

# NW 13TH AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

Adopted by the Portland City Council February 21, 1996



BUREAU OF PLANNING  
PORTLAND, OREGON

# NW 13th Avenue Historic District Design Guidelines

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## **1990 - NW 13th Avenue Historic District Advisory Council**

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Bruce Johnson  
George Sheldon  
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**February, 1996**

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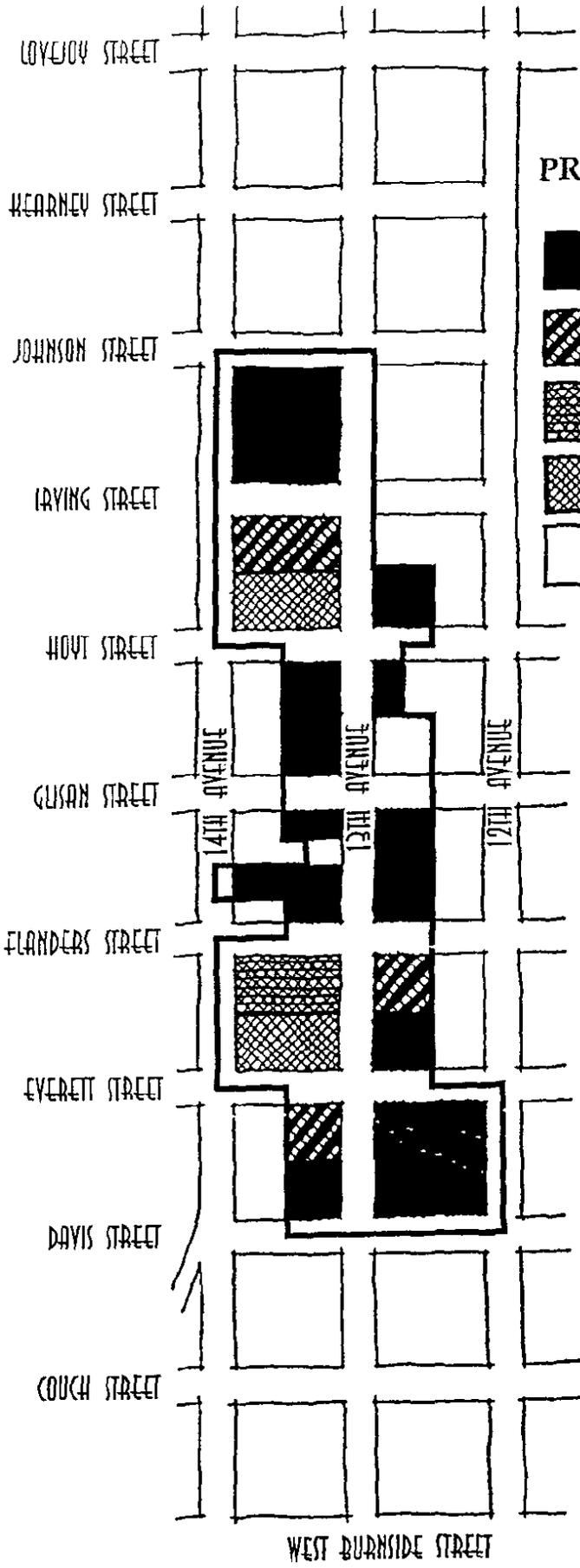
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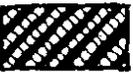
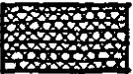
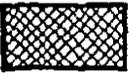
# NW 13th Avenue Historic District Design Guidelines

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**LEGEND  
PROPERTY CLASSIFICATION**

-  PRIMARY
-  SECONDARY
-  COMPATIBLE/CONTRIBUTING
-  COMPATIBLE/NON CONTRIBUTING
-  VACANT PARCELS



# NW 13TH AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT

# NW 13TH AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR EXTERIOR REMODELING AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

The NW 13th Avenue Historic District has been designated as a Portland Historic District and has also been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, in recognition of its unique architectural and historical qualities. It contains an outstanding ensemble of late 19th and early 20th century loft warehouse structures. These structures display a remarkable uniformity of design, materials, and special features. The essential character of the District lies in this architectural coherence and uniformity, and in the street itself. Northwest 13th Avenue is the spine of the District. The District remains as a primary expression of the City's historical development as a center of commerce and distribution.

Because of its historic district status, properties within the NW 13th Avenue Historic District are subject to review by the Portland Historical Landmarks Commission of any new construction or exterior remodeling. Each historic district has design guidelines which the Commission uses in its review of projects. The purpose of these guidelines is to encourage rehabilitation and new construction which respect and enhance the historical character of the District. The guidelines are not intended to be inflexible; rather, they seek to guide development and rehabilitation in a manner compatible with the District character.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES BACKGROUND

One of the essential elements which defines the character of the NW 13th Avenue Historic District is the high degree of compatibility among its visual elements and architectural relationships. Most buildings along NW 13th Avenue retain much of their original integrity. These buildings are largely intact as originally constructed, including special features such as water towers, loading docks, and window systems.

The basic aim of these guidelines is to encourage the retention and rehabilitation of those elements which constitute the historical and architectural character of the District, while accommodating reasonable changes to allow new use and building upgrading. Alterations or additions to the exterior of existing buildings, and construction of new buildings, should be done in a manner that is compatible with the character of the District, as defined by these common architectural elements and relationships.

Presented below are general considerations which should guide all development in the District. These considerations derive from the SECRETARY OF INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION. They are advisory only. Subsequent sections present more specific guidelines for exterior rehabilitation (Page 3) and for new construction (Page 6).

## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS (Advisory)

1. **Compatible Use** — Every reasonable effort should be made to provide a compatible use for buildings, which will require minimum alteration to the building and its environment.
2. **Rehabilitation** — Rehabilitation work should not destroy the distinguishing qualities or character of the property and its environment. The removal or alteration of any historical material or architectural features should be held to the minimum, consistent with the proposed use.
3. **Repair vs. Replace** — Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of original features, substantiated by physical or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs, or on the availability of different architectural features from other buildings.
4. **Distinctive Features** — Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize older structures, and which often predate the mass production of building materials, should be treated with sensitivity.
5. **Building Evolution** — Many changes to buildings and environments which have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history of the building and the District. These changes may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected.
6. **Building Integrity** — All buildings should be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations to create an appearance inconsistent with the actual character of the building is discouraged. New additions or alterations to buildings should be done in such a manner that if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the original building would be unimpaired.
7. **Contemporary Compatibility** — Contemporary design for new buildings and additions to existing buildings is not discouraged if such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the district, building or its environment.
8. **Building Survey/Analysis** — A structural soundness and building survey should be obtained prior to any substantial rehabilitation. This should include an analysis of the types of structural elements and the extent of deterioration for each element. These elements include: primary - foundations, bearing walls, columns, beams, floors, roof; secondary - nonload bearing walls, windows and doors, stairs, utilities; and minor - finish materials, roof coverings, siding, ceilings, etc.
9. **Surface Cleaning** — The surface cleaning of structures should be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting, and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building materials, **should not** be undertaken.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR EXTERIOR REMODELING

1. **Visual Integrity of Structure** — The vertical lines of columns and piers, and the horizontal definition of spandrels and cornices, and other primary structural elements should be maintained. Such structural lines should be restored if previous alterations have substantially changed them.
2. **Scale and Proportion** — The scale and proportion of altered or added building elements, and the relationship of voids to solids (that is, the relationship of doors and windows to walls and column elements) should be visually compatible with the traditional architectural character of the historic district. Avoid blank walls on street elevations, especially on ground floors, unless there is a historic precedent for the blank wall.
3. **Exterior Building Materials** — Most of the buildings within the NW 13th Avenue Historic District were constructed of bearing wall brick masonry (left exposed or covered with plaster), or stone. This feature gives the area much of its textural surface character. Surfaces should be treated, repaired, and maintained in a manner which respects this character.

- a. **Walls** — Wall materials within the District maintain a fairly uniform surface texture, but are articulated through columns, piers, and surface ornamentation. Bricks, stone and plaster are the predominant materials. Original building materials should be preserved wherever possible. Cleaning and/or repainting of masonry is preferred over replacement. If masonry has to be replaced, it should be done with original or new masonry of matching color, texture, size and coursing. Mortar color should match the color and joint configuration of the existing masonry wall.

Plastered surfaces should be cleaned, repaired with a similar plaster texture, and repainted. Avoid exposing brick to the weather by removing finish plaster, as this will speed deterioration of the brick. Artificial and/or inappropriate coverings, such as metal, plastic, or wood sidings, should not be applied to masonry surfaces.

- b. **Storefronts, Doors, and Windows** — The shape, size, placement and trim of storefront openings are a key element in establishing the character of a building. Where original storefronts remain, they should be preserved and repaired. Where covered with other materials, the latter materials should be removed to determine the condition of the original materials.

Storefronts requiring new materials may include a wide variety of replacement systems. Building Codes require non-combustible materials (steel, aluminum, etc.), but wood systems may be acceptable provided other means of fire protection are installed. Wood systems should be painted.

New window and door openings should maintain a similar horizontal and vertical relationship as the originals. Traditionally, ground floor window systems vary in the District — some buildings feature multi-paned wood or

metal industrial casement windows. Other buildings feature large storefront panes with smaller transom panes above. Still others feature ground floor systems similar to upper floor systems, typically double-hung, one-over-one, wood sash windows.

Clear glass should be used instead of tinted glass. Original hardware should be maintained wherever possible. If not, new hardware should be in keeping with original designs.

- c. **Loading Docks, Overhead Doors, and Canopies** — Many of the buildings along NW 13th Avenue have concrete or wood loading docks projecting into the street, with canopies above and roll-up doors adjacent to the loading space. These features are among the most distinctive features in the District, and should be retained even where loading operations have been discontinued. New docks are also encouraged, to a maximum projection of 11 feet.
4. **Rear and Side Walls and Roofs** — Generally, the issues which apply to the fronts of buildings also apply to rear and side walls. Masonry surfaces should be repaired as necessary. Historic elements on rear or side walls, such as old painted wall signs, and historic roof top features, such as water towers, should be retained where practicable. New openings are allowed in rear or side walls, but should be a consistent system (as opposed to random placement) which doesn't detract from primary elevations.
5. **Color** — As has been noted, all of the buildings in the NW 13th Avenue Historic District are masonry clad. Most of these structures have never been painted (except for decorative details and wood systems); but several of the buildings were painted, either originally or at a later date.

Painting of masonry which has never been painted is discouraged. Removal of paint to reveal originally exposed surfaces is encouraged. Paint removal should be done as gently as possible, i.e., **not by sandblasting**.

When repainting surfaces which were traditionally painted (window systems or some decorative masonry details), effort should be made to determine the original color by scraping a chip from the existing surface. If the original color cannot be determined, or a new color is desired, the new color should be compatible with the rest of the building facade.

6. **Signs** — There is a tradition in the NW 13th Avenue Historic District of painting large signs on the walls (usually on non-street elevations) of warehouse structures. These historic painted wall signs should be retained where practical.

New signs on the principal (i.e., street) elevations of new or existing buildings should be restrained and should not be a dominant facade feature. Lettering painted on windows, and signs located inside buildings are appropriate; moreover, these types of signs do not require review. Other appropriate design types include indirectly lit letters mounted on spandrels above the storefront, or signs on an entry awning. Contemporary plastic, back-lit signs are discouraged. Signs should be mounted so as to minimally damage any historic surface to which they are attached.

7. **Vertical Additions** — Buildings in the NW 13th Avenue Historic District are typically two to six stories in height. Additional stories may be added provided that:
  - a. The added height complies with the height and density maximums in the Zoning Code. At the time of the adoption of these guidelines, the following regulations apply: North of Hoyt St., maximum height is 75 feet and maximum FAR is 4:1. South of Hoyt St., maximum height is 100 feet and maximum FAR is 6:1. Additional FAR and height are allowed when certain amenities are provided, as set forth in the Central City Plan District regulations.
  - b. The added height does not exceed that which was traditional for the style of building. The tallest loft warehouse structures are approximately 8 to 10 stories.
  - c. The added height does not alter the traditional scale and proportions of the building style. A frequent means of achieving this aim is to set the addition back from street facade planes, so that the addition is minimally perceived from the street.
  - d. The added height is visually compatible with adjacent historic buildings.
8. **Horizontal Additions** — Horizontal additions may be added to historic buildings provided that:
  - a. The addition maintains the traditional scale and proportion of the building style.
  - b. The addition is visually compatible with adjacent historic buildings.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

Vacant, developable property in the NW 13th Avenue Historic District is relatively scarce. Because of the small number of vacant parcels, new construction on infill sites will not have a major effect on the District character. The following guidelines present the basic issues which the design of a new building should address. In general, it is intended that these guidelines encourage new construction which is compatible with the historical character and architecture of the District, but which does not attempt to mimic or imitate the older buildings.

1. **Siting** — Without exception, the historic siting pattern of development in the NW 13th Avenue Historic District has been to construct buildings which come out to all property lines. This pattern gives the District a strong sense of street wall enclosure. New buildings should be built out to street property lines, in accordance with the historic pattern.
2. **Height and Bulk** — Buildings in the NW 13th Avenue Historic District display a consistent mass. Buildings are typically two to six stories in height. New construction should likewise be at least equivalent to two stories in height, and should not exceed the maximum allowed height and density requirements in the Zoning Code.
3. **Composition** — Most of the historic warehouse structures share a common, classically derived composition of a base, middle, and top. On some buildings, the distinction between these three sections is simple, with a cornice marking the top, and different window systems distinguishing the base or ground floor. On other buildings, the tri-partite composition is more strongly defined, with strong belt courses separating the sections, and distinct window patterns at each section. New buildings should respect this tri-partite composition, with a clear base, middle and top.
4. **Scale and Proportion** — Historic warehouse structures in the NW 13th Avenue Historic District consistently feature masonry walls with openings recessed from the building plane. The size and relationship of windows, doors, and other architectural elements in new buildings should be of a scale and proportion that is compatible with the historic architectural pattern. Blank walls should be avoided in street-facing elevations, especially at the ground floor.
5. **Materials, Colors, and Textures** — Historic warehouse buildings feature consistent exterior materials and textures and most buildings display a consistent range of colors. Buildings are clad in masonry, either brick or concrete. Window systems typically consist of wood sash, double-hung windows, or wood or metal industrial casement windows. New buildings should be compatible with the materials, colors and textures found in the District.

Use of masonry and stuccoed masonry as a major building material is encouraged. For the purpose of achieving historic compatibility, careful attention should be given to new brick work as follows: a) the color, texture and size of the brick; b) the width of the joints between the bricks; and c) the color and profile of the mortar joint.

The use of non-traditional finish materials should be avoided. Also, the use of wood as a major exterior surface material should be avoided.

6. **Rear and Side Walls, and Roofs** — Non-street elevations of a building are less significant than street elevations. Rear and side walls of buildings should therefore be fairly simple, masonry-clad, with or without windows. Effort should be made to obscure views of roof top mechanical and electrical equipment.
7. **Special Features** — Several special features are commonly found throughout the District. These include loading docks with roll-up doors and wood or metal canopies overhead; awnings at entries; cast-stone lintels, sills, and decorative cornices; and water towers. Efforts should be made to include similar features in new construction, although decorative elements should not dominate or detract from the basic integrity of the building and its elevations.
8. **Signs** — There is a tradition in the NW 13th Avenue Historic District of painting large signs on the walls of warehouse structures. This practice is not discouraged on new buildings. However, signage on the principal (i.e., street) elevations of new or existing buildings should be restrained and should not be a dominant facade feature. Lettering painted on windows and signs located inside buildings are usually suitable; moreover, these types of signs do not require review. Other suitable design types include indirectly lit letters, mounted on the spandrels above storefronts. Contemporary plastic, back-lit signs are discouraged.

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Agenda No.

ORDINANCE NO. 169823

Title

Adopt design guidelines for the NW 13th Avenue Historic District. (Ordinance)

INTRODUCED BY Commissioner Charlie Hales	Filed: <b>FEB 09 1996</b>
NOTED BY COMMISSIONER	Barbara Clark Auditor of the City of Portland
Affairs Finance and Administration Safety <i>[Signature]</i> Utilities Works	By: <u><i>Coy Kershner</i></u> Deputy
BUREAU APPROVAL Bureau: Planning	For Meeting of:
Prepared by: Leo Dean Williams Date: 1/10/96	Action Taken: <b>FEB 15 1996</b> Passed to 2nd Reading <b>FEB 21 1996 2 P.M.</b>
Budget Impact Review: <input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Required	Continued to: _____
Bureau Head: <i>[Signature]</i> David C. Knowles, Director	

AGENDA		FOUR-FIFTHS AGENDA	COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
			YEAS	NAYS	
Consent	Regular <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Blumenauer	Blumenauer	✓	
NOTED BY		Hales	Hales	✓	
City Attorney		Kafoury	Kafoury	—	—
City Auditor		Lindberg	Lindberg	✓	
City Engineer		Katz	Katz	✓	

ORDINANCE No. 169823

Adopt design guidelines for the NW 13th Avenue Historic District and direct the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission to use the guidelines. (Ordinance)

The City of Portland ordains:

Section 1. The Council finds:

1. On October 8, 1986, the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission voted unanimously to recommend designation of the NW 13th Avenue Historic District to the Portland City Council.
  2. On October 29, 1986, City Council designated by Ordinance No. 159127 the NW 13th Avenue Historic District as a historic district and declaring it an emergency.
  3. On June 15, 1987, the NW 13th Avenue Historic District was entered in the National Register of Historic Places.
  4. A NW 13th Avenue Historic District Advisory Committee was formed to develop special design guidelines for the 13th Avenue Historic District.
  5. The Advisory Committee completed their draft of recommended design guidelines for the NW 13th Avenue Historic District on February 8, 1990, however these proposed guidelines were never submitted to the Landmarks Commission and City Council for adoption and use.
  6. During the process of creating design guidelines for the River District, the Landmarks Commission recommended that the 13th Avenue Historic District Design Guidelines proposed and recommended by the 13th Avenue Historic District Advisory Committee be incorporated in the public review process for River District.
  7. On March 17, 1994, the Portland Design Commission and Portland Historic Landmarks Commission endorsed the direction of the River District Development Plan and recommended that the City Council accept it and direct the Bureau of Planning to further refine the plan, consider zone changes on the upstream portion of Terminal 1 and Union Station property north of the Broadway Bridge, evaluate the Central City Plan with a view toward accommodating features of the River District Development Plan and commence a public process to adopt River District Special Design Guidelines.
  8. Notice of a Landmarks Commission public hearing on proposed design guidelines for the NW 13th Avenue Historic District was sent to all property owners of record in the River District on April 27, 1995. Additionally, adjacent neighborhood associations, interested groups, and individuals were notified. The notice clearly identified the date, time and place of the hearing. Also the notice informed recipients of two public forum/workshops to present and discuss a discussion draft of the proposed design guidelines. The workshops were designed to solicit ideas, create a consensus-building partnership, and to get response/recommendations regarding the proposed guidelines.
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9. The public forums/workshops were conducted on May 15, 1995 and May 22, 1995. No public testimony was received in opposition to the proposed NW 13th Avenue Historic District Design Guidelines.
10. A public hearing on the proposed NW 13th Avenue Historic District Design Guidelines was held by the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission on June 12, 1995 at which time all testimony was supportive of the proposed Design Guidelines.
11. On June 12, 1995, the Landmarks Commission voted unanimously to adopt the attached recommended Design guidelines for the NW 13th Avenue Historic District (Exhibit A). The Landmarks Commission recommends that City Council adopt these guidelines and approve them for the Landmarks Commission's use when conducting design review within the NW 13th Avenue Historic District.
12. The use of the special NW 13th Avenue Historic District Design Guidelines meets the intent of findings in Ordinance No. 163325 (adopting fundamental design guidelines). The additional guidelines serve to protect the District's historic character and further implementation of the Central City Plan, an acknowledged portion of the Comprehensive Plan, because they help stimulate and support a successful fulfillment of the Plan's Design Goals and Objectives.
13. It is in the public interest and critical to successful implementation of the Central City Plan that design review in the NW 13th Avenue Historic District use special historic district design guidelines specific to the District.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Council directs:

- a. The goals for design review and the Design Guidelines for the NW 13th Avenue Historic District within the River District of the Central City Plan, attached as Exhibit A, are hereby approved and adopted for use as the approval criteria for design review procedures within the NW 13th Avenue Historic District.
- b. The Portland Historic Landmarks Commission and the City Council on appeal, shall conduct design review in the NW 13th Avenue Historic District using the NW 13th Avenue Historic District Design Guidelines.
- c. The review body conducting design review is authorized to waive individual guidelines for specific projects based on findings that such waiver will better accomplish the goals and objectives for NW 13th Avenue Historic District design review.
- d. Should the review body find that one or more of the design guidelines are not applicable to the circumstances of the particular project being reviewed, the guideline or guidelines may be waived by the review body.

- e. The Portland Historic Landmarks Commission may modify, delete or add to these design guidelines where such a change will aid in the retention and rehabilitation of those elements which constitute the historical and architectural character of the NW 13th Avenue Historic District, while accommodating reasonable changes to allow new use and building upgrading; provided, however, that the specific modification, addition or deletion may not take effect until approved by the Portland City Council.

**FEB 21 1996**

Passed by the Council,

Commissioner Charlie Hales  
Leo Dean Williams  
January 10, 1996

**BARBARA CLARK**  
Auditor of the City of Portland  
By

*Britta Olson* Deputy