

What is the role of the Waukesha Landmarks Commission?

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Landmarks FAQ

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2. [What is a Certificate of Appropriateness \(COA\)](#)

A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is the Landmarks Commission approval needed when the proposed work will affect significant protected architectural features on the exterior of the structure or property. Additions, demolitions, new construction, and changes of architectural features such as stoops and cornices require a COA.

3. [How do I get my project approved by the Landmarks Commission?](#)

If you live in a Historic District or Local Landmark you will need to complete a Landmarks Commission Application. Once the application and fee are received by the Community Development Department you are scheduled on the next available Landmarks Commission agenda. The Commission will review your project and determine if it meets the criteria for approval.

You can download an application form, instructions for filing, or a materials checklist below or you may pick up the materials at in the Community Development Department at City Hall (Room 200). After completing the form and adding your descriptive materials, you may mail or drop off your application. The application fee is \$15.00 and it is an additional \$15 if you wish to apply for a Paint and Repair Grant.

4. [When does the Landmarks Commission Meet?](#)

The Landmarks Commission meets the 1st Wednesday of the Month in Room 207 at Waukesha City Hall, 201 Delafield Street. Meetings begin at 6:00 P.M.

Applications are due 10 days prior to the meeting date.

5. [How can I find out more about my Landmarked property of the Historic District where my property is located?](#)

The City has extensive records on Landmark properties and Historic Districts, including nomination papers, previous approvals, historical articles, and preservation plans for the various districts in the City. Please contact the Community Development Department at 262-524-3750 or CommDev@waukesha-wi.gov. You can also stop by City Hall at 201 Delafield Street, room 200 to view these files. The City's internet mapping system also lists information on Landmarks and Historic Districts ([Link](#))

6. [What projects need approval from the Landmarks Commission?](#)

The Commission must approve in advance any restoration, alteration, reconstruction, demolition, or new construction affecting any designated property, including buildings in historic districts. You need Landmarks Commission approval for any project that will affect the exterior appearance of a designated building before you begin work on the exterior; whether the proposed project requiring a permit from the Building Inspection Division or not.

7. [Do I need Landmarks Commission Approval for interior work on my historic home?](#)

No, Landmarks Commission approval is not required for interior work as long as that work does not have any impact on the exterior of a home. If the interior work will result in changes to the exterior, such as relocating a window to accommodate a remodeling project, it will need a Certificate of Appropriateness.

8. [Do I need a Certificate of Appropriateness \(COA\) to make ordinary repairs?](#)

You do not need a COA from the Landmarks Commission to perform ordinary repairs or maintenance chores. For example, you do not need a permit to replace broken window glass, repaint a building exterior to match the existing color, or caulk around windows and doors. However some repairs, such as tuckpointing exterior masonry, will likely require a COA. If you have any doubt about whether a COA is needed, be sure to contact the Community Development Department at 262-524-3750 or CommDev@waukesha-wi.gov.

9. [I want to enlarge my building. May I consult with the Landmarks Commission or a staff member about my proposal before I file an application?](#)

Yes. If you plan to file an application to enlarge your building or to construct a new building in a historic district, you may arrange to meet with Community Development Department staff to discuss your proposal. Such a meeting may be helpful if you have questions about the Landmarks Commission's policies or procedures.

10. [What material and information should I include with my Landmarks Commission application form?](#)

The descriptive materials needed to complete your application should illustrate the existing conditions of the building and the proposed changes. Depending on the type of work proposed, the descriptive materials could include drawings, photographs and photomontages of street fronts, samples and photographs of proposed materials, and/or

written specifications. You should also include a short written description of your proposal.

- For an application for a building in a historic district you should include photographs showing the building's relationship to the neighboring buildings in the historic district.
- For a complex proposal, such as a proposal to construct a new building in a historic district, you should submit written statements, drawings, photographs, and material samples; you may wish to submit a model or color rendering if it will help to explain the proposal.
- For an application to replace windows, clear photographs of the building, drawings showing a section and elevation of existing and proposed windows, and a sample of the proposed window finish may be needed.

11. [Does the Landmarks Commission offer any financial assistance?](#)

The Landmarks Commission has a Paint and Repair Grant program (LCP&R) that is funded with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. This program provides matching grants to property owners to offset the costs to repair and/or paint designated landmarks, landmark sites, or properties within Historic Districts. The grant application fee is \$15, which you can submit along with your COA application. You should include a written estimate for the work which you are requesting the grant assistance for. The Landmarks Commission will determine the grant amount. Please be aware that fund availability fluctuates from year to year and grant awards are made on a first-come, first-served basis. There is no set grant amount and grant award amounts are at the sole discretion of the Landmarks Commission.

These grant awards are matching grants, meaning no grant may exceed 50% of the project costs. Grants are paid only after the work is completed. Once your project is complete, submit receipts and paid invoices to the Community Development Department for reimbursement. Property owners may receive up to two (2) Paint and Repair Grants within a 5 year period.

In addition, landmark properties, properties in historic districts, or properties that are on the National Register of Historic Places are eligible for federal and state tax credits. For more information on tax credits, please visit the Wisconsin Historical Society website. Please be aware that the State must review all plans for any project you plan on applying for tax credits for.

[Wisconsin Historical Society website](#)

12. [What happens after I file my application?](#)

The application is reviewed by Community Development Department staff. If the application is incomplete, the staff member will contact you and explain what additional materials are needed. Depending on the complexity of the proposal, the staff may suggest that you and your architect or contractor come to the Commission's office to discuss the proposed project. A meeting at the property may also be arranged. The staff member will then review the proposal to evaluate the effect of the proposed changes on the architectural and historic character of the building and/or the historic district. If the staff believes that the proposed work would detract from your building's significant

architectural features, the staff may be able to suggest alternatives that would satisfy your practical requirements while maintaining the architectural integrity of the building. The staff member will also provide guidance regarding materials and restoration or construction techniques, if needed. If the application is complete staff will place it on the Landmarks Commission agenda. For more information please see “Certificate of Appropriateness” below.

13. [When the Commission reviews an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness, what factors does it consider?](#)

The Landmarks Commission assesses the effects of the proposed work on the significant features of the landmark and the compatibility of the proposed changes with the building's appearance and character. The Commission considers the building's architectural, historical, and cultural significance and its architectural style, as well as the proportions, materials, textures, and colors of the existing and proposed designs, among other factors. In a historic district, the Landmarks Commission also considers the effect of the proposed work on neighboring buildings and on the special character of the district. There are specific criteria, depending on the property designation and property type:

- For work on a designated landmark or site – Proposed work on the building, structure, or other improvements on the site can not destroy or adversely affect any exterior architectural feature.
- For new construction on a landmark site – The exterior of the new building, structure or other improvement must harmonize and not adversely affect the external appearance of other improvements and structures on the site.
- For any property located in a Historic District – The proposed construction or exterior alteration must conform to the objectives and design criteria of the historic preservation plan.

14. [What happens at the Landmarks Commission meeting?](#)

It is strongly recommended that you or a representative (contractor, etc) is present at the meeting in case there are questions.

The Chair of the Commission will announce your item and City Staff will present your proposal to the Landmarks Commission. After the proposal the Chair will open the floor to the applicant and the public. At this time you are given the opportunity to explain why you believe that the application should be approved. The public may also comment on the proposed work. The applicant and the public may also submit written statements before the hearing.

Usually the Commissioners will make a decision on a COA application based on "presentation" or "design development" drawings of a proposed project. After the Commissioners vote to approve an application, the applicant may be required to submit construction drawings in order for the approval to become final. The actual COA permit is not issued until the staff has reviewed the final construction drawings to make sure that the final plans are consistent with the proposal approved by the Commissioners.

15. [Does the Landmarks Commission offer any financial assistance](#)

In addition to issuing Certificates of Appropriateness, the Commission has a Paint and Repair Grant program (LCP&R). This program provides grants to property owners to offset the costs to repair and/or paint designated landmarks, landmark sites, or properties within Historic Districts. The grant application fee is \$15, which you can submit along with your COA application. You should include a written quote for the work which you are requesting the grant assistance for. The Landmarks Commission will determine the grant amount. In order to receive the grant, you must complete the work and submit a receipt to the Community Development Department. Please see the following link for additional information regarding additional financial and technical assistance available to Designated Landmarks, Landmark sites, and properties in Historic Districts

16. [Will the Building Inspection Division issue a permit before the Landmarks Commission has approved my application?](#)

No. The Department of Buildings will not issue a permit in response to your application unless you have first received a Landmarks Commission approved COA for the proposed work.

17. [I plan to make a series of similar changes to the facade of my building over the next few years. Can I apply for a permit for all of the work at one time?](#)

Yes, you may submit an application for a "master plan" that includes those series of changes. You should provide an anticipated schedule outlining when you think each project task will be completed. Please keep in mind that building permits expire after a certain amount of time depending on the project. So while you will not need to return to Landmarks once your master plan is approved, you may need to re-apply for building permits if your project takes a long time.

18. [Does the Landmarks Commission restrict the height of proposed buildings in historic districts?](#)

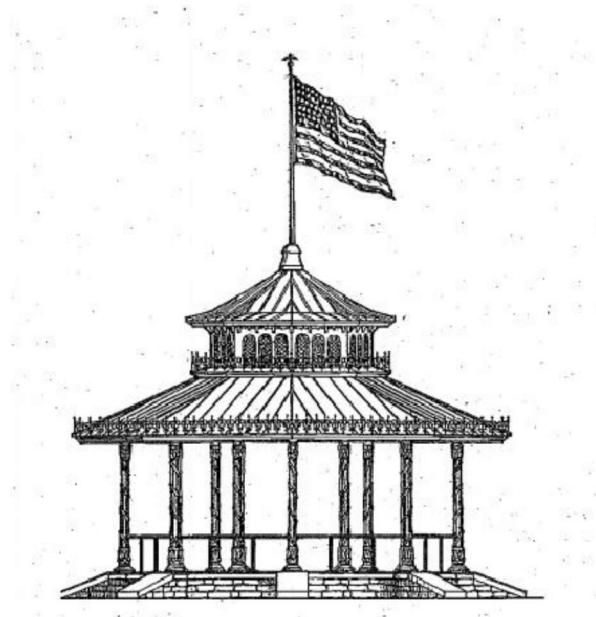
The Commission does not regulate the height or floor area of buildings, the size of rear yards or open spaces, obstruction of sunlight or air, density of population, or the purposes for which buildings are used. These Zoning Code matters are under the jurisdiction of the Planning Division. For more information about these issues, contact City Planning at 262-524-3750 or within City Hall at 201 Delafield Street Waukesha, WI room 200.

19. [My project conforms to zoning regulations regarding height and bulk. Does that mean that the Landmarks Commission must approve my application?](#)

No. The Landmarks Commission may find that a proposed project is inappropriate under the provisions of the Landmarks Regulations even if the project complies with the Zoning Code requirements. For example, even if a proposed addition to a landmark does not exceed zoning limits regarding height and bulk, the Landmarks Commission may deny a permit for the addition if it finds that the design and materials would detract from the landmark's architectural significance.



DESIGN POLICIES



201 Delafield St., Room 200
Phone: 262-524-3529

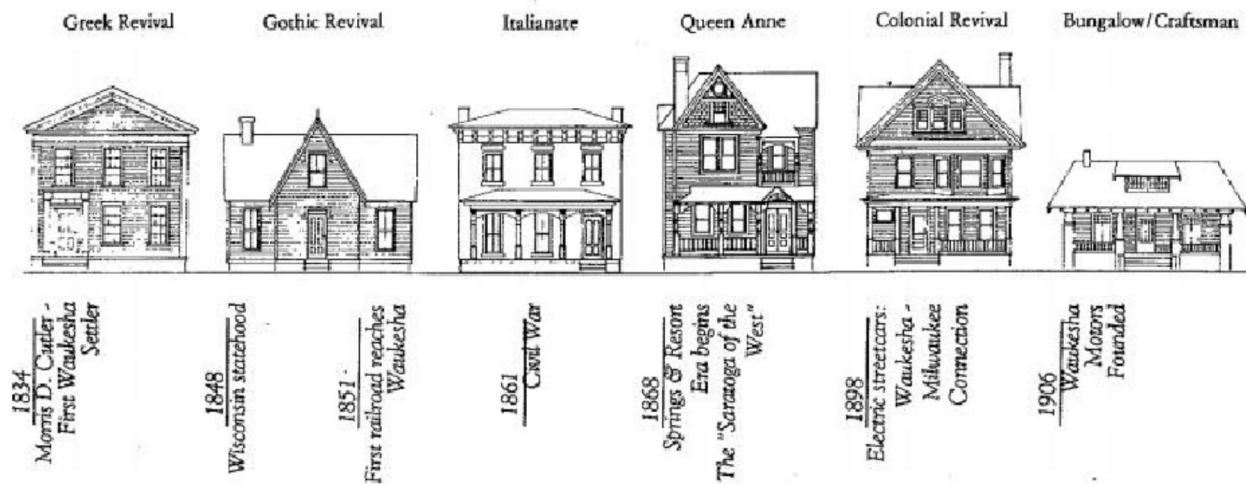
Adopted July 11, 2019

Projects that **NEED** Landmarks Commission approvals

- Roof repair
- Window repair or replacement
- Siding repair
- Porch or foundation repair
- Chimney repair
- Gutter replacement
- Demolitions
- Painting of masonry - rarely acceptable
- Painting of wood siding, if wood repair is included
- Any other work that has a similar impact

Projects that **DO NOT NEED** Landmarks Commission approvals

- Site improvements such as landscaping and fence repair
- Painting of wood siding if wood repair is not included
- Interior remodeling work



LANDMARKS COMMISSION DESIGN GUIDELINES

The purpose of the Waukesha Landmarks Commission is to preserve, enhance, and perpetuate the City of Waukesha's history as embodied and reflected in its improvements, landmarks, and historic districts. If you own a home in one of the city's nine historic districts or if your property is listed as a Local Landmark, you will need Landmarks Commission approval before you can proceed with exterior repair work, to ensure the work you are doing will maintain your property's historic identity and integrity. The Landmarks Commission recognizes that it will not be able to achieve its goals without the cooperation of property owners, so it seeks to work with applicants, rather than against them, to help them find the best way to maintain their properties.

The Landmarks Commission's review standards are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards are a set of concepts that were created by the Federal Government to define best practices for preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction of historic properties. The Secretary of the Interior, the Wisconsin Historical Society, and local preservationists have created additional guidelines for applying the Standards to specific projects. **The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are listed on the next page.**

Several Grants and Tax Credits are available to offset the cost of maintaining your historic property.

- Landmarks Paint and Repair Grants can reimburse roughly 10% of the cost of a residential repair project, up to a maximum of \$2,000. Most homes that are Local Landmarks or are in Historic Districts are eligible.
- Façade grants cover up to half of the cost of certain types of repairs, to a maximum of \$10,000. Commercial properties in or near Waukesha's Historic Downtown may be eligible.
- State and Federal tax credits are also available for both commercial and residential historic preservation projects. If you plan to apply for preservation tax credits you should contact the State Historic Preservation Office before applying for Landmarks Commission approval.



Examples of City of Waukesha local landmarks - St. Joseph's Church, the Nickell Building, and the Andrew Frame house

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES, APPLIED BY THE WAUKESHA LANDMARKS COMMISSION

To receive a **Certificate of Appropriateness**, a rehabilitation project must be determined by the Landmarks Commission to be consistent with the historic character of the structure(s) and, where applicable, the district in which it is located. The following Standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archaeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

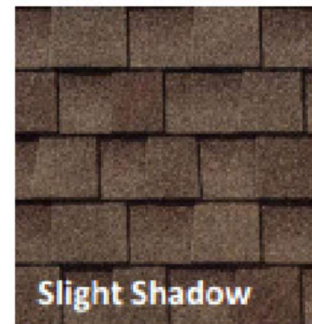
THE FOLLOWING ARE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SEVERAL COMMON TYPES OF WORK

for more details or other types of work, see resources on back cover

Roof Repair or Replacement: Most historic homes were originally roofed with wood shingles, not wood shake. Wood shingles had a uniform size and were laid out in even rows. For high level preservation projects replacing the roof with new wood shingles may be ideal, but asphalt shingles are also an acceptable replacement material. 3-tab shingles are best. Architectural shingles with slight shadow lines are also acceptable. Wood shake, or shingles with false shadow lines or uneven bottoms are generally not acceptable unless you can provide documentary evidence that they were historically present.



3 Tab

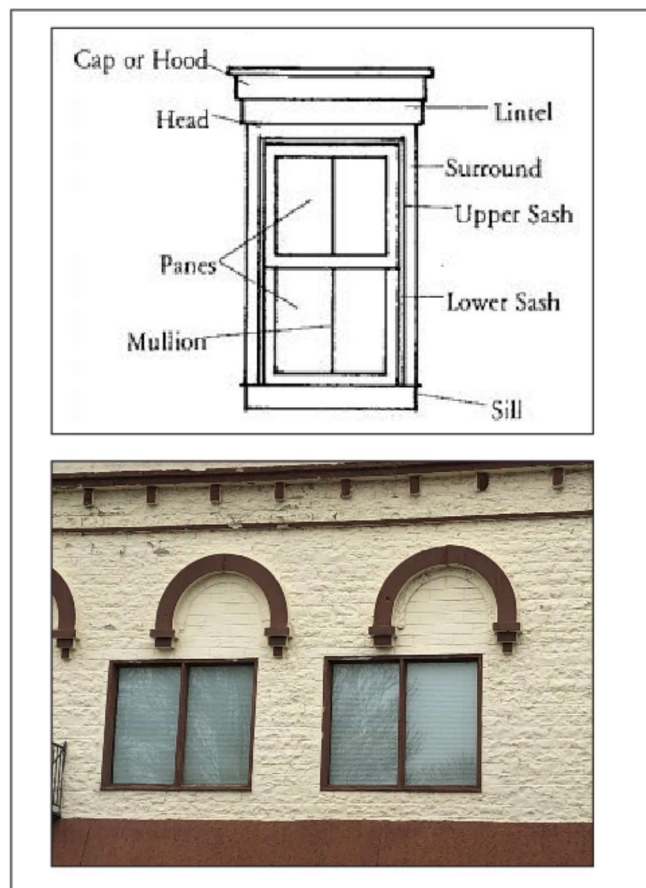


Slight Shadow

3-tab shingles and shingles with a slight shadow line are usually acceptable (Photo Credit: Wisconsin Historical Society)

Window Repair or Replacement. If the original windows are still present on your house it is always better to repair them than replace them. Historic windows can be made more energy efficient than modern windows and should last longer. Repairing existing windows also is often more cost effective than replacing them.

If the original windows are missing or have deteriorated beyond repair, replacement windows should match the original in shape and size, and in the arrangement of window panes. If possible the replacement windows should use the same materials as the original. If no evidence of the original window's appearance is available, replacements should match the style of the house and the size of the window opening. Windows with highly reflective surfaces are inappropriate for historic homes.



Replacement windows that do not match the original size and style can damage your building's historic integrity.

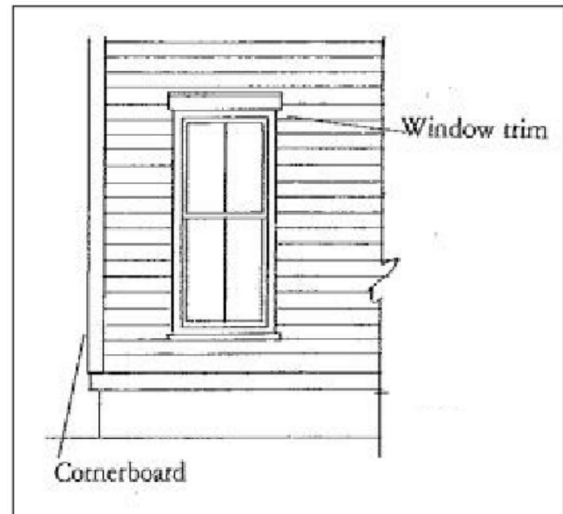
Wood Siding: Wooden clapboard siding is common on many historic homes in Waukesha. With proper maintenance, it can have comparable or better insulating properties and last much longer than modern synthetic materials such as vinyl. It is usually possible to repair or replace one section of rotted wood rather than re-siding your whole house. If possible, replacement wood should be the same kind as the existing wood. More importantly, the slats should have the same width as the existing slats, and any corner boards or other character defining features should be maintained.

Replacing wood siding with vinyl or other synthetic materials is discouraged on historic properties. Ventilation practices have changed significantly since most historic homes were built. Unless you fully update the ventilation along with the siding you may experience significant structural damage from moisture trapped inside the walls. Substitute materials such as Hardee Board may be acceptable as long as they are similar to the existing siding in design, scale, and architectural appearance. You should not use siding that includes non-historic false wood texture, and you must maintain any character defining features such as corner boards.

Painting: Painting work typically does not require a Certificate of Appropriateness unless you are also applying for a Paint and Repair Grant. However, you should maintain the paint on the wood siding of your historic home to keep the wood waterproof and prevent rotting. If you would like to paint your home in a way that is historically accurate, the Landmarks Commission is happy to advise you on color choices.

Brick or stone repair or replacement, tuckpointing: Many historic homes in Waukesha have red or cream colored brick siding, and many homes have stone foundations. Properly maintained masonry siding can last hundreds of years. The Wisconsin Historical Society recommends that you conduct an annual inspection of your brick siding to identify any deterioration or other issues before it becomes too significant to be easily fixable. Any repair work should be done by a professional mason who has experience working on historic buildings.

The most common repair for brick or stone siding is repointing deteriorated mortar. It is very important that



Maintain character defining features such as cornerboards and window trim



The wood siding restoration at 215 N. Charles St. won the Landmarks Commission's George Gunn award in 2009. (Photo Credit: Mary Emery)

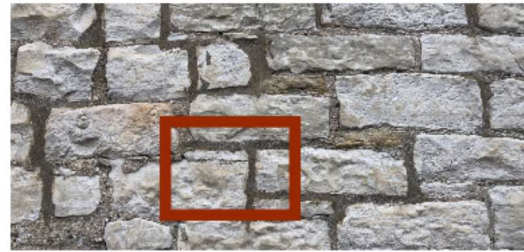
the color, texture, and hardness of replacement mortar matches the mortar in the surrounding wall. Mortar that does not match the existing color will stand out in an obvious and unsightly way and will damage the historic character of your house. Mortar that does not match the texture of the surrounding mortar will not properly adhere to the bricks and may damage the rest of the wall. Your mason should also ensure that the mortar is installed in such a way as to match the existing joint style.

If you need to replace stones or bricks, the replacements should match the existing materials in color and in hardness. Historic bricks were generally softer than modern bricks, and replacing soft bricks with harder ones can damage the rest of the wall. Modern synthetic wall structures tend to look very different from the originals, so they are generally not considered to be acceptable.

Painting of historic masonry walls can cause serious moisture damage. It is almost never appropriate for historic buildings in Waukesha.



Mortar that does not match existing can damage historic character and surrounding masonry. (Photo Credit: Wisconsin Historical Society)



Replacement mortar should match color, texture and joint style of existing mortar.

New Construction and Non-contributing structures: New buildings in historic districts should be compatible with the bulk, height, scale, and style in the surrounding neighborhood. However, new buildings should not be designed as replicas of historic buildings. They should show sensitivity to the historic structures and show continuity, but they should not be made to look older than they are. Non-contributing structures in historic districts will be evaluated to ensure that they maintain this continuity, but they will not be held to the same standard as historic structures.



125 N. Charles St, center is compatible with the bulk, height, scale, and style of the McCall Street Historic District

RESOURCES

Landmarks Resource Library

waukesha-wi.gov/1041/Landmarks-Resource-Library

The Secretary of the Interior Standards

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm>

The Wisconsin Historical Society's How to Preserve Your Historic Home Guidelines

<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS15265>

Waukesha Preservation Alliance:

waukeshapreservation.org

262-278-6658

Waukesha County Historical Society

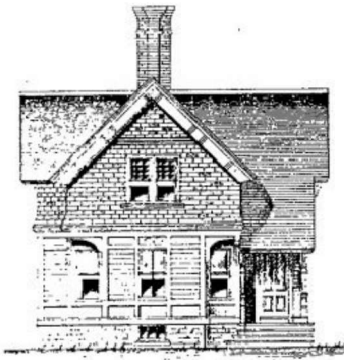
www.waukeshacountymuseum.org

262-521-2859

Landmarks Commission members and staff are happy to assist you in any way they can

cgriffith@waukesha-wi.gov

262-524-3529



Some Key Ideas

Don't remove anything that can be repaired.

Replacement parts should closely match the originals in size, shape, materials, and design.

Don't attempt to make your house look older than it is.