

NEW CONSTRUCTION

The City of Lake Worth Beach has a rich variety of historic and authentic architectural styles. These Design Guidelines document the 10 primary styles throughout the six historic districts as well as other notable styles throughout the city. Cities and neighborhoods, including those that are historic, are never static. There will always be some level of construction activity in the neighborhood, and that often includes the new construction of primary and accessory buildings.

New construction, defined as a new structure within a historic district, should be carefully planned and designed so that it is compatible with neighboring structures. It is very important that the construction of new structures adhere to certain principles that are vital to the health and longevity of the historic district.

Style

Each historic district in Lake Worth Beach is made of many architectural styles. These buildings and homes were built over time, with different hands, and in a manner or style that was in favor at the time. The historic districts of Lake Worth Beach are authentic; they are not architectural “petting zoos” that showcase a single style. New construction within the districts should take the primary styles into consideration when contemplating the design of a new building. While it is understood that new buildings will not be built exactly the same way their historic neighbors were, there should be a conscious effort to be compatible with and take inspiration from the historic fabric. New construction can be designed utilizing the architectural language of one of the 10 defined primary styles, or an alternate yet compatible style. It is very important that new construction not hybridize the styles, borrowing pieces from one and another. This approach creates confusion and dilutes the intrinsic value of the historic structures and styles. Additionally, this approach will result in mediocre architecture at best. The best approach is to choose one style of architecture, and to design a structure that utilizes the common characteristics, proportions, and materials of that style.



This image shows a historic structure in the foreground with a new two-story addition beyond.



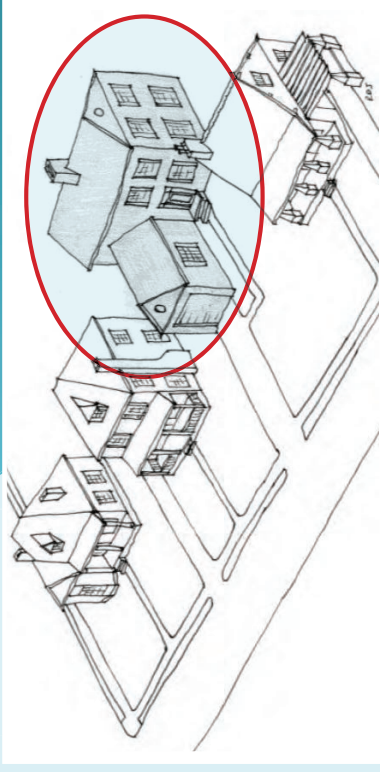
Here is an example of an award-winning new construction in Lake Worth Beach.

The Street

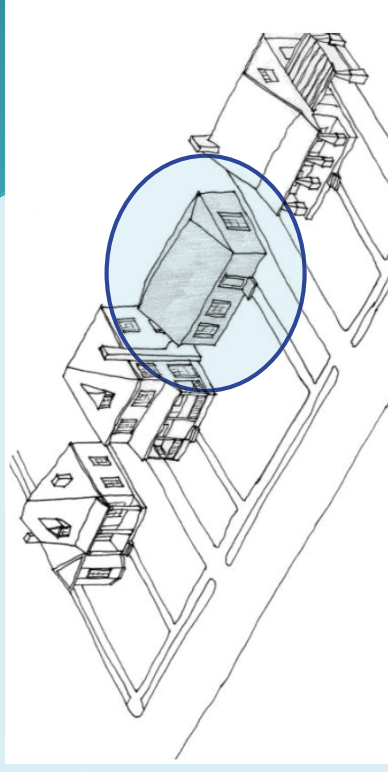
One of the most impressive and enduring characters of the historic district is the assemblage of the buildings to create the street. The rhythm, consistency, and beauty of the historic neighborhood street is made of many parts that need to be understood in order to protect the character of the street during new construction. These elements include street trees, walls and fences, the spacing between buildings, the height of porches, and the relationship between upper and lower floors of a building. This is not to say that new construction must align its roof lines, doors and windows precisely with its neighbors. There is a narrow range however where these elements in new construction can either add to the rhythm of the street or break it. This is why applicants for new construction must include a street elevation illustrating the new structure in context with its neighboring structures. The city's historic preservation staff are available to assist applicants to ensure the rhythm of the street remains intact.

Scale, Height, and Massing

Few things can disrupt a historic street and district than new construction that is out of scale, too tall, and simply overwhelms its lot. The relative size and height of a new structure is regulated within the city's Land Development Regulations, however, in a historic district a greater level of sensitivity is typically required. Even if the zoning code allows a two-story structure; on a street made of one-story historic structures, a two-story structure may not be appropriate. Sensitivity and compatibility with neighboring structures and homes is as important as what is allowed by code. Additionally, the issues of scale, height, and massing are also important at the micro scale. Windows that are too big, or too small; roof fascia lines that are too bulky and out of proportion with the character of the style; roof pitches that are uncharacteristic for that language can also be disruptive to the district. Also, historic structures rarely (if ever) have their finished floor level at grade. They are typically raised 18"-24" above the ground. Not only is this detail important for flooding and air circulation issues, but it gives the structure a greater presence on the street. This is an important, often overlooked, detail that will impact the massing of the new structure. When considering new construction in a historic district and confronted with questions about scale, height, and massing, look around the neighborhood: all of the answers are there.



In this diagram the new construction (circled in red) is inconsistent with the siting of its historic neighbors. The structure itself is also out of scale.



Here this new home is more appropriately scaled to its neighbors and has consistent setbacks.

Building Placement and Orientation

A characteristic of historic districts and neighborhoods that is not commonly appreciated is their historic development pattern. Unlike suburban neighborhoods, historic districts were typically planned with a regular street and block pattern, often with alleyways, and with a disciplined distribution of small, medium-sized, and large lots. While it might be common to have small cottages, sprawling ranches, and large Mediterranean Revival structures on a single block, it is the discipline of their placement and orientation in relation to the street that is inherent to the historic planning of the district. It is also vitally important that like-sized houses face like-sized houses. If the homes on a block have smaller front setbacks and garages that are accessed from an alleyway, new construction should be consistent with those conditions. A typical feature of historic homes, particularly more modestly sized structures, is their presence on the street. If all of the houses on the street have direct pedestrian access from the sidewalk to the front door, then new construction should be consistent. If new construction is occurring in an area with larger lots where orientation of historic structures relative to the street is less consistent, then again new construction can take its cues from the neighborhood. The consistent theme with new construction is to look and listen to the neighborhood. All of the direction needed is already there.

Materials and Details

These Design Guidelines are filled with drawings and photographs of appropriate windows, doors, roof types, materials, and construction details for each of the 10 primary architectural styles. This is a tool to identify the appropriate parts and pieces that comprise a particular historic architectural style. Many of the instructions herein are geared to the reconstruction, rehabilitation, and restoration of existing historic structures. The same rules apply for new construction. When building a new structure within a historic district, the owner should consider the variety of historic styles in Lake Worth Beach, choose one, and design a structure consistent with the details provided in this guide.



This diagram illustrates a few key elements to assessing a building's compatibility with its historic context: roof slopes, building height and mass, and front and side setbacks. These items combined help establish the rhythm of the street.



This new construction in Lake Worth Beach effectively uses modern materials in a manner that is compatible with the historic context.