

FAN OVERLAY DISTRICT (FOD) GUIDELINES

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to protect and maintain the established historic architectural character of the Fan. The “Guidelines for New Construction” promote existing architectural coherence and harmony by controlling patterns of design and features. The “Guidelines for Demolition” preserve historic structures by managing the demolition process.

Also included are “Recommendations for Alterations to Existing Structures.” Though purely aspirational, they are provided as a resource with the hope that they will be adhered to when making exterior alterations and renovations to structures in the Fan.

B. Overview of the Fan and its Architecture

Richmond’s Fan District is a predominately residential neighborhood of some hundred blocks. Largely built up between the 1890s and the 1920s, the district is an outgrowth of the demand for better housing and improved services by a new, urban middle class who spurred architects, builders, and real estate speculators to develop entire blocks of town houses sprinkled with conveniently located small commercial establishments. Scattered in the neighborhood are several churches, apartment houses, two public schools, and a hospital. The district conveys a unity that depends not so much on consistent architectural style as on intrinsic qualities of good urban design, such as uniform heights and setbacks, compatibility of textures and building materials, and consistent building footprints of mostly three-bay town houses.

The Fan District encompasses the Monument Avenue Historic District, the West Grace Street Historic District, and the West Franklin Street Historic District. Each of these areas have been designated a National Historic Landmark and a Richmond Old and Historic District. The latter designation carries with it specific architectural controls on existing buildings and new construction administered by the Richmond Commission of Architectural Review. As a consequence, the guidelines in this document do not apply to any area in the Fan District that is included in a Richmond Old and Historic District.

Except for the area of the Fan District east of Harrison Street that is now dominated by the newer academic buildings of Virginia Commonwealth University and notwithstanding various surface parking lots and architecturally incompatible new construction or renovations, the Fan District has survived for the past century with minimal intrusions. The high historic

integrity of the neighborhood led to its being listed as a historic district on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. In 2014, the American Planning Association officially named the Fan District as one of America's Ten Great Places. That same year the City of Richmond issued a proclamation recognizing that designation.

Today, the Fan District is a popular and vibrant neighborhood in which most structures are well maintained. Nevertheless, this historic area is not immune to change. Development is not to be discouraged, but it needs to be guided in order that the qualities that make the Fan District a "Great Place" are to be sustained. The Fan District Association (FDA), in cooperation with the Richmond Department of Planning and Development Review, created the following Guidelines to achieve this goal.

C. Using the Guidelines

The Guidelines should be followed for any covered work to any residential, multi-family/multi-tenant, and commercial structure visible from a Fan District street. Where the Guidelines state that similarity or compatibility should be based upon neighboring buildings or buildings within the immediate vicinity, the intent is to look to and draw from the closest structures of similar use. The introductory historical background that precedes each topic's Guidelines is intended to be referred to when evaluating applications and applying the Guidelines.

A Certificate of Approval must be obtained from the City of Richmond for all new construction and demolition within the areas of the Fan District covered by these Guidelines. The process for obtaining a Certificate of Approval is set forth in Richmond Code Sec.30-940.7. A copy of all applications for a Certificate of Approval must be sent via first class U.S. mail, postage prepaid, to:

**Fan District Association
Attn: Historic Preservation Committee
208 North Strawberry Street
Richmond, Virginia 23220**

II. GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

Building Form & Massing

Building form refers to the shape of the structure, while massing refers to the overall three-dimensional composition of the structure (i.e. its overall 'bulk') and how it sits on the site. Elements that are used to define building form and massing include the roof form, as well as wings and other projecting elements such as bays and ells. A new building with form and massing similar to neighboring buildings allow it to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

Guidelines:

- Construct a new building with similar form and massing to buildings on adjacent sites and blocks.
- Construct roof forms, wings, ells, bays, and other projecting elements on new buildings that are similar to those found on historic buildings in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project
- Match neighboring cornice heights.

Not recommended:

- Constructing a new building that has a form and/or massing that is dissimilar to the immediate vicinity of the project site.

Setback

New construction should reflect prevailing setbacks (distances between a building and the property line, neighboring buildings, street, and/or sidewalk).

Within the Fan District, certain physical elements define the character of historic buildings and block façades and create visual continuity and cohesiveness along a streetscape. These elements include historic building façades, porches (both one and two-story), walls, fences, barrier curbs, garages, and other outbuildings. A consistent setback maintains the visual rhythm of the buildings and site elements in the neighborhood and makes new construction more compatible in its setting.

Guidelines:

- Keep the visual mass of a building at or near the same setback as historic buildings on adjacent sites and blocks.
- Keep landscape elements such as a fence or wall, and projecting elements such as a porch, at similar setbacks as neighboring historic buildings.

Not recommended:

- Constructing a new building in a position on a site that is dissimilar to that of buildings on neighboring sites.
- Creating a large front-yard setback.

Site Coverage

The percentage of a lot covered by buildings should be similar to adjacent lots. Although local zoning regulates the maximum allowable coverage area and minimum setbacks, the overall building-to-lot area should be consistent along a streetscape or block façade. At a parcel with larger development, the site coverage proportions should be minimized by breaking large building masses into smaller elements to be more compatible with the neighboring historic buildings.

Guidelines:

- Maintain the building-to-lot proportions found on adjacent sites and blocks.
- Adjust the massing of a large new building to maintain or suggest building-to-lot proportions found on adjacent sites and blocks.

Not recommended:

- Constructing a building or building complex that does not maintain or suggest similar building-to-lot proportions as on adjacent sites or blocks, or the general low-rise character of the Fan District.
- Creating off-street parking areas on the street front of new buildings or building complexes.

Orientation

The principal façade of new construction should be oriented in the same direction as the majority of the historic buildings on the block or adjacent blocks, with the main entrance located on the principal façade. In the case of new construction on a corner site, the front façade should generally face the same direction as the existing historic buildings on the primary thoroughfare following the rhythm of the block façade or streetscape. A residential building typically should have an entrance on the street front even if the primary access is from a courtyard or secondary elevation.

Guidelines:

- Orient the principal façade and entrance door parallel with the primary street or thoroughfare.

Not recommended:

- Orienting the principal façade of a building on a secondary street elevation if the building fronts a primary street.

Alignment, Rhythm, & Spacing

The architecture of the Fan District is characterized by the consistency of its blocks of town houses, most of which are two stories although three story buildings are interspersed within. Many have attic stories expressed with architecturally prominent dormers. Some historic apartment houses have more than three stories.

The neighborhood is about evenly divided between free-standing town houses and houses that share party walls. Corner houses and apartment buildings on some blocks tend to be larger and more architecturally prominent, providing visual anchors for their respective blocks. Whether a block is composed of free-standing houses, joined houses, or both, the majority of the Fan District's blocks appear as unbroken façades with few disruptive gaps. The stylistic diversity within each block façade prevents them from being visually monotonous.

The blocks also possess general consistency in vertical components, including distance of the first floor or porch above the sidewalk level, cornice heights, and alignment of major projections, particularly porches. These elements visually establish consistency in floor and ceiling heights among neighboring buildings in a block façade. This consistency establishes a building pattern that should be applied to new construction.

Guidelines:

- Align a new building façade with the façades of existing neighboring historic buildings.
- Align the rooftop of a new building as well as its porch, cornice, eave, and parapet with those found on neighboring historic buildings.
- Construct the new building with a similar width and side separation relative to neighboring historic buildings.
- If a proposed new building is to be larger than those that define the historic character of the neighborhood, the mass of the new building should be divided visually to suggest smaller building masses.

Not recommended:

- Placing the primary façade of a new building out of alignment with existing historic buildings on adjacent sites.
- Adding a building to a site that does not maintain or suggest the spacing of historic buildings, on adjacent sites.

Architectural Elements & Projections

Nearly every Fan District historic building originally had a decorative one-story porch. Most of these porches are of wood construction with wood trim. Some incorporate composition ornament, and/or cast-iron ornament and trim. Some porches are also stone construction or incorporate stone trim. Regrettably, through changes in taste or lack of maintenance, 30% or more of the Fan District's porches have been removed in recent decades. Nevertheless, surviving porches, covered stoops, projecting bays and towers, mansard roofs, parapets, and dormers contribute to the overall shapes and silhouettes of the Fan District's historic buildings.

Guidelines:

- Construct a new building with architectural elements that are compatible with those found on neighboring historic buildings.
- The choice, size, location, and arrangement of elements for a proposed building should be appropriate for the building's style and should be compatible with the neighboring historic buildings.
- Include and incorporate architectural elements and detailing that are similar to those found on historic buildings in the neighborhood.
- Construct porches and entrance covers at similar levels found on neighboring historic buildings.
- Encourage the addition of one-story front porches to new town houses.

Not recommended:

- Constructing a porch, entrance cover, balcony, or dormer for a building type or style that would not have included one, or in a location where one is not appropriate for a building type.

Façade Proportions; Window and Door Patterns

Similar to the rhythm of buildings along a streetscape, an individual façade has a pattern that helps to define its scale. In the Fan District, the prominent elements that establish the façade pattern include the number of bays and the location, spacing, and proportions for doors and windows.

Guidelines:

- Construct a new building with its façade height and width proportions similar to neighboring historic buildings.
- Use similar proportions, sizes, locations, and numbers of windows and doors as existing neighboring buildings.
- Install windows and doors in new buildings that are stylistically compatible with those on neighboring historic buildings

Not recommended:

- Constructing a new building that does not maintain the pattern and proportions of windows and doors found on existing neighboring buildings.
- Installing sliding, plate glass, or other window and door types that are incompatible stylistically and proportionally with neighboring historic buildings.

Trim and Details

Trim and details can define a building's style. They include the moldings, decorative elements, and features of a building that are secondary to major surfaces such as walls and roof. Trim is not only decorative, it often serves to provide a transition between different materials or building elements such as a wall to a window. Functional and decorative detail elements include cornices, lintels, arches, balustrades, chimneys, shutters, columns, posts, iron cresting, and other common architectural features. For example, louvered shutters visually frame a window or door opening and provide security. By contrast, shutters screwed into a building wall do not served a functional purpose. Most historic Fan District houses were not designed to have exterior blinds or shutters in their façades, although they were not uncommon on rear and side elevations, especially when side elevations face onto alleys.

The exterior details and forms of new buildings should provide a visual link to neighboring historic buildings. A new building should be architecturally compatible and not visually dominate or clash with existing historic buildings. New buildings may be adaptations of neighboring historic buildings. Existing details and trim on neighboring historic buildings may be replicated or used as cues and the basis for details and trim applied new buildings.

The trim and details of new buildings should be used to accomplish purposes similar to those used historically, both functionally and decoratively. When installed, trim and details should create a unifying effect on a building and should be compatible with the historic context of the neighborhood.

Guidelines:

- Construct a new building with details and trim that are compatible with neighboring historic trim and details.
- Install trim and details appropriately scaled to a building type and style.
- Install trim that is functional and with a high level of craftsmanship rather than applied "stock" decoration of watered-down character.

Not recommended:

- Applying trim and details that are incompatible with the style of the new building.
- Applying details and trim to new buildings that have no relation to historic trim or details found on historic Fan District houses.

Materials

The materials used in the construction of new buildings for walls, roof, windows, doors, trim, porches, and other visible elements contribute to a building's character and appearance. Materials for new construction should be similar to those predominately found on neighboring historic buildings. The majority of the Fan District's historic buildings are masonry. Brick of various types and colors dominates.

A minority of the Fan District's historic buildings have stone façades, employing either gray granite or sandstone. Sandstone colors found in the Fan District range from dark brown to tan. Some historic building have stuccoed façades. Only a mere fraction of the Fan District's buildings are of wood-frame construction sheathed with wood siding, and do not define the historic character of the neighborhood. Materials for trim and other details include stone, brick, wood, and cast iron. The majority of the visible roofs of historic buildings, including porch roofs, are covered with slate. Standing seam sheet metal is also found, as well as (rarely) ceramic tiles.

Substitute materials on new buildings, such as artificial slate and imitation wood trim, may be used on new buildings so long as their appearance successfully replicates the character of the materials they imitate. However, some substitute materials, such as plastic "brick," aluminum and vinyl siding, and plastic trim and moldings, unsuccessfully imitate the texture, proportions, finish, and colors of authentic historic materials and should be avoided.

Guidelines:

- Use exterior materials that are present on adjacent historic buildings for new buildings.
- Use substitute materials, trim, and details that are visually indistinguishable from historic building materials.
- Use materials that are of high quality, equal durability, and capable of blending in with existing materials on the structure
- Install materials with a high level of craftsmanship using techniques that complement original craftsmanship

Not recommended:

- Installing building materials that do not exist on historic Fan District buildings. These include metal panels or sheathing and natural-finish wood siding.
- Using asphalt shingles or wood shingles to roof new buildings.

III. GUIDELINES FOR DEMOLITION

These guidelines supplement and are to be read in conjunction with procedures for demolition of a property in the Fan Overlay District (FOD) as set forth in City of Richmond Code **Sec. 30-940.9**.

Qualifying Structures. For purposes of applying Sec. 30-940.9 to the FOD, “structures deemed to be contributing to the general neighborhood character” shall:

- **Include** any structure listed on the 1985 National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form for the Fan Area Historic District¹;
- **Exclude** any property or structure subject to the provisions of an Old and Historic District pursuant to **DIVISION 4 – OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICTS** (*Sec. 30-930 et seq.*) of the Code of the City of Richmond, Virginia;
- **Exclude** any structures considered a secondary usage to a property’s primary residential structure that does not have a residential use (i.e. garages and other outbuildings); and
- **Exclude** any properties that do not have street frontage.

Partial Demolitions. The demolition of only a portion of a qualifying structure shall also be prohibited according to the above conditions if:

- The planned demolition includes the façade of the structure, including any front porch; or
- The planned demolition affects more than 25% of the total finished and unfinished square footage of the property.

The prohibition of a partial demolition may be appealed by application to the Urban Design Committee, who will receive a recommendation on such demolition application by the Fan District Association, and shall have the authority to approve or deny such demolition. If such demolition application is denied, the property owner may further seek to demolish the structure pursuant to the procedures set forth in City of Richmond Code Sec. 30-940.9 (see below).

City of Richmond Code on Demolitions.

Sec. 30-940.9. *Additional rights of owners to demolish certain buildings or structures regulated by design guidelines.*

- (a) **Procedures.** The following are procedures entitling owners to demolish properties:
- (1) If the design guidelines for a particular design overlay district prohibit the demolition of buildings or structures deemed to be contributing to the general

¹ http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/registers/Cities/Richmond/127-0248_Fan_HD_1985_Final_Nomination_Part_I.pdf

neighborhood character, the owner of the building or structure shall, as a matter of right and in addition to the right of appeal set forth in Section 940.8, be entitled to demolish the building or structure provided that:

- a. The owner has submitted a demolition permit to the City for such and, if denied by the designee of the Urban Design Committee, has appealed the decision to the Urban Design Committee and, if denied, has appealed the decision to the City Council;
- b. The owner has, for the period of time set forth in Subsection (b) of this section and at a price reasonably related to its fair market value, made a bona fide offer to sell the building or structure and the land pertaining thereto to the City or to any person, firm, corporation, government or agency or political subdivision or agency which gives reasonable assurance that it is willing to preserve and restore the building or structure and the land pertaining thereto; and
- c. No bona fide contract, binding upon all parties thereto, has been executed for the sale of any such building or structure and the land pertaining thereto prior to the expiration of the applicable time period set forth in Subsection (b) of this section.

(2) Any appeal taken to the court from the decision of the City Council, whether instituted by the owner or by any other proper party, notwithstanding the sections of this division relating to a stay of the decision appealed from, shall not affect the right of the owner to make the bona fide offer to sell referred to in this section. No offer to sell shall be made more than 12 months after a final decision by the City Council, but thereafter the owner may renew the request to the City to approve the demolition of the building or structure.

(b) **Time schedule.** The time schedule for offers to sell made pursuant to this section shall be as follows:

- (1) Three months when the offering price is less than \$250,000.00;
- (2) Four months when the offering price is \$250,000.00 or more but less than \$400,000.00;
- (3) Five months when the offering price is \$400,000.00 or more but less than \$550,000.00;
- (4) Six months when the offering price is \$550,000.00 or more but less than \$750,000.00;
- (5) Seven months when the offering price is \$750,000.00 or more but less than \$900,000.00; and

- (6) Twelve months when the offering price is \$900,000.00 or more.
- (c) **Notice required.** Before making a bona fide offer to sell as provided for in this section, the property owner shall first file a statement with the Secretary of the Urban Design Committee, and the owner shall publish the notice twice, not less than seven days apart, in a daily newspaper of general circulation in the City. The statement shall identify the property and shall state the offering price, the date that the offer for sale is to begin, and the name of the real estate agent, if any. The Secretary of the Urban Design Committee shall forward such notice to any neighborhood organization in whose boundaries the property is located. No time period set forth in Subsection (b) of this section shall begin to run until the statement has been both filed and published.

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IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING STRUCTURES

The goal of the FOD is to maintain the architectural character, coherence, and harmony of the Fan. Although a certificate of approval is not needed for alterations to structures within the Fan, the following recommendations are offered to assist owners, contractors, and design professionals. The Fan District Association will utilize these recommendations when proposed alteration plans are presented to it for approval.

Architectural Elements & Projections

Guidelines:

- Replacement architectural elements should be designed and detailed similarly to those found on neighboring historic buildings.
- Maintain the architectural elements and detailing that echoes that found on historic buildings in the neighborhood.
- Construct porches and entrance covers at similar levels found on neighboring historic buildings.
- Encourage the addition of one-story front porches to town houses.

Façade Proportions; Window and Door Patterns

Guidelines:

- Maintain façade height and width proportions similar to neighboring historic buildings.
- Use similar proportions, sizes, locations, and numbers of windows and doors as existing neighboring buildings.
- Install replacement windows and doors that are stylistically compatible with those on neighboring historic buildings.

Trim and Details

Guidelines:

- Replacement details and trim should be compatible with neighboring historic trim and details.
- Install trim and details appropriately scaled to a building type and style.
- Install trim that is functional and with a high level of craftsmanship rather than applied “stock” decoration of watered-down character.

Materials

Guidelines:

- Use exterior materials that are present on adjacent historic buildings for new buildings.
- Use substitute materials, trim, and details that are visually indistinguishable from historic building materials.

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