



# Elm Heights Historic District Design Guidelines

Draft

**The Elm Heights Historic District is established to promote a sense of community among a diverse population by working toward a set of flexible goals which include, preservation and protection of our neighborhoods diverse architectural significance and retention of its historical integrity and fabric. To encourage a balanced approach, the district adopts a set of flexible guidelines that focus on the conservation of green spaces, the ability to age gracefully in place, ecologically sound energy practices that include alternative energy sources, as well as a working relationship with the city.**

**The Elm Heights Subcommittee**

These Design Guidelines were developed by a group of citizens who live within the Elm Heights Historic District. They are intended to assist homeowners by helping them make informed decisions about their historic homes and properties. Most of the information provided here is simple instruction concerning the treatment and repair older materials in ways that make them last. The underlying goal is to preserve the elements of the district that create its historic atmosphere but also to acknowledge the advantages of reuse and repair in a changing world of diminishing resources.

New with these guidelines is a section on sustainability and the use of new technologies. We hope to encourage their use by integrating them into our guidelines in clear and actionable ways.

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**General Guides for your project:**

The architectural and historic significance of the property is always considered first. If you live in an outstanding home, changes to the exterior will be more sensitive than in a non-contributing or contributing home.

Following historic preservation laws and ordinances, all homes within a district are classified in one of four categories:

- o Outstanding- an outstanding resource, so significant that it is individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- o Notable- a building that, upon further research, may be eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places
- o Contributing- Meets the basic criterion of being at least 40 years old but is not sufficiently significant to stand on its own.

Non-contributing- Either too recently built or so severely altered that it no longer contributes to the historic fabric of the district. Noncontributing properties will have less restrictive review of existing exterior building changes, but additions and setting elements will require review.

**Unique Materials**

Historic resources illustrate the past and instruct us about the different ways that we have lived as a society. Durable and natural materials like wood, limestone and slate can endure much longer than petroleum-based replacement products. It is important to prioritize repair and replacement in kind instead of wholesale replacement with inferior materials.

**Visibility**

The presentation of the house or property to the street, its public interface, is its most important asset. When possible major changes should be placed on secondary elevations, taking care not to damage existing historic materials. This document and the Commission are dedicated to finding the least obtrusive solution for those proposals while implementing suggested changes.

**New Construction**

Additions and new accessory structures should be consistent in style and scale to the main structure. New residences should be compatible with surrounding contributing properties in placement, proportion, scale, materials, features, and setting



## **Architectural Metals**

Most historic homes have a certain amount of architectural metals. It is generally seen in roofing and guttering applications such as, standing-seam roofs, flashing, gutters, downspouts, finials, cornices, copings, and crestings. Additional metals may including storm doors and windows, vents and grates, case-ment windows and industrial sash, railings, hardware, site lighting and trim work.

Throughout Elm Heights a variety of architectural metals are introduced as an integral part of the detailing and the surfacing of homes, street elements, and site features. The distinct and varied architecture of Elm Heights lends itself to the historic application of architectural metals in the form of cast iron fences, gates, and streetlights, features not found in other core neighborhoods of Bloomington. The Elm Heights district is also home to a handful of Bloomington's few surviving Lustron houses. These prefabricated enameled steel houses were produced following World War II in response to the housing shortages caused by returning service personnel. Historic copper guttering can still be found in Elm Heights, and often plays an integral part in a home's overall architectural style. Unfortunately like other traditional materials, it is frequently replaced by less character-defining painted aluminum. For many homes steel windows are also a character-defining feature not generally found in Bloomington homes outside of Elm Heights. Additional uses for architectural metals throughout the neighborhood can vary between individual homes. But their presence lends a unique quality not found elsewhere in Bloomington.

## **Preservation Goals for Architectural Metals**

To retain and restore original architectural metals of buildings and sites through repair, cleaning, coating and routine maintenance. If original metal elements are deteriorated beyond repair, when feasible they should be replaced with components of the same material and design.

## **Maintenance and Project Planning**

Routine inspection and maintenance of architectural metals is critical as corrosion, structural fatigue, or water damage can drastically shorten their life-span. Corrosion, caused either by moisture exposure or galvanic action between two different metals, is the most frequent cause of metal deterioration. So preventing it is important. This is best achieved by maintaining a watertight paint film, as unprotected ferrous metal corrodes when paint fails. The subsequent removal of all rust and immediate priming with a zinc-based primer or other rust-inhibiting primer are critical first steps. This halts the deterioration and prevents future corrosion. If corroded metals have become fragile, coating with a rust converter may be the best solution to halting further corrosion. However, unlike iron and steel, copper and bronze surfaces develop a characteristic patina and should never be painted. Unpainted soft metal elements like brass or bronze hardware may be protected from corrosion with a clear lacquer once properly cleaned.



## **Guidelines for Architectural Metals**

### **3.9 Retain and preserve architectural metal features that contribute to the overall historic character of a building and a site, including but not limited to such functional and decorative elements as roofing, guttering, downspouts, flashing, cornices, railings, hardware, casement windows, gates, fences, and light fixtures.**

- Refer to the appendix for maintenance assistance.
- Clean soft metals, such as lead, tin, terneplate, and copper, with a non abrasive chemical cleaners. First test cleaner in an inconspicuous area. Sand blasting or other abrasive techniques should not be used.
- Clean hard metals, such as steel and cast or wrought iron by first hand scraping or wire brushing to remove corrosion before repainting. If ineffective, a low-pressure (80–100 lbs. per square in.) glass bead abrasive cleaning may be used.

### **3.10 Repair and maintain architectural metal surfaces and features through appropriate methods.**

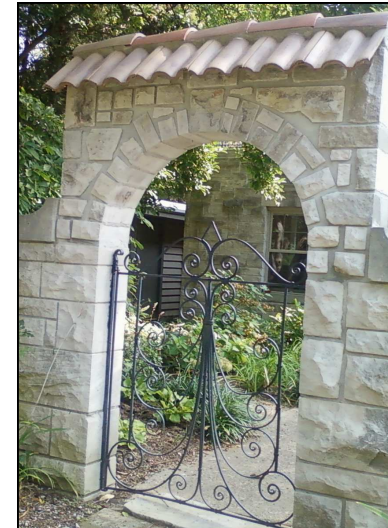
- Splice, patch, or reinforce architectural metal features in kind when possible. A differing metal should not be used for repairs as it will cause galvanic corrosion. Coat metals with a rust converter if necessary.
- Apply paint, lacquer or other appropriate coatings promptly to architectural metals. Tar or asphalt products should not be used to patch metal roofs or flashing.
- Replace a detail or element by matching the original detail or element in design, dimension, texture and material.

### **3.11 A Certificate of Appropriateness will be required prior to the reconstruction, or the installation of new, architectural metal elements that are integral components of the building or site and visible from the right-of-way.**

- The installation of new metal garden artwork or decorative items will not require a COA.
- Replace missing elements based on accurate documentation of the original or use a compatible new design.
- Consider compatible substitute materials only if using the original material is not technically feasible. Replication of details in fiberglass, wood, or aluminum may be appropriate substitutions.
- Architectural metal features or details should not be introduced to create a false historical appearance.

### **3.12 A Certificate of Appropriateness will be required prior to the removal of any architectural metal element outlined above (3.9) and visible from the right-of-way.**

- The retention of all architectural metal elements is encouraged. If replacement is necessary, consider in kind replacement over substitute materials if feasible.



## **Accessibility, Safety and Aging in Place**

Thanks to the diversity of the EHHD, our neighborhood is lucky to have people of all age groups. Many people who grew up in this neighborhood have chosen to remain and grow old here, or have returned in order to retire here, rendering it essential for us to ensure that they can comfortably age in place. Their presence contributes to the stability of the neighborhood as they invest time, money, and affection in keeping their houses in excellent condition while continuing to improve them. We see Elm Heights as a great place to raise children, have fun, work, retire, and age gracefully. The neighborhood's beauty encourages pedestrian and bicycle traffic and its proximity to entertainment, parks, and shopping makes it very livable for people of all ages and physical abilities. Aging in place, however, most often requires adjustments to accommodate people with restricted or limited mobility. The guidelines in this section, therefore, aim at improving safe accessibility to a residence while preserving its exterior historic facades. Simply put, this means allowing for external changes that do not harm the original edifice and are ultimately reversible, such as level entry to the home through ramps, technological additions such as lifts or electric garage door openers, and enhanced security measures such as motion-detector lights and alarms.

## **Preservation Goals for Aging in Place.**

The principal goal is to suggest solutions that are temporary and reversible so that neither the historic nature of the house nor the safety of the residents is compromised. Naturally when a COA is needed, such adjustments should be planned in consultation with the Historic Preservation Commission.

## **Maintenance and Planning Projects**

Elm Heights was built in an era when full basements with raised foundations were a popular design feature. This is a major accessibility concern, and we feel it is imperative that our guidelines provide ways to

safely negotiate stairs, grades, and entryways in our historic homes, sidewalks, and yards. Since few historic houses in our neighborhood were built employing the principles of Universal Design, i.e. houses and features that are accessible for all and easy to use, we must consider temporary changes that will make our houses more user-friendly for all and reversible so that neither the historic nature of the house nor the safety of the residents is compromised, especially those of us who are elderly or have difficulty managing certain features of the residence, such as lighting, heavy original garage doors, fencing, and entry mechanisms. While the present guidelines do **not** cover internal changes, there are many websites and organizations that can offer suggestions about making your house more user-friendly (or accessible), such as placement of electrical sockets, positioning of storage, reduced height of bathroom and kitchen features, etc.

With regard to external features, since almost all of the houses in Elm Heights have raised foundations, it may become necessary to provide ways to avoid stairs by building temporary ramps or lifts or to ensure the safe use of stairs by the addition of railings, a problem most of us face when there is winter ice. Likewise the replacement of an original garage door with an electric one should be accomplished with the idea that the original should be reinstalled when the electric door is no longer needed. Improving accessibility includes the use of keypads or levers on doors; this may necessitate substitution of the historic hardware on the door but should be done in such a way that the original could be reinstalled subsequently.

### **3.11 Guidelines for Accessibility, Safety and Aging in Place**

**.1 All modifications to a house for the purposes of accessibility and safety should attempt to do the following:**

**A) Be temporary and reversible.**

- Historic steps, foundations, and features should not be damaged or endangered by construction of a ramp.
- If it is necessary to remove historic hardware or features, they should be stored carefully and reinstalled when safety or access is no longer a concern.

**B) Not obscure or endanger the prominent features of the house, in particular the visible facades of the house.**

- This would mean that when adding railings to already-existing stone stairs, the railing should be anchored in the ground or on the porch without drilling holes in the stone that would certainly damage them by ensuring future infiltration and cracking.

**C) Be screened from public view and should be located on the side and rear facades of the house when feasible.**

- A ramp could be screened from view by a screen wall or tasteful plantings.

**D) Be consistent in scale, proportion, and materials with the prominent features of the house**

**E) Should comply with the requirements set out by the various city, county, and federal building codes that govern safety and accessibility, including the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.**

**.2 A Certificate of Appropriateness will be required for all exterior accessibility modifications visible from the right-of-way.**

- Consult the specific sections of these guidelines for the areas that will be affected.
- Develop a plan and consult with the BHPC before submitting a formal application for the Committee's consideration.

