

BALTIMORE CITY'S  
MOUNT VERNON  
*Historic District*

**Design Guidelines for New Construction**



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for New Construction were developed by David H.  
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Adopted by The Commission for Historical and  
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## Introduction

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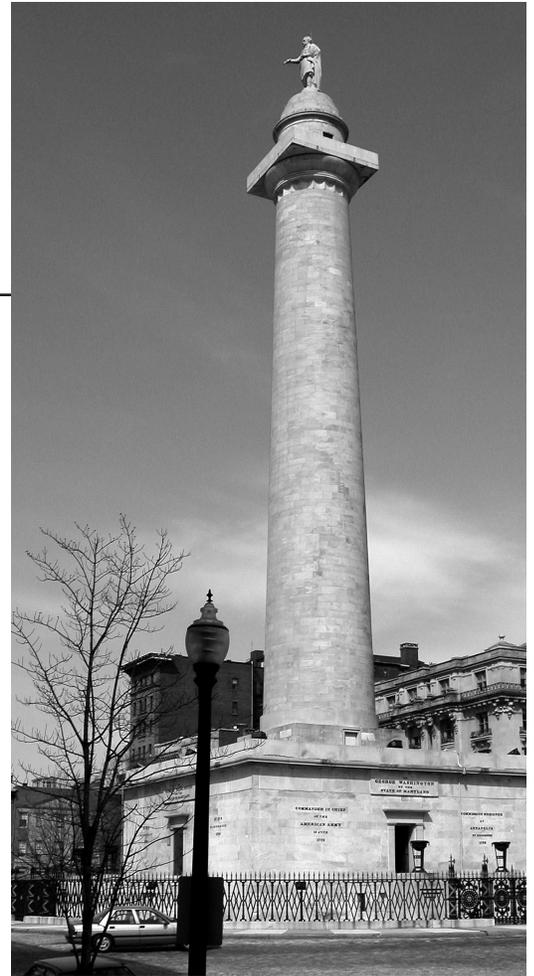
The Design Guidelines for New Construction for Mount Vernon Historic District are intended to assist developers of new buildings and their architects, contractors, and others involved in designing and constructing buildings and structures to create ones that are compatible with the historic character of the area. The Design Guidelines are to be used in conjunction with existing urban renewal plans, building and zoning codes, and other codes and ordinances in effect in the district.

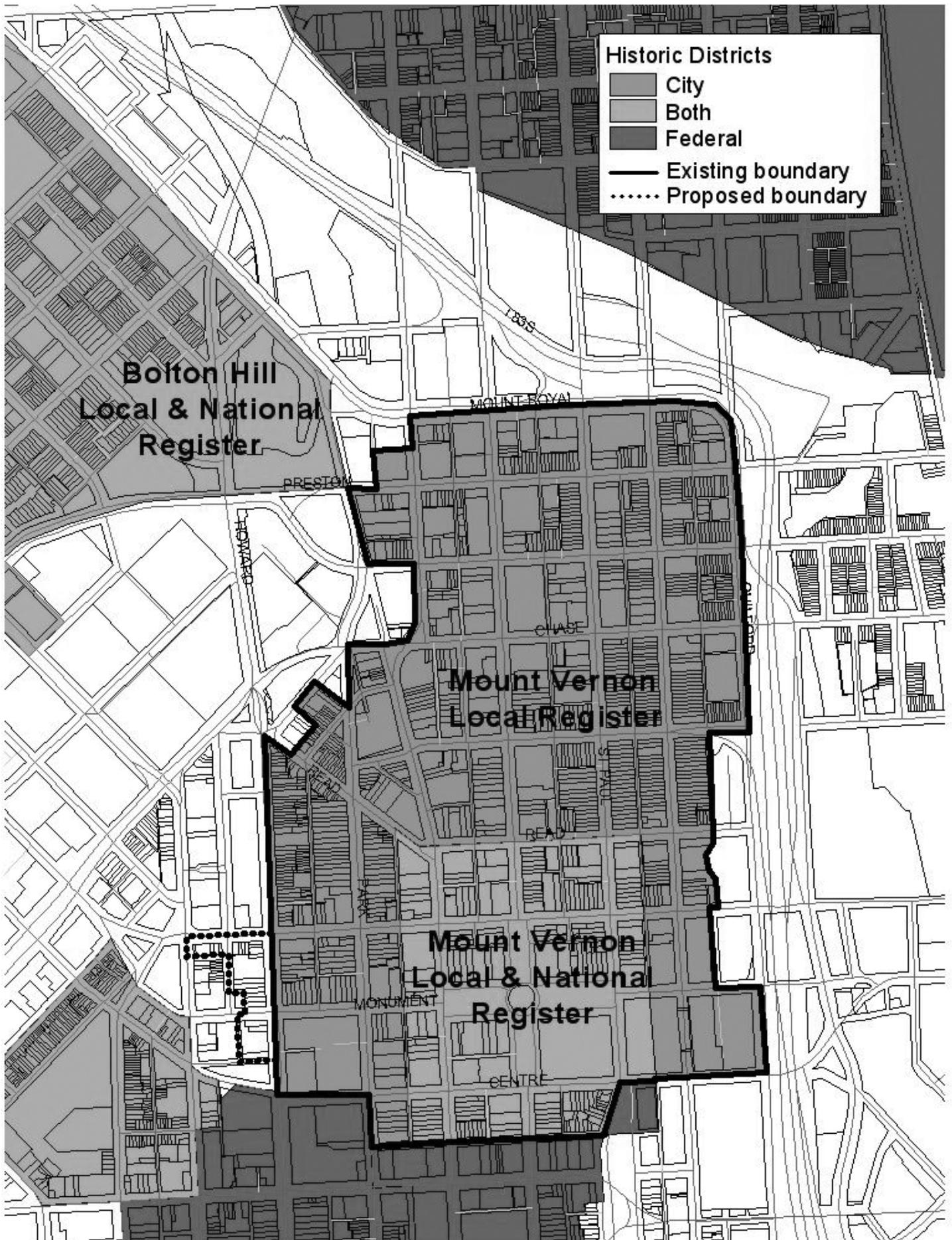
Baltimore City's Mount Vernon Historic District Design Guidelines for New Construction are based on the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*. The *Standards for Rehabilitation* are used to determine if proposed changes to historic buildings are "consistent with the historic character of the structure or district in which it is located." The most prevalent use of the *Standards* is to determine if a rehabilitation project qualifies as a "certified rehabilitation" for tax benefit purposes. The *Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* were developed to provide assistance to property owners, architects and others in applying the *Standards for Rehabilitation*.

The Design Guidelines for New Construction apply to all new buildings and structures within the city's Mount Vernon Historic District, which also encompasses a portion of the Mount Vernon National Register Historic Landmark Historic District. The Washington Monument and surrounding structures of national importance are protected, in part, by the application of these Design Guidelines to all new construction within the Mount Vernon Historic District.

Baltimore City's Mount Vernon Historic District Design Guidelines for New Construction pertain to new buildings and structures of all uses, construction types, materials and sizes. Those approaches, treatments, and techniques that are compatible with the historic character of the district are listed as "Recommended". A few examples of approaches, treatments and techniques that are incompatible with the historic character of the district are listed as "Not Recommended"; while those that are clearly detrimental to the character of the district are listed as "Prohibited".

The Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) uses the Design Guidelines to determine if a proposed design is compatible with the historic character of the district. While CHAP considers all applications on a case by case basis, these Guidelines are applied with consistency to a wide variety of projects. The merits of each project are evaluated to determine if they are consistent with the intent of these Guidelines. If so a "Notice to Proceed" permit is issued. If the project is inconsistent, CHAP will inform the applicant of what areas need attention and review the design again once it has been changed.





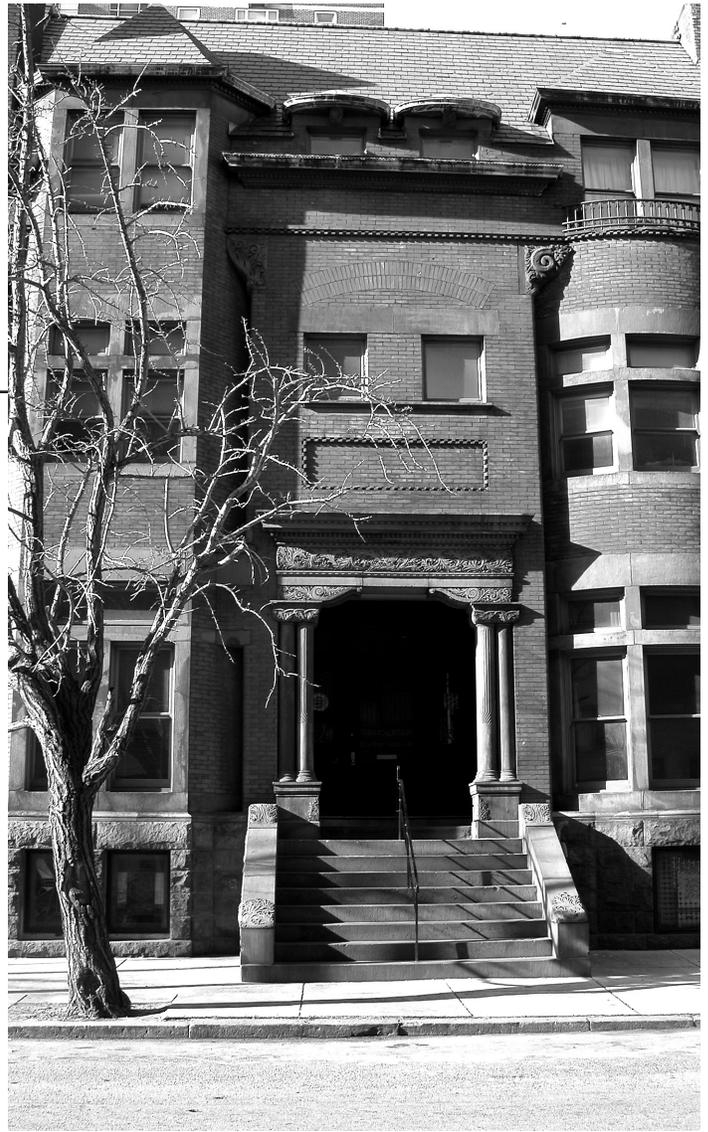
Map 1: Mount Vernon Historic District

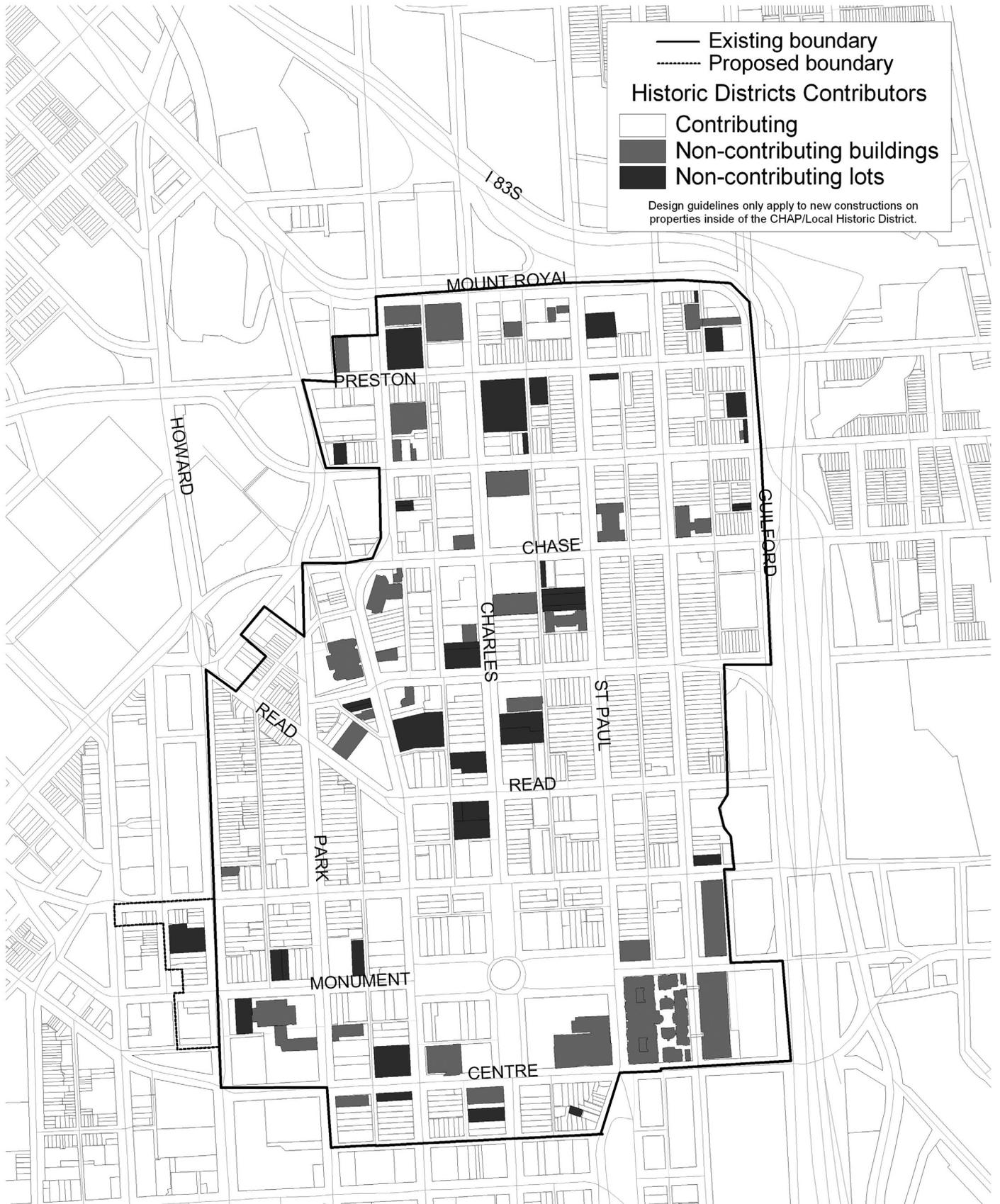
## *Mount Vernon Historic District*

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The Mount Vernon Historic District encompasses some 40 city blocks immediately surrounding and north of Mount Vernon Place. The district's contributing buildings include mansion houses, townhouses, early luxury apartments, office and commercial buildings, and religious, institutional and civic buildings as well as monuments and the open space around the Washington Monument. They are designed in a diversity of styles, including Greek, Gothic and Renaissance Revival, Second Empire, Italianate, Queen Anne, Richardsonian Romanesque to name the most predominant.

The district boasts a rich stock of historic buildings and landmarks. While distinct in many ways, the buildings and structures that define the character of Mount Vernon share a common architectural language. The basis of this language is the tradition of load bearing masonry construction. Whatever their style, the masonry buildings share basic principles of design that give them the remarkable variety yet compatibility seen in the Mount Vernon Historic District. For example, historic masonry structures have cornices, recessed window and door openings, and vertically proportioned windows. Their principal facades almost always have pronounced vertical expressions, reinforced through the use of articulated bases, middles and caps, which are proportional to the overall height of the building.



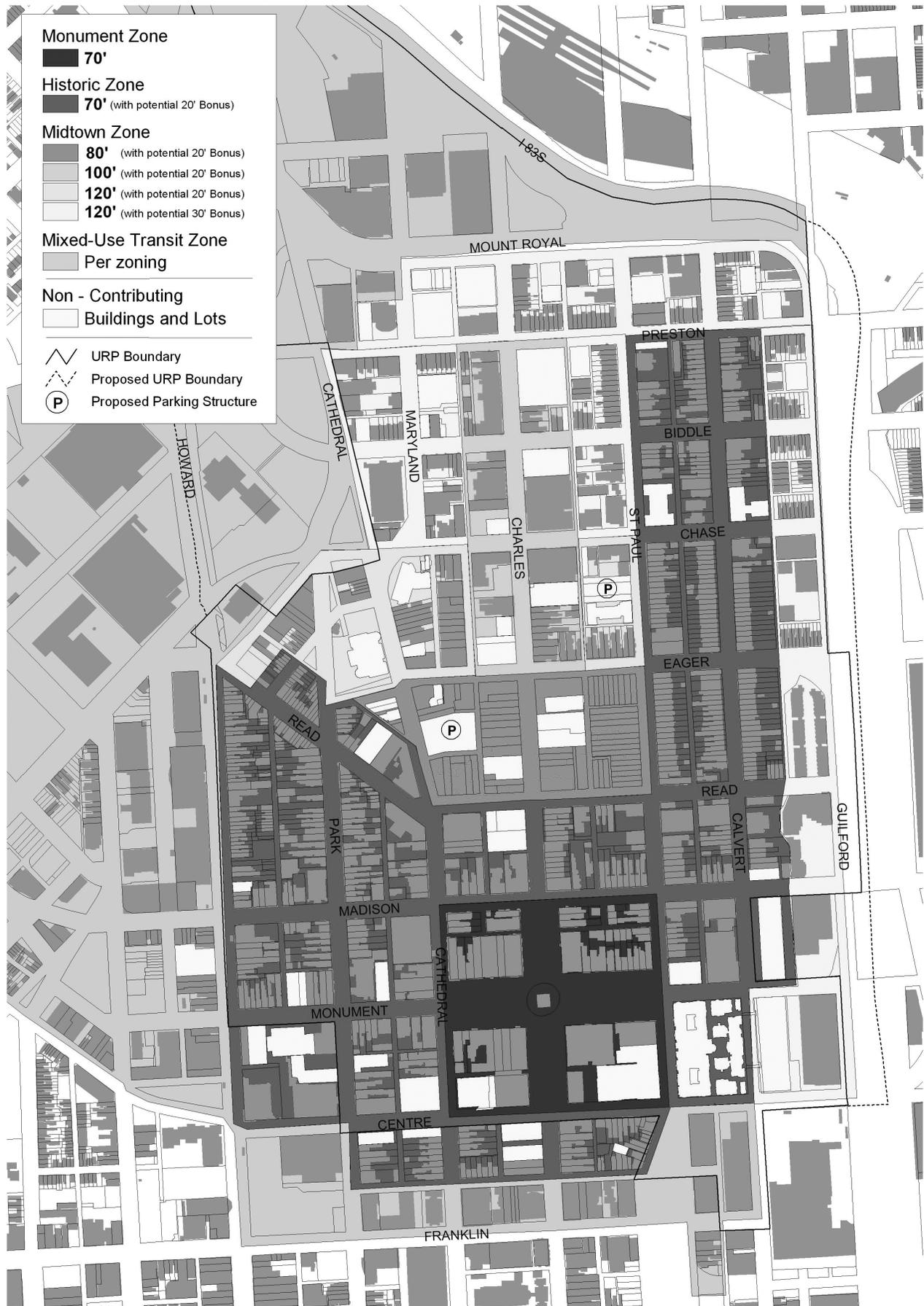


Map 2: Non-Contributing Buildings and Lots

Contributing to the district's character is the pattern of principal and secondary streets, and alleys that run primarily north to south and east to west throughout the historic area. Historically, the primary streets contained large, architecturally imposing buildings, while the secondary streets and alleys contained carriage houses, garages, and other secondary buildings that are equally important to defining the character of the historic district. Public open space in the district is confined primarily to the gardens flanking the Washington Monument. Private open space, with the exception of a few religious and residential buildings, is typically found at the rear of properties. For buildings located at the intersection of two principal streets, a high brick wall almost always screens private open space.

Out of the more than 1,100 buildings in the Mount Vernon Historic District, less than 40 are considered non-contributing. That is, their exterior appearance does not reinforce the overall character created by the contributing buildings, structures and open spaces, striking inharmonious notes in the environment. Equally distracting are vacant lots, most of which are used as surface parking lots.





Map 3: Maximum Height Restrictions.

## *New Construction*

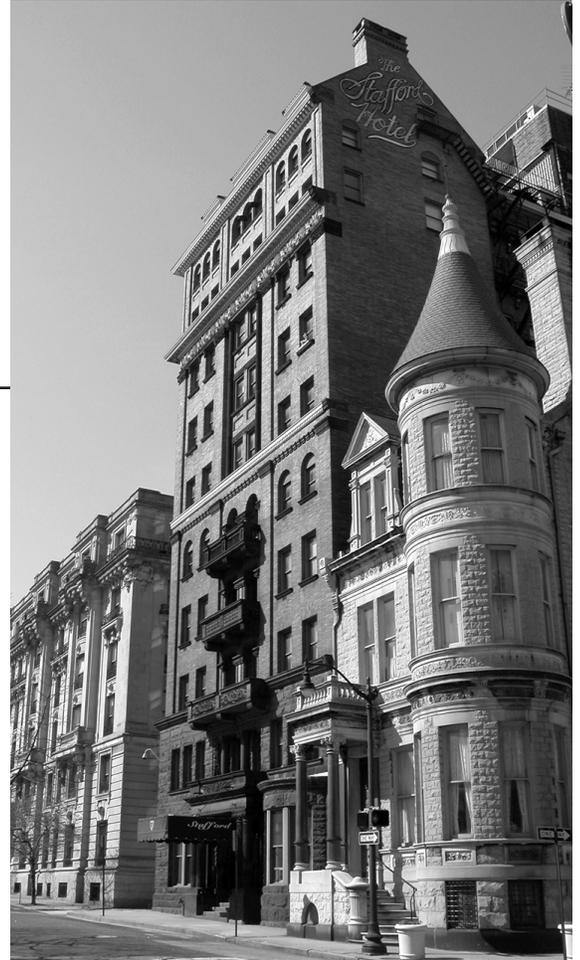
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The Mount Vernon Historic District Design Guidelines must be used for all new construction located within the historic district (See Map 1). New construction is defined as any new building or structure constructed on a vacant lot, or on the site of a non-contributing building (See Map 2). These guidelines are not to be used for additions to contributing and non-contributing buildings and structure. Developers, architects, contractors and others involved in creating additions to existing buildings and structures should consult the City of Baltimore’s “Historic Preservation Guidelines”.

One of the most important aspects of new construction is its height. Map 3: Maximum Height Restrictions shows the maximum height to which new buildings and structures within the Mount Vernon Historic District may be constructed. In addition to the maximum height allowed the principal facade of new construction within the district must be a minimum of 30 feet high. If new construction occurs within a row of townhouses with similar cornice lines, the height of the principal facade should match those of the other buildings within the row.

In addition to complying with these Design Guidelines, all new construction within the Mount Vernon Historic district must comply with the Mount Vernon Urban Renewal Plan and all applicable city, state and federal regulations.





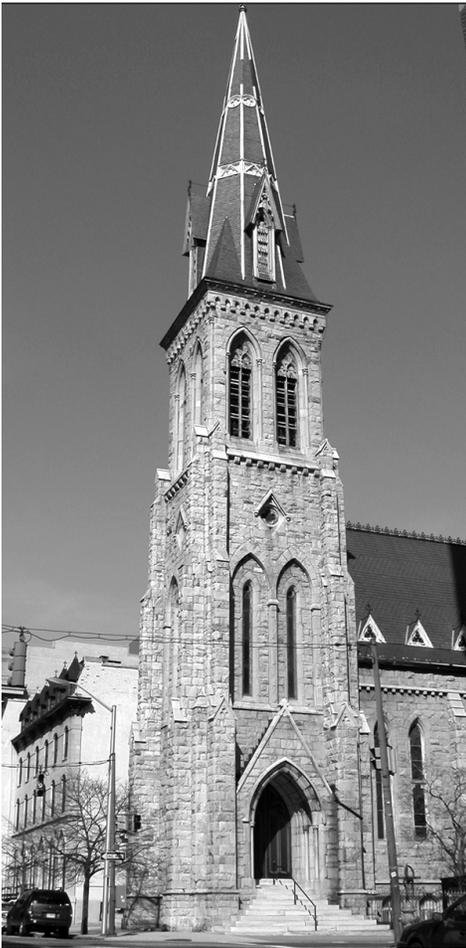
## *Principles of Compatible Design*

The key to designing a new building or structure that enhances an existing environment is its *compatibility* with neighboring buildings and streetscapes. Compatibility is based on an understanding of the character-defining elements of existing buildings, structures, landscapes, streetscapes and other historically and architecturally important features of a district. Typically, this understanding is gained through an analysis of how the design principles discussed below are used in the existing environment; interpreting them to meet the functional requirements of new construction through careful use of massing, scale, proportion, materials and the other principles of good design.

Compatibility does not mean exact duplication. A new building or structure should be seen as a product of its own time. To reproduce an historic building, or to exactly copy a style of the past, will create a false sense of history of the new building and of the Mount Vernon Historic District, and is thus discouraged. Rather a new building or structure should seek to form a link between the district's future and its historic past. In short, a new building or structure should be a good neighbor, adding to, rather than detracting from, the historic architectural character of the district

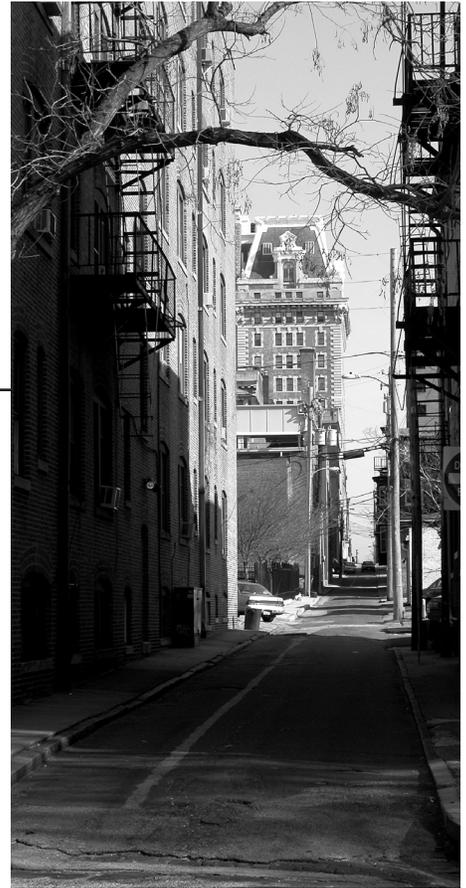
Designing new high-rise buildings within a generally low-rise environment such as Mount Vernon Historic District presents unique challenges. By their sheer size and bulk, high-rise buildings in a three or four story environment can overwhelm their neighbors, drastically





altering the existing environment immediately around the new structure as well as the entire streetscape. Tall buildings that tend to be most compatible are ones that have exterior facades that use the same architectural principles, interpreted in similar ways, as those used to design their smaller, historic neighbors. New designs that are least successful are ones that are based on different principles.

Designing a new building that is compatible with, rather than detracts from, the overall character of the Mount Vernon Historic District, or the specific character of its immediate neighbors, must begin with a detailed analysis of the character-defining features of the existing historic buildings, landscapes and streetscapes. Typically these character-defining features include: setback, orientation, scale, proportion, rhythm, massing, height, materials, color, roof shape, windows, and details and ornamentation of the historic buildings in the immediate vicinity of the new building. In the case of high-rise buildings and structures, it is also important to analyze the character-defining features found on historic tall buildings within view sheds and streetscapes of the new structure.



## A. Setback

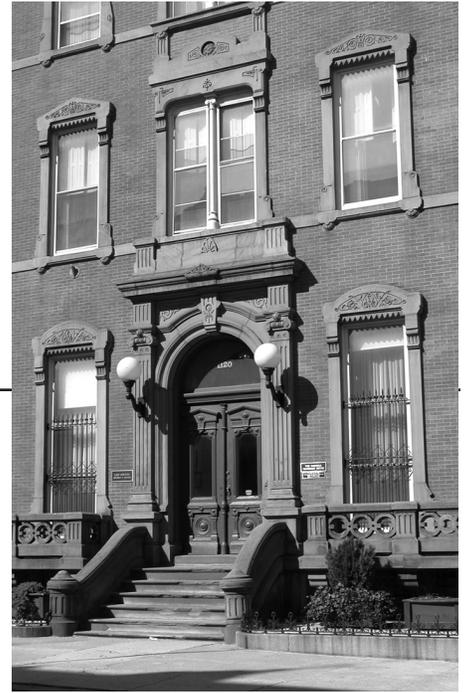
A building's setback is the distance it is located inside the property lines. Most historic buildings in the Mount Vernon Historic District have no (zero) setbacks of facades facing principal streets. Those that do have setbacks tend to have been constructed for public, religious or institutional purposes, or a block of townhouses constructed at the same time.

### **Recommended**

- Designing facades of New Construction located on principal streets that maintain the same setbacks of neighboring historic buildings.
- Designing side and rear facades of New Construction visible from secondary streets and alleys that respect, if possible, existing setbacks of neighboring historic buildings.
- Maintaining existing setbacks on principal streets is particularly important for New Construction located in blocks with rows of townhouses and other historic buildings of party wall construction.

### **Not Recommended**

- Designing facades of New Construction on principal streets that do not maintain the setbacks established by its neighboring historic buildings.



Some historic townhouses are recessed from the front property line allowing small front yards.



Most historic buildings are built to the front property line.

## *B. Orientation*

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A building's orientation to the street is an important character-defining feature. Most historic buildings in the Mount Vernon Historic District squarely face a principal street, with their primary entrance in full view. In rare cases, historic residential buildings have their primary elevation and entry oriented to side yards.

**Recommended**      ○ Orienting New Construction so that it is compatible with its neighboring historic buildings.

**Not Recommended**      ○ Dramatically changing the orientation of New Construction from that of neighboring historic buildings.



Most historic buildings are oriented to the principal street, with exceptions typical being those located at intersections.

## C. Scale

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Scale is the relative or apparent size of a building or structure. Scale is achieved through careful design of building elements, such as bases, caps, windows, doors, cornices, details, ornamentation, and other features, as well as the size and texture of primary wall materials. Most historic buildings in the Mount Vernon Historic District, even historic high-rises, tend to be in scale with their neighbors through careful design. Some of the non-contributing buildings are not in scale with their neighbors and thus are not compatible with the character of their immediate neighbors or of the district as a whole.

- Recommended**
- Relating to the scale of neighboring historic buildings in the design of New Construction.
  - Reinforcing the scale of the historic district when designing New Construction.

- Not Recommended**
- Drastically changing the scale of New Construction from that of neighboring historic buildings.



Similar scale helps to make buildings constructed at different times compatible.

## D. Proportion

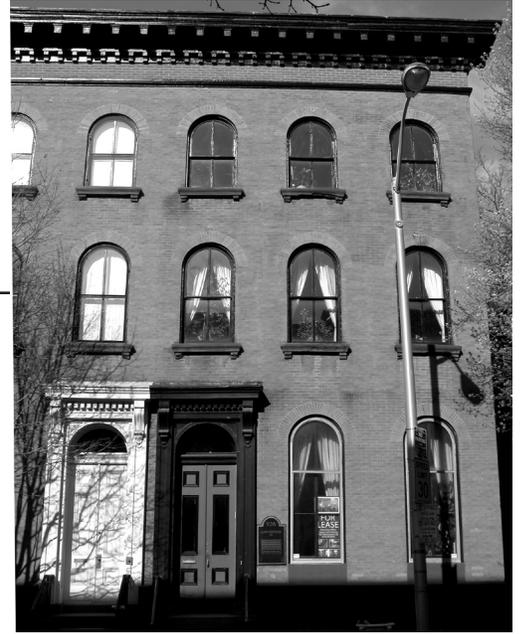
Proportion is the relation of building elements to each other and to the facade of a building or structure as a whole. Often proportions are expressed as mathematical ratios; particularly those based on architectural theories of ancient Greece and Rome or Renaissance Italy. Many of the historic buildings located in the Mount Vernon Historic District use proportional systems to compose facades, and size and locate windows, doors, columns, cornices, details and ornamentation, and other facade elements.

### Recommended

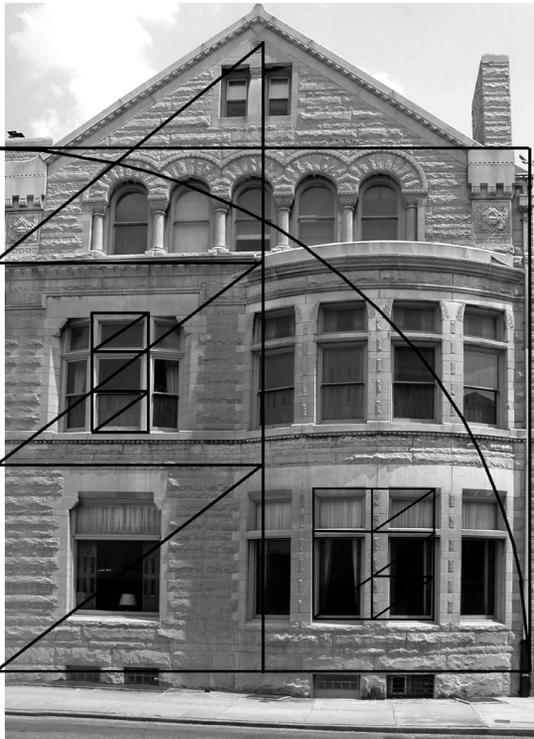
- Designing principal facades of New Construction to be compatible with the proportions used on principal facades of neighboring historic buildings.

### Not Recommended

- Drastically changing the proportion of principal facades of New Construction from those of neighboring historic buildings.



The proportions of windows and doors, and solid wall surfaces are important character-defining features of facades.



Many historic building facades used mathematical ratios to create well-proportioned facades.



The proportion of the base, middle and cap are important character-defining features of high-rise buildings.

## *E. Rhythm*

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The spacing and repetition of facade elements, such as storefronts, entries, windows, doors, belt courses, cornices, and the like give a facade its rhythm. The continuous street fronts of townhouses with their entries, stoops and windows, along with their similar cornice heights, roof shapes, bays, and scale of facade materials, establishes the rhythm of many streetscapes in the Mount Vernon Historic District. Storefronts, entries, upper floor windows, cornices, and other facade elements; establish the rhythm of other streetscapes in the district.

- Recommended**
- Designing principal facades of New Construction to be compatible with the rhythm of neighboring historic buildings and the streetscape.
- Not Recommended**
- Drastically changing the rhythm established by neighboring historic buildings and the streetscape when designing principal facades of New Construction.



The rhythm created by the doors, windows and front stoops of this block is important to defining the character of the streetscape.

## *F. Massing and Composition*

A building's massing and composition are derived from articulation of its facade through the design of doors, windows, storefronts, dormers, towers, bays, porches, stoops, and other projections, as well as the scale and texture of facade materials. In the Mount Vernon Historic District, the principal floor of townhouses and other three and four story party wall buildings is often raised a few steps above the sidewalk on an articulated base containing windows letting light into English basements. The three or four story facade usually contains regularly spaced windows, gradually becoming shorter with each successive story. These buildings are almost always capped by a pronounced cornice or mansard roof with dormers.

Historic high-rise buildings are always composed of an articulated base, usually one or two stories high, a multi-story middle sometimes accentuated with string or belt courses, and a one to three story cap. The height of the base, middle and cap are proportional to the height of the building. Window sizes, surrounds, and sometime shapes, vary with their vertical placement on principal facades.



Historic high-rise buildings were always composed of an articulated base, middle and cap.

### **Recommended**

- Designing a principal facade of New Construction so that it has an articulated base, middle, and cap that are proportional to the overall height of the building.
- Designing principal facades of New Construction so that they are compatible with the massing and composition of neighboring historic buildings.

### **Not Recommended**

- Drastically changing the massing and composition of facades of New Construction visible from principal rights-of-way so that they are incompatible with the massing and composition of the primary facades of neighboring historic buildings.



The massing of some historic townhouses is relatively plain while others have more complex massing.

While some historic high-rise buildings exist, their use of the design principles contained in these Design Guidelines helps make them compatible with the district's three and four story townhouses.



## G. Height

The height of walls, cornices, and rooflines, as well as height of chimneys, towers, and steeples contributes to the overall character of the Mount Vernon Historic District and as well as to that of individual buildings and structures. With a few notable exceptions, historic buildings within the district are typically three or four stories high. Those contributing buildings that are higher are of masonry construction and contain articulated bases, middles, and caps that are proportional to their heights.

The design of a building or structure that will be taller than its historic neighbors poses a particular challenge to its designer to make it compatible. Similarly, designing buildings that are substantially shorter than neighboring historic buildings challenges their designers in making them compatible. (See Map 3 for maximum height restrictions in the Mount Vernon Historic District.)

### **Recommended**

- Reducing the perceived height of high-rise New Construction through careful application of proportion, scale, rhythm, and the other design principles used in historic buildings in the district.
- Designing the principal facade of New Construction, located in a row of townhouses, to match the height of the existing cornice, and roof slope if one exists.

### **Not Recommended**

- Designing New Construction that does not have principal facades composed of an articulated base, middle and cap.

### **Prohibited**

- Designing New Construction that exceeds the maximum height limits.
- Designing principal facades of New Construction that are less than 30 feet high.



The perceived height of New Construction should be reduced through the careful application of proportion, scale, rhythm, materials and other principles of design.

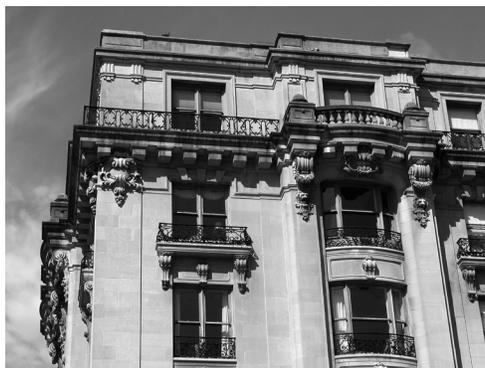
Prominent cornices serve as visual caps to buildings.



## *H. Roofs and Cornices*

Roofs and cornices, along with upper floors of high-rise buildings, serve as visual caps to principal facades of historic buildings in the Mount Vernon Historic District. Sloped roofs exist in a range of shapes, materials, details and ornamentation, with the most prevalent being mansard and gable. Cornices on principal facades of historic buildings in the district tend to be prominent, with restrained to elaborate details and ornamentation. Typically they are made of stone, wood or metal. Some mansard and gable roofs contain dormer windows, and a few contain balconies.

- Recommended**
- Designing roof shapes and cornices for New Construction that are compatible with the roof shapes and cornices of neighboring historic buildings.
- Not Recommended**
- Introducing roof shapes on New Construction that are incompatible with the roof shapes of neighboring historic buildings.
  - Not providing cornices or sloped roofs on New Construction.
  - Not providing articulated cornices on principal facades of New Construction.



Historic buildings sometimes have more than one cornice or use sloped roofs as visual caps.



Towers are sometimes used to accentuate the end of a row of similar townhouses.



## I. Steeples, Chimneys, Towers, and Other Roof Projections

Along with roof shapes and cornices, steeples, chimneys, towers, and other roof projections are important character-defining features of buildings and streetscapes in the Mount Vernon Historic District. Steeples, always located on sanctuaries of religious buildings, provide visual landmarks as well as express the use of the buildings. Chimneys are often prominent features on historic residential buildings in the district, particularly townhouses with sloping roofs. Corner towers are another prominent feature of some corner rowhouses. On non-historic buildings in the district, roof projections may contain elevator penthouses, mechanical equipment, pools, decks, communication equipment and the like.

### **Recommended**

- Designing chimneys, and other roof projections for New Construction that are compatible with the roofscapes of neighboring historic buildings and the streetscape.
- Locating towers on New Construction of three or four stories in height that are located at the corners of principal streets.
- Locating modern roof projections such as elevator and mechanical equipment, pools, decks, communication equipment, and the like so that they are not visible from principal public rights-of-way.
- Designing modern roof projections such as elevator and mechanical equipment, pools, decks, communication equipment, and the like that cannot for functional reasons be located so that they are not visible from principal streets so that they are compatible with neighboring historic buildings and the streetscape.

### **Not Recommended**

- Locating modern roof projections such as elevator and mechanical equipment, pools, decks, communication equipment, and the like so that they are visible from principal public rights-of-way.
- Locating steeples on New Construction except for religious buildings.

### **Prohibited**

- Exceeding the maximum height limitations with steeples, chimneys, towers or other roof projections.



Steeple is often found on religious buildings in the Mount Vernon Historic District.

The texture, size, finish, and other defining characteristics of materials are important to the overall appearance of a building.



## *J. Materials*

Exterior materials used for walls, doors, entries, canopies, storefronts, windows, cornices, sloped roofs, and other elements of historic buildings visible from principal streets contribute significantly to the character of individual buildings and streetscapes in Mount Vernon Historic District. The size, scale, texture, finish, reflectivity, color, and other defining characteristics of exterior materials are as important to defining that character as the type of material used. While there is a range of exterior materials found on historic buildings in the district, the most prominent are stone and brick for walls, wood and glass for windows and storefronts, wood and glass entry doors on commercial buildings, decorative wood doors on residential buildings, metal and wood cornices, and slate sloped roofs with copper flashing. On rear and side facades visible from secondary streets and alleys, stucco and brick are prevalent exterior materials on historic buildings.

### **Recommended**

- Using exterior materials for New Construction visible from principal streets that are compatible with the size, scale, texture, finish, reflectivity, color, and other defining characteristics of exterior materials used on principal facades neighboring historic buildings and the streetscape.

### **Not Recommended**

- Using exterior materials for New Construction visible from principal streets that are incompatible with exterior materials found on neighboring historic buildings and the streetscape.
- Using glass and metal curtain walls, and stucco for facades of New Construction that can be seen from principal streets.

### **Prohibited**

- EIFS (Exterior Insulation Finish System), vinyl, oversized brick, concrete masonry units, and other similar incompatible materials for facades of New Construction that can be seen from principal streets.



Most historic buildings use contrasting materials as part of the overall composition of facades.

Windows of historic buildings are typically recessed two or three inches behind the wall plane. Many have protruding hoods to cast shadows and give depth to facades.



## *K. Shadows and Depth of Facades*

The character of historic buildings in Mount Vernon Historic District is defined in part by the shadows created by projections and recesses, including window and door reveals, moldings, projecting cornices, bays, and other details and ornamentation found on the facades. Facade depth is also created by the texture of exterior wall materials, such as raked mortar joints, rock faced stone, raised terra cotta features or profiles of window sash and frames.

**Recommended** ○ Designing principal facades for New Construction that create shadows and have depth.

**Not Recommended** ○ Designing principal facades for New Construction that are visually flat and are not articulated.



Recessed doors, grilles, handrails, and rough textured materials all cast shadow that given depth to and enliven facades.

Attic windows often have elaborate surrounds.



## L. Windows

Street level facade windows in the Mount Vernon Historic District are almost always made of wood. They may be double or even triple hung, or large casements, sometimes with elaborate surrounds or shallow balconies. Many have divided lights. The heads of street level windows, located on the principal floor or English basement of residential buildings, may be flat or arched. In a few cases, round, oval or octagonal windows are found at street level. Glass used in residential windows may be clear, cut, beveled or even stained, while that used on commercial buildings is almost always clear.

The spacing of upper floor windows, their height and width, materials, and features, along with wall materials, help define the character of historic buildings in the Mount Vernon Historic District. Most historic townhouses, and many historic high-rise buildings, have one-over-one, or two over-two double hung wood windows with articulated jambs, heads and sills. Windows on historic buildings were always taller on the first floor, becoming shorter towards the top. Except for storefronts, windows were always vertical. Attic windows often had elaborate surrounds.

### Recommended

- Designing windows for New Construction that are compatible in location, size, shape, number of lights, materials, and other defining characteristics with the upper floor windows of neighboring historic buildings.
- Recessing window frames in principal facades a minimum of three inches behind the plane of the facade.

### Not Recommended

- Using flat profile frames for upper floor windows of principal facades.



Windows on historic buildings are shorter the higher they are on the facade.



Street level windows on residential buildings are double and even triple hung.

Contrasting colors heighten interest in a facade and are important to defining its character.



## *M. Color*

The color of materials used on the exterior of historic buildings in the Mount Vernon Historic District is also important to defining their character. In some case these colors are derived from unpainted or uncoated materials such as brick, stone, terra cotta, slate, copper, and lead. In other case, such as wood or base metals, the color is applied by painting or staining.

### **Recommended**

- Using exterior colors for New Construction that are compatible with exterior colors of neighboring historic buildings.
- Leaving unpainted materials, such as stone, brick, terra cotta, slate, copper, and lead that are traditionally not painted or coated.

### **Not Recommended**

- Using exterior colors for New Construction that are incompatible with exterior colors on neighboring historic buildings.
- Using more than four applied exterior colors on a facade of New Construction.



Color contrast may be achieved through use of different materials, paint or both.

## *N. Details and Ornamentation*



Some historic buildings in the Mount Vernon Historic District contain elaborate details and ornamentation, while others are relatively plain. Details and ornamentation are found typically on doors, windows, storefronts, entries, bases, walls, caps, cornices, and roofs. New construction should consider the amount, location, and elaborateness of details and ornamentation on neighboring historic buildings in its design. However details and ornamentation used for new construction should not copy exactly that found on historic buildings in the district since buildings should be seen as being of their own time, not copies of the past.

- Recommended**
- Designing details and ornamentation for New Construction that are compatible with neighboring historic buildings.
- Not Recommended**
- Designing New Construction that has few details or ornamentation on its principal facades.
  - Copying exactly details and ornamentation from neighboring historic buildings.

Details and ornamentation give historic buildings a rich character.



Street level facades should reinforce the pedestrian nature of the district.



## O. Street Level Facades

The design of street level facades of New Construction is particularly important in making it compatible with the historic buildings and streetscapes in the Mount Vernon Historic District. A street level facade should be inviting and contribute to the character of the streetscape. It usually contains pedestrian and sometimes vehicular entries. Many contain storefronts with display windows. The most important features of a street level facade are the doors and windows on residential, civic, religious, and institutional buildings, and main entries and storefronts on commercial buildings.

### **Recommended**

- Designing street level facades for New Construction that reinforces the pedestrian nature of the streetscapes in the historic district.
- Designing street level facades for New Construction that has solid/void ratios compatible with those found on street level facades on neighboring historic buildings.
- Designing street level facades for New Construction that maintains the setbacks, scale, proportions, and other character-defining features of neighboring historic buildings.

### **Not Recommended**

- Designing street level facades that are recessed behind the principal facade.

### **Prohibited**

- Designing street level facades of New Construction, located on principal streets, without doors, windows, or storefronts.



Street level facades should maintain the setbacks, scale, proportions, and other character-defining features of neighboring historic buildings.

Doors on residential buildings should be inviting.



## *P. Doors and Main Entries*

Doors and main entries in Mount Vernon Historic District, typically located on the principal facade, are usually designed to symbolically greet a visitor, customer or client. Doors of residential buildings usually have a warm, welcoming appearance. Historically, residential doors were made of wood with raised and/or recessed panels. Many incorporated colored, stained, beveled or even etched glass panels, and transom and fan- or sidelights. Main entries of commercial buildings were historically constructed of wood with a large central glass panel. A transom window, often operable, was typically located above the entry. Main entries of commercial and residential buildings were recessed to provide protection from the weather.

### **Recommended**

- Designing doors and main entries of New Construction that are inviting and reinforce the pedestrian nature of the historic district.
- Designing and locating doors and main entries of New Construction so that they are compatible with the street level facades of neighboring historic buildings and the streetscape.

### **Not Recommended**

- Designing doors and main entries of New Construction that are plain or uninviting in appearance.



Entries should be designed to be compatible with the building's facade and that of neighboring historic buildings.

Storefronts should help attract customers and clients as well as contribute to the character of the streetscape.



## Q. Storefronts

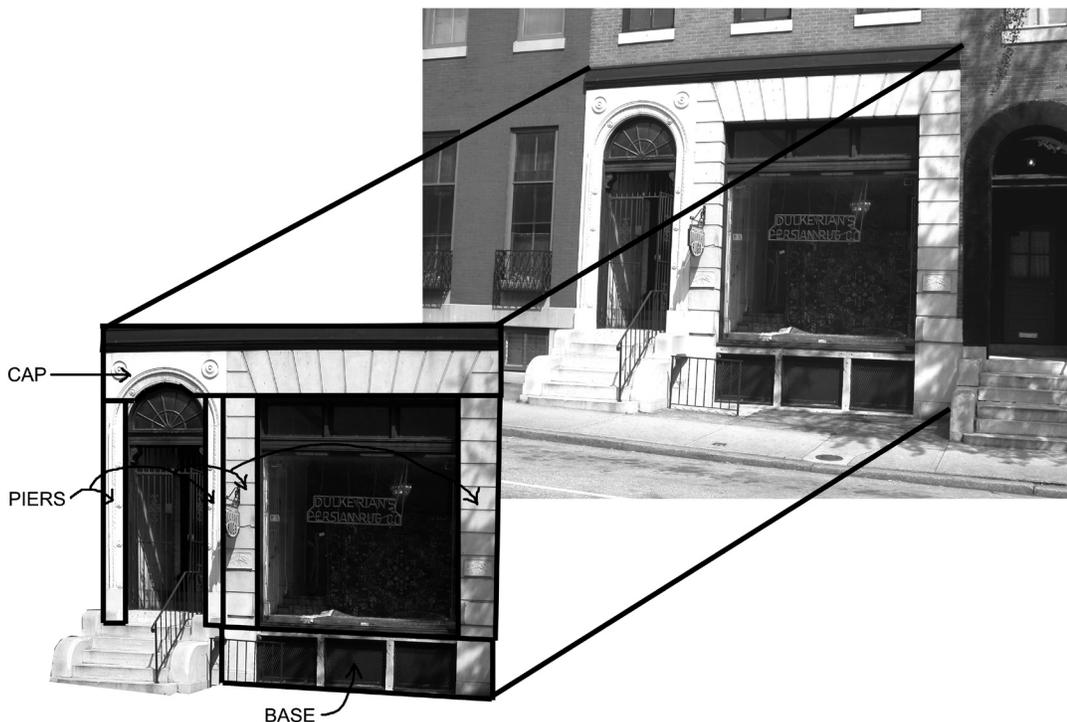
Commercial storefronts are also important contributors to the character of street level facades in the Mount Vernon Historic District. They help attract customers and clients to a business by providing an inviting appearance and allow views into ground floor display areas. Traditional storefronts are composed of a storefront cornice, signboard area, display windows, and enframing elements consisting of storefront piers, base, and cap. In many cases, traditional storefronts were also designed to have transom windows and canvas awnings.

### Recommended

- Designing storefronts for New Construction that are compatible with the street level facades of neighboring historic buildings.
- Designing storefronts for New Construction that have enframing piers, base and caps.

### Not Recommended

- Designing storefronts that are incompatible with the facade of the New Construction in which it is located.



Traditional storefronts consist of enframing elements as well as display and transom windows, piers, and signboard areas.



Well-designed signs are easy to read as well as compatible with the building's facade.



## R. Signs

Business signs are important character-defining elements of commercial buildings in the Mount Vernon Historic District. Well-designed business signs contribute to the appearance of a building as well as attract customers and clients. Business signs that are poorly designed, on the other hand, detract from the appearance of a building as well as the image of a business. Common problems with poorly designed business signs include excessive size, illegible graphics and typeface, poor color selection and improper location.

Building signs are found on a number of historic buildings in Mount Vernon Historic District. They made contain the name of the building, developer, or street address and be made of carved stone, terra cotta or bronze. Sometimes they are located above main entries, other times at the buildings cornice.

### Recommended

- Designing business and building signs, and their illumination, to conform to the Standards for Signs contained in the Mount Vernon Urban Renewal Plan.

### Not Recommended

- Designing business and building signs that are not compatible with the building to which they are attached or with neighboring historic buildings.



Signs should be designed to attract clients and customers.

Significant features of monuments, and public, religious and institutional buildings should be illuminated.



## *S. Illumination of Buildings*

Illuminating important historic buildings and structures in the Mount Vernon Historic District helps to draw attention to their architectural details as well as create a more inviting environment after dark. Historically illumination, except for business signs, was confined to entries of commercial and residential buildings. Significant architectural features on public, religious, and institutional buildings and structures, as well as their entire principal facades, were sometimes illuminated, confirming their importance to the entire community.

### **Recommended**

- Illuminating entries of New Construction designed for commercial or residential uses.
- Illuminating architectural features or entire principal facades of New Construction designed for civic, religious or institutional uses.
- Shielding pedestrians and motorists from glare.
- Using only true color rendition luminaries for all external lighting.

### **Not Recommended**

- Illuminating the entire facades of residential or commercial buildings.
- Using luminaries that do not give true color rendition.



Entries and storefronts of residential and commercial buildings should be illuminated.



## T. Private Open Space

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Except for a few residential and religious structures, existing private open space within the Mount Vernon Historic District is located at the rear of the property. Historic townhouses with front yards traditionally used iron fences to separate the private open space from the sidewalk. In the case of corner buildings, the private open space is usually separated from the public right-of-way by a high wall or fence, providing visual privacy.

### **Recommended**

- Designing private open space in New Construction, except for religious, civic and institutional buildings, so that it is located at the rear of the property and is not visible from principal streets.
- Screening private open space located at the rear of corner properties with walls or fences designed to be compatible with the New Construction and neighboring historic buildings
- Allowing clear visual access to the facade of religious, civic, or institutional New Construction that contains private open space in front of principal facades.

### **Not Recommended**

- Visually screening private open space located in front of principal facades.

### **Prohibited**

- Designing private open spaces in front of New Construction except for those designed entirely for civic, religious, or institutional purposes.



Private open spaces at the rear of a property may be screened or fenced.

## Definitions

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*The following terms, used in this document, are defined here. All other terms use definitions found in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.*

*Contributing Buildings or Historic Buildings.* Buildings that meet one or more of the Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) standards for district designation or otherwise designated as having historical or architectural importance. See Appendix Three for the CHAP Standards for Historic District Designation.

*Neighboring Historic Buildings.* Historic buildings immediately surrounding a New Construction site, including buildings on both sides and across public rights-of-way.

*Non-Contributing Buildings or Non-Historic Buildings.* Buildings that do not meet any of the Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) standards for district designation. See Appendix Two for a list of Non-contributing Buildings and Appendix Three for the CHAP Standards for Historic District Designation.

*Principal Facades.* A facade that face principal streets, typically containing a building's or structure's primary public entry.

*Principal Streets.* Streets that typical contain a minimum of two travel lanes as well as curbside parking.

*Public Right-of-Way.* Public areas of passage, including principal streets, secondary streets and alleys, sidewalks and other public spaces such as plazas and parks.

*Secondary Streets.* Streets that typically contain one travel lane and may or may not have curbside parking.

*View shed.* Views along public rights-of-way, including appearance of buildings, structures, skylines, setbacks, sidewalks, streets, street furniture, and landscaping.



## *Appendix One: Architectural and Historical Significance of the Mount Vernon Historic District [Period of Significance 1810-1945]*

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Prior to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the area now known as Mount Vernon contained a few large estate houses, woods, and farmlands. As the Baltimore grew northward, Federal style row houses began to be constructed. Buildings, such as the unit block of East Hamilton Street (circa 1810), attributed to architect Robert Carey Long, Sr., set the architectural tone as the area developed into an elite neighborhood of residential, commercial, social, and religious buildings. For the next 135 years, the buildings and monuments constructed in area established the character of the Mount Vernon Historic District.

With Mount Vernon Place and the Washington Monument as its centerpiece, the historic district contains buildings designed in a variety of architectural styles. The majority of residential buildings are Federal, Romanesque, Italianate or other Victorian styles ranging from some of the smallest row houses built in Baltimore along Tyson Street to the elaborate Mount Vernon Place brownstones. Along with row houses, individual mansions were built throughout the area during the mid to late nineteenth century, with the construction of mid- to high-rise apartments starting in the 1890s. While taller than row houses and mansions, these buildings complimented the existing houses by the quality of their architecture and use of their design principles, materials, details and ornamentation.

In addition to housing, several prominent churches were built in the neighborhood, primarily on street corners, with their tall spires and steeples punctuating the skyline. Institutional buildings, such as the Peabody Institute and Loyola High School designed in the Classical style, take up large block frontages. A few other school buildings and fraternal institutions are located within the district. Commercial buildings range from large, early twentieth century hotels and office buildings to small storefronts, and include early twentieth century industrial buildings on the edges of the district. The Mount Vernon District was also a center of automobile show rooms of the early twentieth century.

In 1876, the last large estate in the area, Belvidere, was opened for development. By the end of the nineteenth century the area was fully built-up. Around the same time, redevelopment activities began. Small existing buildings were replaced with larger apartments, such as the Severn Apartments (1895) at Cathedral Street and Mount Vernon Place. The year before, the Stafford Hotel replaced a mansion house. Another notable building, the Garrett-Jacobs house, expanded in 1899 taking over a neighboring property. .

During the early twentieth century development was sporadic, with some of the residential buildings being converted into offices or commercial spaces. The few new buildings that were constructed retained the classical design and ornamentation of the existing architecture. Alterations to existing buildings accelerated with the onset of World War II as the defense industries expanded throughout the city. This created a demand for housing resulting in many of the large residences being divided into apartments.



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Immediately after the war, Mayor Theodore McKeldin appointed an architects' committee to recommend improvements for Mount Vernon Place. They proposed retaining the landscaped squares, but called for the demolition of more than half of the buildings fronting the squares for public improvements. The buildings were thought to be old and antiquated, needing to be replaced with modern structures, plazas and street improvements to accommodate large numbers of automobiles. This plan, which disregarded the architectural and urban importance of Mount Vernon Place, set the tone for the next twenty years.

From 1945 to the establishment of the original Mount Vernon Historic District in 1964, incompatible buildings were constructed, and historic structures lost to surface parking lots. The new buildings were typically constructed with little articulation of facades, flush windows, and little or no details and ornamentation. The surface parking lots created a "gapped tooth" appearance along streetscapes. Some of the modern buildings were much larger or smaller than the existing; thus they are out of scale with the traditional architecture in the district. Others were inappropriately set back from the front property line, thus interrupting the streetscape. In other cases the facades of historic buildings were modified to such a degree that they no longer retain their architectural character. Since the creation of the initial historic district in 1964, and its later expansions, some new buildings have been designed to be more compatible with the historic character of the district.



## *Appendix Two: Non-Contributing Buildings in the Mount Vernon Historic District.*



The following is a list of buildings in the Mount Vernon Historic District that have been determined not to contribute to the architectural character of the area. Typically this is because they are not compatible with that character, having been designed in a modernist idiom. Others, such as the Mercantile Bank Building, are architecturally compatible but have not reached 50 years of age when buildings are typically eligible for designation as contributing to an historic district.

36 W. Biddle St.	4 story residential building
222 E. Biddle St.	1 1/2 story colonial style building
601 N. Calvert St.	parking garage
707 N. Calvert St.	State Highway Administration
1101 N. Calvert St.	Horizon House
912 Cathedral St.	2 story altered garage building
919 Cathedral St.	service station
1009 Cathedral St.	1 story commercial building
10 W. Centre St.	Walters Art Gallery addition
111 W. Centre St.	18 story apartment building
19 W. Chase St.	2 story residential building
524 N. Charles St.	Westminster House
917 N. Charles St.	Maryland Club addition
1017 N. Charles St.	Belvedere parking garage
1008 N. Charles St.	Chambers Interior Design
1100 N. Charles St.	Mercantile Bank Building
1111 N. Charles St.	Aegon (Monumental Life) Building addition
1310 Guilford Ave.	6 story storage building
809 N. Howard St.	2 story commercial building
1300 Hunter St.	4 story industrial building
1037 Maryland Ave.	Chase House
1205 Maryland Ave.	parking garage
201 W. Monument St.	Maryland Historical Society addition
1 E. Mount Vernon Pl.	Peabody Institute dormitory and addition
9 E. Mount Royal Ave.	Catholic Charities Building
11 W. Mount Royal Ave.	University of Baltimore Thumel Business Center
21 W. Mount Royal Ave.	University of Baltimore Student Center
861 Park Ave.	Waxter Center
22 W. Preston St.	Greek Orthodox Church school
124 W. Read St.	parking garage
611 Park Ave.	12 story apartment building
521 St. Paul St.	2 story commercial building
649 St. Paul St.	Waterloo Place
701 St. Paul St.	Casey Foundation building
1010 St. Paul St.	10 story apartment building
1101 St. Paul St.	St. Paul at Chase Condominiums
1308 St. Paul St.	service station

## *Appendix Three: Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) Standards for Historic District Designation.*

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An historic district should include historic sites, buildings, structures, or landscapes in their original setting which:

1. contribute to the heritage of the community.
2. represent one or more periods of styles of architecture, landscape architecture, building, or construction which has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or culture of the City of Baltimore.
3. contain a sufficient number of structures of related or similar characteristics to make a recognized entity within logical geographical boundaries. Including but not limited to parks or squares.
4. provide certain historic or scenic value significant to the area.

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## *Appendix Four: Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) Criteria for Height Bonus Approval.*

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Requests for approval of a height bonus will be granted by the Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) if the applicant receives design approval by the Commission and satisfies the following criteria:

1. Active participation of the developer of the project in a pre-petition conference planning process coordinated by the Department of Planning.
2. The construction permit is issued prior to December 31, 2015.
3. The project receives a rating of 40 points or more as determined by the following:
  - a. For projects with a residential component, a commitment that 10 or more of the units are sold or rented to households at a rent or sales price affordable at 0-80% of area median income and a certain percentage of units are sold or rented to households at market rate. (35 points).
  - b. Projects that incorporate LEED certified design for an energy efficient “green building”. (30 points).
  - c. Projects that provide all on-site parking underground or off-site through an agreement with a parking district. (20 points).
  - d. Projects that provide significantly less parking on site than required through contributions to a parking district that provides shared off-site parking or through providing routine shuttle connections to local public transit stops (10 points).
  - e. Projects that establish or significantly enhance Park or Open Space. (10 points).