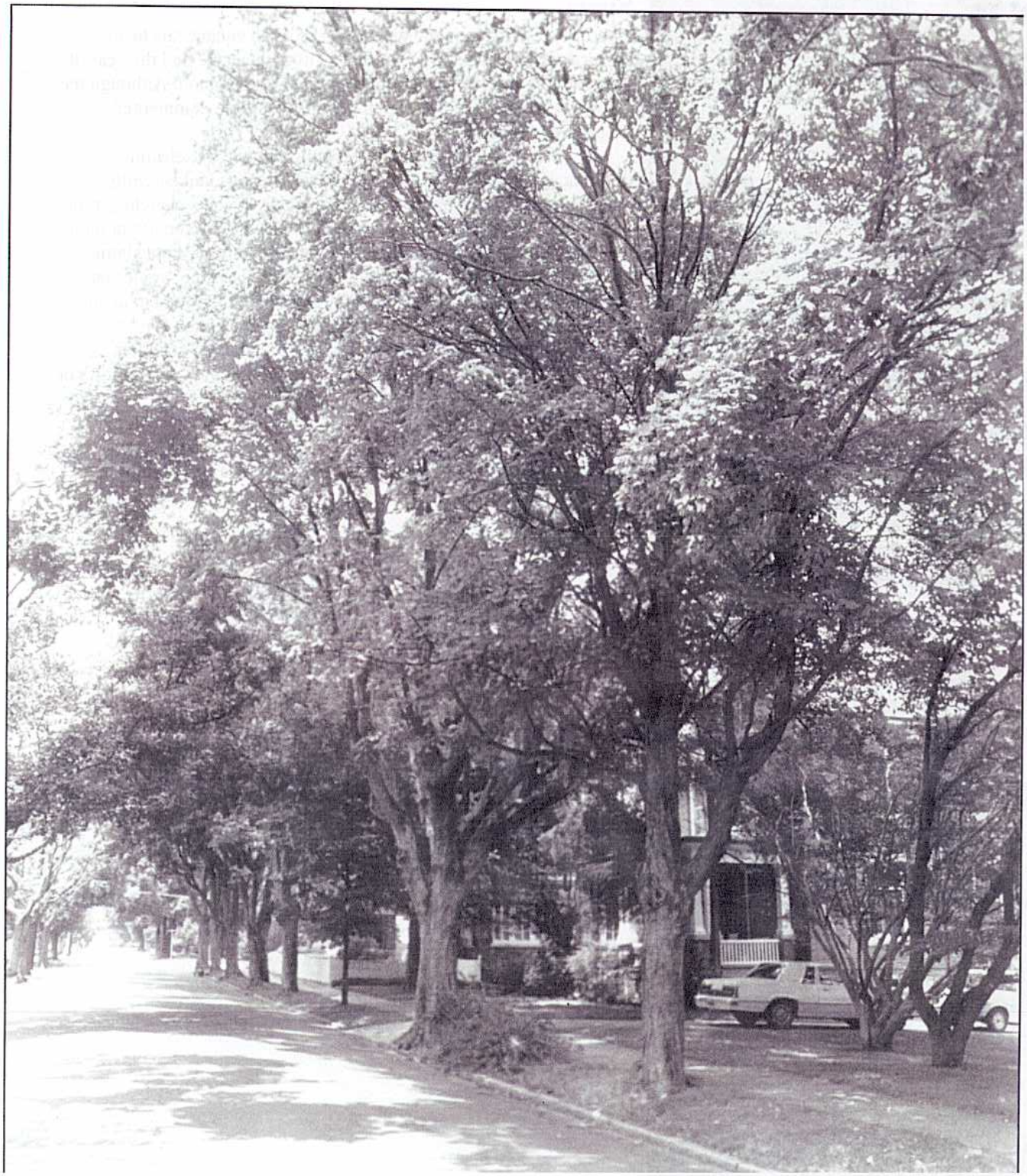
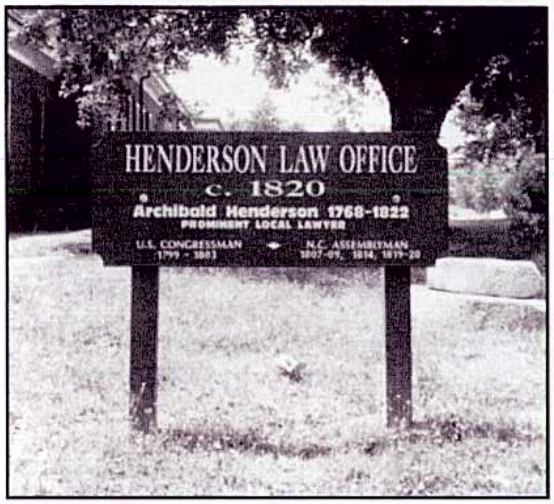


CHAPTER 4 SITE FEATURES AND DISTRICT SETTING



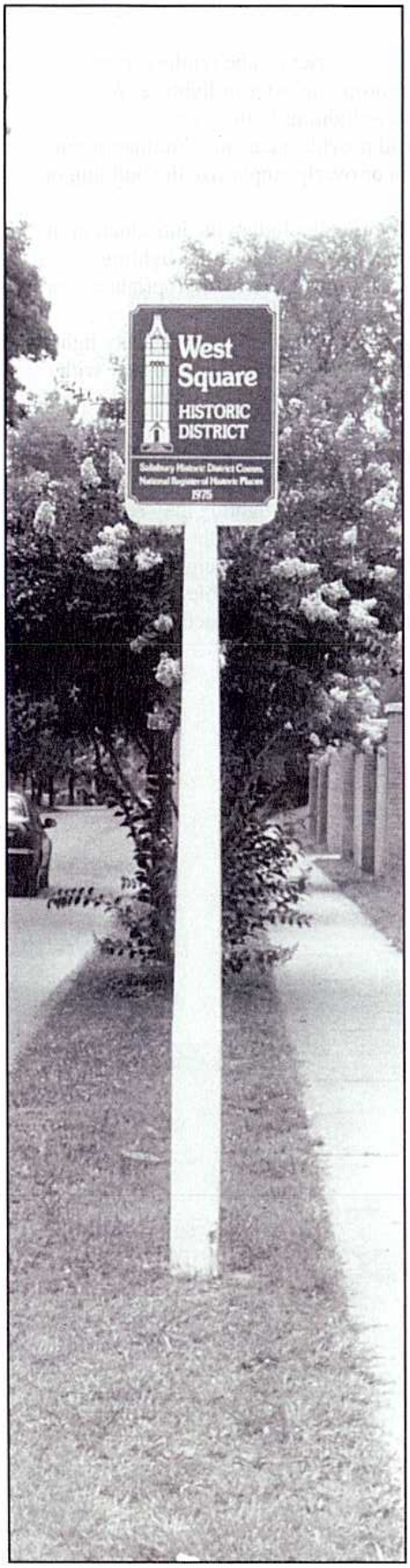
Small, painted, wooden identification signs mounted on fences or low standards are typical of district signage.

Signs

Appropriate signage in the historic district can enhance its historic character and residential scale. Signs citing the name and the year of construction of residential buildings are fairly common. Although the district is primarily residential, there are also some commercial properties with signs.

New signage should be kept unobtrusive by selecting traditional materials such as wood, metal, or stone and carefully placing signs in locations that do not damage or conceal architectural features and details. New signs should be sized to be consistent with the pedestrian scale of the district. Graphics should be kept simple and legible. Generally, freestanding signs should be no larger than necessary and should be mounted fairly low to the ground to avoid blocking the pedestrian's view. An appropriate location for freestanding signs is close to the front walk and near the public sidewalk. For commercial properties, graphics painted on windows or applied to fabric awnings are also appropriate.

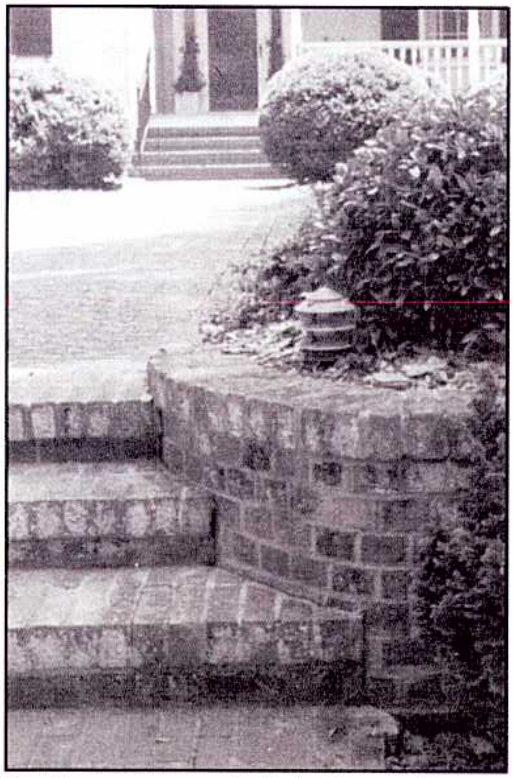
In reviewing applications for new signs, the commission considers their proposed dimensions, graphics, materials, colors, supports, and locations. All proposed signs must also conform to the local sign ordinance.



Signs: Guidelines

1. Introduce unobtrusive signage in the historic district that is simply designed and easily read.
2. Use materials found in the district, such as wood, stone, and metal, for new signage. Graphics applied to windows or awnings of commercial structures are also appropriate.
3. Limit the number of colors on signs, and relate the colors to or blend them with adjacent structures.
4. Keep identification signs for residential structures small in size, generally under three square feet.
5. Install small identification signs for residential buildings so that architectural features and details are not concealed.
6. Install flush-mounted flat signs in appropriate locations that do not conceal architectural features or details.
7. Install free-standing signs appropriately, such as on well-landscaped ground bases or low standards.
8. Make lighting for signs compatible with the residential atmosphere and the historic character of the district.
9. Generally, it is not appropriate to introduce internally illuminated signs, plastic signs, flashing signs, or portable signs in the district.
10. Generally, it is not appropriate to install large signs directly on facades or porch roofs.

Unobtrusive lighting fixtures on low standards at the public-private edge of property can enhance security.



Simple contemporary footlights along walkways or steps can improve pedestrian safety.

Lighting

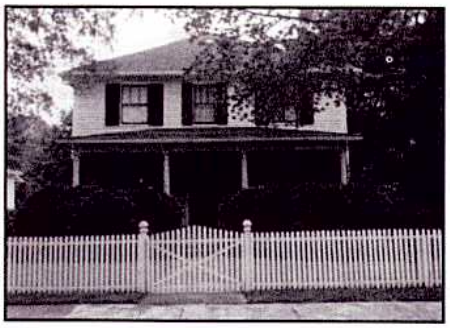
The residential character of the historic district can be reinforced and even enhanced by the selection of appropriate exterior lighting. Warm-spectrum light sources and unobtrusive lighting fixtures are recommended. Lighting levels should provide adequate illumination for safety concerns, but not detract from or overly emphasize the building or the site.

All proposals for exterior lighting, including the introduction of porch and entrance lighting fixtures and low-level security lighting, require a certificate of appropriateness. Certificates of appropriateness are required for spotlights mounted on buildings and for free-standing lighting fixtures mounted on posts, including Duke Power security lights. Often, security needs in the district can be met more appropriately with residential-scale security lighting than with the standard security lights mounted on utility poles.

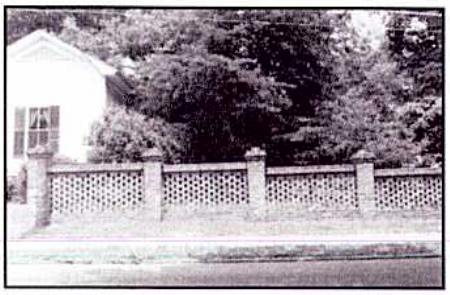
The compatibility of proposed exterior lighting and lighting fixtures is assessed in terms of design, material, use, size, scale, color, and brightness. Review of proposals for exterior lighting may require a scaled drawing or site plan. For post-mounted fixtures the following information may be required: (a) the location and the height of each pole; (b) the number of light fixtures to be located on each pole; (c) the type and the wattage of all lamps; (d) the area to be illuminated; and (e) the aiming angle of each light fixture.

Lighting: Guidelines

1. Introduce exterior lighting that is understated and compatible with the residential quality of the structure, the property, or the historic district. Compatibility of exterior lighting and lighting fixtures is assessed in terms of design, material, use, size, scale, color, and brightness.
2. Unless original fixtures exist, select unobtrusive lighting fixtures that are compatible with the building and the site.
3. Rather than indiscriminately lighting areas, introduce subtle lighting qualities by carefully locating light sources.
4. Introduce lighting levels that provide adequate safety, yet do not detract from or overly emphasize the structure or the property.
5. Introduce low-level lighting at the public-private edge of the property for the safety of pedestrians.
6. Introduce directional lighting to avoid spilling light onto adjacent properties. Exterior lighting should not be directed onto neighboring properties because it may adversely affect enjoyment of such properties.
7. Screen facade lights from public view.
8. It is not appropriate to install tall security lights in locations that are visible to the public.
9. It is not appropriate to introduce or remove exterior lighting fixtures that would alter the historic or architectural character of the structure, the property, or the historic district.

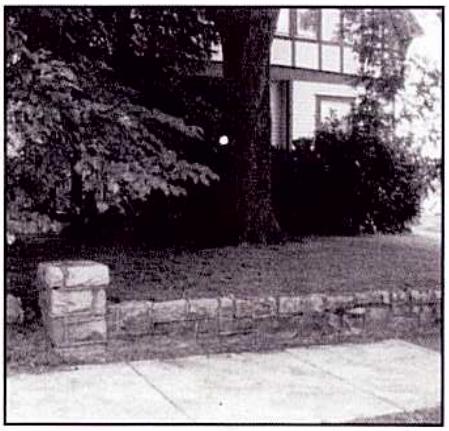


White picket fences border many front yards in the district.



A pierced brick wall provides privacy for this rear yard.

A wooden privacy fence screens the rear and side yards from view.



Low granite retaining walls accommodate grade changes to several front yards in the district.

Fences and Walls

Fences and walls are important constructed features of the landscape that help define the context of the site for a historic building. Within a historic district the repetition of fences or walls also provides a strong sense of continuity to the streetscape. Wood, cast iron, and wrought iron were all traditional fence materials, just as stone and brick were popular wall materials. The selection of material and design often related to the architectural style of the house.

In the historic district, wooden picket fences in a variety of patterns are the most typical fence type. However, there are a number of cast-iron fences and low stone walls as well. Simple utilitarian fences enclose some backyards. Occasional granite pillars and posts, at one time the supports for wrought-iron gates and fences, remain as markers of earlier entrances and property lines. Most fences and walls closely follow the property line. Preservation and repair of existing fences and walls is preferable to their replacement or removal.

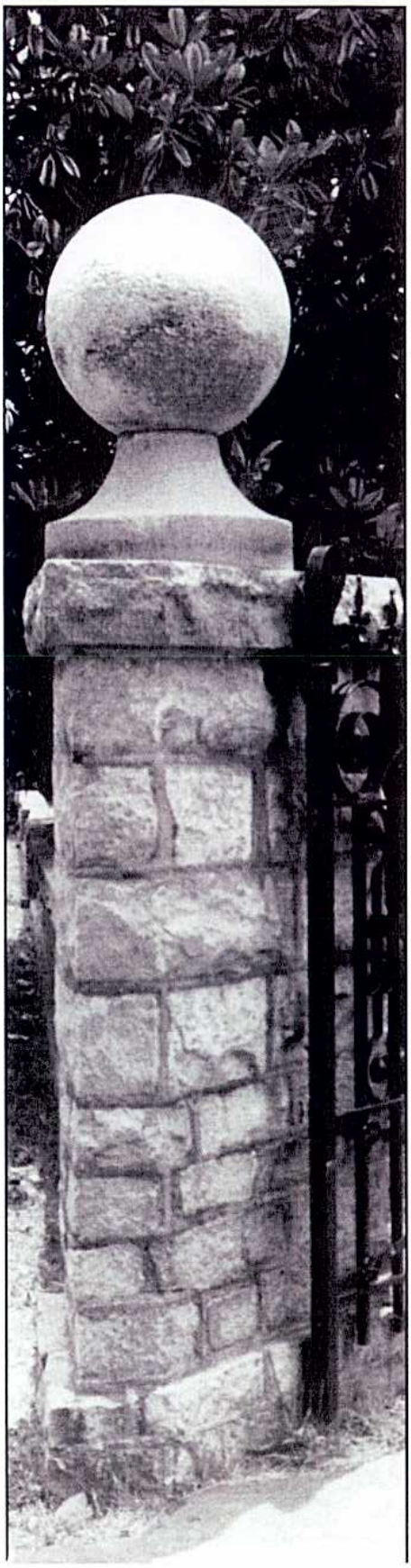
Whereas low retaining walls, low hedges, and open fences are appropriate for front yards, privacy fences and taller walls in rear side yards and backyards can provide desirable visual screening of parking areas or mechanical equipment from the street. Traditional materials such as wood or brick are recommended for privacy walls and fences. It is not appropriate to use contemporary fence or wall materials, such as vinyl or chain link fencing, in the district.

The introduction of new fences or walls in the district is reviewed according to the appropriateness of their design, materials, size, details, and color to the specific site and the district, as well as the appropriateness of their location and height. The commission requires a site plan locating the fence or the wall configuration and a scaled elevation drawing or a photograph of any proposed fencing.

Maintenance and Repair

The preservation of historic fences and walls in the historic district requires continuing maintenance and repair. A sound paint film is essential in maintaining and protecting both wooden and iron fences. To prevent rust and corrosion, iron fences should be cleaned with a wire brush to remove all loose paint and rust, then primed immediately with a high-quality metal primer before the finish coat is applied. Corrosion will begin whenever the iron is left unpainted, even in a few hours. Traditionally, iron fences are painted dark green, brown, or black. Typically, picket fences are painted white or occasionally a trim color related to the house. Stone and brick walls require maintenance similar to that required for exterior building walls. Retaining walls are particularly susceptible to cracking due to uneven settling and damage caused by moisture and vegetation.

The guidelines for masonry offer additional information on maintenance and repair of masonry walls.

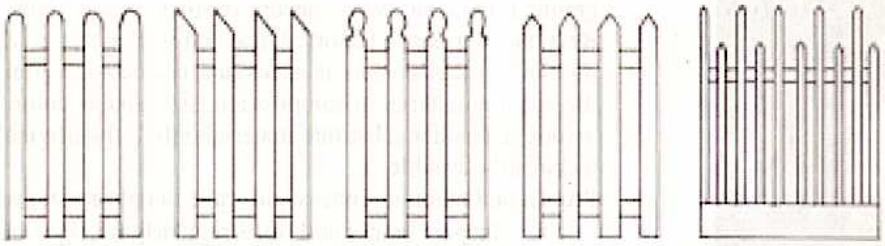


Fences and Walls: Guidelines

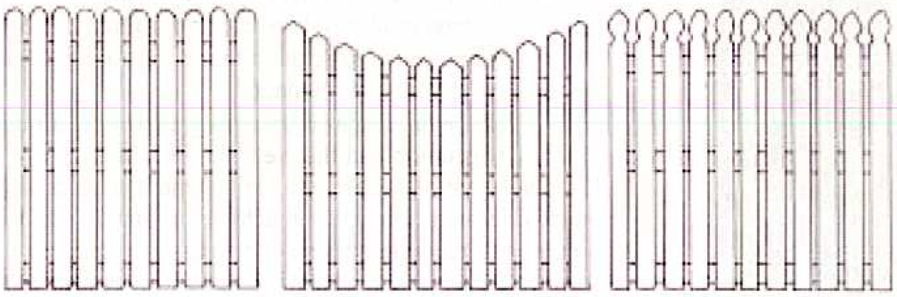
1. Retain and preserve original fences and walls.
2. Retain and preserve all architectural features that are character-defining elements of original fences and walls, including gates, granite pillars, hardware, decorative pickets, and rails.
3. Retain and preserve historic fence and wall material whenever possible. If replacement is necessary, use new material that matches the historic material in composition, size, shape, color, pattern, and texture. Consider substitute material only if the original material is not technically feasible.
4. Protect and maintain fences and walls in appropriate ways:
    - Inspect fences and walls regularly for signs of deterioration or moisture damage.
    - Keep all joinery adequately sealed to avoid moisture damage.
    - Maintain a sound paint film on all elements that were traditionally painted.
    - Follow the guidelines for maintenance of masonry, wood, or architectural metals where applicable.
    - Remove any vegetation that is uprooting posts or causing other structural damage.
    - Maintain hedges by trimming them and eliminating vegetation that threatens their health.
5. If replacement of a fence or a wall element is necessary, replace only the deteriorated element to match the original in size, scale, proportion, material, texture, and detail.
6. It is not appropriate to apply paint or other coatings to unpainted wall or fence materials that were not historically coated.
7. If a new fence or wall is to be constructed, base the design on accurate documentation of a historic fence or wall, or create a new design compatible with the historic character of the building and the district.
8. Keep new picket fences substantially open in character, and paint them white or a color appropriate to the color of the building.
9. Generally, construct new fences or walls to follow property lines and not to abut existing buildings.
10. It is not appropriate for new fences to exceed a maximum height of forty-two inches in front yards or six feet in rear yards. For rear side yard fences, it is not appropriate for the six-foot maximum height to extend beyond the rear corner of the house.
11. It is not appropriate to add elements or details to a fence or a wall in an attempt to create a false historical appearance.
12. It is not appropriate to use contemporary fence or wall materials, such as vinyl and chain link fencing, that were not historically available and are inconsistent with the character of the district.
13. Whenever possible, screen existing chain link fences with vegetation, such as climbing vines, ivy, or shrubbery.

continued on page 59

Fences and Walls

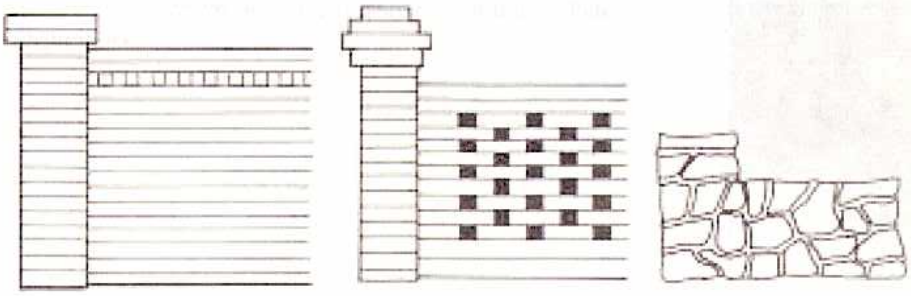


Wooden picket fences in a variety of patterns are the most typical fence type in the district.

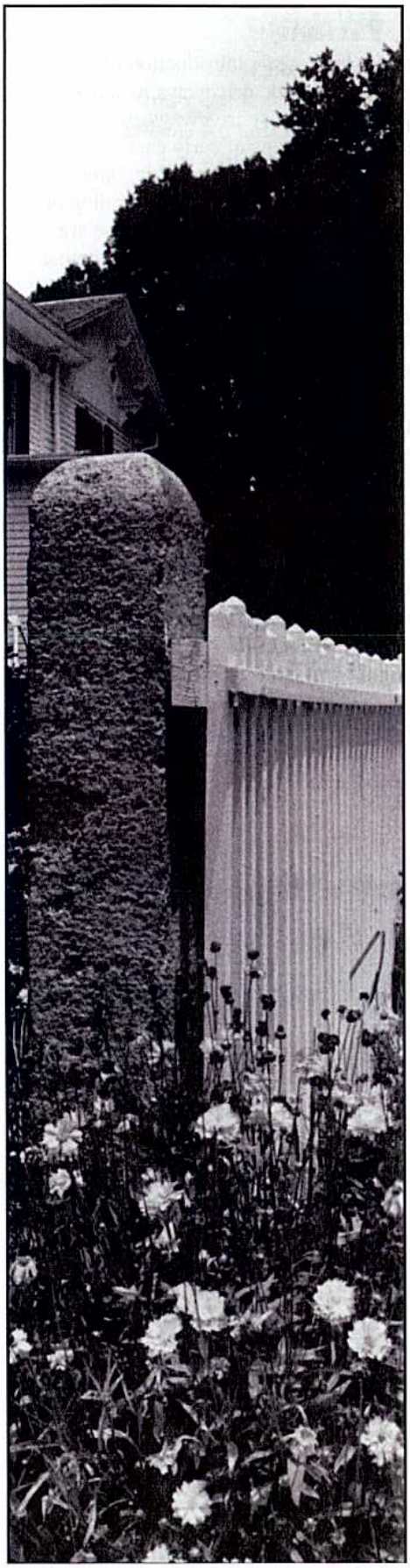


Wooden privacy or furniture fences enclose a number of back yards throughout the district.

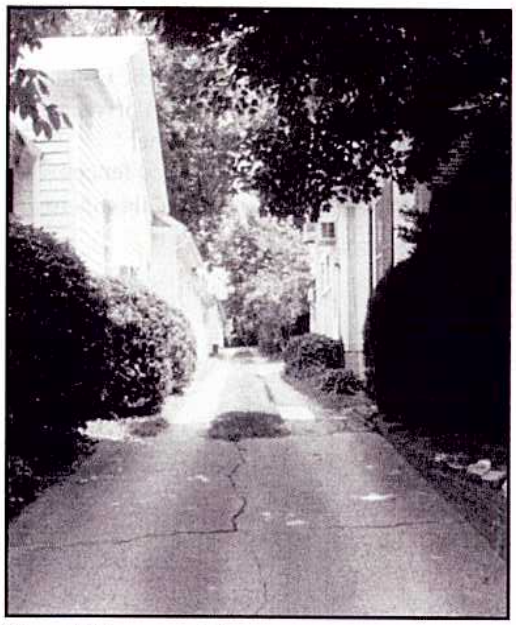
A variety of decorative cast- and wrought-iron fences in front yards contribute to the district character.



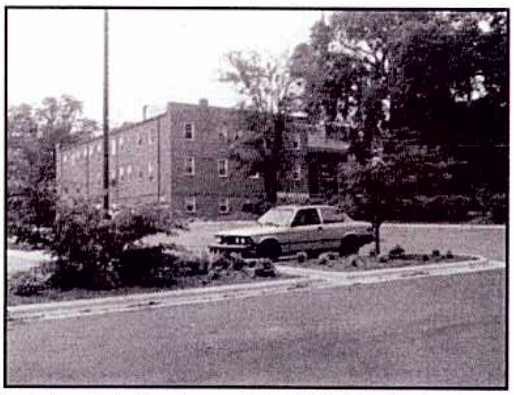
Brick low retaining walls and taller privacy walls constructed of brick or granite are found in the district.



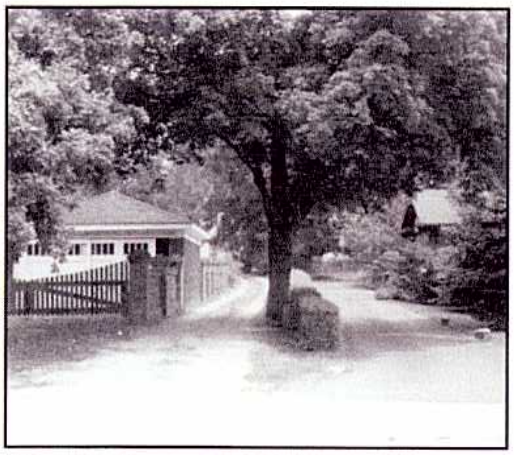
14. It is not appropriate to use utilitarian fences in front yards. Restrict utilitarian fences to rear yards, and screen them from view.
15. It is not appropriate to use fences or walls to screen front yards. Limit privacy fences to side and rear yards. If possible, use wooden privacy fences to screen parking areas, mechanical equipment, or other intrusive site features on residential properties. Relate privacy fences and walls for commercial buildings to the materials of the buildings or adjacent fences and walls.



Shared driveways with gravel or concrete runners split by a grassy median are common in the district.



Landscaped planting strips subdivide this large offstreet parking area and partially screen it from street view.



Alleys like the one on the left provide access to the rear of a number of properties.

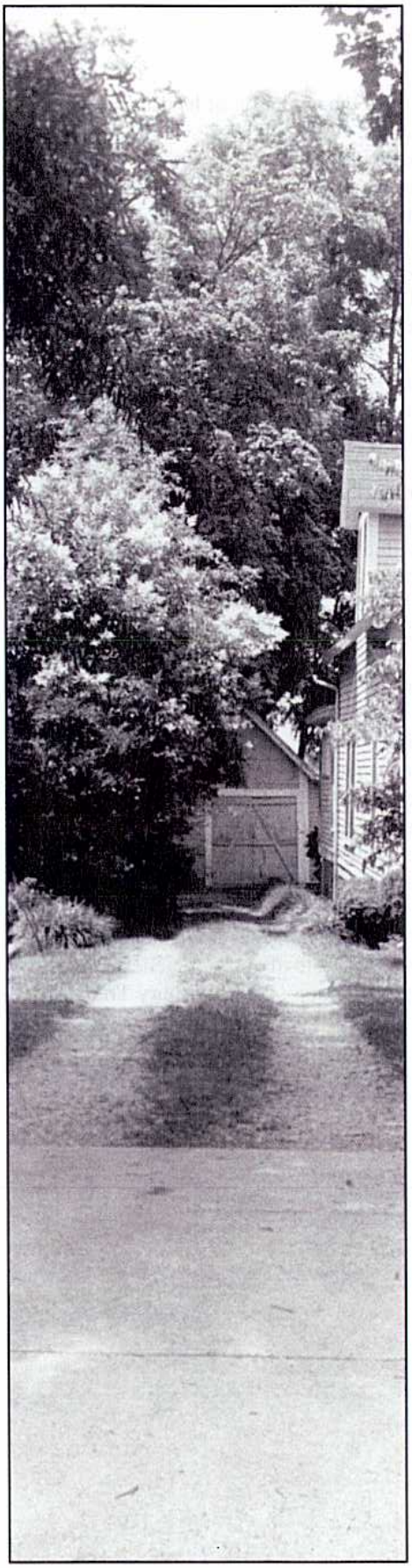
Driveways and Offstreet Parking

Because the historic district predates the large-scale introduction of automobiles in the 1920s, some lots do not include driveways, whereas others share a driveway with an adjoining lot. Most driveways are relatively narrow, reflecting the smaller dimensions of early cars. Generally, driveways in the district lead directly to a rear parking area or garage. On some larger lots a few driveways circle around the building or past the front entrance. Most driveways are graveled, although some are bricked or paved with concrete or asphalt. Granite curbstones define most streets and curbcuts in the district. A series of narrow alleys provides access to the rear property line of some lots. The preservation of the configuration and the materials of historic driveways and alleys is critical in preserving the overall character of the historic district.

New driveways should be compatible with existing driveways in spacing, width, configuration, and paving material. They should be introduced in locations that do not compromise historic site features, including landscaping, walkways, and retaining walls.

Because the historic district is predominantly residential, large offstreet parking areas are not typical. The introduction of additional offstreet parking must be weighed carefully and should only be considered if the parking area can be located unobtrusively in the rear or rear side yard, can be visually screened from the street and adjoining properties, will not abut the house, and will not destroy the residential character of the site by eliminating significant landscape features or a substantial portion of the rear yard.

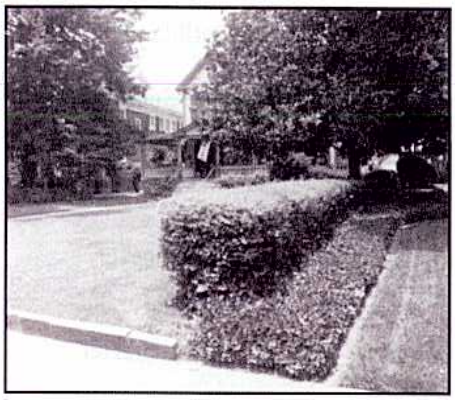
Proposals for new driveways or offstreet parking areas must provide the commission with scaled site plans, including all landscape and ground-cover changes and information on any proposed lighting.



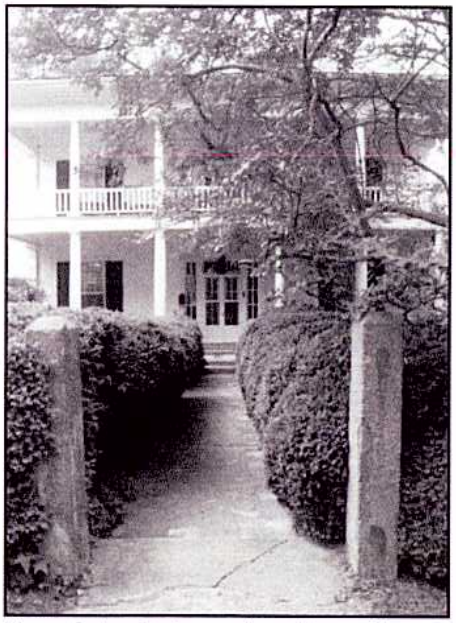
Driveways and Offstreet Parking: Guidelines

1. Retain and maintain the historic configuration and materials of existing driveways and alleys whenever possible.
2. Construct new driveways to conform with the spacing, the width, the configuration, and the materials of existing driveways.
3. Locate new driveways so that a minimum of alteration to historic site features, such as landscaping, walkways, and retaining walls, is necessary. Avoid damage to historic curbs and sidewalks.
4. Use driveways and alleys to access side and rear parking areas and garages.
5. Locate new parking areas as unobtrusively as possible in rear yards whenever possible.
6. It is not appropriate to locate offstreet parking in front yards.
7. It is not appropriate to locate offstreet parking in the side yard if the area would be visible from the street or the front yard.
8. It is not appropriate to store abandoned or inoperable vehicles in front yards.
9. For new parking areas, use paving material that is compatible with traditional paving materials for driveways in the district.
10. Create perimeter planting strips around new parking areas. Subdivide large parking areas with interior planting strips to break up the expanse of paving.
11. Screen all new parking areas from adjoining properties with fencing or shrubbery.
12. Incorporate existing mature trees into new parking areas whenever possible, and introduce new trees to maintain the tree canopy.
13. It is not appropriate to create large offstreet parking areas encompassing so much of the rear yard that the residential character of the site is lost.
14. It is not appropriate to abut new driveways or parking areas directly to the principal structure.
15. In lighting parking areas, follow the guidelines for exterior lighting in the district.
16. Design lighting levels for safety. Use unobtrusive, directional lighting fixtures to avoid spilling light onto adjacent properties. For nonresidential parking areas, use lighting fixtures that turn off automatically after business hours, if possible.

Substantial foundation plantings surround most front porches.



Hedges and border plantings like these define the boundaries of many yards.



Mature hedges flank a number of front walks in the district.

Landscaping

The historic district is an excellent example of the evolution of landscapes in southern residential development from the mid 1700s to the present. Early in the district's development, wide dirt streets were lined with fences, and considerable efforts were made to plant deciduous trees, mostly willow oaks and sugar maples, to provide shade. Gardens emulated several landscape styles, but the most prominent garden motif borrowed from the Dutch Colonial influence of Williamsburg with extensive use of boxwood in parterres and along walkways. Native trees were planted to provide shade for the many azaleas that were imported. The advent of the lawnmower in later years allowed for displacement of the broomswept yards with modern turfgrass. Over time, fences were removed, streets widened, and trees cut down. Today the historic district features many attractive landscapes with immaculate lawns, neatly arranged foundation plantings, massive shade trees, and finely crafted garden statuary and ornaments.

Because the historic district is primarily residential in scale and character, with buildings covering less than half of the average lot, it is important to preserve both the proportion of green area to building mass and the formal or informal character of the landscaping. Large, mature trees line many streets. Gardens are generally located in the rear yards, but some larger lots also have side yards with gardens. Existing hedges illustrate that foliage can be as effective as fences or walls in creating physical enclosure or visual screening.

Significant elements of the landscape, such as grassy lawns, mature trees, hedges, foundation plantings, fences, walls, ground cover, trellises, patios, terraces, fountains, and gardens, all contribute to the character of the specific site and the historic district as a whole. Consequently, the preservation of such elements is essential in preserving the historic character of the district. If a mature tree or hedge is damaged or diseased so severely that removal is necessary, replacement in kind or with a similar species will maintain the historic character of the landscape. Appendix D includes a list of suggested plant materials for the historic district.

The removal of any tree larger than eighteen inches in diameter at four-and-a-half feet above the ground requires a certificate of appropriateness. Trees in the public right-of-way come under the jurisdiction of the Salisbury Tree Board, City Code Chapter 24, "Trees."

Landscaping: Guidelines

1. Retain and maintain landscaping that contributes to the character of the historic district.
2. Retain and maintain specific landscape features that are character-defining elements of the historic district, including large trees, hedges, foundation plantings, grassy lawns, ground cover, trellises, patios, terraces, fountains, and gardens.
3. The removal of any tree larger than eighteen inches in diameter at four-and-a-half feet above the ground requires a certificate of appropriateness.
4. Remove a diseased, mature tree only on a written certification of its condition by an arborist, a landscape architect, a cooperative agent, or a city-designated agent. If it is necessary to remove a large tree or a hedge because of disease or storm damage, replace it with a new tree or hedge of the same species or with a similar appearance.
5. Pruning of large, mature trees that calls for the employment of a tree service also requires a certificate of appropriateness. Pruning techniques that promote the health and natural growth of the tree are encouraged. Unnatural pruning techniques such as topping, stubbing, dehorning or lopping are not appropriate. Tree pruning should follow accepted industry standards for arborists (ANSI 300A Standards).
6. Retain and preserve historic ground-cover materials, such as brick or granite pavers. If replacement is necessary, use new materials that match the original materials, or materials traditionally found in the historic district. Gravel is not appropriate as a ground cover.
7. If a landscape feature is completely missing, replace it with a new feature compatible with the character of the district.
8. When introducing additional landscaping features, keep them consistent with similar elements in the historic district.
9. When locating new landscape features, keep their locations consistent with the location of similar elements in the district.
10. Incorporate existing large trees and other significant landscape elements into plans for additions and new construction.
11. It is not appropriate to alter the residential character of the historic district by significantly reducing the proportion of green area to built area on an individual lot through additions, new construction, or surface paving.
12. It is not appropriate to install contemporary site features, such as swimming pools or decks, if they would compromise the historic character of the site or be visible from the street.
13. It is not appropriate to introduce raised planting beds in front yards or side yards if they would be visible from the street.
14. It is not appropriate to introduce contemporary edging materials, such as exposed landscape timbers, that are inconsistent with the character of the historic district.
15. It is not appropriate to introduce gazebos or playground equipment in front yards or front side yards.

An archaeological excavation reveals information about the site of a confederate prison that once stood between East Bank and Horah streets.

Archaeology

Archaeological resources include all material evidence of past human activity found below the surface of the ground. Occasionally, portions of such resources may be visible above grade as well. Such resources, known or unknown, are endangered whenever substantial grading or new construction is planned. Therefore, it is wise to investigate the likely presence of archaeological resources before beginning any major ground-disturbing work. Staff of the State Historic Preservation Office are available for consultation if there is reason to believe that significant archaeological resources will be destroyed or disturbed on a particular site.

Archaeological resources can often reveal additional information about a historic property. For example, they can indicate the location and the footprint of earlier outbuildings, porches, additions, and gardens. They can also reveal information about the life-style and the habits of earlier residents. Protecting such valuable resources in situ—that is, in their natural or original position—is the best means of preserving them.

Archaeology: Guidelines

1. Retain and preserve known archaeological features that are important to the history of the site or the district.
2. Minimize disturbance of the terrain in the historic district to reduce the possibility of destroying unknown archaeological materials and habitation levels.
3. Protect in situ known archaeological materials whenever possible.
4. Undertake necessary investigations using professional archaeologists and contemporary methods when it is not possible to preserve archaeological materials in situ.
5. It is not appropriate to introduce heavy machinery or equipment on sites where their presence might disturb archaeological materials.