

**DESIGN GUIDELINES**

**for the**

**FRONT STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT**

**recommended by the**

**SMYRNA HISTORIC ZONING COMMISSION**

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## **SECTION I**

### **HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES**

The Front Street Historic District Design Guidelines are intended to provide the Smyrna Historic Zoning Commission (the Commission) and property owners, tenants, and residents of the Front Street Historic District (the District) with guidelines for building rehabilitation, new construction, and other changes that would affect the overall appearance of the District. The guidelines provide information on rehabilitation methods and parameters to guide property owners in planning and designing their projects.

Legislation permitting Historic District Zoning in Tennessee was passed by the State Legislature in 1965. The purpose of this act was to promote the educational, cultural, and economic welfare of people of the State of Tennessee by enabling municipalities and counties to preserve and protect historic structures, areas, and districts which serve as visible reminders of the history and cultural heritage of the State and America.

The Town Council of Smyrna amended the Zoning Ordinance creating the ability for the Town to create Historic District Overlays (H-1) in August 2003. This amendment created the Historic Zoning Commission, which is made up of seven members. Membership on the Commission requires an architect, if available, a member of the Smyrna Municipal Planning Commission, and a representative of a local patriotic or historic organization, with the rest of the members being citizens of Smyrna. The Commission membership is nominated by the Mayor with confirmation by the Town Council. The Commission is responsible to oversee certain changes within the Town's historic districts and administer the Certificate of Appropriateness process.

The Front Street Historic District is what everyone in Smyrna refers to as "The Old Downtown". The area was established due to the railroad selling lots around the depot, which was used as a stop between Nashville and Murfreesboro. The area is currently undergoing a revitalization project by the Town to restore the depot building itself as well as rebuilding Front Street, adding sidewalks and crosswalks, a roundabout at the Washington Street/Front Street intersection, new pavilions and extensive landscaping. This will help to revitalize the area and bring "The Old Downtown" back as an area for commerce and civic events. It is the intent of these guidelines to ensure that this investment is protected, as well as the investments of the property owners in the area.

### **THE REVIEW PROCESS**

No building permit for construction, alteration, rehabilitation, moving or demolition to be carried on within the District shall be issued by the Building Official until the project has been submitted to and receives a written Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). Certificate of Appropriateness applications must be procured from the Building Official's office in Town Hall. All applications are then referred to the Town Planner, who will determine the completeness of the application. Once an application is complete, the Town Planner will refer the application to the Commission for review.

The Commission can request detailed construction plans and related data such as photographs in order to make its' review. In the Front Street Historic District the Commission may make determinations for the following actions:

1. Appropriateness of altering or demolishing any building or structure within the District;
2. Appropriateness of any signs to be erected or altered;
3. Appropriateness of the exterior architectural features including signs and other exterior features of any new buildings and structures to be constructed in the District;
4. Appropriateness of exterior design of any new extension of any existing building or structure within the District;
5. Appropriateness of front yards, side yards, rear yards, off-street parking spaces, and location of entrance drives into property or sidewalks along the public right-of-way, that might affect the character of any building or structure in the District;
6. The general compatibility of exterior design, arrangement, texture, material, and color of the building or structure in question and the relation of such factors to similar features of buildings in the immediate surroundings.

The Commission may not make determinations regarding interior arrangements or design as long as these arrangements or designs do not visibly affect the exterior appearance of a building or structure.

Applications for building permits for properties within the District shall be made to the Building Official, and all such applications shall be forwarded to the Town Planner. When the Town Planner has determined that an application is complete, the application shall be forwarded to the Commission for review. Upon receiving an application, the HZC shall meet within 30 days and consider the request. The Commission shall then either approve the application as submitted, approve with conditions, or deny the application with the grounds for denial detailed in writing. A COA shall be issued when an application is approved and all conditions of the approval have been met. If an application is denied, the applicant may reapply or appeal the decision to the courts by the procedures of statutory certiorari as provided for in Section 27-9-101 et seq. of the Tennessee Code Annotated.

In addition to meeting the Design Guidelines of the Front Street Historic District, properties are also subject to the regulations in the Smyrna Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance governs the use of property and has standards for height, lot coverage, setback, landscaping, and parking requirements. New construction and renovation must also follow regulations set forth in the building and fire codes adopted by the Town.

## **HOW TO APPLY FOR A COA**

1. Applications may be received when applying for a building permit in Town Hall. Property owners will be given a Certificate of Appropriateness application form.
2. Minor changes to a building shall require completion of the form with a description of the proposed work.
3. Major rehabilitation work and new construction shall require drawings, photographs, plans, and other documentation to fully illustrate the property and the proposed work.
4. If a project's documentation is deemed sufficient by the Town Planner, the COA application will be submitted to the Commission at its' next meeting. The applicant shall appear before the Commission to make his or her request. If the Commission deems the application to not have sufficient information to properly act on the request, the applicant will be notified and informed what additional information is necessary.
5. COA applications are reviewed by the Commission which can approve, approve with conditions, or disapprove applications. The applicant may reapply or appeal the decision. The Commission may also delay action on an application so that further information or documentation may be presented.

## **WORK WITHOUT COMMISSION APPROVAL**

If a property owner undertakes work without receipt of an approved Certificate of Appropriateness and/or building permit, a stop work order may be issued by the Building Official. The property owner shall then be required to document the work and state why a COA application and/or building permit was not previously applied for. Completion of a COA application and review may then be required by the Commission. COA applications approved by the Commission must be followed. If the actions specified in the COA application are not followed an owner may face fines and penalties as outlined in the Zoning Ordinance.

## SECTION II DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of these Design Guidelines, the following definitions shall apply:

**Addition:** New construction that increases the dimensions of an existing building or structure

**Alteration:** A replacement or change in building material; the addition or elimination of any architectural element of a building; a repair that reconstructs any part of the exterior of an existing building; or construction of or change to an appurtenance.

**Appropriate:** Suitable for, or compatible with, a property, based on accepted standards and techniques for historic preservation.

**Appurtenances:** Fences, walls, paving, streetlights, curbs, signs, mailboxes, gazebos, fountains, and other accessory or adjunct permanent built features related to a building or streetscape.

**Belt Course:** A horizontal band usually marking the floor levels on the exterior façade of a building.

**Bracket:** Projecting support member found under eaves or other overhangs. May be only decorative or may be used to support weight.

**Certificate of Appropriateness:** A document issued by the Historic Zoning Commission certifying that the Commission has reviewed the described proposal and determined that it meets all applicable standards of the Commission.

**Character-Defining Features:** Individual physical elements of any structure, site, street, or district which contribute to its overall historic or architectural character, and for which it is recognized as historically or architecturally significant.

**Cornice:** Projecting decorative molding along the top of a building or wall.

**Demolition:** The removal of a building, or major portion thereof.

**Elevation:** A scaled drawing which illustrates the view of the side of a building.

**Façade:** An exterior side of a building.

**Infill:** Buildings that have been designed and built to replace missing structures or buildings so they fill gaps in the streetscape.

**In kind:** Staying with the same material or items used originally.

**Joint:** Junction at which two surfaces meet.

**Maintenance:** The act of keeping a structure in a condition of good repair.

**Massing:** Physical volume or bulk of a building, and the building's arrangement and organization in relation to the physical site and other buildings.

**Muntin:** Strips separating panes of glass in a window sash.

**New Construction:** Any structure or appurtenance constructed on a lot after the date of the establishment of the Front Street Historic District.

**Pitch:** Slope of a roof.

**Preservation:** The act of maintaining the form and character of a building as it presently exists. Preservation stops deterioration and stabilizes the structure.

**Rehabilitation:** The act of returning a building to a usable condition through repair, alteration, and/or preservation of its features.

**Restoration:** The process of accurately taking a structure's appearance back to a specific period of time by removing later work and by replacing missing earlier features to match the original.

**Rhythm:** The pattern of repetition of spacing and building elements.

**Scale:** Absolute height and width in relation or proportion to neighboring buildings.

**Setback:** Distance from a building to a street.

### **SECTION III**

## **DESIGN GOALS FOR THE FRONT STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT**

The primary design goals for the Front Street Historic District are to celebrate the stylistic variety of the various structures within the District, while simultaneously enhancing the area by promoting stylistic consistency. These two goals seem to be in direct conflict with one another. However, the idea is that the existing built environment will be restored and reused to its original luster, while new development will occur within the context of the existing environment in such a way as to further enhance the aesthetics of the area and not detract from the area by being built out of character with the area.

The following design goals more specifically express what is unique and important about the Front Street Historic District. They are the foundation for the guidelines and are based on the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation* as required by State and federal law. Reflection on these goals shows the importance of developing specific guidance for property owners and the Historic Zoning Commission to help the neighborhood retain its' integrity and charm.

- Preserve architectural character when rehabilitating buildings.
- Design new construction to respect and be compatible with the setback, spacing, and scale of existing buildings.
- Avoid demolition of properly maintained buildings.
- Preserve significant site features such as landscaping, rock walls, etc.
- Ensure that public improvements complement district character.
- Minimize the impact of the automobile and parking on private sites.

The primary concern of historic zoning is to protect old buildings, but changes to more recent buildings as well as new buildings can have a significant impact on the streetscape and character of the neighborhood as well. In order to ensure that those changes do not have a negative impact, work on new and more recently constructed buildings is reviewed by the same process as historic buildings. These guidelines apply to every property in the District.

The Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation* (1990) are the underlying design guidelines for the Front Street Historic District. The *Standards* are listed below.

1. A property shall be used for its' historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the buildings and its' site environment.

(The Historic Zoning Commission does not control usage of property; that is a function of the basic zoning classifications of designated property. However, the Commission does recognize that maintaining the use the property had when it was constructed will result in fewer alterations to the historic fabric of the building.)

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its' time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures should be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its' environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its' environment would be unimpaired.

## **SECTION IV**

### **GUIDELINES FOR EXISTING BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES**

It is the intention of these guidelines that existing historic buildings and structures be preserved. Any alteration, rehabilitation, or restoration to an existing building or structure shall be completed in a manner that preserves its' architectural character. Appropriate maintenance and repairs shall be provided for existing buildings and structures. The original character-defining features of a building, structure, or site generally shall not be removed or destroyed. The following guidelines shall apply for existing buildings and structures:

#### **A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

When maintaining, repairing, altering, rehabilitating, or restoring an existing building or structure in the Front Street Historic District the following general requirements shall be met:

1. The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that damage historic building materials are not permitted.
2. Original building materials, including masonry, wood siding, and wall shingles should be retained. Where replacement of building materials is necessary, new materials shall match the design, dimension, detail, and all visual characteristics of the originals, based on physical or historical documentation.
3. Original architectural details should be retained. Where replacement is necessary, new architectural details shall match the design of the originals, based on physical or historical documentation.

#### **B. ENTRANCES AND FRONT DOORS**

The following guidelines apply for entrances and front doors:

1. Removing or radically changing entrances important in defining the building's overall historic character is prohibited. If altering the entrance, ensure that the new treatment matches or blends with the original style or character of the structure. Handicap access should be added to the side, rather than the front, of primary elevations if at all possible.
2. Substituting the original doors with stock size doors that do not fit the opening properly or do not blend with the style of the structure is prohibited. Transom windows and sidelights shall be retained.
3. When installing screen doors ensure that they relate to the character of the existing door.

4. New storm and security doors shall be full view or near full view design to avoid obscuring the original door. Original storm and security doors may be replaced with doors of a matching style.

### **C. WINDOWS**

Windows play a major part in defining a building's particular style. Because of the wide variety of architectural styles within the District there is a corresponding variation of styles, types, and sizes of windows. They can feature different designs of sills, panes, sashes, lintels, decorative caps, and shutters. The following guidelines for windows shall apply:

1. Retain original windows and window openings if possible. Replace original windows only when they are missing or beyond repair. Use true or simulated divided lights, in a similar configuration, when replacing windows to match the remaining originals.
2. The use of materials or finishes that radically change the sash, depth of reveal, muntin configuration, the reflective quality or color of the glazing, or the appearance of the frame is prohibited.
3. The number, location, size, and glazing pattern of windows on primary elevations shall be retained. New openings, blocking in windows, or installing replacement sashes that do not fit the window openings are prohibited. If a window is no longer needed, the glass should be retained and the backside frosted, screened, or shuttered so that it appears from the outside to be in use.
4. If using awnings or shutters, ensure that the size, scale, and materials are appropriate to the structure.
5. The installation of shutters at windows where they were never previously used shall be compatible with the design of the structure.
6. Storm windows and security windows shall follow the same guidelines for storm and security doors.

### **D. GARAGES, OUTBUILDINGS, AND SITE FEATURES**

1. Existing garages, outbuildings, chimneys, driveway configurations, and site features shall be retained if possible.
2. Uses, such as recreational structures, that are not compatible with the historic nature of the property, shall be screened and not visible from the street.

## **E. FENCES, WALLS, AND WALKS**

The following provisions for fences, walls, and walks shall apply:

1. Fences, as defined in Article II of the Town of Smyrna Zoning Ordinance, are not allowed in the front yard of a property.
2. The design of new decorative fences and walls on the front of the property shall blend with materials and designs found in the District and on the property. The scale and level of ornateness of the design of any new walls and fences shall relate to that of the existing building.
3. Use materials such as painted wood, brick, stone, cast iron, stucco, or combinations of these materials. Materials such as chain-link fencing, vinyl fencing, concrete block walls, or landscaping timbers where they would be visible from the street are not allowed.
4. For repairs to existing walks use paving materials such as flagstone and concrete, as well as any decorative elements.
5. Use compatible materials, such as patterned concrete, flagstone, etc., and compatible design in new walk construction.

## **SECTION V**

### **GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION**

It is the intention of these guidelines that all new construction shall be compatible in terms of placement, orientation, scale and design with existing buildings and structures in the Front Street Historic District. The following guidelines shall apply for all new construction:

#### **A. PLACEMENT AND ORIENTATION**

1. The setback from front and side yard property lines established by adjacent buildings shall be maintained if possible, or accommodated to maintain a rhythm.
2. The orientation of a new building's front façade shall be visually consistent with surrounding buildings.
3. A new accessory structure shall reflect the character of accessory buildings contemporary with the primary structure. The accessory structures shall be compatible, by not contrasting greatly, with surrounding historic accessory structures in terms of height, scale, roof shape, materials, texture, and details. Accessory structures shall be appropriately situated on the lot, to the rear of the property behind the principal structure, and on a permanent foundation.

#### **B. SCALE AND DESIGN**

1. The height of the foundation wall, porch roof(s), and main roof(s) of a new building shall be compatible, by not contrasting greatly, with those of surrounding buildings.
2. The relationship of width to height of windows and doors, and the rhythm of solids (walls) to voids (door and window openings) in new buildings shall be compatible, by not contrasting greatly, with surrounding buildings.
3. The roof of a new building shall be visually compatible, by not contrasting greatly, with the roof shape, orientation, and pitch of surrounding buildings.
4. The shape of a new building shall be compatible, by not contrasting greatly, with those of surrounding buildings.
5. The materials, texture, and details of a new building's public facades shall be visually compatible, by not contrasting greatly, with surrounding buildings. Materials include, but are not limited to, wood, brick, stone, mortar, roofing concrete, and glass and glazing.
6. New construction shall relate in footprint and mass to the surrounding buildings and shall respect building height and setback.

7. New accessory structures shall be designed to be compatible with the style of the primary structure(s) on the site, especially in materials and roof slope.
8. The scale of new accessory structures shall not overpower the existing primary structure or the size of the existing lot.

## **SECTION VI GUIDELINES FOR ADDITIONS**

An exterior addition to a historic building can radically change its' appearance. When an addition is planned, it shall be designed and constructed so that it will complement and not detract from the character-defining features of the historic building. If a new addition is to feature architectural detailing that replicates the original building, it shall be done in a manner consistent with the history and quality of the original building.

Carports, decks, and porches shall be considered as additions under these guidelines. If they are visible from the street, their design, materials, and scale shall relate to and respect the existing building. Accessory structures are addressed in Section IV and Section V.

The design of new additions shall follow the guidelines for new construction on all elevations. Other considerations for new additions in the District are described below:

1. New additions shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property.
2. The new work generally shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, materials, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its' environment.

### **A. BUILDING FORM AND SCALE**

1. Additions shall resemble the same period as the existing structure.
2. Material and pitch of the roof shall be compatible with and not overpower the existing structure.
3. The scale of additions shall be compatible with and not overpower the existing structure.
4. Additions shall be located to the rear, if at all possible, or to the side of the existing structure.
5. The number, size, and glazing pattern of openings shall be consistent with existing structure and surrounding structures.
6. Original front setbacks from the street shall be maintained.

## **B. MATERIALS**

1. Building materials shall be similar to those employed historically.
2. Foundations shall be compatible with existing structural foundations if possible.
3. Chimneys shall be of masonry construction.

## **SECTION VII GUIDELINES FOR DEMOLITION**

Demolition of a structure shall be considered as a last resort and should be avoided by properly maintaining the structure. Demolition shall be permitted only if one of the following conditions exists:

1. Demolition has been ordered by the Building Official for the public safety because of an irreparable unsafe or dangerous condition.
2. The owner can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Commission that the structure cannot be reused.
3. The demolition request is for an inappropriate previous modification, or an incompatible/non-historic building, and the demolition of said structure will not adversely affect the street appearance as determined by the Commission.

## **SECTION VIII GUIDELINES FOR MOVING OR REMOVING BUILDINGS**

A building may be moved or removed only under the following circumstances:

1. The only alternative to removing the structure is demolition.
2. When moving a structure into the District does not involve the loss of a historic building to create space for it.
3. When moving a structure into the District it will be architecturally compatible with adjacent building style, height, scale, materials, shape, design, setback, and setting.

## **SECTION IX GUIDELINES FOR LANDSCAPING, SCREENING AND SIGNS**

The following guidelines shall apply for landscaping, screening, recreational structures, mechanical equipment, and signs with the District:

### **A. GENERAL LANDSCAPING**

The following guidelines for landscaping shall apply:

1. Do not conceal or obscure the primary façade of a building with landscaping.
2. New retaining walls shall not be constructed of railroad timbers or concrete blocks.
3. Keep the locations of lawns, driveways and sidewalks as traditional for the neighborhood.
4. Walkways shall be of flagstone or concrete where appropriate. (Do not use block porch steps unless traditionally bricked.)
5. Property owners shall maintain all areas between the front of properties and the street, including any grass areas between the sidewalk and street pavement.
6. Canopy trees shall be removed only when necessary and shall be replaced, where appropriate, to maintain the street canopy.

### **B. RECREATIONAL STRUCTURES AND MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT**

The following guidelines for recreational structures and mechanical equipment shall apply:

1. Recreational structures, such as swimming pools and tennis courts, shall be placed at the rear of the dwelling and screened through landscaping or fencing.
2. HVAC, window air conditioning units, satellite dishes, antennas and other signal-receiving devices, solar panels, sky lights, and all other such devices shall be added on secondary or rear facades rather than primary facades. If visible from the street, all such structures shall be screened with wood or brick fencing, lattice panels, and/or landscaping.

## C. SIGNS

The following guidelines, in addition to the Town of Smyrna Sign Ordinance, shall apply for signs in the District:

1. Signs that flash, rotate, or are illuminated with neon-type lamps shall be prohibited. Electronic changeable copy signs shall be prohibited.
2. Residential freestanding signs shall not exceed 2 square feet in size or 2 feet in height. Commercial freestanding signs shall not exceed 20 square feet in size or 20 feet in height.
3. Residential wall and projecting signs shall not exceed 2 square feet in size. Commercial wall and projecting signs shall not exceed five percent (5%) of the area of the wall to which the signage is attached in size. Commercially zoned properties that do not utilize a freestanding sign may increase the area of wall signage up to seven percent (7%) of the area of the wall to which the signage is attached. Commercial wall signs shall not extend above the roofline of the occupied building. Signs attached to the inside of windows and intended to be viewed from the exterior of the building shall cover no more than twenty-five percent (25%) of such window.
4. Signs shall not cover architectural features.
5. Sign materials shall not include plywood or unfinished wood. Sign colors should be coordinated with the colors used on the exterior building elevations. The overall sign aesthetics should complement that of the district. For multi-tenant properties, signs shall share a common design, style, material, structure, method of attachment, illumination, and size.
6. If signs are to be illuminated, it shall be by remote sources, not with visible bulbs, neon-type lamps, or luminous paints. Lighting fixtures used for the purpose of illuminating signs shall complement the character of the building and the historic zoning district.
7. A campus style development (as defined by the Town of Smyrna Sign Ordinance) may be permitted one (1) pole or monument sign per street frontage that either identifies the name of the development or business or serves as a directory which identifies individual occupants that are part of the development. Such sign shall not exceed 100 square feet. The maximum height shall not exceed twenty (20) feet for a pole sign or four (4) feet for a monument sign. Monument signs which are integrated into a brick, stone, or wood architectural feature or an earth berm, all of which shall be permanently landscaped, may exceed four (4) feet in height to a maximum of seven (7) feet.
8. Signage plans for planned developments that fall partially or completely within

the Front Street Historic District must be first reviewed and approved by the Historic Zoning Commission.

9. Signs must meet all other guidelines set forth in the Town of Smyrna Sign Ordinance.

## **SECTION X TRANSITION AREAS**

Sites adjoining the District, while not under design control, can have a powerful, potentially negative, impact on the District. Compatible designs can help avoid this problem.

### **Recommendations:**

Buildings should relate to the character of the neighborhood as it relates to scale, setbacks, materials, roof forms, massing, and window patterns.

As appropriate to the site and the use, transition should be provided to the neighborhood. Avoid having buildings “turn their backs” to the District. Parking lots are not a desirable use.