



**BRUNSWICK
OLD TOWN HISTORIC
DISTRICT DESIGN REVIEW
GUIDELINES**

**Part 6: Commercial
New Construction**

**CITY OF
BRUNSWICK, GEORGIA
2020**

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CHAPTER 9: COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

41.0 NEW CONSTRUCTION - ACCESSIBILITY

POLICY

All commercial buildings in the historic district must be compliant with safety, emergency, and accessibility codes and regulations. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that all public buildings, including those designated as historic, be accessible to everyone. Property owners should consult the Americans with Disability Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) to comply with ADA requirements.

If a property's rehabilitation requires access for upper floors, locate fire exits and stairs on rear elevations or side elevations not readily visible from the public right-of-way. Compliance with ADA can usually be accomplished without compromising the historic integrity of a building. Most existing storefronts have entrances which can accommodate wheelchairs. If access is an issue, solutions include incorporating ramps, installing wheelchair lifts, creating new entrances, and modifying doors, hardware, and thresholds. If the primary entrance cannot be utilized, then make a secondary public entrance accessible. In these instances, provide directional signs to the accessible entrance.

GUIDELINES

- 41.1 Install new fire exits and stairs on rear or non-readily visible side elevations.**
- 41.2 New fire doors should be as similar as possible to existing doors in proportion, location, size, and detail.**
- 41.3 If a new fire door can only be placed on the primary elevation, it should be designed to be as compatible as possible with similar storefront doors of the building's period.**
- 41.4 Keep existing access ramps in good repair using in-kind or appropriate materials.**
- 41.5 Replace existing ramps with new ramps in-kind or appropriate replacement materials.**
- 41.6 Accessibility solutions must meet all state and local accessibility requirements as well as ADA mandates.**
- 41.7 Accessibility installations should provide the highest level of access with the least impact to the historic character of the building'. Avoid damage to significant features and materials.**

41.8 When retrofitting doors to allow accessibility, maintain historic doors; do not widen door frames on façades.

If historic doors are missing, widening the entrance is a possibility. Typical guidelines require a minimum of a 32-inch clear opening with manageable door opening pressures. Ideally, retain and upgrade historic doors with a device to reduce door pressure.

41.9 If an access ramp is needed, it should be simple in design, constructed of wood or metal, and painted in colors that are compatible with those of the building.

41.10 If historic doors do not allow for universal access, retrofit replacement doors to meet ADA Guidelines.

The use of automatic door openers with push plates is also an alternative to meet ADA door requirements on commercial buildings.



If needed, doors on commercial buildings can generally be retrofitted with push plates (left) which activate door openers (right) to allow wheelchair access.



If a grade change is needed for access, construction of a concrete and metal ramp screened by landscaping may be an acceptable alternative (left). When non-historic storefronts are remodeled, new traditional storefronts should be designed with lever door handles and appropriate widths (right).

COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

42.0 NEW CONSTRUCTION - ADDITIONS

POLICY

When adding to historic commercial buildings, the most important consideration is to maintain the building's historic character and appearance. Rear elevations are the most favorable locations for additions on historic commercial properties. Rear additions are less visually obtrusive and allow the historic primary façade to remain intact. The size and scale of the addition should be subordinate to the main building. The construction of an addition should not damage historic architectural features. Another option is to add additional space on the roof. A rooftop addition should be recessed sufficiently from the façade so that the addition is not readily visible from the street.

GUIDELINES

42.1 Additions should be consistent with the original building in scale, proportion, design, and materials.

The overall design of the addition should complement the character of the historic building in roof pitch, materials, window design, window placement and rhythm, ratio of solids to voids, and general form.

42.2 Rear additions should be smaller and simpler in design than the historic building.

Construct the addition to be subordinate in size to the overall building. The addition needs to be visually compatible but also distinguishable from the historic building.

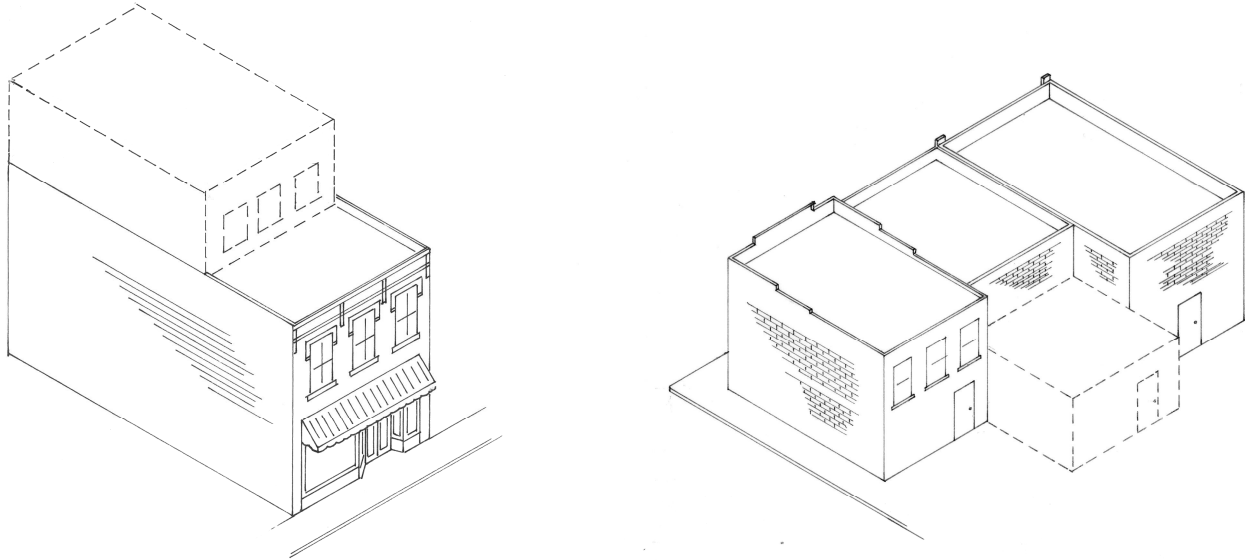
42.3 The construction of an addition should not obscure or damage significant architectural features.

Additions should result in minimal damage to the historic building and do not cause extensive removal of original walls. Use existing openings to connect the building and the addition.

42.4 A rooftop addition should be recessed from the façade roofline and not readily visible from the street. Follow the general mass and scale of the original façade.

42.5 Rear decks may be added to the rear elevations of historic commercial buildings.

They should be constructed of wood in a simple design. They should be readily removable, not damaging, covering, or removing any original feature or material of the historic building.



Roofline additions should be recessed from the primary façade of the building (left). Rear additions are appropriate as long as they are not readily visible from the street and are secondary to the original building in size and scale (right).



This rooftop addition is appropriate since it is recessed from the main façade, of limited height and not readily visible from the primary street elevation.

COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

43.0 NEW CONSTRUCTION - REAR ELEVATIONS

POLICY

Rear elevations are generally not visible by everyday shoppers and tourists. However, these elevations are readily visible by those attending downtown festivals or parking behind them. Most rear elevations do not have public access into the building but property owners are encouraged to make them more attractive through paint, awnings and other improvements. Rear elevations also offer opportunities for ADA access if needed. Decks, fire stairs and enclosed porches are also appropriate for rear elevations.

GUIDELINES

- 43.1. Maintain and preserve historic doors at rear entrances.**
- 43.2. If new doors are required, use single-light glass-and-wood or other historically appropriate doors.**
- 43.3. Screen HVAC units and service equipment through landscaping or wood and/or brick enclosures, or place units and equipment on roofs out of view from the street.**
- 43.4. Consider making rear entrances ADA compliant if necessary for building access.**
- 43.5. If replacement of a deteriorated façade feature is necessary, replace only the deteriorated element to match the original in size, scale, proportion, material, texture and detail.**
- 43.6. Wood decks may be added to rear elevations if they have simple traditional square or round balusters, and blend with the adjacent buildings.**
Wood decks are most appropriate. Alternative materials may also be considered if they match the wood appearance in texture, design, and overall appearance.
- 43.7. Decks and porches should be of open design and not enclosed except with screen panels.**
For privacy, decks should have louvers or privacy fences to separate and screen the deck from adjacent buildings.
- 44.8 Decks and staircases shall be attached to buildings in a manner so that they do not damage historic materials.**
- 44.9 Rear fire stairs for upper floor access should be of wood but metal staircases are also acceptable.**



The building at 1602 Newcastle Street has an appropriately designed fire stair of wood construction with square balusters.



This rear deck is of appropriate design of wood construction and with simple balusters and railing (1604 Newcastle Street).

COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

44.0 NEW CONSTRUCTION - PRIMARY BUILDINGS

POLICY

Brunswick's commercial district along Newcastle Street and adjacent streets has few vacant lots not intentionally left open for green space. Brunswick's Renaissance Strategic Planning and Visioning (RSVP) plan addresses proactive redevelopment in the city, including the commercial historic district. Where opportunity for infill exists, new commercial buildings are encouraged to increase economic vitality and provide additional housing and commerce for the city. New construction should be compatible with the historic character of the district in general and with historic buildings primarily in scale, mass, and height, and secondarily in materials, orientation, shape, placement, and rhythm and proportion of openings. New construction which references historical styles but is clearly identifiable as contemporary may be appropriate.

The commercial buildings in the Old Town Historic District are zoned GC (General Commercial), GC Core (General Commercial Core) and OC (Office Core). The maximum height allowed in these zoning districts is sixty feet (60') which would allow for four- to five-story buildings. Most historic buildings are no taller than three-stories and this maximum height is recommended for most blocks. Taller buildings may be appropriate on the edges of the historic district or blocks which lack a majority of older structures.

GUIDELINES

Building Orientation

44.1 Orient new construction toward the major street.

Traditionally primary entrances are oriented to the street, which encourages pedestrian traffic.

44.2 Create a continuous façade wall through setback of new buildings in line with existing buildings.

Maintain the traditional lines that have been established along the street to create an even flow of buildings.

44.3 New construction should respect uniform setbacks along a block.

Mass and Scale

44.4 Construct new buildings to be compatible with adjacent buildings in terms of scale and proportion.

Replicating the existing pattern established along the block will provide visual continuity and uniform scale.

44.5 Construct new buildings so they are compatible in scale with historic buildings, as to not overwhelm the streetscape.

While new buildings may be larger than historic ones, ensure they do not compromise the visual continuity of the street. New buildings of a larger mass may be subdivided into smaller visual sections that are similar in size to historic structures in the area.

44.6 Large new buildings should be constructed to appear similar in width to surrounding historic buildings—visually separate sections that give the appearance of traditional building widths through vertical divisions.

Height

44.7 Construct new buildings so their height is compatible with that of adjacent historic buildings.

Ensure new construction is compatible in height with the block and general surroundings on which it is sited. The maximum height allowed in the historic commercial district area is 60 feet.

Solid to Void Ratio

44.8 Ensure that window size and proportion of openings are consistent with adjacent historic buildings.

Design new buildings to have similar amounts of wall space and openings for windows and doors as adjacent historic buildings. Create patterns in rhythm, size, and spacing of window and door openings similar to adjacent historic buildings.

Building Form

44.9 Construct new buildings of forms that are similar to those of existing historic buildings along the blocks on which they are sited.

Typically, commercial buildings have simple rectangular forms of varying heights.

44.10 Ensure the roof form of new commercial buildings match those of adjacent historic buildings.

Flat or slightly sloped roofs are most common for commercial buildings.

44.11 Maintain the traditional separation between storefronts and upper façades. Typically, ground floor storefronts are visually separated from upper floors through design patterns and window placement. Replicate this separation in new construction, and maintain the alignment with adjacent buildings.

Rhythm and Spacing

44.12 Ensure proportions of window and door openings are similar to those of surrounding historic buildings.

Similarity in rhythm and spacing of window and door openings strongly contributes to the visual appearance and character of the district. This includes the pattern of display windows along storefronts as well as upper level windows. It is important that new construction maintain a pattern similar to that already established in the district.



Large buildings constructed across several parcels should have vertical divisions consistent with traditional historic commercial building widths. The illustration above shows a new building divided into three separate sections. An example of this type of vertical divisions is illustrated in the new commercial building below.



Materials

44.13 Use of traditional building materials that are compatible with adjacent buildings is preferred.

Common building materials such as wood, brick, and metal help to provide a sense of visual continuity and flow to the street.

44.14 New materials that are similar in character to traditional materials may be acceptable with appropriate detailing.

Alternative materials may be approved if they appear similar in scale, proportion, texture, and finish to materials used historically. Alternative materials must have a proven durability for Brunswick's climate.

Architectural Character

44.15 Building components of new construction that are similar in size and shape to those found historically along the street are preferred.

Components which replicate or imitate doors, bulkheads, and display windows and are comparable in size and shape to adjacent historic buildings, help to maintain visual continuity in the district.

44.16 The scale of decorative elements similar to that of surrounding historic examples is preferred.

These include ornamental elements such as cornices, moldings, or other decorative elements.

44.17 Contemporary designs for infill may be appropriate provided that the building has compatibility with adjacent historic buildings in scale, materials, proportion, fenestration, storefront arrangement, and vertical divisions.

44.18 If new construction is in a flood prone area the ground floor may not be able to be occupied by retail or office use. If a ground floor is used for parking the exterior must maintain the resemblance and character of traditional storefronts similar to adjacent historic buildings

44.19 If parking is utilized on the ground floor or any floor of a new commercial building the vehicles shall be appropriately screened by a wall or other visual barriers compatible with the architectural styles of adjacent buildings.

Open ground level parking in buildings is not appropriate.

Awnings and Canopies

43.20 Use traditional materials in awnings and canopies.

Cloth, canvas, or metal awnings or canopies are best for the downtown area.

43.21 Install awnings that fit the opening(s) to which they are attached.

Use rectangular awnings for rectangular openings, and curved awnings for arched openings.

Lighting

44.22 Install light fixtures that are unobtrusive in design, materials, and placement.

44.23 Ensure the lighting design complements the new building's style and does not detract from the surrounding historic setting.

Install lighting as a subtle addition to the property that does not dominate the overall site or intrude on adjacent properties.

44.24 Do not install light fixtures that suggest a false sense of history.

Contemporary interpretations of historic light fixture designs are appropriate – do not attempt to replicate fixtures of earlier architectural periods.

44.25 Lighting should be compatible and appropriate for the surrounding area.

Install light designs that complements the building while not detracting from the historic setting.

Datestones/ Cornerstones

44.26 In order to help distinguish new construction from historic buildings, the addition of datestones or cornerstones with the building's date of construction is encouraged.



The new infill buildings shown above have appropriate storefronts and window and door designs. They are of brick construction and have modern cornices at the rooflines.



New infill buildings in the historic district may also be one-story in height. This new building has appropriately designed storefronts and upper façade features.



Any proposed parking garages should also be designed to be compatible with the historic character of the commercial district. This example has traditional window and door openings, awnings and cornices at the roofline.

CHAPTER 10: COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

45.0 SETTING - STREETScape DESIGN

POLICY

The historic character of downtown Brunswick is defined not only by the historic buildings and their sites, but also by the network of streets, sidewalks, planting strips, parking, and alleys that support those buildings and sites. In recent years, the Brunswick Downtown Development Authority has overseen many improvements to enhance the visual appeal, safety, and walk-ability of the historic commercial business district, including new sidewalks, ADA curb cuts, streetlights, benches, boulevard plantings, and other amenities and traffic safety features. These improvements should be maintained in concert with principles of preservation of the historic character, setting, and lay-out of the district.

GUIDELINES

- 45.1 Brunswick was planned with a network of squares and it is important to preserve this spatial arrangement and its historic dimensions. Historic street patterns, and materials contribute to the overall character of the historic district.**
- 45.2 Place street furniture, trash receptacles, mailboxes, newspaper racks, and other similar elements in locations that do not impede the flow of pedestrian traffic.**
Select simple designs for benches, planters, and garbage receptacles that do not detract from the historic character of the district.
- 45.3 Continue to use pedestrian-scaled, decorative streetlights that match the existing streetlights on Newcastle Street.**
- 45.4 Maintain the existing infrastructure for public safety and protection of tax-dollar investments in sidewalks, pavement markings, street furniture, streetlights, and surface pavement.**
- 45.5 The screening of parking lots with landscaping or fencing is highly encouraged.**
Parking lots should be delineated through striping and directional arrows.



Brunswick has invested in many streetscape improvements on Newcastle Street and adjacent streets including trees and landscaping (left) and traditional design street lamps (right) which reinforce the appearance and historic character of the district.



Additional streetscape elements in the downtown area include benches (left) and wayside markers which provide information on the historic district (right).