VI. Guidelines for New Construction and Additions

This chapter provides guidance to ensure that the design of any new dwelling in Port Norfolk respects the historic architectural character of the district.

A. Introduction

The following guidelines offer general recommendations on the design of new houses and additions in the Port Norfolk Historic District. These guidelines are intended to provide a general design framework for new construction. Good designers can take these clues and have the freedom to design appropriate, new architecture for the district.

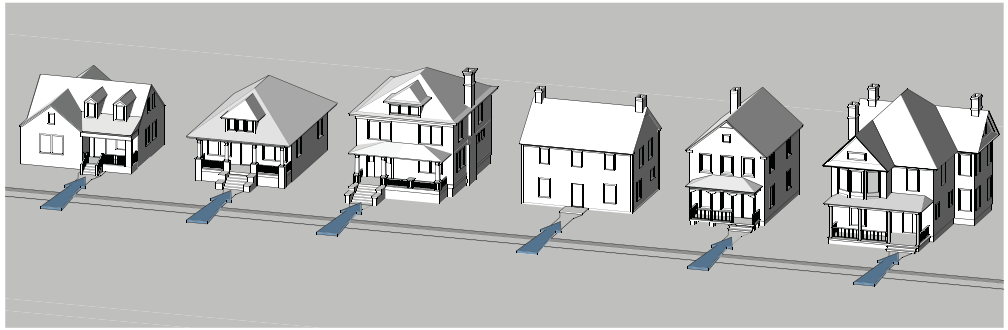
The intent of these guidelines is not to be overly specific or to dictate certain designs to owners and designers but to allow for the creation of new buildings that are compatible with their historic settings. The intent is also not to encourage copying or mimicking particular historic styles.

The earlier, Victorian-based architectural styles represented in Port Norfolk took advantage of inexpensive decorative wooden elements, often referred to as "gingerbread," that was mass-produced and delivered by railroad car. Later styles including the Bungalow, American Foursquare and Colonial Revival often used more classically inspired ornamentation. It may be a challenge to create new designs that use this vocabulary of historic details successfully. More successful new buildings take their clues from historic images and reintroduce and reinterpret designs of traditional decorative elements.

The criteria in this section are all important when considering whether proposed new house designs are appropriate and compatible. All criteria need not be met in every example of new construction, although all criteria should be taken into consideration in the design process. Care should be taken to ensure that the new design does not visually overpower its historic neighboring buildings.

Open front porches and porticos reinforce the consistent setback of these Port Norfolk houses.

The setbacks for Port Norfolk houses are uniform by block, and this condition should be reinforced with new infill construction.



The primary facade and main entry for new houses in Port Norfolk should orient to the street.

B. Setback

Setback is the distance between the building wall and the property line or right-of-way boundary at the front of the lot. Port Norfolk houses were designed with uniform, shallow setbacks.

Guidelines

1. Relate setback and spacing of any new construction to the character of the existing historic houses in the district.
2. Defer to the setback of the historic buildings for sites located between two distinctive areas of setback, such as between new commercial and traditional residential.

C. Orientation

Orientation refers to the direction in which the front (facade) of the building faces. Port Norfolk houses are oriented to the street that they face.

Guidelines

1. Orient the facades of new houses to the street.
2. Orient the primary facade to the major street if the building is to be constructed on a corner lot.

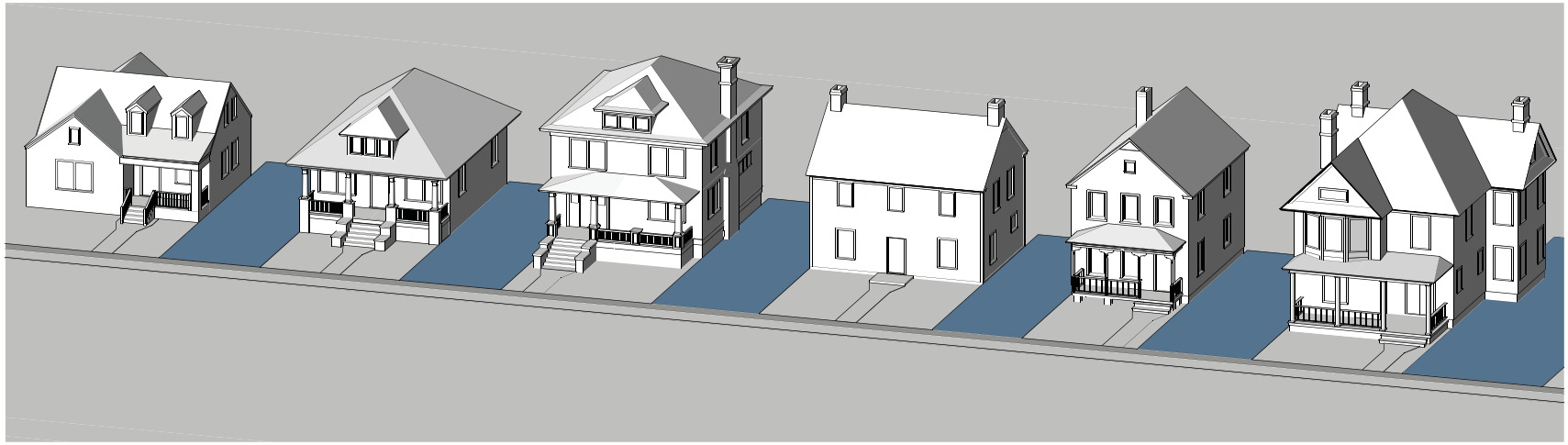
D. Spacing

Spacing refers to the side yard distances between buildings. Port Norfolk was designed with minimal side yards between houses.

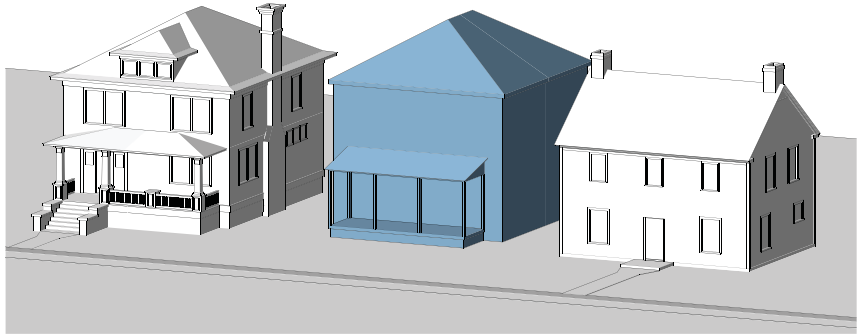
Guideline

Space new construction according to the historic precedent and adhering to applicable zoning regulations.

New construction should reflect the spacing of historic examples to maintain the cadence of the block.



Most house lots in Port Norfolk are less than 40 feet wide and houses are set close together. This spacing conveys a compact quality and should be mirrored in new construction.



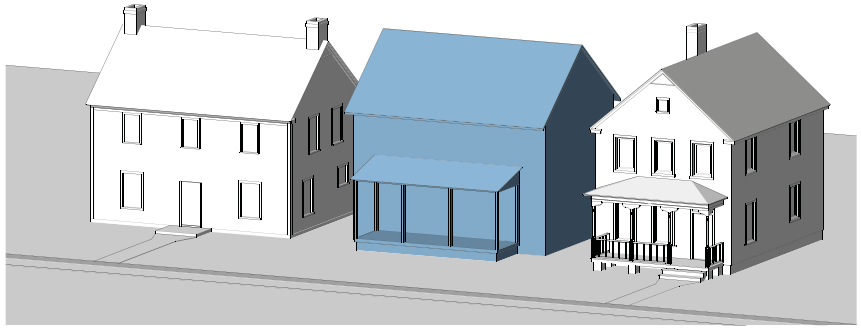
An APPROPRIATE example of mass for new construction relates to the existing adjacent house forms. Here the square mass of the American Foursquare is reduced by the addition of a full-width porch.

E. Massing

The overall massing of a building relates to the organization and relative size of the building sections or pieces of a building. The nature of the mass will be further defined by other criteria in this chapter, such as height, width, and directional expression.

✔ Guideline

Use massing that relates to those of existing adjacent historic houses.



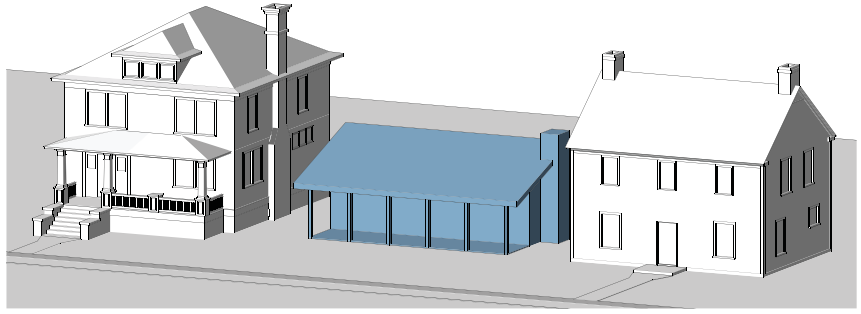
An APPROPRIATE example of mass for new construction relates to the existing adjacent house forms. This example borrows the porch from an adjacent Victorian style house and the rectangular massing from the Colonial Revival next door.

F. Complexity of Form

A building's form, or shape, can be simple (a box) or complex (a combination of many boxes or projections and indentations). Port Norfolk houses may be simple rectangles or squares in form or may have a more complex massing.

✔ Guideline

Use forms for new construction that relate to the majority of surrounding buildings.



An INAPPROPRIATE example of mass for new construction is shown in this example. The one-story mass with a shallow roof containing the porch breaks the historic rhythm of the street and looks out of place with its historic counterparts.

G. Height, Width and Scale

The actual size of a new building can either contribute to, or be in conflict with, the existing structures in a historic district. Height and width create scale. Scale in architecture is the relationship of the human form to the building. It is also the relationship of the height and width of one building to another. Most single-family Port Norfolk houses are two to two-and-one-half stories tall.

Guidelines

1. Establish the height of a proposed building within ten percent of the average height of adjacent historic structures to achieve visual compatibility.
2. Design new buildings to respect the width of original structures in the district thereby maintaining the rhythm of spacing between houses in the district.
3. Reinforce the human scale by including functional elements that contribute to the character of the district, such as porches and porticos.

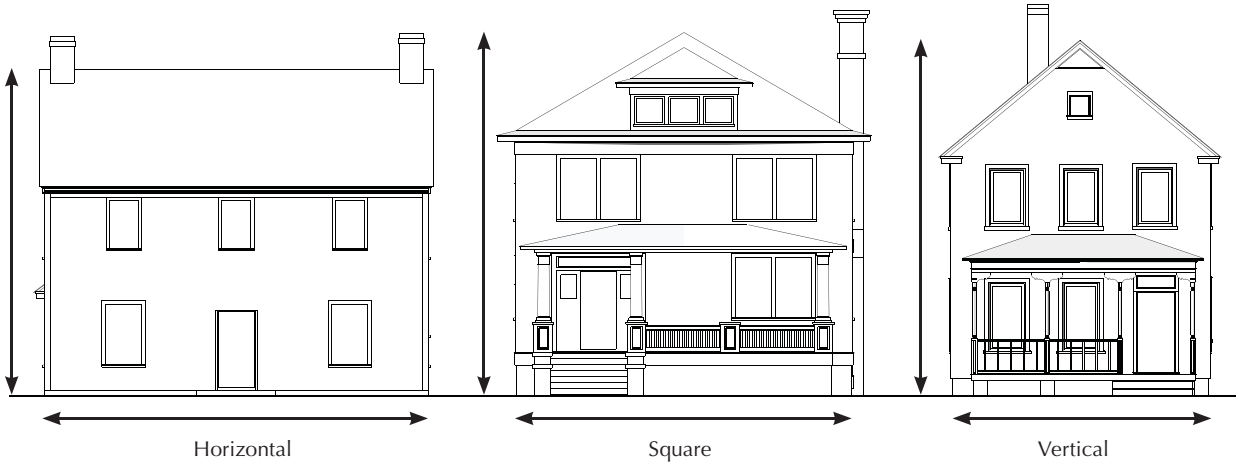
H. Directional Expression

The relationship of the height and width of the front elevation of a building mass provides its directional expression. A building may be horizontal, vertical or square in its proportions. Port Norfolk has examples of each, although the majority of houses have a vertical expression.

Guideline

Make sure that the directional expression of new residential buildings is compatible with that of surrounding houses in the block.

A Port Norfolk house with a porch and one without shows how a porch can be used to reduce the perceived size of the house and relate it to a human scale.



This sketch illustrates the three types of directional expression for a dwelling.

Respect the roof pitch and types historically found on Port Norfolk houses and porches.

I. Roof Form and Materials

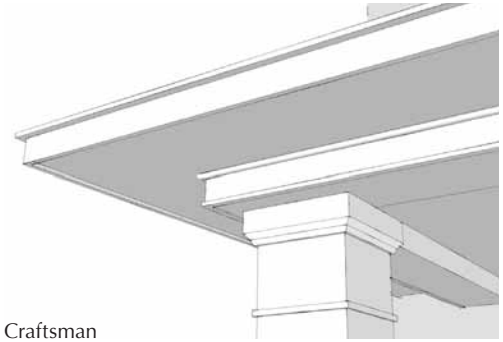
Roof form plays an important role in defining the form of a building, while the materials of the roof help to define its character and create continuity and rhythm in the district. A variety of roof lines provide interest to the streetscapes of the district.

Guidelines

1. Use gable, hipped, or complex roof forms for new residential buildings to relate to adjacent historic examples.
2. Reflect the historic roof pitch(es) of adjacent historic Port Norfolk houses in the roof pitch for new houses.
3. Use asphalt shingles in dark grey tones to create a visual pattern similar to the original slate shingles. Shingles should not vary widely in color range. Traditional roof materials, such as standing-seam metal, metal shingles, slate or artificial slate may also be used. Metal products are available pre-painted to reduce maintenance.
4. Consider the use of a cornice at the roof line of new house construction.
5. Use cornice designs and materials that complement those found in the area where the new building is being constructed.

Victorian

Colonial Revival



Craftsman

The cornice is the embellishment of the junction between the roof and the wall. It also may be used on porches.

On Victorian styles, the cornice may be embellished with brackets or other woodwork. On houses with Colonial Revival detailing, a simplified cornice may be composed of an unadorned frieze and architrave or a simple boxed eave. More decorative examples contain small dentils or large modillions. Foursquare cornices are often an unadorned wide board. In each case, the style and articulation of the cornice help to define the style of the building.

J. Doors and Windows

The size, proportion, pattern, and articulation of door and window openings help to give a building its individual style and character.

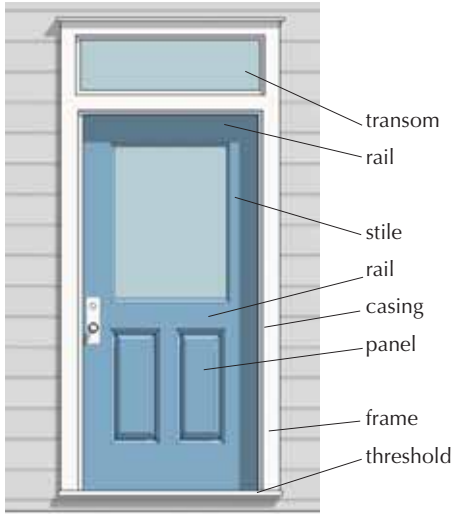
Doors and windows help to define a building's particular style through the rhythm, patterns, size, proportions, and ratio of solids to voids.

Doors allow access to the interior of a building and combine a functional purpose with a decorative one. Secondary entrances are often more utilitarian. Original doors can be found on many houses in Port Norfolk and may provide a guide for new door choices.

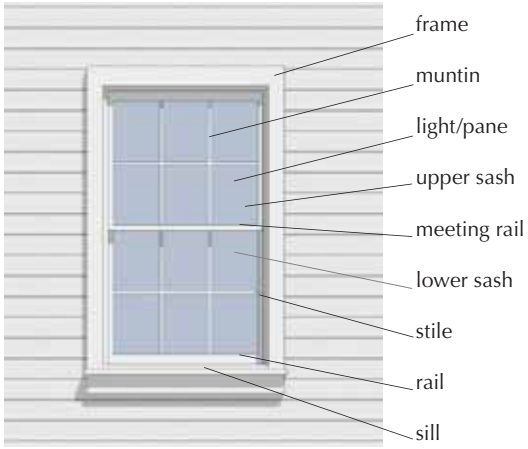
Windows add light to the interior of a building, provide ventilation, and allow a visual link to the outside.

Port Norfolk windows often have larger panes in the lower sashes and may have small or large panes in the upper sash.

ELEMENTS OF A DOOR



ELEMENTS OF A DOUBLE-HUNG WINDOW



Highlighting the windows and doors of typical Port Norfolk house types shows the balanced arrangement of these openings.

J. Doors and Windows *continued*

Inappropriate Treatments

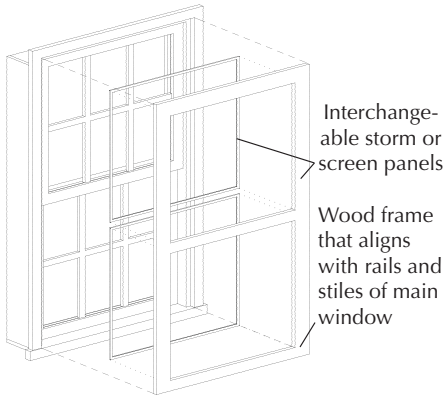
1. Do not use unfinished aluminum as a finish for doors.
2. Do not use false muntins and internal removable grilles because they do not present a historic appearance.
3. Avoid designing false windows in new construction.
4. Do not use tinted or mirrored glass on major facades of the building. Translucent or low-e glass may be strategies to keep heat gain down.
5. Avoid aluminum-colored storm sash. It can be painted an appropriate color if it is first primed.
6. Do not use shutters on composite or bay windows.

Guidelines

1. Relate and make compatible the ratio of solids (walls) and voids (windows and doors) of new buildings to that of adjacent historic houses.
2. Make sure the rhythm and placement of window openings are compatible with those on/of adjacent historic structures.
3. Make the size and proportion of window and door openings, or the ratio of width to height, compatible with those on nearby historic houses.

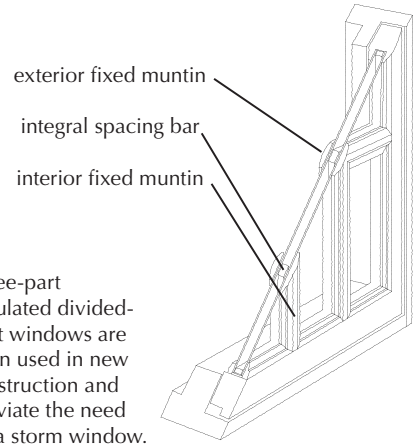
4. Respect the traditional design of openings that are generally recessed on masonry buildings and have a raised surround on frame buildings. New construction should follow these methods as opposed to designing openings that are flush with the rest of the wall.
5. Relate new doors to the door styles found historically in the district.
6. Construct doors of wood (preferred material). Metal-clad, fiberglass or metal doors may also be considered for new construction depending on design.
7. Use windows with true divided lights or interior and exterior fixed muntins with internal spacers to reference traditional designs and match the style of the building.
8. Construct windows of wood (which may be vinyl- or metal-clad), a wood composite, or fiberglass.
9. Install exterior storm windows and doors so that they do not obscure the windows or doors. Storm window divisions should match those of the window.
10. Use shutters of wood or a wood composite (rather than metal or vinyl) scaled to fit the window opening. Shutters should be mounted on hinges.

ELEMENTS OF A STORM WINDOW

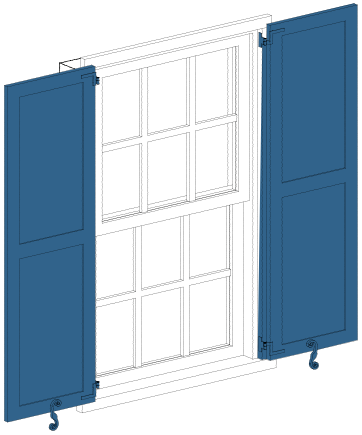


A glass panel storm door should be large enough to reveal the basic panel design of the door beyond.

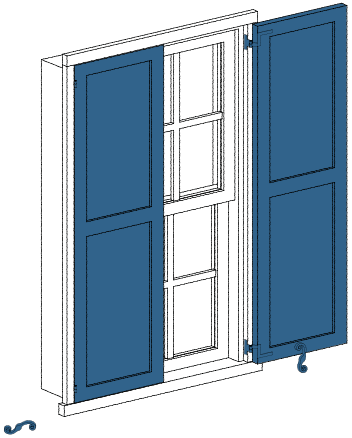
ELEMENTS OF A THREE-PART SIMULATED DIVIDED LIGHT WINDOW



Three-part simulated divided-light windows are often used in new construction and alleviate the need for a storm window.



Properly mounted shutters have upper and lower hinges and are kept open with shutter dogs.



When shutters are properly sized they cover the window and fit closely within the frame when closed.

Including a porch or portico in the design for any new construction will reinforce the connection the houses have with one another and the street as well as reducing the perceived scale of the building.

Porches and porticos are character-defining elements of the Port Norfolk neighborhood, and should be included in new construction designs to continue the rhythm created by this condition on most streets in the district.

K. Porches and Porticos

A porch or portico is the focal point of the front of most Port Norfolk houses. Because of their decoration and articulation, these features help to add variety and rhythm to each block.

Porches have traditionally been a social gathering point, as well as a transition area, between the exterior and interior of a residence. New residential buildings can better blend with the historic district if a porch is incorporated into the design.

Guidelines

1. Include a porch in new residential construction.
2. Make sure that new porch designs reflect the size, materials proportion and placement of existing historic porches.

The height of a foundation for new construction should approximate that of adjacent structures. The blue shading of the house on the right represents the foundation height for a typical Port Norfolk house. The house to the left is built on a slab and would be out of character in the district.

L. Foundation

The foundation forms the base of the building. Most Port Norfolk houses have brick foundations. The design of new houses should incorporate foundations for aesthetic as well as functional reasons. When built on a concrete slab, new buildings may appear shorter and out of scale with surrounding historic buildings.

✔ Guidelines

1. Distinguish the foundation from the rest of the building through the use of brick foundations on frame buildings.
2. Respect the height, contrast of materials, and textures of foundations on surrounding historic buildings.

Brick chimneys, dark gray roofs, wood wall cladding and trim, and brick foundations are materials characteristic of most historic dwellings in Port Norfolk and are the most appropriate materials for new construction in the district.

M. Materials and Details

The selection of materials and details for a new house in Port Norfolk should be compatible with and complement neighboring traditional buildings. Duplication of historic details to the point where new construction is not distinguishable from old is not recommended.

Inappropriate Treatments

1. Do not use exposed concrete or split-face block.
2. Avoid the use of brick of highly contrasting shades.
3. Do not use siding with an artificial wood-grained texture.
4. Refrain from the use of metal except as a roof covering.

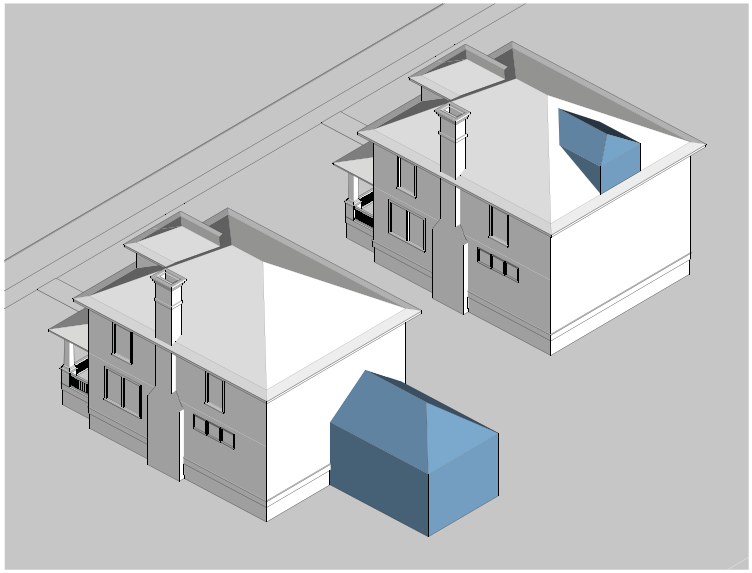
Guidelines

1. Use brick as the foundation material in Port Norfolk since most Port Norfolk houses were built on brick foundations.
2. Use wood or non-woodgrained cementitious siding for new construction and additions to enhance the traditional image of the district. Wood is the most appropriate material for new houses.
3. Use wood as a first choice for elements such as trim, porches elements, and other decorative features.
4. Consider the use of substitute materials for trim details. Some currently available composites are available in custom-formed lengths, such as urethane, while others, including cellular PVC, are dimensional mill-ready blanks. Flat board dimensional materials are available in wood-resin composites and cement board but are not able to be worked in the traditional manner of wood.
5. Consider traditional standing-seam metal, or metal shingle roofs, such as galvanized steel and terne (a zinc and tin alloy), as an alternative to asphalt shingles in areas where metal roofs are prevalent.
6. Use new stainless steel and pre-coated terne products as substitute roof materials, if manufactured in the traditional widths and if installed with standing seams.

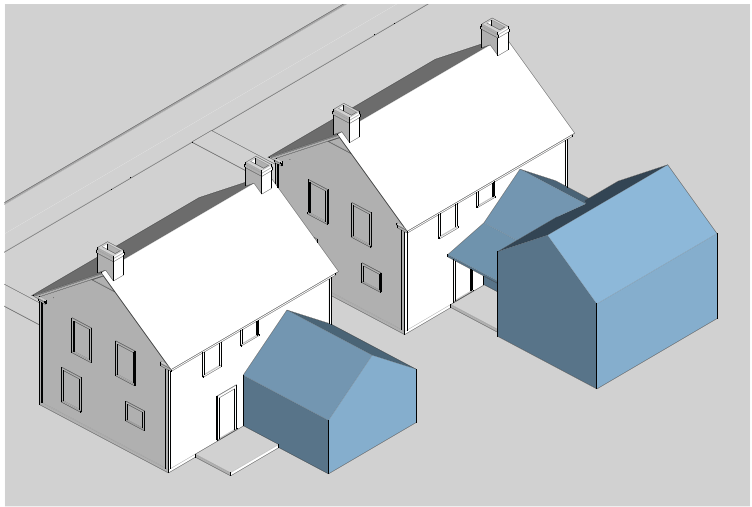
N. Color

Paint colors popular during the era of construction of the original dwellings in Port Norfolk were often dependent on the architectural style of the house and the amount of decorative trim. When choosing colors for new construction, respect the historic palette for the styles of adjacent historic structures and stylistic references of the new dwelling. Refer to *Chapter V: Section F* for a discussion of appropriate color schemes in the Port Norfolk Historic District.

For new construction that is inspired by the Folk Victorian style popular in Port Norfolk, a three color paint scheme based on historic paint colors is appropriate. This illustration is provided as a guide for the proper application of such a scheme.



An additional rear dormer or a rear ell can extend the livable space of an American Foursquare design.



A rectangular mass such as this Colonial Revival may receive an addition on the rear, either connected to the main house by a hyphen or directly attached.

O. Additions

A carefully designed new addition can respect the historic building without totally copying the original design. If the new addition appears to be a part of the existing building, the integrity of the historic design is compromised, and the viewer is confused over what is historic and what is new.

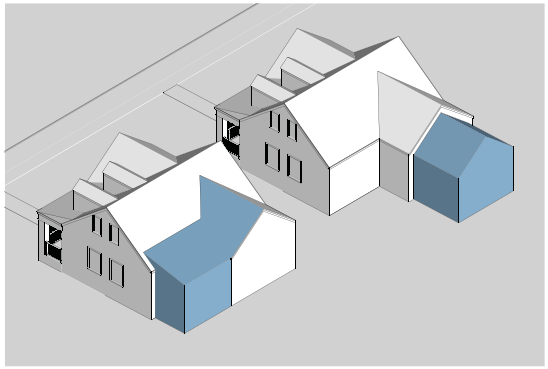
The design of new additions should follow the guidelines for new construction on the preceding pages for all elevations that are visible from the street. Other considerations that are specific to new additions are listed below.

Inappropriate Treatments

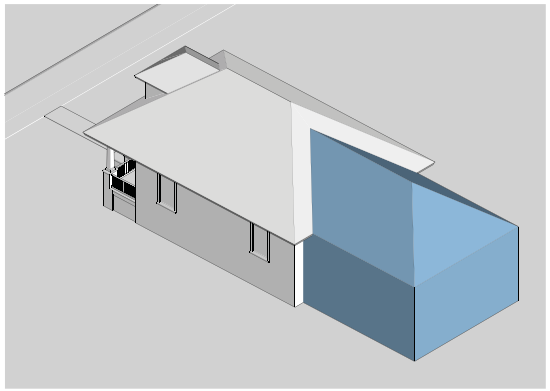
1. Do not destroy historic materials when constructing a new addition.
2. Do not use the exact wall plane, roof line, or cornice height of the existing structure in the new design.

Guidelines

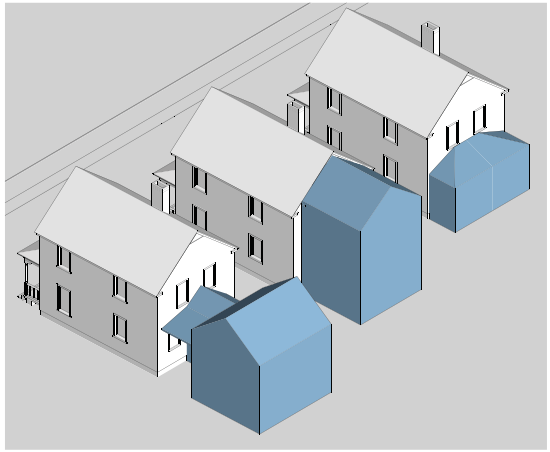
1. **Function:** Attempt to accommodate the needed functions within the existing building without building an addition.
2. **Location:** Attempt to locate the addition on the rear elevation so that it is not visible from the street.
3. **Attachment to Existing Building:** Attach new additions or alterations to existing buildings in such a manner that, if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the building would be unimpaired.
4. **Size:** Limit the size of the addition so that it does not visually overpower the existing building.
5. **Orientation:** Maintain the original orientation of the structure. If the primary entrance is located on the street facade, it should remain in that location.
6. **Roof Line and Roof Pitch:** Maintain the existing roof pitch. Roof lines for new additions should be secondary to those of the existing structure.
7. **Design:** Make sure that the design of a new addition is compatible with the existing building. The new work should be differentiated from the old and should be compatible with its massing, size, scale, materials, color, ratio of solids to voids, and architectural features.



The cross-gable roof line of this cottage design may allow for a number of addition designs. Two examples are shown here.



If an addition needs to be made to a Bungalow, an ell that does not fully extend across the rear elevation may be another solution.



A one-story shed-roofed addition, a rear ell, or a smaller, gable-roof mass which may be connected by a hyphen may be suitable for Victorian period styles.