

CHAPTER 13

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR NEW BUILDINGS



This section presents design guidelines for all new buildings in downtown Truckee. The guidelines provide property owners with assistance in designing infill structures that are compatible with the existing downtown infrastructure. The basic principles for new construction relate to respecting the historic design character, setbacks, building alignment, scale and lot patterns.

In addition to the general Guidelines for New Buildings, more specific ones are included for individual Character Areas of Downtown Truckee. These Character Areas each reflect differences in historical development and existing features that contribute to the unique visual characteristics of each area. The Character Areas are:

- Brickelltown Character Area
- Commercial District Character Area
- Burckhalter Character Area
- River Character Area
- Church Street Character Area
- McGlashan Addition Character Area
- Railroad Character Area
- South River Character Area
- Hilltop Character Area

Character Area Boundaries

The boundaries for these Character Areas generally follow those defined in historical studies, particularly the publication *Fire and Ice: A Portrait of Truckee* (ed. Members of the Truckee Donner Historical Society, 1994). However, in some cases, two or more

historic neighborhoods have been combined to form a new, single Character Area to reflect the similarity in design policies that they share.

In drawing the boundaries for these Character Areas, the lines delimiting three other planning variables also were considered:

Historic Preservation District Overlay

The Town of Truckee has adopted an historic preservation overlay boundary for the downtown. This defines the area for which the preservation design guidelines presented in this document apply. All of the Character Areas are drawn to fit within this boundary. In some cases, therefore, portions of the neighborhoods that may have historically been associated with the area are excluded from the purview of these design guidelines.

Historic Neighborhood Boundaries

Historians generally define neighborhood boundaries based on their early development patterns. In Truckee, they were defined in some cases by subdivision filings and in other cases by cultural histories of the residents who tended to congregate in certain portions of the town. These boundaries are generally defined in the publication, *Fire and Ice*. When the current physical design features that were used to define the Character Area boundaries correspond to these historic neighborhoods, they are used.

Downtown Specific Plan Study Area

In 1997, with the publication of the *Downtown Truckee Specific Plan*, a series of eight sub areas were defined within the Downtown Study Area: "Each sub area has its own unique characteristics, problems and

opportunities, therefore, a set of land use policies and implementation measures have been developed for each." When the current physical design features that were used to define the Character Area boundaries correspond to those sub areas identified in the Specific Plan, they are used.

The Basic Principles for New Construction

While the design guidelines for new construction presented in the following chapters provide direction for specific design issues, some basic design principles form the foundation for them. The following principles apply in Truckee:

1. Respect the design character of the nearby historic properties.

Don't try to make a new building look older than it is. The copying or exact duplication of architectural styles or specific historic buildings is also inappropriate. Often, a contemporary interpretation of those architectural styles seen historically will work best.

2. Maintain the setbacks and alignments of buildings in the surrounding context.

A new building should be set back a similar distance from the street as those nearby historic buildings and incorporate a landscaped area that is in keeping with the neighborhood. Other alignments, such as

those seen from similar eave heights, porch heights and the relative alignment of window and door moldings, are also important.

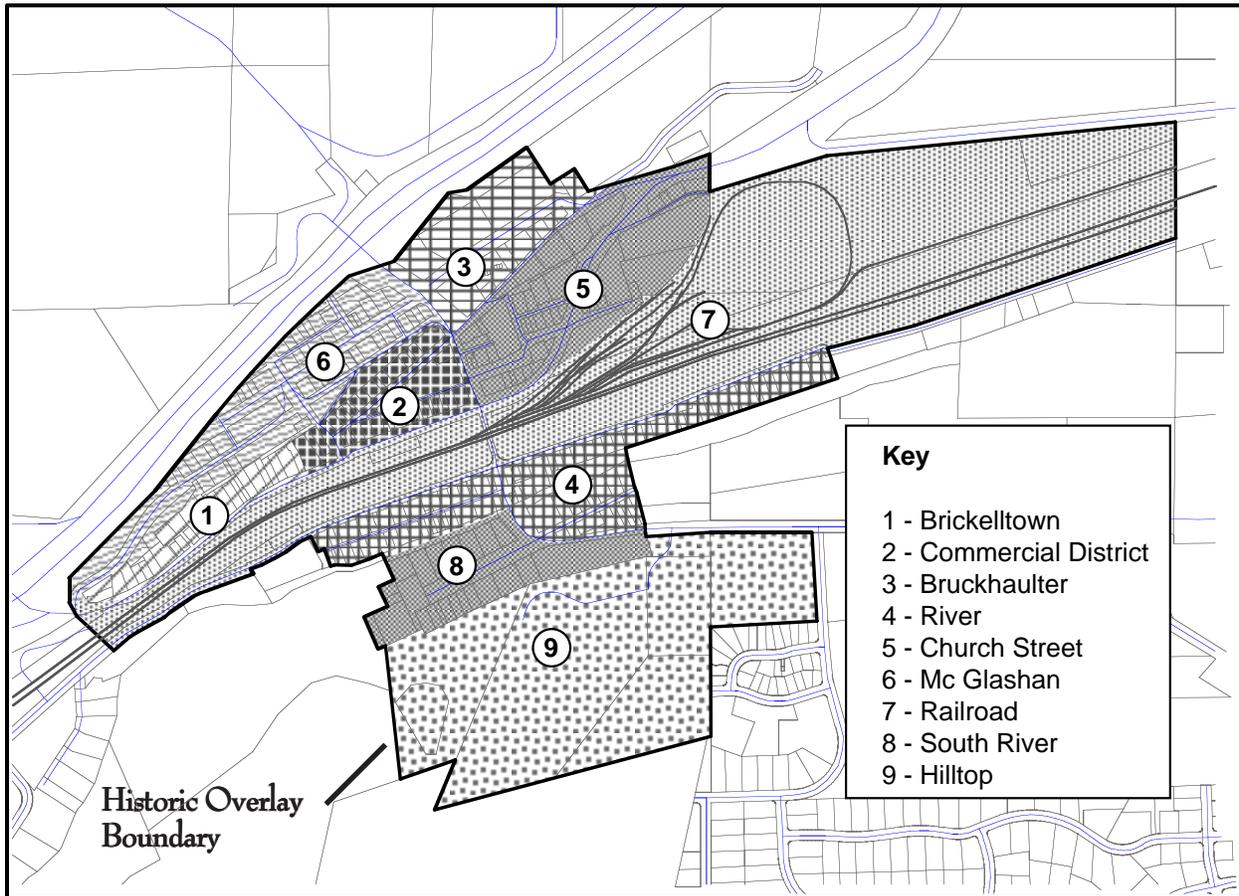
3. Relate to the scale of nearby historic buildings.

A new building should relate to the general size, shape and proportions of those buildings seen historically. It is equally important for a new building to use similar primary building materials, at least in appearance.

4. In residential areas, relate to the size of lot patterns.

A new building should be in proportion with the overall size of its lot. Generally, smaller homes are built on smaller lots, and larger homes are reserved for larger lots. Although many of the lots and the traditional scale of single-family houses in the Character Areas are smaller than current tastes support, a new building should, to the greatest extent possible, maintain the established scale.

Downtown Truckee's Character Areas



Downtown truckee is generally considered to be the area encompassed by the Historic Overlay Boundary, which is on the map above. This is then divided into nine sub-areas.

Guidelines for New Buildings

These guidelines apply to all new construction within the Historic Preservation Overlay for downtown.

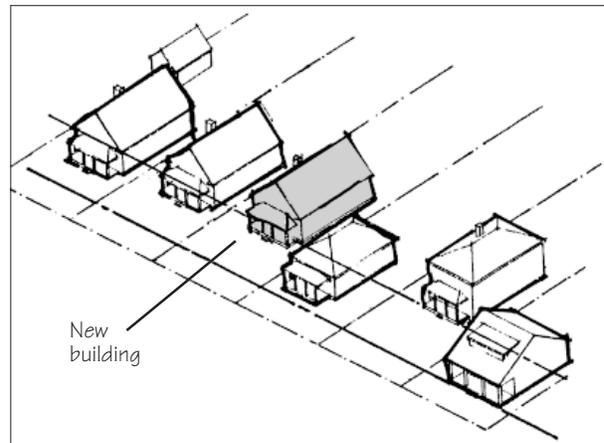
1. Building Setbacks

The distance from the street or property line to the front of the building should be similar to that established historically in the Character Area and in similar contexts. On many residential streets buildings align with relatively uniform setbacks. This results in a sense of visual continuity along a block and helps to highlight the curvilinear nature of these streets. This is an important feature that should be maintained. In other places, however, some variety in setbacks exists and in such a situation greater flexibility in setback is appropriate.

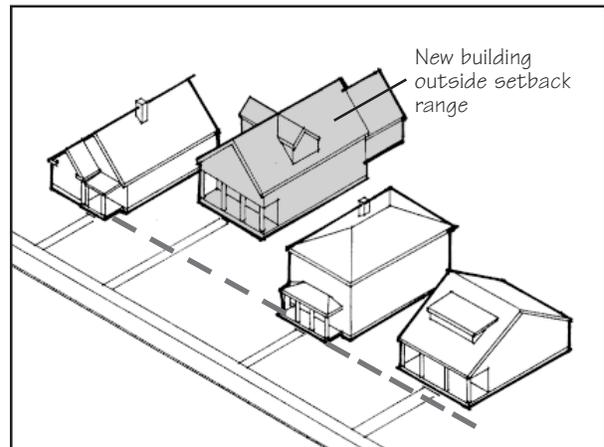
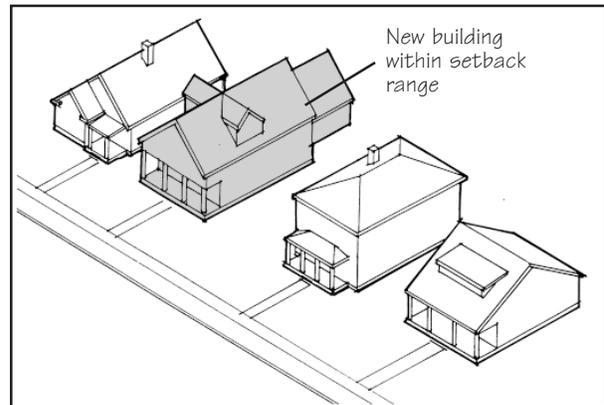
By contrast, most buildings in the commercial area align at the inside walkway edge. This contributes to a sense of visual continuity in such blocks, and should be maintained.

A. Maintain the pattern of alignment for building fronts in the Character Area.

- 1) In a residential context, where similar front setbacks are characteristic, maintain the alignment of uniformly setback facades.
- 2) In a residential context, where variety in building setbacks is a part of the historic context, locating a new building within the traditional range of setbacks is appropriate.
- 3) In some cases, site constraints may prevent aligning a new building with the historic context. In these situations, using landscaping elements such as fences and walls to define these lines should be considered.



Where variety in building setbacks is a part of the historic context, locating a new building within the traditional range of setbacks is appropriate.



In a residential context, where similar front setbacks are characteristic, maintain the alignment of uniformly setback facades. In the bottom sketch, the new building is outside of the traditional range of setbacks and is inappropriate.

2. Building Orientation

The manner in which a new building relates to the street is an important consideration in terms of compatibility with its context. Traditional siting patterns should be respected.

A. Orient a new building parallel to its lot lines in a manner similar to that of historic building orientations.

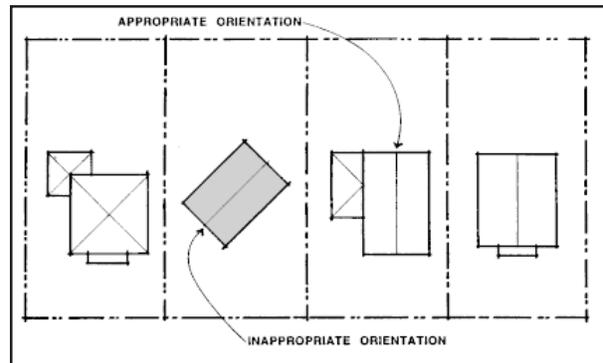
- 1) This orientation also should be compatible with any distinctive lot patterns in the relevant Character Area. (Exceptions may apply in the Hilltop and Railroad Character Areas.
- 2) This applies to both primary and accessory structures.

B. Orient the primary entrance of a building toward the street.

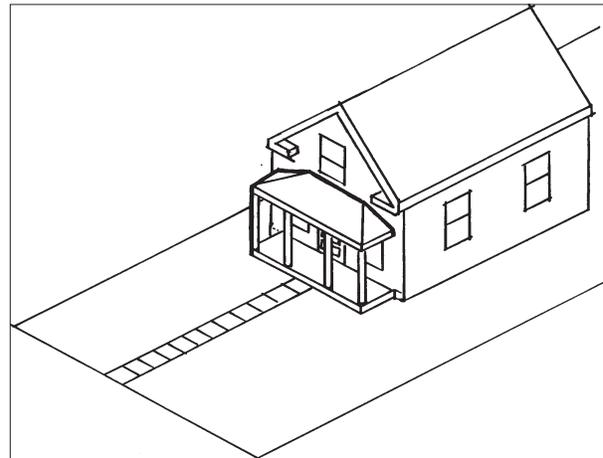
- 1) Buildings should have a clearly defined primary entrance. For example, provide a recessed entryway on a commercial building, or provide a porch on a residential structure, to define its entry.
- 2) The gable end of a structure should also face the street.
- 3) Entrances on the rear or sides of buildings should clearly be secondary to those on the front.
- 4) Exceptions apply in the Hilltop and Railroad Character Areas, where buildings may orient to a shared open space.

C. In some cases two dwellings appear on the same lot. In situations where the historic building is set to the back of the lot it may be appropriate for a new building to be in front of the existing historic building.

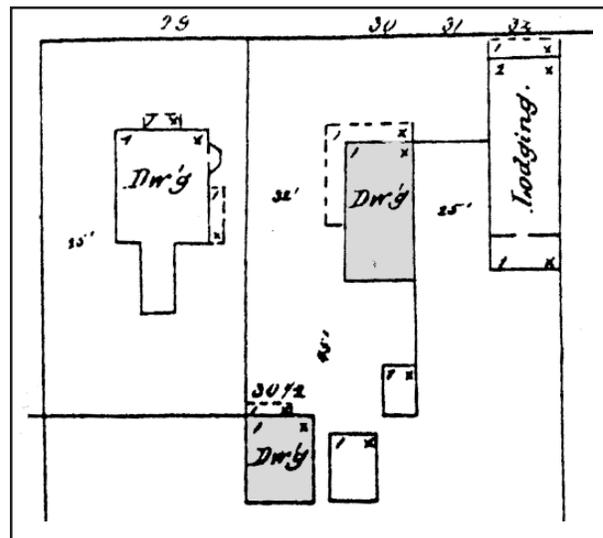
- 1) This should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- 2) New construction should be historically compatible with the existing structure on the lot.
- 3) This option would be appropriate in a case where the historic building does not have a strong orientation to the street that would be altered by construction of a new building on the site.



Orient a new building parallel to its lot lines, similar to that of historic building orientations.



Orient the primary entrance of a building toward the street. The gable end of a structure should also face the street.



In some cases two dwellings appear on the same lot, as seen in the c. 1890 map above.

3. Mass and Scale

The mass and scale of buildings in Downtown Truckee are key considerations that effect compatibility. The height, width and depth of a new building should be compatible with historic buildings in the downtown and within the Character Area

A. New construction should appear similar in mass and size to historic structures found in the Character Area.

- 1) Break up the massing of larger buildings into components that reflect this traditional size.
- 2) An exception may be a new civic or institutional building that is intended to be a dominant feature in the Character Area.

B. A facade should appear similar in dimension to those seen historically in the town.

- 1) Typically, a residential building front ranges from 20 to 25 feet in width, with larger residences ranging from 30 to 35 feet in width. Additional widths were accomplished with a setback or change in building plane.
- 2) Commercial buildings typically had building fronts ranging from 15 to 30 feet in width.
- 3) Civic and institutional buildings may vary from the typical facade dimensions.

4. Building Form

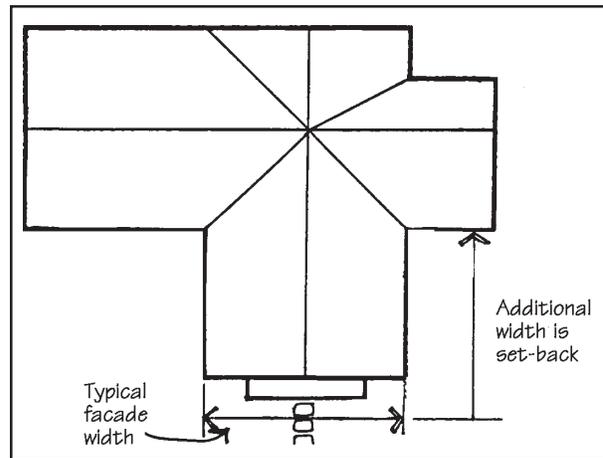
Most historic buildings in Downtown Truckee have very simple forms, and new structures should respect this design tradition.

A. In a new building use forms that are similar to those found traditionally in the Character Area.

- 1) The overall building form should be similar to historic buildings found in the specific Character Area.
- 2) Maintain the traditional proportions (height to width to depth) found in the Character Area.

B. Use traditional roof forms.

- 1) Sloping roof forms, such as gabled and shed, should be the dominant roof shapes in residential contexts.
- 2) Non-traditional roof forms are inappropriate.
- 3) Flat roof lines are appropriate on commercial structures on Commercial Row.



Typically, a residential building front ranges from 15 to 30 feet in width. Additional widths were accomplished with a setback or change in building plane.

C. The number and size of dormers should be limited on a roof, such that the primary roof form remains prominent.

- 1) Dormers should be used with restraint, in keeping with the simple character of buildings in Truckee.

D. Roofs should be similar in size to those used historically on comparable buildings.

- 1) The length of a roof ridge should not exceed those seen historically on comparable buildings. Historically, in residential contexts, the maximum ridge length was 35 to 40 feet.



Dormers should be used with restraint, in keeping with the simple character of buildings in Truckee.

5. Building Materials

Traditionally, a limited palette of building materials—wood, brick and stone— was used in Truckee. Accessory structures also had a limited range of materials, sometimes more rustic and utilitarian in character. The type of materials used should be selected from those used historically in the community and specifically in the Character Area. Also, new materials should have a simple finish, similar to those seen historically.

A. Maintain the existing range of exterior wall materials found throughout the Character Area.

- 1) Appropriate materials for primary structures include horizontal lap siding, board-and-batten, shingles (in limited applications), brick and stone.
- 2) Stucco, when it is tinted earth tone in color and detailed to express visual interest and convey a sense of human scale will be considered on a case-by-case basis. For example, use reveals or scoring lines to create panels to establish a rhythm and texture along a wall, or provide moldings and frame openings that establish shadow lines and visual relief. Stucco shall not be the primary building material and may only be approved for use as a secondary material on a case-by-case basis.
- 3) Reflective materials, such as mirrored glass or polished metals, are inappropriate.
- 4) Rustic shakes are inappropriate.
- 5) Corrugated metal may be considered on accessory structures and as additive forms on commercial buildings.

B. Exterior wood finishes should appear similar to those used historically.

- 1) Maintain protective coatings of paint or stain on exterior wood siding.
- 2) The lap dimensions of siding should be similar to that found traditionally (i.e., four to five inches of lap exposure).

C. Masonry should appear similar to that used historically.

- 1) Masonry unit sizes should be similar to those found traditionally.
- 2) The texture and color of the brick also should be similar.



Synthetic materials, such as this composite Hardiplank may be considered, if they appear similar in character and detailing to traditional building materials.

D. Newer, synthetic materials may be considered, if they appear similar in character and detailing to traditional building materials.

- 1) New materials must have a demonstrated durability in this climate and have the ability to be repaired under reasonable conditions.
- 2) Details of synthetic siding should match that of traditional wood siding. The lap dimensions of synthetic siding should be similar to that of historic wood-lap siding, which are typically four to five inches of exposure.
- 3) Physical samples of any synthetic materials may be required, and their use will be approved on a case-by-case basis.

E. For larger buildings and projects on large parcels, consider a combination of appropriate materials as a means to reduce the apparent size of the project.

F. Materials should be applied in a manner similar to that used historically.

- 1) For example, brick veneer should not “float” above a wood clapboard wall.

6. Roof Materials

A variety of roof materials exist in the Character Areas. Today, the use of composition shingles dominates. Historic research indicates that wood shingles and standing seam metal roofs were all seen in Truckee. Roof materials are major elements in the street scene and contribute to the character of individual building styles. Roof materials for new buildings should be used in a manner similar to that seen historically in the Character Area.

A. Roof materials on new buildings should appear similar to those used traditionally.

- 1) Composite shingles in muted colors are appropriate.
- 2) Sawn wood shingles are appropriate for most building types. Rustic wood shakes are inappropriate.
- 3) Metal roofs may be considered.

B. If they are to be used, metal roofs should be applied and detailed in a manner that does not distract from the historic appearance of the building.

- 1) Metal roof materials should be earth tones and have a matte, non-reflective finish.
- 2) Seams should be of a thin, low profile.
- 3) Many modern metal roofing materials do not have proportions that are appropriate to the historic character of the town and are inappropriate.



Metal roof materials should be earth tones and have a matte, non-reflective finish.



Composite shingles in muted colors are appropriate

7. Design Character

Traditionally, buildings in Truckee were simple in character. This is a fundamental characteristic that is vital to the preservation of the historic integrity of the downtown. New buildings should be distinguishable as more recent additions to the community, albeit in a subtle way such that the overall historic character is conveyed. Regardless of stylistic treatment, a new building should appear simple in form and detail, in keeping with the tradition of Truckee. Buildings also should be visually compatible with older structures in the Character Areas without being direct copies of them.

A. Respect the sense of time and place in all projects.

- 1) In all new construction, one should be able to perceive the character of the downtown as it was historically. Do not, however, attempt to create an exact perception of a point of time in the past.

B. Avoid stylistic ornamentation that confuses the history of Truckee.

- 1) Use ornamental details with constraint, and do not use historic details in a way that would confuse the history of the area.

C. New interpretations of traditional building styles are encouraged

- 1) A new design that draws upon the fundamental similarities among historic buildings in the community (without copying them) is preferred. This will allow new structures to be seen as products of their own time yet compatible with their historic neighbors.
- 2) The exact copying or replication of historic styles is discouraged.

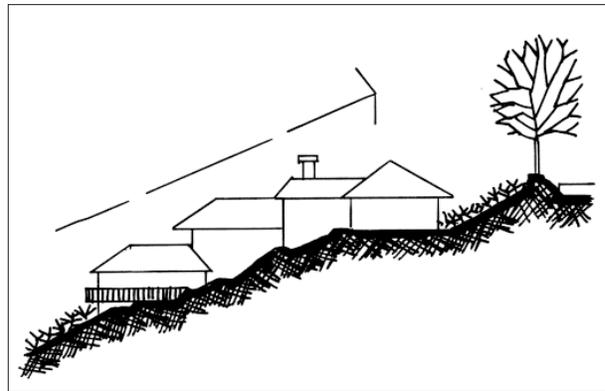
8. Building Foundations

Many of Truckee's historic houses were built on rock foundations. When possible this should be continued.

A. When designing a building foundation wall, design it to be compatible with similar historic buildings in the character area.

- 1) The form, materials and detailing of a foundation wall should be similar to that of nearby historic structures.

B. On any sloped site the building foundation and form should step with the natural topography of the site.



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