

CHAPTER 8

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR ADDITIONS AND ADAPTIVE REUSE



8.1 INTRODUCTION

When adapting an historic building or structure to a new use, all of the other standards and guidelines for the treatment of historic properties continue to apply. This chapter focuses on the procedures and methods that should be considered before adapting a building to a new use, such as converting a property from residential to commercial, as well as new additions. Changing the use of a building may have other consequences and trigger compliance with other building, health and safety codes, which could affect the historic character of a property.

For example, changing a residential property to a commercial use may require fire separations in order to preserve the property's historic character. In a similar manner, complying with accessibility laws may require modifications to buildings.

However, if the building is designated an historic property, the State Historic Building Code may apply and provide some flexibility in design standards. In either case, a design solution should be sought that minimizes the loss of historic building fabric and attempts to avoid altering the historic character of the property.

When adapting an historic building to a new use consider:

- maintaining the overall residential character of the property.
- preserving the key architectural features of the building as well as historic landscape and site design elements.
- seeking a use that is compatible with the historic character of the property. A use that is closely related to the original use is preferred.
- preserving the existing and/or historic character of a front yard.
- preserving and/or rehabilitating historic fabric, such as siding and ornamental details.
- design accessibility improvements in a manner that will preserve the historic character of the property, if commercial use is desired.

8.2 ADDITIONS

This chapter presents design policies and guidelines for the treatment of new additions to historic properties. Constructing additions is part of the design tradition of Grass Valley, even from its earliest history. Historically, as households expanded, additions were placed on existing properties, such as bedrooms, bathrooms, and kitchens. Some of the residential homes in Grass Valley were converted to boarding houses to address the shortage of housing for miners and their families. In later years, popular architectural styles influenced remodeling and new additions on many of the city's residential and commercial properties.



Older additions often used design elements and materials that were similar to the original building, although after 1900 new building materials, particularly windows and siding, varied markedly from 19th century architectural styles. In well thought out additions, the height of the addition was usually positioned below the primary building and it was often located to the side or rear, in such a way that the main, or public or street-facing façade, remained predominate. In some cases, an owner simply added a bay window to the front or a dormer to an existing roof, creating more usable living space without increasing the footprint of the structure. Dormer roof additions can be seen throughout many of Grass Valley's residential homes. What makes a dormer addition sympathetic is its roof shape, scale, and siding, and window fenestration that mirrors the main or original building. Greater flexibility in designing an addition is available to properties that received a Priority 3 or 4 rating score.

8.2.1 Existing Additions

An early addition to a building may be evidence of the history of the structure and its occupants. An older addition may, through the passage of time, have developed significance in its own right. Generally, older addition or additions that occurred during the building's defined period of significance, should be preserved. Poorly designed additions, or those that detract from the building's historic integrity of design, should be considered for removal or restoration.



For example, a sun porch may have been added to the original building, as was the case in the photograph to the left. In this situation the design and fabric of the sun porch detracts from the architectural elements and form that clearly identifies this structure as a Queen Anne home. While it is not inherent that these types of additions be removed, there may be modest solutions to embellish or restore older additions to a more sympathetic

design that will ultimately enhance the value of a historic property.

8.2.2 New Additions

When planning an addition, the effect it will have on the historic building should be considered. The new work should be recognized as a product of its own time and yet it should be visually compatible with the original, and the loss of the historic fabric should be minimized. A design for a new addition that would create an appearance inconsistent with the historic character of the building is inappropriate.



Note the gable room addition to the left of the main residence, whose placement and scale do not diminish the architectural character of the original main residence.

Recommendations:

- (1) A new addition should be designed such that it will not obscure, alter or destroy the character of the original building. An addition that seeks to imply an earlier or later period than that of the building is inappropriate. An addition that conveys an inaccurate variation on the historic style is inappropriate. For example, introducing more modest Craftsman details to an ornate Victorian is inappropriate.
- (2) An addition should not obscure or damage character- defining features (such as windows, doors, porches, brackets or roof lines). An addition should be designed such that it will not obscure, alter or destroy the character of the original building. An addition should be visually subordinate to the main building form. This is especially important for buildings rated Priority 1 and 2.
- (3) An addition should respect the proportions, massing and siting of the historic building.
- (3) The form and detailing of an addition should be compatible with the historic building. Simpler details on an addition can help distinguish it from the original structure.
- (4) An addition should be set back from the primary facade in order to allow the original proportions, form and overall character of the historic building to remain prominent.
- (5) If an addition is proposed to be taller than the main building, it should be set back substantially from primary character- defining facades.
- (6) A small connector linking the historic building and the addition may be considered.
- (7) A substantial addition should be distinguishable from the historic building so it can be understood as a more recent change. This can be accomplished with an offset or jog in the wall planes, or by using a corner board to define the connection, a subtle change in material, or a subtle differentiation between historic and more current styles.

(8) The materials of an addition should be compatible with those of the primary structure. Matching the historic material is an appropriate approach, although new materials may also be considered.

(9) Windows in an addition that are visible from the public way should be compatible with those of the historic structure.

8.2.3 Roof, Dormer, and Balcony Additions

Dormers were frequently adapted to homes in Grass Valley. A roof or dormer addition should be designed in a manner that minimizes damage to historic building fabric, does not alter the historic character of the building as seen from the public view or street, and is in keeping with the original structure.





Greater flexibility may be considered for buildings rated Priority 3 and 4. A new dormer (lower photograph) or balcony (upper photograph) should be constructed in a manner similar to those seen historically within the adjacent block or District Character Area.



Recommendations:

- (1) A roof addition should be in character with the style of the primary structure. The size of a roof addition, including dormers, should be kept to a minimum and should be set back from the primary facade so that the original roof line and form is identifiable from the street.
- (2) Gabled dormers are appropriate for most architectural styles, and hipped dormers may be appropriate for some architectural styles. A new dormer should remain subordinate to the historic roof in size and character. A new dormer should be lower than the primary ridge line and set in from the eave.

8.3 SOLAR PANELS OR SKYLIGHTS

Over the past decade the need and the desire to install solar or green energy components on residential properties has grown. While solar systems may not have the same benefits for every community, the need to conserve energy is a high priority for consumers and government agencies.

To meet the demand for green energy, California enacted the 1978 Solar Rights Act. [Government Code Section 65850.5](#) (a) states that:

it is the intent of the Legislature that local ordinances not adopt ordinances that create unreasonable barriers to the installation of solar energy systems, including, but not limited to, design review for aesthetic purposes, and not unreasonably restrict the ability of homeowners and agricultural and business concerns to install solar energy systems. Review of the application to install a solar energy system shall be limited to the building official's review of whether it meets all health and safety requirements of local, state and federal law. If the building official has a good faith belief that the solar energy system could have a specific, adverse impact upon the public's health and safety, the applicant may be required to apply for a use permit. Application for a use permit may not be denied unless a written finding is made based upon substantial evidence in the record that that the proposed installation would have a specific, adverse impact upon the public health and safety, and there is no feasible method to satisfactorily mitigate or avoid the specific, adverse

impact. These findings shall include the basis for the rejection of potential feasible alternatives of preventing the adverse impact.

The State Historic Preservation Office describes the applicability of the Act as it relates to historic properties as follows:

Although Government Code 65850.5 states that an application for solar energy systems cannot be denied for other than health or safety reasons, the Act in its entirety, taking into consideration the Reasonableness Standard of Civil Code Section 714, does not appear to prohibit review or reasonable restrictions in the interest of historic preservation or preserving the integrity of historic resources during the appropriate permit reviewing process. Historic preservation commissions should assert their authority to participate in the review of solar energy systems on historic resources. Their review should be timely, even expedited, so as to not delay the permit process. Any recommendations to minimize damage to character-defining features or the integrity of the resource shall comply with the reasonableness limitations imposed by Civil Code Section 714. The review itself should be based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards or locally adopted standards. Preservationists, building officials, historic preservation commissions and homeowners would do well to focus on the language in Civil Code Section 714 that allows for an alternative system of comparable cost, efficiency and energy conservation benefits (Office of Historic Preservation - *Solar Rights Act*, 2009.)

Taking into account recent legislation regarding solar installations on historic properties, the application of materials, such as solar panels or skylights, which will adversely alter the original roof line and/or physical character of designated historic buildings or structures and within designated historic districts, is discouraged. Owners of historic properties should explore alternative means of adding light or conserving energy before considering the use of installation of skylights and solar systems.

Where owners apply to install skylights or solar systems to the structure, the Commission will evaluate each application on its merits.

Generally, utilitarian roof accessories will be reviewed by the staff and given administrative approval. Where the proposed installation will have a significant impact on the roof line or other feature of the structure, such as the installation of large turbine vents or other obtrusive accessories, the proposal will be referred to the Commission.



Solar panels installed properly on a historic property. Note the separation between the rear of the home and the solar panels affixed to structural columns.

Recommendations:

- (1) Attached solar panels or solar systems away from the buildings or structures.
- (2) Avoid damaging significant historic fabric when adapting solar systems to historic buildings.

- (3) Make sure the intended purpose of the installation will provide the desired outcome when selecting solar systems.
- (4) Explore other alternative means for introducing natural light to the structure's interior and/or conserving heat energy before adding solar systems to buildings or structures.
- (5) Avoid having skylights and/or solar system visible from public streets and adjoining properties.
- (6) Design skylights and/or solar systems so they are compatibility with the historic buildings roof line, color, texture, and shape.