

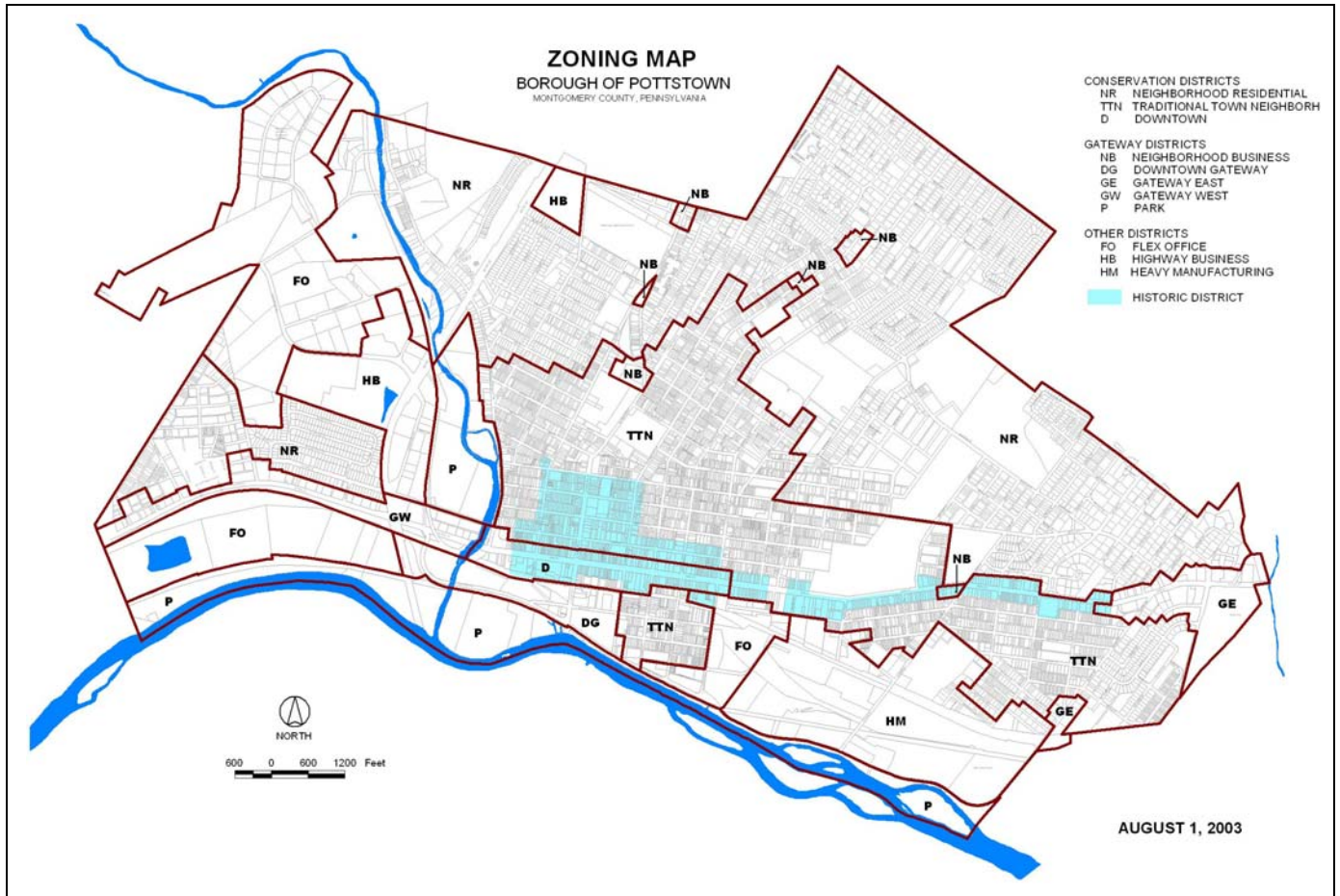
# Pottstown Historic Districts Maintenance and Renovation Guidelines



## Historic Districts established to protect Pottstown's assets

Pottstown Council has established two historic districts to protect the Borough's oldest and most historic buildings. A Historic Architectural Review Board appointed by Pottstown Council ensures that any change to the exterior of a building in the districts is compatible with its historic appearance. This reinforces the districts' historic character and maintains property values. The Review Board also regulates the design of new structures in the districts, including buildings, fences, signs, and sheds. The districts encompass these areas:

### Pottstown's Historic Districts:



### List of properties within Pottstown's Historic Districts

Range of addresses	Street	Range of addresses	Street
414 through 456	Apple Street	00 through 28	S. Hanover Street
216 through 272	Beech Street	16 through 602	High Street north side
00 through 180	N. Charlotte Street	642 through 1314	High Street north side
00 through 28	S. Charlotte Street	29 through 559	High Street south side
148 through 307	Chestnut Street	631 through 1239	High Street south side
00 through 16	N. Evans Street	1319 through 1333	High Street south side
00 through 23	S. Evans Street	17 through 455	King Street
00 through 62	N. Franklin Street	150 through 312	Walnut Street
00 through 26	S. Franklin Street	00 through 19	N. Washington Street
00 through 175	N. Hanover Street	00 through 26	S. Washington Street
		15 through 63	N. York Street

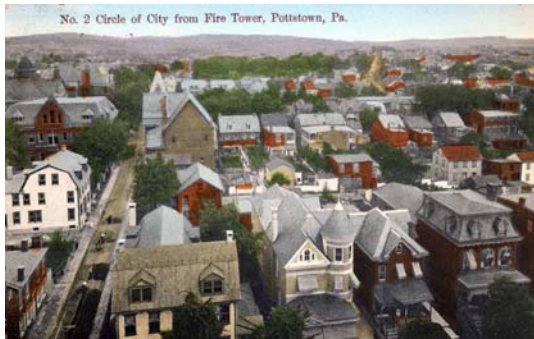
## Historic Districts protect neighborhoods and property values

Over a period of 250 years, Pottstown has evolved into one of the loveliest, most historic, and most livable small towns in Pennsylvania. Located in a densely populated region with millions of people, Pottstown provides a niche market among potential residents and businesses who value traditional towns.

Pottstown is nearly fully built out. Less than five percent of Pottstown's land area is vacant and suitable for building. Therefore, most future development in Pottstown will involve the renovation of existing buildings and the construction of occasional new buildings on small lots interspersed with existing development. Changes in the appearance of existing buildings and construction on "infill" lots have a powerful impact on the established character and economic well-being of Pottstown.

Numerous studies have recommended that Pottstown's future lies in retaining its architectural heritage. For example, a study by the Urban Land Institute noted:

"For its size, Pottstown contains some of the oldest, most architecturally significant, charming housing stock in the Northeast. Preserving it is not only vital to Pottstown's long-term future, but could very well serve as a major tool for marketing the community."



*Two early 20<sup>th</sup> century views of Pottstown*

## Applications for repairs or renovations in Historic Districts

You will need a building permit before doing any work to the exterior of any building, including sheds and outbuildings, and before erecting any new structure, including fences and signs.

First, fill out a building permit form included with this booklet and submit it to Pottstown's Code Enforcement Office on the second floor of Borough Hall, 100 East High Street (Phone 610.970.6520). The office staff will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

### Approval by the Code Officer:

In some cases, the Code Officer may be able to approve your permit without first submitting it to Pottstown's Historic Architectural Review Board. This is most likely for repairs and new accessory structures, such as fences, that clearly meet the guidelines in this booklet. We hope to make the application and approval process as simple and quick as possible.

### Historic Architectural Review Board:

If there is any question about your proposed work, or if you propose substantial exterior renovations or new construction, your application will be submitted to the Historic Architectural Review Board. The Board meets 7 p.m. Tuesday the last week of each month on the third floor of Borough Hall. After reviewing your application, the Review Board will either recommend approval to Pottstown Council, suggest alternatives, or recommend denial to Pottstown Council. Council meets about two weeks after the Historic Architectural Review Board and will act on the Board's recommendations at that time.

## You will need a certificate in the following cases:

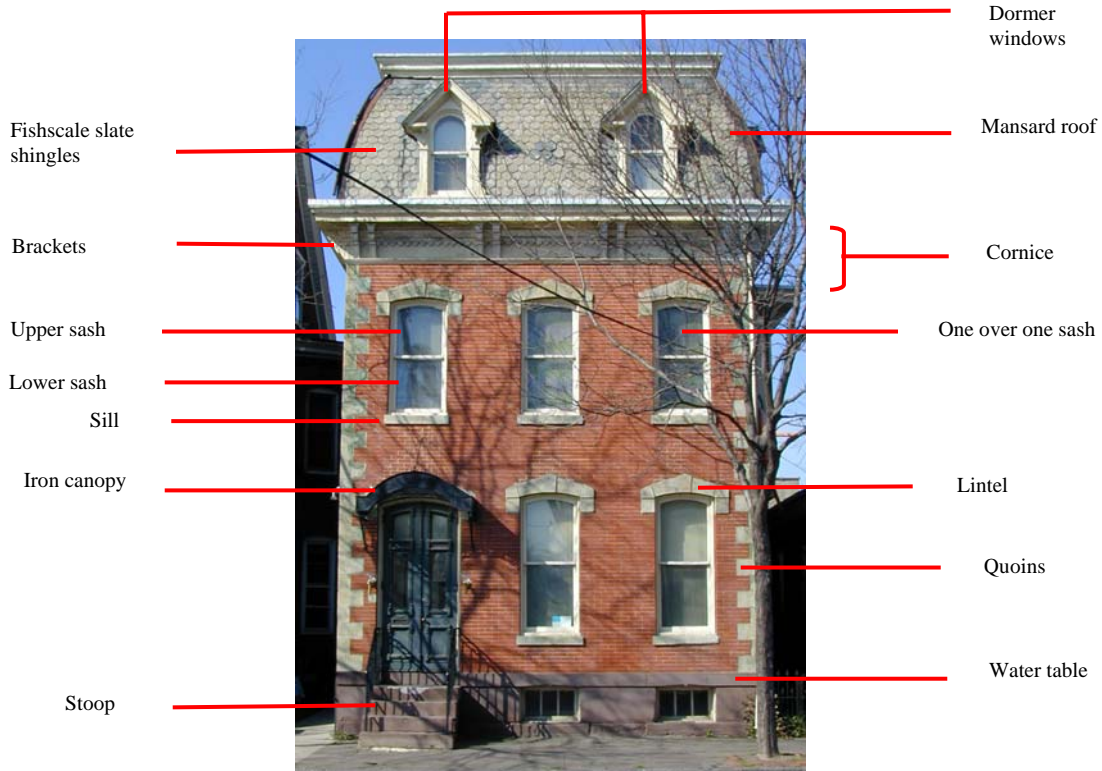
- 1. Windows**
  1. Installing replacement windows
  2. Adding or removing a window, or blocking in a window
  3. Reducing or enlarging any window opening or altering its shape
  4. Installing storm windows, unless they are exactly the same size as the window they are intended to cover
  5. Removing, capping, or changing any trim around a window
  6. Adding shutters
  7. Installing awnings
  8. Installing security bars or grills
  
- 2. Doors**
  1. Replacing doors
  2. Replacing door panels
  3. Removing or changing any trim around a door
  4. Reducing or enlarging any door opening or altering its shape
  5. Installing security bars or grills
  6. Removing or changing glass in a door
  
- 3. Roofs, Gutters, and Cornices**
  1. Installing roof hatches, decks, or skylights
  2. Altering or removing dormers, dormer windows, chimneys, dentals, flashing, or other roof elements
  3. Replacing roofing material
  4. Replacing surfaces or decorative elements of cornices
  5. Making major repairs to cornice
  6. Installing, removing, or changing gutters and downspouts
  
- 4. Fences, gates, sheds, stairs and stoops**
  1. Installing new fences, gates, stairs or stoops or altering existing ones
  2. Installing new sheds or altering existing sheds if they can be seen from the street
  
- 5. Porches**
  1. Replacing or altering balusters
  2. Replacing or altering columns
  3. Enclosing porches
  4. Altering or covering porch floors or roofs
  5. Replacing, removing, or changing railings.
  
- 6. Exterior walls**
  1. Making major repairs to walls of brick, stucco, or siding
  2. Installing new siding or stucco
  3. Installing air conditioners in walls
  4. Power cleaning masonry (including using chemicals or sandblasting)
  
- 7. All Signs**
  
- 8. All Storefronts**
  
- 9. All Additions and New Construction**

# Regulated work

## Historic Districts seek to retain original style of architecture

Pottstown encourages property owners to rehabilitate existing historic buildings rather than redesign them. In nearly all cases, the best design is the building's original design.

**Background:** The following illustration demonstrates many of the details that define the characteristics of Pottstown buildings and give them their unique "personality." The most important part of any building is its "façade," the front of the building facing the street.



### Design Guideline:

For existing buildings: Pottstown encourages property owners, whenever possible, to **retain and repair** original architectural features such as cornices, lintels, windows and doors. If these features cannot be repaired, they should be replaced with **original materials known as "in-kind"** – wood for wood, for example. If this is not feasible, they should be replaced with features that are similar in size, scale and appearance to the original. The façade is the most important part of the building to conserve in its original form.

For new buildings: New buildings should be compatible in design with existing historic buildings in the historic districts.

## Windows

**Background:** Windows are an integral part of buildings in Pottstown’s Historic Districts. Their style, size and shape determine the building’s personality and appearance. Because Pottstown’s historic homes were constructed in the days before air conditioning (and in some cases, electric lights), they were made large to allow maximum light and air flow.

Property owners should attempt to save an existing sash if at all possible. Even a sash that is loose or broken can be fixed inexpensively and reinforced. Thin metal or plastic channels in the jambs can help weatherstrip original wooden windows and make it possible to open and shut them without window weights. Storm windows with old windows are nearly as energy-efficient as replacement windows.

Window frames should also be retained. A rotted window sill can be repaired with modern wood fillers or even replaced with a new wood sill at less cost than a whole new frame. The trim around a window should be preserved. Aluminum siding contractors often “cap” window frames and remove or cover over decorative features. Such practices destroy the beauty of the windows.

If replacement windows are absolutely necessary, they should match the style and size of the original windows.



**MAINTAIN**

*This window needs to be maintained, not replaced*



**NO**

*This dormer window once looked like the one at left. To accommodate a standard storm window, the opening was boxed in, detracting from the appearance of the window.*



**REPAIR**

*This window needs to be repaired and painted, not replaced*



**NO**

*This window once looked like the one at left. To accommodate a standard storm window, the opening was boxed in, detracting from the appearance of the window*



**NO**

*The window at left has been ruined by stuccoing in the opening. The window at right is still functional. The window at left could have been closed in from the inside and its panes painted black to match the functional window.*

**YES**



**YES**

*This window was closed in from the inside. The window itself was retained, and the panes painted black.*



**NO**

*A brick building is covered with aluminum siding and the trim around the window has been removed.*



**YES**

*These replacement windows are manufactured to look as similar as possible to the original windows.*



**YES**

*This dormer window has retained its original appearance because the storm window has been placed on the inside of the window.*



**NO**

*If a replacement window is needed, it should fit the opening.*

## Shutters



**YES**

*The shutters on this building are appropriately sized for the windows. If the shutters were closed, they would fit the window opening exactly.*



**NO**

*Historically, shutters were always functional. These decorative shutters clearly are not.*



**NO**

*This shutter is too big for the window.*

## Doors

**Background:** Doorways define the character of homes in Pottstown's Historic Districts. They were carefully designed to be part of the whole façade, and any change from the original is apt to be for the worse. The best front door is the original front door or one that looks like it.

Old doors should never be discarded because they are drafty or leaky. Old doors are made of wood and are usually more than an inch thick, making them excellent insulators provided they are weathertight. For a few dollars, property owners can purchase weatherstripping kits that will provide a tight seal. Fabricating and installing pieces of wood to compensate for any warping is still less expensive than purchasing a new door, which will need to be adjusted to fit into the old frame. New doors, if necessary, should be compatible with the original style of the building.



**YES**

*The best door is almost always the original door.*



**NO**

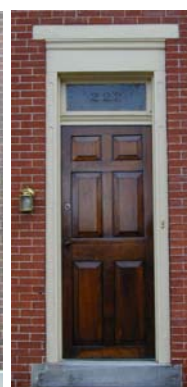
*The modern replacement door, at left, is not compatible with the original door, at right, and detracts from the appearance of the building.*

**YES**



**NO**

*The tops of the original double doors were cut off and fixed in place so a new standard-sized door could be installed. Not appropriate.*



**YES**

*This new door was custom-made of cherry to fit the original opening and the style of the building.*



**NO**

*Aluminum siding has been used to fill in the opening where the original door and transom used to be.*

## Roofs

**Background:** Unlike today's roofs, which last 15 to 25 years, original Pottstown roofs could last 100 years or more with regular maintenance. Slate from a quarry near Pottstown was used for all mansard roofs and most high-pitched roofs. Many original and replacement slate roofs are still serviceable. If you have a slate roof, you can extend its life with frequent inspections and diligent repair. Slate is still the longest-lasting roof material, although it is quite expensive. Imitation slate shingles are also available.

If these options are too expensive, the next best choice is asphalt shingles designed to look as much as possible as slate. Always use dark colors to suggest the original slate. Dark colors also contrast better with the sky and provide a more pleasing appearance.

The second most common roof in Pottstown's Historic Districts, primarily on low-pitched roofs, is tin. Other standing seam metal roofs can give the appearance of tin.

For flat roofs, which cannot be seen from the street, rubber roofing or rolled roofing is most commonly used. Roofs that cannot be seen from the street need not meet Historic District guidelines.

**Mansard roofs:** When the original slate wore out on mansard roofs, decorative painted wooden shingles were often used as a replacement. Their continued use is encouraged in Pottstown's Historic Districts.



**YES**

*Slate is the best and most common covering for mansard roofs*



**YES**

*Painted wooden shingles are a good substitute for slate on mansard and turret roofs*



**YES**

*Decorative asphalt shingles on the gabled roof, foreground, are used to try to match the original slate on the turret, background*



**YES**

*A typical historic house with slate roof.*



**YES**

*Decorative asphalt shingle attempts to imitate slate.*



**YES**

*New slate are used to repair an old slate roof*



## Roofs (continued)



**YES**

*Dark-colored asphalt shingles provide the same general appearance as slate.*



**NO**

*Light colored asphalt shingles are not compatible with historic buildings.*

**YES**  
*A standing seam metal roof is a common historic roofing*



**YES**  
*A new standing seam metal roof is similar to original metal roofs.*



## Cornices

**Background:** Cornices cover the area where the wall of a building meets the roof. They are often richly decorated with brackets and other ornamentation. They often serve as gutters to direct rainwater to downspouts. They are essential features to Pottstown's historic buildings and should not be removed, replaced, or covered over with siding. If a cornice is so deteriorated that it must be replaced, and so ornamental that it would be prohibitively expensive to replace it, a new cornice should imitate the same scale and form of the original.



Cornice

Cornice

**YES**

*These cornices have lasted more than 125 years through regular maintenance and repair. Both cornices have had deteriorated boards replaced and painted to match the original.*



**YES**

*These cornices have been preserved*



**No**

*The cornices on the house and porch have been removed and replaced with stock aluminum, degrading the appearance of the building.*

## Fences and Walls

**Background:** Fences and walls are another integral part of Pottstown neighborhoods. Traditionally, fences in front yards have been short enough so people could easily talk over them. They have been made of wood, wrought iron, or brick. In areas where buildings have been built up against the sidewalk, however, fences have formed part of the street edge and sometimes are as high as six feet.



*This wooden picket fence separates the side and front yard from the sidewalk, yet remains compatible with other front and side yards on the block without fences.*



*Wrought iron is the most typical material used for front yard fences in Pottstown.*



*Where buildings are placed up against the sidewalk, fences and walls can be higher.*

**Design guideline:** One type of fence shall be used from the choices listed below:

Location	Maximum height	Materials
Front yard	4 feet	Brick
Side yard adjacent to a street (alleys excluded)	4 feet	Ornamental iron
Rear yard adjacent to a street (alleys excluded)		Ornamental aluminum or steel designed to look like iron
		Stone
		Wood in the form of a picket fence
		Vinyl designed to look like wood in the form of a picket fence
		Vinyl designed to look like iron
Front or side yard of a building that abuts sidewalk	6 feet	Brick
		Ornamental iron
		Ornamental aluminum or steel designed to look like iron
		Stone
		Wood
		Vinyl designed to look like wood or iron
		Stucco over concrete block, capped with brick or stone
Interior side yard	6 feet	Any common fence material
Rear yard		