

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
**GUIDANCE ON DECKS**

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CITY OF NEWPORT

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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By motion of the Historic District Commission at their June 11, 2024 meeting, the following guidelines and standards were adopted concerning decks on properties within Newport’s Historic Districts.

References:

- 1) Newport Standards – Ordinance: 17.80.060
- 2) US Secretary of the Interior Standards

Decks are a modern architectural element that generally lack a counterpart in historic buildings. Decks added to contributing historic properties have a substantial negative impact on the authentic character and visual qualities these structures possess. Decks on non-contributing structures require special attention to retain the historic character of the district and the building.

Existing decks and other elements covered under this section on both contributing and non-contributing structures are grandfathered until changes, upgrades or alterations are proposed, at which time these elements must comply with the current guidelines as enumerated herein.

Therefore, the Historic District Commission establishes the following guidelines and standards:

**For Contributing Buildings and Properties:**

1. Proposals for new decks on contributing historic structures are not considered appropriate. Unless definitive historical evidence is presented showing a deck on or attached to the original historic structure, the proposal will be rejected. Replacement of an existing deck at the ground floor level will be considered on a case-by-case basis and held to the standards herein. The creation of a new deck on existing building additions are not appropriate.
2. If historic precedent of a deck is established,
  - a. The new deck should be situated in the same or similar location as established by the historical evidence presented. The new deck must neither damage nor obscure the historic fabric of the structure and its character-defining features or details. A deck must be installed to be structurally self-supporting without damage to the historic structure if future removal is necessary.
  - b. The design and detail of deck and associated supports, pillars, railings, balusters, steps and other finishing details must reflect the scale, proportion and appropriate materials of the historic building of the deck for which historical precedent has been established.
  - c. Cable railings are not compatible with contributing properties and will be rejected.
3. Roofs are a major character-defining feature of historic buildings. Roof decks significantly alter the appearance of a roof and damage historic material; therefore, roof decks are not considered

appropriate in Newport's Historic Districts. Proposals for roof decks with no historical basis will be rejected.

4. Widow's Walks may be considered appropriate depending on individual circumstances and characteristics of the building. Historical evidence for prior existence of a Widow's Walk must be presented with any request for a new Widow's Walk on a contributing structure; it must be compatible in scale, proportion, design and materials with the existing structure.
5. Where a contributing building or property is not a single-family residence and has existing decks as part of previous renovation work, new proposals for repair/replacement of these decks shall be held to the standards herein. Alterations to decks which are part of an egress stairway shall be reviewed with preference for decks or landings minimized to meet the pertinent building codes for egress, thus minimizing the impact on the contributing building.

**For Non-Contributing Buildings and Properties:**

1. Deck must be sited in an inconspicuous location, usually on the building's rear elevation and inset from the rear corners. Careful consideration should be given to sightlines from any public right of way, including public waterways. It is preferred that the proposed deck is not visible from any public vantage points.
2. Deck must be aligned with height of the building's first floor (ground) level or stepped down. Visually tie the deck to the building by screening with compatible foundation materials such as skirt boards, lattice, masonry panels, or dense evergreen foundation plantings. Decks proposed above the first-floor level will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
3. In rare instances where it may be appropriate to site a deck in a location that is either visible to the public right-of-way (i.e. the side of a building), or above the first floor (ground) level (i.e. multi-family dwellings where upper levels have no other access to ground level), a deck should be treated in a more formally architectural way. Careful attention should be paid to materials, details and finishes, including painting or staining the deck's rails and structural support elements in colors compatible with the building. Landscape materials are encouraged to screen the impact of a deck and opaque screening structures are not appropriate.
4. Design and detail of decks and associated supports, pillars, railings, balusters, steps and other finishing details must reflect the scale, proportion and appropriate materials of the building. Cable railings will be considered in context of the non-contributing building.
5. Proposals for roof decks with no historical basis will be rejected.
6. Proposal of a deck requiring removal of a significant building element or site feature such as a porch or a mature tree will be rejected.
7. Proposal of a deck that will detract from the overall historic character of the building, site or district will be rejected.

8. Exterior stairs and stair landings necessitated by building code may be incorporated but shall not exceed the minimum size required for code compliance.

**For New Construction:**

1. When incorporated into new construction, a deck must be sited in an inconspicuous location, usually on the building's rear elevation. Careful consideration should be given to sightlines from any public right of way, including public waterways. It is preferred that the proposed deck is not visible from public vantage points.
2. Deck must be aligned with height of the building's first floor (ground) level or stepped down. Visually tie the deck to the building by screening with compatible foundation materials such as skirt boards, lattice, masonry panels, or dense evergreen foundation plantings. Decks proposed above the first floor level will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
3. Proposal of a deck that will detract from the overall historic character of the site (including other contributing buildings on the property) or district will be rejected. Roof decks are not appropriate.
4. In rare instances where appropriate to site a deck in a location visible to the public right-of-way or above the ground floor (i.e. multifamily dwellings where upper levels have no other access to ground level), a deck should be treated in a more formally architectural way. Careful attention should be paid to proportion and scale, materials, details and finishes. Landscape materials are encouraged to screen the impact of a deck and opaque screening structures are not appropriate.
5. Proposal of a deck requiring removal of a significant site feature on the property such as a mature tree will be rejected.

**For all projects:**

Drawings, materials list and cut sheets must be provided as part of the application. Historic photos, reference documents and material samples should be presented wherever possible.

The above criteria are intended as general guidelines to give property owners, architects, builders and others involved in proposed projects within Newport's Historic Districts a general awareness of the commission's expectations. Additional guidance may be found in the Standards and Guidelines for the Newport Local Historic District, (Revised 4.2016)

APPROVED BY RESOLUTION:

*Deanna Amorello*

Chair, Historic District Commission

June 11th, 2024

Date