CHAPTER 6
NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS

The historic districts of Moultrieville, Sullivan;s Island and Atlanticville have few vacant lots and there has been limited construction of new dwellings in recent years. Vacant lots provide the opportunity to integrate new construction into the streetscape. Careful planning and design of new construction in the districts is essential to maintaining their character. Homeowners should take a similarly respectful approach when considering additions to an existing historic building.

Infill construction in the historic districts can be positive, strengthening the visual rhythm of the streetscape by closing up the gap of a vacant lot. A new building or addition reflects its own period of construction, representing the vitality and evolution of the historic district over time. The design, style, and technology embodied in new construction illustrates the ongoing growth of the community and the historic districts.

Design guidelines for new construction do not dictate a particular architectural style. Their purpose is to ensure that new buildings and additions blend harmoniously with existing historic buildings. Continuity among historic buildings derives from qualities other than style, rather from site placement, building height/scale, materials, details, form, and rhythm. Infill buildings are able to achieve these similarities without attempting to mimic a traditional style. Avoid excess historic architectural details since this can present a false sense of history and confuse the viewer as to what is original and what is new.

The most appropriate infill will be buildings which have compatibility to the existing surrounding neighborhood. Compatibility will reflect the mass, scale, height, materials, and design of the buildings of the neighborhood and be harmonius with the visual streetscape for the continuity of the adjacent properties and the island. While compatibility is an important factor to the DRB, their review is not intended to regulate or restrict a homeowner or individual property owner to determine the type of dwelling or building desired. However, the visual impact of the proposed design on the neighborhood and adjacent property owners will always be an important consideration.

In recent years, many of the new infill projects on Sullivan's Island have been elevated to meet the Town's Base Flood Elevation (BFE) and Design Flood Elevation (DFE) requirements. These projects were reviewed by the Town's Design Review Board (DRB) and they provide templates for future new construction. An infill building should achieve harmony with the site's immediate surroundings. The historic districts on Sullivan's Island share many similarities in their vernacular designs of frame construction. New construction should reinforce this character while at the same time allowing for the use of compatible, contemporary designs and materials. Qualities including building height, scale, setback, site coverage, orientation, spacing between buildings, building rhythm along the street, and such landscape features as walls, walks, trees (or hedges), and fences should be noted and followed. For an addition to an existing contributing building in the historic districts, define the characteristic elements of that building, as well as those in both the block and the immediate environs. When vacant lots are developed, builders are encouraged to devote as much space as possible to lawns over paving, such as for patios and multi-car driveways. Limit paved areas in front yards to walks and well-scaled driveways.

Height & Width

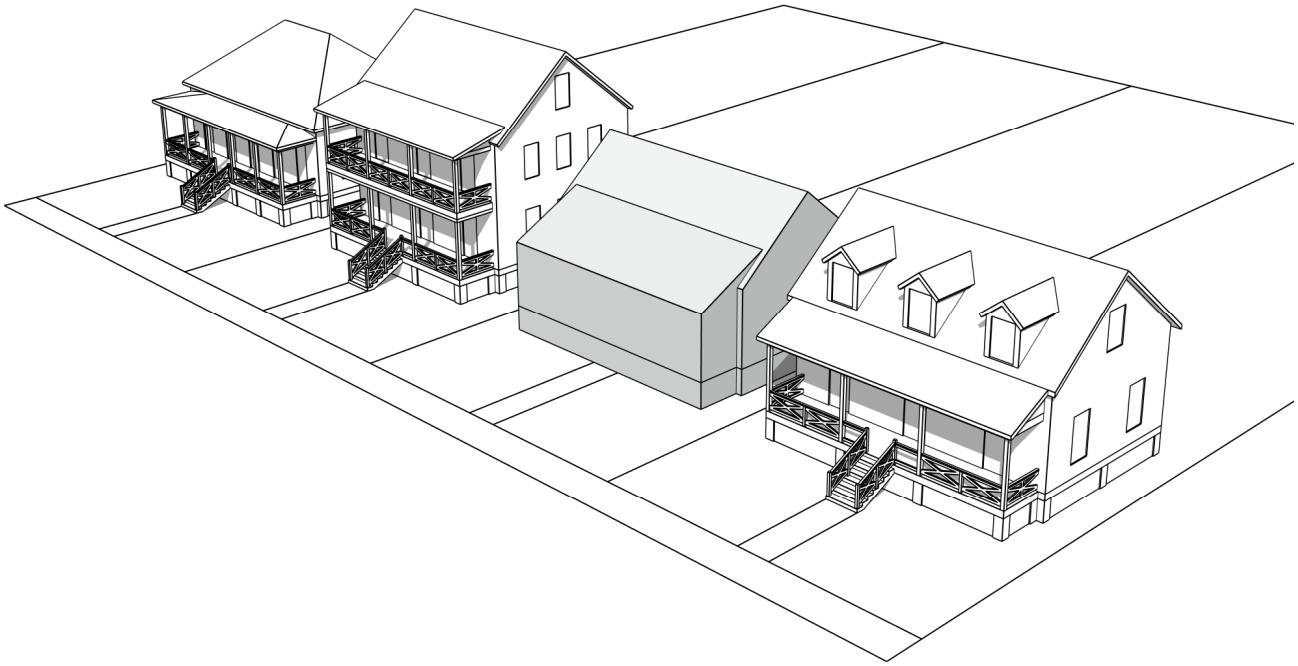
A new building should not dominate the streetscape in height. A feature of the building should not rise above the general pattern in height. Likewise, a low, one-story building is not appropriate in an area characterized by two–story buildings. Building width and space between buildings along the streetscape are similarly important patterns to follow. If there is not an established pattern, new construction should stay within this range as represented. For new construction in the RS Zone, new buildings shall not exceed thirty-eight feet (38') in height. The bottom elevation of the building's lowest horizontal structural member shall be no more than eight (8) feet above finished grade. The finished floor shall be no more than nine (9) feet four (4) inches above finished grade. If the base flood elevation (BFE) conflicts with the maximum height limitations, the lowest horizontal structural member shall be no higher than the design flood elevation (DFE) with a finished floor elevation (FFE) no higher than two (2) feet above the DFE elevation.

Scale

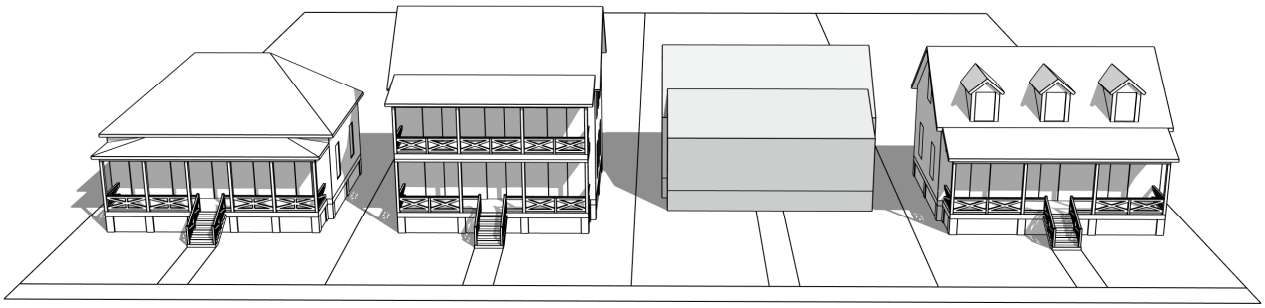
Scale refers to the relationship between a building size and its architectural details. Door and window openings, story heights, and the dimensions of details are all in "human scale" proportion. The scale of new buildings and their features should follow this pattern.

Orientation

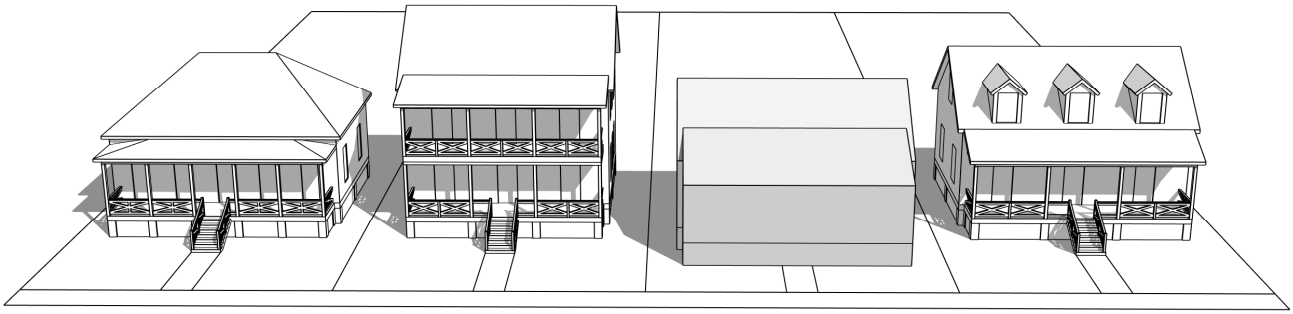
The primary façade of buildings in the historic districts are oriented to either the street or beachfront. This orientation should be consistent for new construction, even on corner lots.



New construction should be consistent with the height, massing and roof forms of adjacent dwellings along the street.



NO: *This new construction does not respect the setbacks along the street.*



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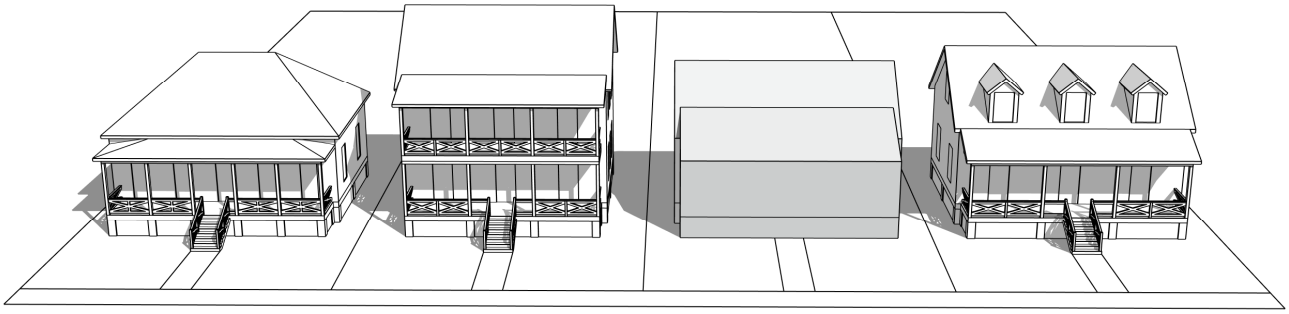


YES: *This new construction is consistent with the setback of adjacent dwellings.*

Block Rhythms

Repeated elements on adjacent buildings should be noted when designing new construction. Examples may include wide roof eaves, wrap-around porches, or the use of shingle siding. New construction in the historic districts should utilize these strong, shared streetscape elements in blocks where they appear.

Massing

New construction should respect the massing displayed along the block. Where there is no pattern in massing, do not introduce a new variant

Roof Forms

Some streetscapes may exemplify similarities in roof form and pitch, while other areas may exhibit a wide variety. Where one form and pitch predominates, follow the block pattern. Where there is a variety of roof forms and pitches, do not introduce a new variant.

Setback

Dwellings along a streetscape generally share a common front and side setback. New construction should align with these setbacks. The minimum front yard setback in the island's Residential Single-Family (RS) Zones is twenty-five feet (25').

Proportion and Solid-to-Void Ratio

The size, style, shape, and distribution of door and window openings in new construction should respect those of adjacent historic examples. The ratio of window openings to the overall façade surface is another design aspect to consider. Create patterns in rhythm, size, and spacing of window and door openings similar to neighboring historic buildings. Dormer windows create their own rhythm along the roofline and are an important way to allow for additional sunlight.

Horizontal Versus Vertical

The rhythm of a streetscape is often defined by a general vertical or horizontal feeling of the individual buildings. New construction should respect the block's dominant vertical and horizontal orientation.

Materials

Frame construction is the primary building material for dwellings on Sullivan's Island. New buildings should be constructed with these exterior materials or alternative materials that are compatible with adjacent properties. Vinyl, aluminum, and composite materials may be considered for new construction.

Special Provision for Dwelling Preservation

As an incentive to preserve historic structures and avoid their demolition, a second dwelling may be constructed on the same lot as an historic structure, and the historic structure may be used as an accessory dwelling, when all of the following conditions are met:

- Prior use shall have been used as a dwelling; and
- The size of the historic structure is less than twelve hundred (1200) square feet of heated space at the time of its designation as historic and is listed as an historic property.

For additional description of this provision consult Section 21-20 in the Zoning Ordinance.

22.0 NEW CONSTRUCTION—DWELLINGS

Design Guidelines for New Dwellings

Building Placement

22.1 Maintain a similar front, side, and rear yard setback to historic buildings of the streetscape.

22.2 Follow the streetscape's pattern of building separation and lot coverage.

22.3 Place outbuildings and accessory structures in side and rear yards. Avoid locations that obscure the primary building's prominent architectural or significant site features.

Appropriate infill may include replicas of Sullivan's Island's historic vernacular architecture. This example at 1808 Central Street was built in 2013 and is compatible with adjacent dwellings in its roof form, massing, lot placement, orientation and use of materials and details

Building Height/Scale

22.4 Infill buildings should be consistent in height with neighboring dwellings.

22.5 The proposed building should follow the scale of contributing buildings of the streetscape.

22.6 The ratio of height to width of the infill building should be consistent with that of contributing buildings on the block or side of the street.

22.7 Windows and doors in new construction should be compatible in proportion, shape, location, pattern, and size with those of contributing buildings on the block or side of the street.

Materials

22.8 The new building should have siding and trim material consistent with the materials traditionally used on the immediate block and in the historic districts. Wood siding and wood shingles were common sheathing materials.

22.9 The use of substitute products may be appropriate. Use of fiber-cement siding may be approved for new structures. If this type of siding is used, it should have a smooth exterior finish and not grained to resemble wood.

22.10 Use materials in traditional ways. New materials should be applied in a traditional manner as to convey the same visual appearance as historically used and applied building materials.

22.11 Aluminum clad windows may be used in new construction provided that they are similar in profile and match historic fenestration patterns. If the windows have divided lights they shall be either true divided lights (TDL) or simulated divided lights (SDL) which have three dimensional grilles on both the interior and exterior sides and a shadow bar. Snap-in grilles or grilles between the glass are not appropriate.

Built in 2015, the dwelling at 2614 Gold Bug Avenue was designed in a traditional gabled ell plan with appropriate scale, materials and orientation to the street.

Texture

22.12 New construction design should achieve a similar degree of texture as found in historic buildings. Texture refers to the physical surface of a building, deriving from the use and interaction of a variety of materials and shapes.

Form and Rhythm

22.13 Design new construction that reflects the basic shapes and forms on the block and in the historic districts.

22.14 Maintain roof forms consistent with contributing structures found along the block. Common historic roof forms include gable varieties with an average pitch of 7/12 or greater and hipped roofs.

22.15 Maintain a similar number and pattern of window and door openings consistent with those of historic buildings.

The dwelling at 1918 I'on Avenue was built in 2023 and designed to meet the Town's Design Flood Elevation (DFE). It reflects the historic vernacular forms of the island with its hipped roof, siding materials, and railing design.

23.0 NEW CONSTRUCTION—OUTBUILDINGS

POLICY

The construction of new outbuildings such as garages, sheds, and secondary living quarters should be undertaken in the context of the main dwelling and its surroundings. These secondary structures should never overwhelm the primary building. Locate new outbuildings to the rear of the main building.

Design Guidelines for New Outbuildings

23 1 The design of new outbuildings should be compatible with the associated dwelling in architectural style and secondary in size and scale.

23.2 Site new outbuildings on the lot appropriately. Locate new outbuildings to the rear of a dwelling or set back from side elevations. Attached garages and accessory buildings should be set back from the front façade of the primary dwelling at least one-half of the total depth of the dwelling.

23.3 Reconstruction of a missing outbuilding should be based on accurate evidence of the original configuration, form, massing, style, placement, and detail from photographic evidence or other documentation of the original building.

23.4 The outbuilding should maintain a proportional mass, size, and height to ensure it is not taller or wider than the principal building on the lot.

23.5 Materials used for new outbuildings should complement the property. Wood is the most appropriate material for new outbuildings in the historic district. For new frame outbuildings, alternative siding materials may be considered if they resemble traditional wood siding in texture, dimension, and overall appearance.

YES: *This new garage is appropriately scaled, and its garage door is based on traditional designs. Flood vents were also added to this building (2408 Myrtle Street).*

YES: *This new garage features a gable front design and has appropriate glass and wood garage doors (2614 Gold Bug Avenue).*

23.6 Designing the eaves and roof ridge of any new outbuilding higher than those of the existing primary building is not appropriate.

23.7 Windows which are readily visible should be appropriate to the style of the house. Visible pedestrian doors should resemble those of the primary dwelling or be solid with no panels.

23.8 Metal garage doors with a paneled design may be appropriate. These doors can be used on garages if located at the back of the lot and are minimally visible from the street. If the garage and garage doors are highly visible from a public street or located on a corner lot, solid wood or wood garage doors with a paneled design are more appropriate.

23.9 Two-car garages should have two bay doors of the same size, not one large door. This design visually reduces the size of the new garage in relation to the primary dwelling.

23.10 New carports should be located at the rear of dwellings and not be readily visible. Prefabricated metal carport designs are not appropriate if visible from primary vantage points.

YES: *These two contemporary designs are appropriate examples for new garages and are of wood shingles and siding with compatible garage doors.*

24.0 NEW CONSTRUCTION – ADDITIONS

POLICY

Additions are appropriate for historic buildings at rear elevations. Additions may also be appropriate on side elevations depending on lot size. Additions should impact historic materials as minimally as possible and be visually subordinate to the original dwelling in size and scale.

The addition should be discernible from the footprint and reinforce the visual dominance of the original structure, while blending with the overall design. Additions should be inset at least one-foot from the dwelling's original wall plane.

The addition should be constructed in a manner that would allow its potential removal in the future with minimal effect to the historic structure.

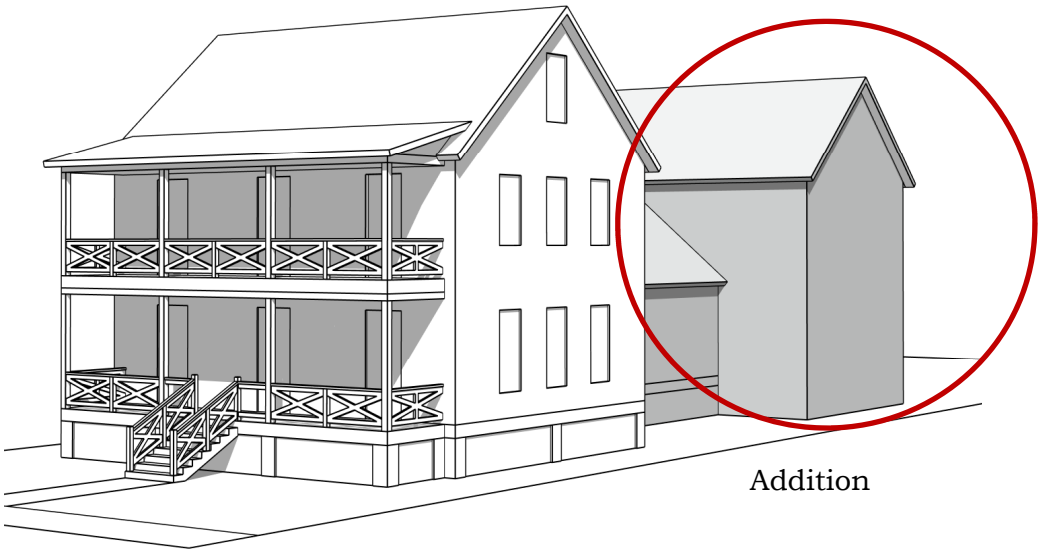
Design Guidelines for Additions

24.1 **Construct new additions at the rear of a building as to result in minimal impact to the façade of the building or adjacent properties.**

24.2 **The overall proportions of a new addition should be compatible with the existing building in height, scale, size, and massing so as not to overpower it visually.** A new addition should never be taller or wider than the original structure unless required by code or a non-aesthetic functional requirement. Observe the principle of "additive massing" where the original structure remains dominant and the additions are adjoining and smaller masses.

24.3 **A new addition should be compatible with the existing building in terms of materials, style, color, roof forms, massing proportion, and spacing of doors and windows, details, surface texture, and location**. Contemporary adaptations of the original that clearly look like an addition and reflect the period of construction are encouraged.

24.4 **Additions should be constructed for possible future removal without damage to significant features.** An addition should be set in at least one foot from the corner of the original dwelling to reinforce their distinction.



YES: *Additions should be secondary in scale, recessed from the main façade, and sited at rear elevations. They should generally be designed in traditional wing or ell plans and be distinguished from the historic building.*

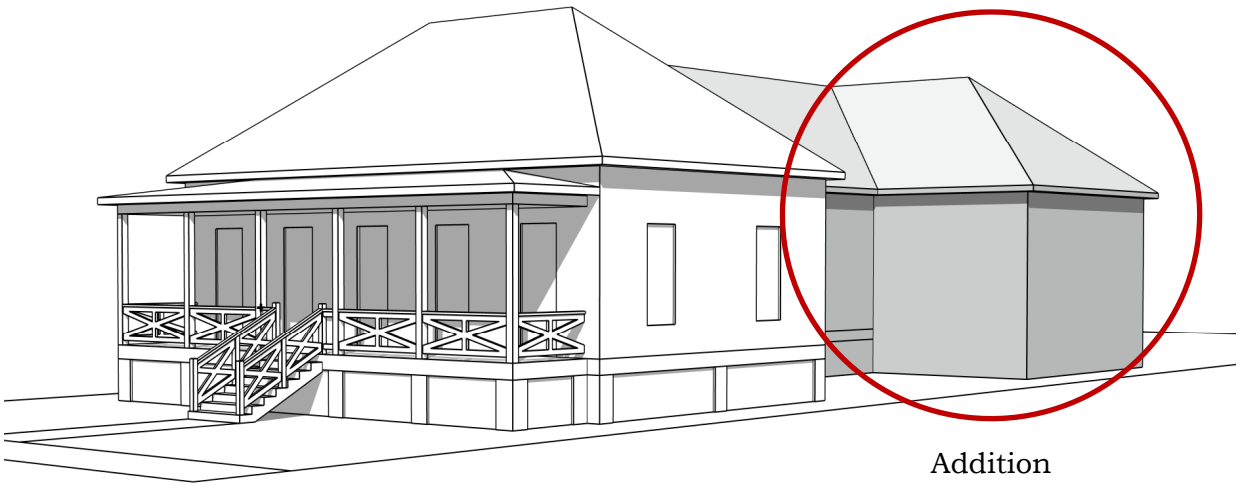
24.5 **Vinyl, aluminum, or pressed wood are not appropriate on additions to historic buildings.** Other substitute siding or trim may be allowed (see siding guidelines.)

24.6 **Wood windows are most appropriate for new additions within the historic districts; however, substitute window materials may also be acceptable for new additions** (see window guidelines.)

24.7 **Rooflines of new additions should be similar in form, pitch, and eave height to the roofline of the original building.**

24.8 **Foundations should be similar to, or compatible with, the existing foundations in material, color, detailing, and height** (see foundation guidelines.)

24.9 **If an older addition exists that has acquired significance over time, it may be used as a model for a new addition**.



Addition

YES: *One-story additions should also be sited at rear elevations to maintain the scale, design and massing of the historic building.*

Technical Information
NPS Preservation Brief #14
New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns
Preservation Brief 14: New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns

Many of the dwellings in Sullivan's Island's historic districts have been enlarged through the construction of rear additions. The dwelling at 2830 I'on Avenue illustrates this approach which retains the original design on the main façade (above) while allowing for a substantial rear wing (below).

The dwelling at 2630 Middle Street has a rear addition which is inset from the footprint of the original dwelling (above) and has appropriate materials and details (below).

The dwelling at 924 Middle Street (above) has a lateral addition connected by a small recessed wing (below).

The dwelling at 1754 Central Street was designed with a large rear addition connected by a recessed hyphen.

25.0 NEW CONSTRUCTION –DECKS

POLICY

Decks and patios were added to Sullivan's Island's dwellings beginning in the mid-20th century. These features provide outdoor living space as porches did centuries ago. New decks are appropriate at rear elevations which are not readily visible from the street.

Front patios original to a dwelling should not be converted into porches with added roofs.

Design Standards for Decks

25.1 Locate decks only on the rear ground level of historic buildings not visible from public view. Their footprints should be recessed from the house's rear corners, to reduce their visual impact.

25.2 Design decks to avoid physical or visual damage to significant historic architectural features.

25.3 Decks should be attached to the historic dwelling so that they may be removed without significant damage.

25.4 Provide proper flashing and other details to reduce or eliminate moisture damage to the historic structure.

25.5 Decks should be recessed from the side walls of the dwelling to help reduce their visibility.

25.6 Alternative materials may be used for deck construction on rear and non-readily visible side elevations as long as they are compatible with the appearance and profile of wood decking materials.

YES: *Built at the rear of the dwelling, this deck is recessed from the side of the house and is appropriately scaled.*

YES: *This deck is appropriately sited at the rear entrance, has square balusters and lattice panels to enclose the foundation.*

26.0 NEW CONSTRUCTION –ACCESSIBILITY

POLICY

Adding accessibility structures to a historic building should be carefully designed. Safety considerations must be balanced with preserving the historic appearance of the building and protecting its significant features from damage or removal. Generally, safety requirements or providing for handicapped accessibility can be met by creative design solutions that respect the architectural character of the building.

Efforts should be made to site wheelchair ramps, chair lifts, fire stairs, and fire doors in the least visually obtrusive location. **The design and installation of these alterations should allow for easy removal from the building without causing permanent or irreversible damage.**

Design Standards for Accessibility and Life Safety

26.1 Locate fire exits, stairs, landings, and ramps so as not to detract from the character of the building or site. Wheelchair ramps may replicate a railing detail or be of a simple design to blend with its surroundings.

26.2 Introduce new or alternate means of access to the historic building as not to compromise the appearance of an historic entrance or front porch.

26.3 Wheelchair ramps and chair lifts should be constructed as portable or temporary. They must not damage, obscure, or require the removal of character-defining architectural details. Such alterations should be reversible in nature to maintain the integrity of the historic resource.

An example of a simple and appropriately sited and designed ADA ramp is at the commercial building at 2010 Middle Street. The ramp is located at the rear of the building and is next to an ADA designated parking space. The ramp is consistent with the materials of the building and is not readily visible from the street.

This former dwelling at 2216 Middle Street was converted into commercial use which required an ADA ramp (above). The ramp was sited on a side elevation and its design is in keeping with the porch railing. The ramp is appropriately screened through landscaping (below).

Technical Information
NPS Preservation Brief #32
Making Historic Properties Accessible
Preservation Brief 32: Making Historic Properties Accessible

27.0 NEW CONSTRUCTION-ENERGY RETROFITS

POLICY

Improving the energy efficiency of historic buildings often does not compromise the character of the property. Sullivan's Island's historic buildings were constructed with inherent heating and cooling features, such as wide eaves, large floor-to-ceiling heights, and transoms. These built-in designs for energy efficiency may be enhanced with responsible retrofitting.

The first step is conducting an energy audit on the building to quantify energy use. The audit will determine how and where energy is escaping from the building. The auditor will develop a list of energy conservation measures that could be implemented to reduce energy usage and costs in the building.

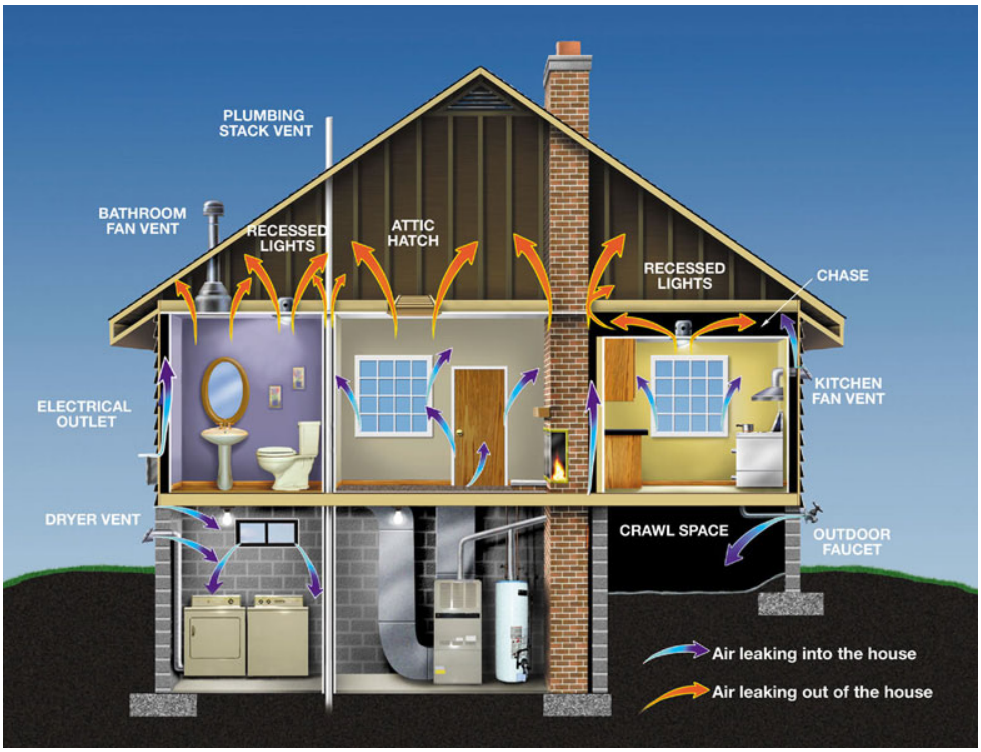
Design Standards for Energy Retrofits

27.1 Preserve historic energy-conserving features and materials that contribute to the overall character of a building or site, including shutters, operable windows, and transoms.

27.2 Increase the thermal efficiency of historic buildings through appropriate, traditional practices, including the installation of weatherstripping and caulking, storm windows and doors, insulation in attics, floors, and, if appropriate, awnings and operable shutters.

27.3 Install energy upgrades in spaces that will result in the least alteration to the building exterior, historic building fabric, and site features.

27.4 Insulating historic plaster walls is not recommended since it does not allow proper air movement. Adding foam or batt insulation can cause deterioration of the exterior and interior wall materials.



Adding insulation in attic spaces is one of the main cost savings for energy use in homes (courtesy U.S. Dept. of Energy).

27.5 **Minimize the visual impact of solar panels**. Solar panels should not be readily visible. Locate them on rear rooftops, back yards, or rear accessory buildings that are out of public view. Rear elevations or rear roof slopes are the best location for solar panels. At present, solar shingles are not appropriate for rooflines readily visible from the street but may be approvable for rear or side elevations not readily visible.

27.6 **Ensure that solar panel hardware attached to a building is not readily visible.** Mount solar panels on rooftops flush with the roofline. If free-standing, solar panels should be located in side or rear yards.

***YES**—Solar panels should be sited on rear roof lines and out of public view.*

***YES**—Free standing solar panels may also be sited and screened in rear yards.*

***NO**—Solar panels should not be placed on primary facades or readily visible locations.*

27.7 Wind turbines may be appropriate if sited at rear rooflines or free-standing in rear yards and not readily visible.

27.8 Property owners may consider the use of reflective roofing surfaces to increase energy efficiency in warmer months.

27.9 Property owners may consider the installation of geothermal heating and cooling systems. Installation of such a system, involving either drilling of holes in the ground or digging horizontal trenches to accommodate the piping system, does not affect the exterior of a building and may offer energy savings.

Reflective roof shingles may be appropriate for some dwellings. These assist in lowering cooling costs in warmer months.

Wind turbines may be mounted at rooflines or in back yards not readily visible.