fenestration that is consistent with the district or block
 - avoidance of blank, mirrored or opaque facades
 - a sufficient percentage of windows and door openings, particularly at the first floor, so as to create a pedestrian friendly scale
 - alignment with cornice lines, window sills and headers of adjacent buildings as much as possible
 - avoidance of introduction of garage doors at the first floor, except on individual houses sufficiently wide enough to maintain 33% of the facade as windows.
- **Rhythm / Pedestrian experience:** New buildings should incorporate architectural elements that divide the facade into intervals that maintain a pedestrian friendly scale. Windows and doors should be placed in a manner that is harmonious with the established rhythm of the district or block.
- **Materials and details:** New buildings should use materials similar to those in the district or on the block, including similar color. Materials should be used in a manner that creates details, incorporates textures or small-scale elements that give buildings a three-dimensional character and a “human scale” especially at the ground level.

Appendix

Appendix

The following case studies have been selected from buildings that have been built in historic districts or settings recently, are proposed for such locations or present interesting examples of older buildings. They illustrate a range of building types and scales. Each building is assessed in terms of the design principles previously outlined and categorized by Semes's four strategies.

The opinions expressed in this publication are solely those of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia. Case studies of specific buildings have been used to test and illustrate design guidelines for new construction in historic districts. Comments about the compatibility of some buildings with their historic settings is not intended to be critical of the property owners, developers or architect

List of case studies:

Single Family Infill Housing

1. House in Society Hill (urban renewal period)
2. House in Society Hill (urban renewal period)
3. House in Society Hill
4. House in Society Hill
5. House in Queen Village
6. House in Washington Square West

Row Houses

7. Row Houses in Society Hill
8. Row Houses in Society Hill
9. Row Houses in Spring Garden

Mid-rise Residential

10. 108 Arch Street, Old City
11. The Beaumont, Old City
12. Apartment building in Washington Square West
13. Two Condominium buildings, Old City

High-rise Residential

14. 10 Rittenhouse Square, Rittenhouse Fittler
15. 218 Arch Street, Old City

Case Studies: Single Family Infill Housing

1. HOUSE IN THE SOCIETY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

This house was considered one of the best examples of infill housing of the Society Hill urban renewal period.

Evaluation by Guidelines



Height: *Yes.* This section of Society Hill and the block contain two-story houses with gabled roofs and some three-story houses. The height of the house and the roof form are consistent with the character of the area.

Relationship to street: *Yes.* The house is built to the property line and maintains the relationship to the street characteristic of the area.

Continuity of wall surface: *Yes.* The house maintains the continuity of the wall surface of the block. Openings, especially the door, appear cut into the wall surface.

Facade composition: *No.* The facade does not respond well to the guidelines. It does not have a tripartite pattern of base, middle and top, although it does have a clear cornice line. It is horizontal in character in part due to its wider site and has no elements that give a vertical emphasis. The type and placement of windows is uncharacteristic of the district and block. The facade indicates that house is designed in the Modern style with

elements intended to be in intentional opposition to the historic setting.

Materials and details: *Yes, with qualifications.* The house is brick although of a different color than the district. However, the dark color helps the house to recede. The brick is very flat, having little of the texture characteristic of the use of brick in the district. There are no details within the materials themselves and an absence of such common elements as lintels over the door or windows. This lack of detail and flatness of surface is characteristic of buildings in the Modern style.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *No.* The house is not incompatible with the rhythm of the block. The wider lot gives the house a horizontal emphasis. At the first floor the house is very unfriendly to the pedestrian. The wall surface is totally blank, there are no windows or other details, and the recessed door is not very welcoming.

Approach: The design of this house falls in between abstract reference and intentional opposition. As an example of the Modern style it has many elements that are deliberately different from its context, but it has other elements that link it to its context.

Assessment: This house was admired because it appeared to include sufficient references to its context to create a relationship with the historic houses on the block, while at the same time being distinctively contemporary. The house achieves a balance between relationship to context and contemporary design in the Modern idiom that is characteristic of much of work of the architectural firm during this period. It seems compatible with the district and block in spite of its Modern style and intentional differences.



2. HOUSE IN THE SOCIETY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

This house is a clear example of a design in the Modern style encouraged for new construction in Society Hill during the urban renewal period. The buildings to the east at the time the house was built have been demolished and replaced by a new house.

Evaluation by Guidelines

Height: *Yes.* Although most of the houses on this block are two stories, the adjacent house at the corner is three stories high and is an appropriate reference for this house. The house appears tall because of the visible roof deck.

Relationship to the street: *Yes.* The house is built to the property line and continues the street wall of the adjacent house. Windows and door openings are cut into the wall surface.

Continuity of wall surface: *Yes.* Although the windows are large, the wide piers, wide band at the top and other elements provide sufficient masonry surface to give continuity to the wall surface. The appearance of discontinuity comes primarily from the color of the brick.

Facade composition: *Yes, with qualifications.* Although this house is designed in a Modern style and intended to be different from its context, it contains a number of contextual references in the facade composition. The facade is vertical; the horizontal bands define a base and the window openings at the second and third floor relate to the floor and window alignment of the adjacent building. Although there is no cornice, the wide brick band gives some definition to the top of the house.

Materials and details: *No, with qualifications.* Although the primary material is brick it is significantly different in color from brick in the area. As would be expected of a house in the Modern style, there are almost no details at all.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *No.* The house is approximately the same width as houses in the area and so maintains the rhythm of the block. At the first floor the house lacks the architectural richness of houses in the district. Although the door and window are recessed there is limited three-dimensional character to the first floor and few items of visual interest.

Approach: The design of this house, like Case Study 1, falls in between abstract reference and intentional opposition. As an example of the Modern style it has many elements that are deliberately different from its context, but it has other elements that link it to its context.

Assessment: This house is a more intrusive example of the Modern style than Case Study 1, primarily due to the color of the material, the lack of any relationship to traditional forms and larger scale of window openings and details.



3. HOUSE IN THE SOCIETY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

This house was built on the site of a large garden that surrounded the colonial house to the west. The new addition wraps around the colonial house.

Evaluation by Guidelines

Height: *Yes.* The house is consistent with the height of adjacent houses and the district as a whole, as is the gabled roof. It appears taller due to the exaggerated dormer windows.

Relationship to the street: *Yes.* The house is built on the property line consistent with the block and with the district.

Continuity of wall surface: *Yes, with qualifications.* Although the house maintains the continuity of the wall surface it lacks some of the features that make the wall surface of the block feel continuous. This is the result of the flatness of the facade, the absence of common details and treatment of the windows as flat surfaces rather than openings cut in the wall.

Facade composition: *No.* The house responds poorly to the guidelines. The facade has no base, consisting of a flat surface coming directly to the ground; it is more horizontal than vertical in spite of the exaggerated vertical windows and exaggerated dormers; the fenestration pattern is inconsistent with the block and the windows appear to be applied to the surface rather than having a three dimensional quality. There is an almost

total absence of details. There are no projecting sills, no inset windows, none of the window detail that comes from double hung windows and mullions, no articulation of the cornice. In all ways, in spite of its apparent relationship to a colonial style, the house is an intentional contrast to its neighbors.

Materials and details: *No.* Although the house is brick, the color and character of the brick seems deliberately in contrast to the way brick is used in the district. The wall surface is flat and lacking in all detail, including the details that would normally come from window indentations.

Pedestrian experience: *No.* The house lacks the three-dimension richness of its neighbors at the first floor. The lack of detail gives the house an abstract quality that would be difficult to relate to a human scale without the presence of the door, which itself looks out of scale. The house is unfriendly to the pedestrian.

Approach: The design appears to be an abstract reference to colonial design, but the references are so abstract it easily fits the category of intentional opposition.

Assessment: Although this house is compatible with some of the design guidelines, its lack of compatibility with respect to details, facade composition and especially its lack of any three-dimensional quality results in a building that by virtue of its contrast is an unsympathetic intrusion into the block and district.



4. HOUSE IN THE SOCIETY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

This single-family house is built on a three-lot-wide site in Society Hill opposite Three Bears Park.

Evaluation by Guidelines

Height: *Yes.* The house is approximately the same height as other houses.

Relationship to the street: *Yes.* Two thirds of the house is built directly on the property line, as are other houses on the block and in the district. One third is set back to provide an entry courtyard, but even here the street line is reinforced by a one-story high wall and ornate gate and the recessed wall is compatible in design.

Continuity of wall surface: *Yes, with qualifications.* The house maintains the continuity of wall surface for the eastern two thirds, but then steps back leaving a break in the wall surface that is particularly noticeable from the east since the east wall of the adjacent house is stucco as it would be if there were an adjacent vacant lot. The windows are openings cut into the wall.

Facade composition: *Yes.* The house successfully addresses the guidelines for facade composition. The facade has a tripartite design of base, middle and top with the top defined by cornices that interpret historic forms. The three-lot wide house is divided into three elements, thus

retaining a vertical character almost resembling three separate houses. Fenestration patterns are consistent with the block.

Materials and details: *Yes.* The house is brick with contrasting trim, similar to materials and design of other houses in the district. The brick is set in a variety of patterns including Flemish bond, typical of many of the older colonial homes in the district.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *Yes.* The house maintains the rhythm of the block by breaking the three-lot facade into three distinct elements. At the street level, the house presents a rich three-dimensional experience: a pier sticks out, windows are recessed, and the screen wall and gate provide interesting views. Even the garage door opening is in scale and character with the historic form of carriageways.

Approach: The house is a good example of abstract reference, with a strong reference to the traditional design elements of the district that would probably lend it to be categorized as being in the post Modern style.

Assessment: Although some of the details of the house may be a little elaborate, overall the house is compatible with the district and block and contributes to the continuity of the district. It responds successfully to all the design guidelines while at the same time being a clearly contemporary interpretation of the guidelines.



5. HOUSE IN QUEEN VILLAGE

This house is typical of a number of infill projects built in the Queen Village and Bella Vista neighborhoods.

Evaluation by Guidelines

Height: *Yes.* The house is consistent with the height of others on the block and in the area.

Relationship to street: *No, with qualifications.* The house is built at the property line and continues the plane of the facades of other houses on the block. However, its relationship to the street is altered by the introduction of a garage, the use of the sidewalk in front as a driveway and by the front stairs that are larger and more intrusive than typical of the block or area.

Continuity of wall surface: *Yes.* The facade of the house maintains the continuity of the wall surface and openings are cut into the wall surface. The continuity of the wall would be stronger if the bay window did not continue through to the cornice line.

Facade composition. *No.* The house has no base as a result of the garage, an intrusive element that also results in the introduction of two windows above it that are out of character with the area. The cornice is expressed in a manner similar to historic styles, but clearly looks unauthentic. The main feature of the facade, the two-story bay reaching to the cornice line, is not typical of the area and its relationship to the roofline is uncharacteristic of traditional bays. The contrasting color makes the bay appear out of scale with the property and the block.

Materials and Detail: *Yes, with qualifications.* The house is brick of a similar color to the area, but dissimilar in the detail by virtue of its wider mortar joints. Although there are some details within the materials (brick patterns above and below windows) these are much more subtle than the articulated sills and lintels of other properties.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *No.* At the first floor the house is an intrusion into the block and not friendly for pedestrians. The protruding stair, garage and driveway are disruptive to pedestrian movement as well lacking in visual interest.

Approach: The house fits the category of abstract reference, with its primary reference being a general relationship to traditional design. However, the style referenced is not typical of the area.

Assessment: The intrusion of the garage at the first floor is the key issue raised by this design. Aside from its disruption to the pedestrian experience, the garage becomes the determining influence on the rest of the design resulting in a house that is an intrusion on the block, in spite of its compatibility with some of the design guidelines.



6. HOUSE IN THE WASHINGTON SQUARE WEST HISTORIC DISTRICT

This single-family house is built on a three-lot-wide site in the Washington Square West National Register Historic District.

Evaluation by Guidelines

Height: *No.* The house is distinctly lower than other houses in the district and on the block. Although some districts have a pattern of two and three-story houses, this district has few two-story houses on major streets.

Relationship to street: *Yes.* The house is built along the property line. It appears to stick out only because the adjacent properties are set back from their property line. Compatibility with the block might have suggested maintaining the street line of adjacent properties. However, building to the property line is consistent with the district and consistent with the overall intent of this design to stand out from its neighbors.

Continuity of wall surface: *No.* The slight difference in the relationship to the property line, the height of the house, the projecting second floor, and the projecting balcony, the difference and color of materials all disrupt the sense of continuity with the wall surface of the block. Windows consist of continuous horizontal bands rather than openings cut into the surface.

Facade composition: *No.* The facade composition is inconsistent with the guidelines and the character of the district. The main entrance door appears more like a service door; the projecting balcony is atypical as is the projecting second floor. The difference in materials gives the house a horizontal emphasis incompatible with the vertical characteristics of the district and block. The design makes no attempt to relate to its context and is intentionally different.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *No.* The house does not follow the rhythm of the block or district. It is wider and has no features that break the facade into intervals typical of the block. The pedestrian experience is very unfriendly; the first floor consists of a continuously blank wall and a wide, industrial-character door.

Materials and Details: *No.* Although the materials are masonry, the type of materials, their color, the strong division between the material of the first and second floor, and the way they are constructed are incompatible with the district. While the materials show some evidence of how they are applied, the facade is lacking in details that give a three dimensional character.

Approach: This house is an excellent example of intentional opposition.

Assessment: This house is a good example of a building intentionally designed to be different from its historic context. In itself, the house is a very interesting design and a distinctive example of an industrial aesthetic. But it could have been designed for any location and makes no attempt to connect with its context in any way. It is incompatible with the guidelines and an intrusion in the district.



Case Studies: Row Houses

7. ROW HOUSES IN THE SOCIETY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

A continuous block of row houses all designed in the same style

Evaluation by Guidelines



Height: *Yes.* The height of the row and each house is consistent with the district. The height appears to be different due to the uncharacteristic roof profile.

Relationship to the street: *No, with qualifications.* These row houses are built to the property line consistent with the practice in the district. However, the relationship to the street is most influenced by the inclusion of the two-car garage on the first floor of every house. This is uncharacteristic and incompatible with the character of the.

Continuity of wall surface: *Yes.* Since the houses were built as a unified row there is a continuity of wall surface.

Facade Composition: *No.* The facades have a base created by the line of garage doors and accentuated by stone band in the brick piers. The facade is topped by a roofline that consists of two different elements, one of which is a gabled roof with circular window. This roofline is uncharacteristic of the area. The row as a whole lacks the rhythm of the other blocks

in the district by virtue of the much wider houses and by a rhythm created by the unusual double height entry way. Overall the houses seem out of scale with their context.

Materials and Details: *Yes, with qualifications.* The brick material is common to the area. Within the brick are various bands, patterns and accent features. In spite of these, the wall surface has a very flat character lacking in detail and three-dimensionality.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *No.* The row is decidedly unfriendly to the pedestrian. The garage doors present a blank and uninteresting wall; the entry grills add to the unfriendly feeling. The row also illustrates the impact on the public environment created by a block with continuous garages that preclude any on-street parking—a factor that appears to increase the barren feeling of the block.

Approach: The general design would be categorized as abstract reference, leaning toward the Modern style in spite of certain post Modern details. However, the inclusion of the two-car garages continuously for the whole row and the unusual roofline of the facade can only be considered intentional opposition.

Assessment: The row does not meet the guidelines. It is most incompatible with the district with respect to the roofline, the inclusion of garages and the scale of entryways.

8. ROW HOUSES IN THE SOCIETY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

These row houses faces on a private street. They are seen primarily in their own context, rather than in the context of other houses in the immediate area.

Evaluation by Guidelines

Height: *Yes.* The three-story height appears slightly larger than houses in the district.

Relationship to street: *Yes, with qualifications.* The houses are built to the property line and present a continuous street face common in the area. The relationship to the street is influenced by the inclusion of garages for each house; however, since this row faces a private street it is less intrusive in the district than Case Study 7.

Continuity of wall surface: *Yes, with qualification.* The houses were built as a row and therefore there is a continuity of wall surface. However, there is so much three-dimensional articulation to the wall surface and the bay windows are so prominent that the continuity is disruptive and difficult to perceive.

Facade composition: *No, with qualification.* The facade has a clear base, mid-section and a roofline defined by cornices and large dormers. The prominent bay windows give the facade of each house a very vertical emphasis. The elements of the facade are an eclectic mix of historical references none of which are quite accurate. For example, the character of the

dormers is unusual and the manner in which the cornice intersects the bay window is inconsistent with historical form. This is a good example of a post Modern design that has selected as a reference a style not characteristic of the district in which the project is located.

Materials and details: *No.* The brick, stone base and material of the bay windows are typical materials for row houses, but more frequently found in those districts developed in the 19th century than in Society Hill. In particular, the paired bay windows are uncharacteristic with the area and reduce the visibility of the brick wall surface. Patterns in the stone, in the stone trim, over the windows and in the bay windows, give the facade a rich character.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *Yes.* At the street level the row is more interesting than Case Study 7. Inset doors of normal size and inset garage doors give the first floor a three-dimensional quality that makes for an interesting pedestrian experience.

Approach: This design may come close to being an invention within a style. It takes many elements of 19th-century Victorian row houses, but uses them in a very different manner. On the other hand, the style is so uncharacteristic of the district in which it is located it falls more closely into the category of intentional opposition.

Assessment: Although this row is compatible with the character of some historic districts it is not compatible with the character of the district in which it is located. Its intrusiveness is somewhat diminished by its location on a private street interior to the block rather than on a major street where its contrasting style would appear even more intrusive in the district.



9. ROW HOUSES IN THE SPRING GARDEN HISTORIC DISTRICT

These row houses are among a group of row houses on several different blocks all designed in the same manner.

Evaluation by Guidelines

Height: *Yes.* The three-story height is consistent with the Spring Garden district and the immediate area.

Relationship to Street: *Yes.* These row houses are built to the property line and form a continuous building wall along the street. The relationship to the street, as in other examples, is also influenced by the inclusion of garages. However, here the disruption seems less than in other examples due to the architectural treatment and size of the garage openings.

Continuity of wall surface: *Yes.* Since the houses were built in continuous rows or groups there is continuity of the wall surface.

Facade Composition: *Yes, with qualifications.* These row houses have a small base, just visible between garages and front steps. They also have a modestly expressed cornice line. The facade of each house has a vertical emphasis; windows and doors are recessed openings in the wall surface. However, most windows are actually sliding glass doors opening protected by metal railings. These elements give the facades the character of commercial buildings converted to housing rather than the residential character typical of the district.

Materials and details: *Yes.* The Spring Garden district contains many blocks of brick row houses with white stone trim around doors and windows. These houses are consistent in the use of brick and the incorporation of the type of window and door surrounds found in the district.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *Yes.* The pedestrian experience is compromised by the garages. However, the inset garage doors and entrances, the contrasting trim, and front sills typical of the area give provide detail and rhythm. The fact that parking spaces where the entry doors are paired also adds to the feeling of activity on the street.

Approach: This is an example of abstract reference with specific inclusion of details from the area.

Assessment: In spite of the inclusion of garages, these row houses are relatively compatible with the district. The design includes enough features to relate to context. The smaller size of the garage doors and pairing of entrance doors helps to relieve the impact of the garages on the block found in other row house examples.



Case Studies: Mid-Rise Residential

10. 108 Arch Street, Old City Historic District

108 Arch Street was built on a parking lot prior to the approval of the Old City District. The height of the building led to the creation of a 65-foot height for most of Old City.

Evaluation by Guidelines

Height: *No.* 108 Arch is significantly higher than historic buildings in the Old City District. The building is prominent from many different views: from further west along Arch Street as well as from Penn's Landing. In all these views the height, massing and bulk and architectural expression appear out of character and scale with Old City.

Relationship to street: *Yes, with qualifications.* The building is constructed on the property line and continues the building plane of the block. However, the relationship to the street is compromised by the recessed first floor and large opening to parking.

Continuity of wall surface: *No, with qualifications.* There is visual continuity of the wall surface with the adjacent buildings. However, the feeling of continuity is disrupted by the horizontal character of the facade and the alternating bands of brick and window openings.

Facade composition: *No.* The composition of the facade is a significant contrast to the district. The prominent brick bands give the facade a horizontal emphasis inconsistent with the vertical emphasis of commercial buildings in the district. This is reinforced by the windows, which, due to the pale color of the dividing panels, further the horizontal feeling of the facade. There is no articulation of the roofline. The facade incorporates no elements of scale or detail that create any sense of relationship with the four-story loft buildings to the west or the three story colonial house to the east. The facade is a deliberate contrast to its context.

Materials and details: *No.* The building is predominantly glass with panels of masonry and zinc. There is little connection to the brick facades characteristic of adjacent buildings. The building overall lacks architectural details and has the quality of an industrial building more than a residential building or the commercial loft buildings found in the district.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *No.* The first floor of the building consists of a recessed entranceway, large windows and an entrance to parking. The surfaces are flat, lacking the three dimensional expression of adjacent buildings. The building is not divided into intervals that would give scale to the pedestrian experience. The first floor is unfriendly to the pedestrian.

Special Issues: 108 Arch Street avoids blank sidewalls by introducing narrow windows and a pattern of vertical lines in the panel system. This helps to slightly mitigate the impact of these walls, which would have been even more overwhelming had they been blank.

Approach: This is an example of a design that is an intentional opposition to its.

Assessment: 108 Arch Street is incompatible with the district in size, scale, materials, facade composition and character.



11. The Beaumont, Old City Historic District

The Beaumont is a 14-story condominium built on a narrow corner lot on Front Street.

Evaluation by Guidelines

Height: *No.* The Beaumont is dramatically higher than the commercial buildings that line Front Street and higher than other buildings in the Old City Historic District. The fact that the building is located on the edge of the district facing an open area over the Delaware Expressway makes the height marginally more tolerable than if the building were located within the district.

Relationship to the street: *Yes.* The building is located on the property line of both Front and Sansom streets.

Continuity of wall surface: *Yes.* The base of the Beaumont continues the brick facades of adjacent commercial buildings and thereby creates continuity with the rest of the block.

Facade Composition: *No.* The building has two principal facades. The facade on Front Street consists of a brick podium with a glass and masonry facade above with a highly articulated roof structure. The facade on Sansom Street is most visible from a distance and consists entirely of glass. On the Front Street facade window openings appear applied to the surface rather than cut in and are different in character and proportion from the adjacent buildings. Had the single windows been similar in scale and character to the historic buildings the transition from the old to the new would have been stronger. In addition, the distinction between the base and its relationship to the existing buildings and the tower would have been enhanced by a set back between the base and tower.

Materials and details: *Yes, with qualifications.* The podium is brick consistent with the materials of the district. The base of the building has modest detailing in the brick articulating floor levels relatively consistent with adjacent properties. However, these details as well as sills and lintels are very subtle and create little richness on the facade. Above the base, the tower consists of large glass areas with little

detail.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *No.* The first level of the building lacks the scale and architectural detail of adjacent buildings and creates an unfriendly pedestrian experience. The inset door opening and the large grated service doors are unfriendly.

Special Issues: This building illustrates two issues not covered by the design guidelines. First, massing is an important consideration in mid- and high-rise buildings. The mass of a tall building may consist of several parts, related in different ways to the historical context. Second, tall buildings built to their property edge can result in blank sidewalls. This is attributed to the requirements of both the building code and the zoning code that limit windows on party walls. The north wall of the Beaumont has a negative impact on the historic district in spite of the pattern on the wall and is highly visible from many locations.

Approach: Although the brick base of the building attempts to make a connection with its context the overall design, with its tall glass facade, is in intentional opposition to the character of the district.

Assessment: The Beaumont is excessive in height for the district. The building base misses the opportunity to create continuity with the adjacent commercial buildings. Overall the building is not compatible in height or character the district.



12. APARTMENT BUILDING, WASHINGTON SQUARE WEST HISTORIC DISTRICT

This apartment building was constructed on the site of an individually listed building that burned and had to be demolished.

Evaluation by Guidelines

Height: *Yes.* Washington Square West has many corner buildings taller than others on the block. For example, the corner of 12th and Spruce streets has three buildings that are approximately twice the height of adjacent properties. Thus, the height of the new building is consistent with the character of the district.

Relationship to street: *Yes, with qualifications.* The building is built to the property line on both streets. However, at the corner the first floor is cut back on a diagonal with a single freestanding column at the corner. Other corner buildings in the district have commercial uses on the first floor but still adhere to the property line.

Continuity of wall surface: *No.* There is some degree of continuity with the wall surface of the block on the north facade. However, on the more dominant west facade the continuity of the wall surface is obscured by the large number of projecting bay windows.

Facade composition: *No.* The facade has a modest base, but it has no real cornice line. The darker row of brick is insufficient to make a real terminus to the facade. The window patterns and window type are inconsistent with the block and seem applied rather than cut into the brick surface. The first floor commercial space is too low in relation related to adjacent buildings. However, the most dominant feature is the bay windows. Other taller buildings in the area have bay windows the full length of the facade as well. However, the bays are fewer in number and therefore the wall surface between the bays has greater continuity. In this case the bays are so frequent and so dominant that their character obscures the rest of the building.

Materials and Details: *No.* The building is brick, although of a color distinctly lighter than brick on adjacent properties and lacking in the detail and texture of brick in the district. The appearance of the building is dominated by bay windows of panels and glass, which are inconsistent with materials in the district and with the character of bay windows in the district. The building has very little detail.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *Yes, with qualifications.* The pedestrian experience of the building is varied. The long ramps along the west side intrude into the sidewalk and separate the building from the pedestrian. Although this facade has some rhythm from windows and wall surfaces, there is little activity and limited architectural detail. The north facade consists of a typical glass storefront having nothing to do with the character of the area.

Approach: This is an example of intentional opposition to the historic context. There are many apartment buildings in the immediate area that contain the same design elements. Closer attention to the character of the district and incorporation of design features by abstract reference would have led to a building more compatible with the district.

Assessment: The building lacks compatibility with the district primarily as a result of the way the excessive use of bay windows compromises the scale, materials, and facade composition.



13. TWO CONDOMINIUM BUILDINGS IN THE OLD CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT

These two condominium buildings are part of the master plan for the development of the National Products site.

Evaluation by Guidelines

Height: *Yes.* Both buildings are consistent with the height of commercial loft buildings in the district and adjacent buildings on the block.

Relationship to street: *Yes.* Both buildings are built to the property line and continue the street face of the block.

Continuity of wall surface: *Yes, with qualifications.* Although both buildings continue the plane of the wall surface of the block, their facade design and mix of materials disrupts the feeling of continuity. The relatively flat facade of the north building has more apparent continuity than that of the south building, which is disrupted by projecting balconies.

Facade composition: *Yes, with qualifications.* The north building appears to be divided into a base and middle after the second floor and the top of the building is defined by a change of material for the top floor. The vertical brick piers give a vertical character to the facade but this is disrupted by the horizontal elements of a different material and color. Floor levels and window openings generally align with the adjacent building, but the

windows themselves are uncharacteristic of the area. The south building also appears to be divided into a base and middle at the second floor with the top defined by an articulated cornice feature. Here again, vertical piers are disrupted by horizontal bands of different material and color. The bright white color of the first two floors is out of character with the district. However, the windows have more in keeping with the industrial window character of the district than those on the north building.

Materials and details: *Yes, with qualifications.* The use of brick and contrasting elements is characteristic of the district, but contrasting materials usually do not stand out as visibly as on these two buildings. The materials and details on the north building are flat by comparison with the district; those on the south building have more in common with the district, with the exception of the balconies.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *No.* Both buildings lack a sense of rhythm at the first floor that is consistent with the district. The wide facades are not divided into intervals and there is a lack of three-dimensional detail at the first floor level, most especially in the north building.

Approach: Both buildings are abstract references to the commercial loft buildings in the district.

Assessment: Although both buildings contain elements characteristic of the district, there are neither strongly incompatible nor entirely compatible with the district. The lack of compatibility is mainly a factor of the mixture of materials, the strong horizontal emphasis of the facade, and the flat facade of one and the disruption to the facade of the other by the inclusion of small balconies.



Case Studies: High-Rise Residential

14. 10 RITTENHOUSE

10 Rittenhouse is a proposed 390-foot tall condominium to be built at 18th and Walnut streets, incorporating the former Rittenhouse Club facade.

Evaluation by Guidelines

Height: *Yes.* 10 Rittenhouse is located in the zone of high-rise buildings surrounding Rittenhouse Square. The Center City Residents Association defines this area as one in which building heights of 300 feet or higher are acceptable. 10 Rittenhouse is taller than other buildings around the square, but because it set back from Walnut Street behind other buildings the height when seen from the square seems compatible with the area. On 18th Street the tower is set back from the street, with a four-story base.

Relationship to the street: *Yes.* On 18th Street the building is built to the property line and continues the wall line of buildings along 18th Street.

Continuity of wall surface: The building is not contiguous with any other buildings so the issue of continuity of wall surface does not apply. Along 18th Street the building continues the wall plane of other blocks of 18th Street.

Facade composition: *Yes.* The composition of the facade has been designed to reflect the building in the foreground. It is predominantly brick in keeping with the masonry character of older buildings around the square, with contrasting trim and facade treatment at the top of the buildings. Although the tower has no clear base due to the buildings in the foreground, it appears to be a building designed with a traditional vocabulary of base, middle and top. The tower is narrower toward the square and wider at the rear, helping to break up the mass of the building. On 18th Street the facade is divided into four bays. The first floor contains store windows and doors; windows on the upper floors appear cut into the masonry wall surface.

Materials and details: *Yes.* The masonry materials and details of the design have a traditional character and relate strongly to the type of traditional design found in the Rittenhouse Square area.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *Yes.* Along 18th Street the facade is designed to fit into the pattern of narrow buildings that line the street. It is divided in appearance into four units by the four storefronts, which, though larger in scale than other storefronts along 18th Street, will provide visual interest to the pedestrian.

Approach: The approach is that of abstract reference, with references to traditional design.

Assessment: 10 Rittenhouse meets the design guidelines. Its appearance is compatible with the character of the district and the Rittenhouse Square area. The four story base along 18th Street will, hopefully, provide a transition in scale from the three-story scale of most buildings along the west side of 18th Street to the tower.



15. 218 ARCH STREET

Several designs were proposed for 218 Arch Street. Each consisted of a four-story brick base with and glass condominium tower above. The total height of the building proposed is 275 feet.

Evaluation by Guidelines

Height: *No.* The proposed height of 275 feet exceeds the 65-foot height limit of the Old City Historic District. It significantly exceeds the general height of buildings in the district and also exceeds the height of Christ Church steeple, a major landmark in the area. From certain critical viewpoints the tower would appear directly behind the steeple.

Relationship to the street: *Yes.* The design includes a four-story brick base that is built to the street line and continues the wall surface of adjacent buildings.

Continuity of wall surface: *Yes.* The four-story base continues the wall surface of the adjacent buildings. In the version of the design illustrated windows on the second and third floors are cut into the masonry surface, but the fourth floor is designed in the style of the tower.

Facade composition: *No.* The facade of the tower is inconsistent with the character of the area. It is entirely of glass with no variations, no cornice line termination of the building and no details. The base building is divided into four intervals similar to the width of other buildings on the block, giving a vertical emphasis to the composition. However, the similarity of the facade to the area is disrupted by the change in design at the fourth floor to a glass facade consistent with the tower.

Massing: *No.* The building is divided into three elements: the four-story base, and two towers slightly offset from one another. The two towers are set back so as to diminish their impact on Arch Street. However, since there are no other buildings of this height in Old City the massing is inconsistent with anything else in the district.

Materials and details: *No.* Although the material of the base is brick, the glass tower dominates the character of the building. The material of the tower and the lack of any kind of detail are inconsistent with the district.

Rhythm/ Pedestrian experience: *No.* Although the facade at the street level is divided into four bays, one of the bays is a wide garage entrance; another is an entrance to an arcade within the building and the others are windows for stores entered from the arcade. At the first floor the design has little of the three-dimensional character of older buildings in the district. The area along Little Boys Way presents a blank wall to the street.

Special issue: The height of the proposed building dramatically changes the entire character of the district by introducing a building that alters the dominance of the Christ Church steeple on the skyline of the neighborhood. This project indicates the importance of evaluating new buildings in relation to their impact on important landmarks.

Approach: Although the base attempts to reflect the character of the district, the design of the tower is in intentional opposition to the character of the district.

Assessment: The proposed tower is incompatible with the district in terms of height, design character, materials and scale. It alters the historic meaning of the district by conflicting with the historical position of the steeple of Christ Church on the skyline of this part of the city.



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Steven W. Semes is the Francis and Kathleen Rooney Chair in Architecture at the University of Notre Dame. He is also principal of his own practice based in New York City and a Fellow of the Institute of Classical Architecture & Classical America. In the 1970s he was Historical Architect in the Technical Preservation Services branch of the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. His books include *The Architecture of the Classical Interior* (2004), *The Elements of Classical Architecture* (2001, co-editor), and *Classical Architecture: A Handbook for the Tradition Today* (2008, contributor), all published by W. W. Norton & Company. A new book, *The Future of the Past: A Conservation Ethic for Architecture, Urbanism and Historic Preservation* is in preparation. Professor Semes received his undergraduate degree in architecture from the University of Virginia, followed by a graduate degree from Columbia University.



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Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
1616 Walnut Street • Suite 1620
Philadelphia, PA 19103
Tel: 215.546.1146
Fax: 215.546.1180

www.preservationalliance.com