

H A R B

Historical Architectural Review Board

1 GENERAL INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

This brochure, published by the Borough of Ridley Park Historical Architectural review board (HARB, contains information about architectural review in the Borough's Historic District. Please review the information before planning a new construction, renovation, or repair project for your property. Familiarity with the HARB's standards will help move a project quickly through the approval process, thus saving time and money.

What is a Historic District?

In 1992, the Borough of Ridley Park enacted Ordinance 1077 to preserve the unique physical characteristics of our community. The Ordinance created a Historic District, where distinctive character conveys a visual sense of Ridley Park's architectural and cultural heritage. In addition to preserving our community's unique architectural heritage, rehabilitation and reuse of buildings in the Historic District have positive effects on the local and regional economy. Under guidelines of the State's Act 167, a Historic District is defined as an area that contains houses more than fifty (50) years old and composed of properties contiguous to each other. There may be some newer houses included in a Historic District, but the entire district must be one cohesive unit. The District is defined by exterior characteristics only. In 1995, Ridley Park Borough Council revised the Ordinance to meet community concerns.

What is the HARB?

The HARB is a public advisory body created by state and local laws, as defined in Ordinance #1077. The seven-member Board helps to protect the historic character of Ridley Park Borough by considering the effects of proposed work to the exteriors of buildings within the Historic District. The HARB makes recommendations to the Borough Council on the appropriateness of that work. The Borough Council makes the decision on issuing a "Certificate of Appropriateness".

Who are the members of HARB?

There are seven (7) members of HARB. The Ordinance sets forth who may serve on HARB as follows:

- ◆ 1 Licensed Architect
- ◆ 1 Licensed Real Estate Broker
- ◆ 1 Borough Code Enforcement Officer
- ◆ 1 Borough Planning Commission Member
- ◆ 3 Members with knowledge of, and interest in the preservation of Historic Districts
- ◆ 2 Members must reside in the Historic District

What are the benefits of a Historic District?

- ◆ neighborhood stability and retention of property values
- ◆ creation of jobs from the handyman to the design professional
- ◆ enhanced community image and respect for local history.
- ◆ new construction that is harmonious with historic and architecturally significant buildings

Is my house in the Historic District?

The boundaries of the Historic District run roughly from Chester Pike to Russell Street and from Ridley Park Lake to Thayer Street. However, to be sure whether or not your house is included, please obtain a copy of the Ordinance (which contains a map) or online at www.ridleyparkborough.org.

How can I obtain assistance and learn the rules?

The Historic District Ordinance will explain the rules for making exterior changes to your house. Additionally, the Borough published *Ridley Park Guidelines*, outline maintenance and repair procedures that will ensure compliance with the Ordinance. Both documents are available at Borough Hall. HARB members are also able to help guide you through the process and provide free, professional advice.

The Ordinance and the Ridley Park Guidelines are also available on the Ridley Park Borough website, www.ridleyparkborough.org

What does the HARB review?

Any exterior changes visible from a public right-of-way or street, including additions, alterations, renovations, major repairs, material replacement; the relocation or demolition of historic buildings; and new construction within the Borough's Historic District require HARB review. Final approval comes in the form a Certificate of Appropriateness (C of A) issued by the Borough Council.

HARB's architectural review is guided by principles contained in the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*. These are common-sense guidelines for appropriate and sensitive rehabilitation that encourage homeowners to:

- **Identify, retain, and preserve** the form and detailing of architectural features that are original to your building.
- **Protect and maintain** original materials. This usually involves the least degree of intervention and often prevents the need for further and sometimes more expensive work.

- **Repair rather than replace** deteriorated physical features where possible. If repair is not possible, the HARB encourages property owners to replace the features in-kind.
- **Replace rather than reconstruct.** If it is necessary to replace a deteriorated feature, and in-kind materials or techniques are unavailable, use new materials and techniques that match the original in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities.
- **Design for missing Historic Features.** Adding or reconstructing missing features is appropriate only if based upon physical or documentary evidence, such as photographs or drawings.

The following is a summary of the types of projects that the HARB reviews and the general principles that apply.

Additions and new construction

Projects involving additions to existing buildings or new construction can dramatically change the appearance of a Historic District and its surrounding landscape. As a result, they are subject to a comprehensive review.

The HARB encourages appropriate design for new construction within a Historic District, such as:

- new construction that is harmonious with the old in scale, proportion, materials, heights, color and setback;
- additions of a basic size and shape that are compatible with historic buildings in the surrounding area, while retaining the original historic fabric of the building.
- new and different designs that are compatible with existing detailing, wall planes, roof lines, cornice heights, materials, siding or window types.

Reconstruction and Restorations

Reconstruction and restorations to buildings in Historic Districts also have the potential to alter the district’s historic character. The *Standards for Rehabilitation* offer specific guidance for this type of work.

The HARB encourages:

- an attempt to identify, retain and preserve the form and detailing of architectural materials and features important to a building;
- minimum changes to the building’s historic design;
- new design elements that are compatible with the historic district;
- the use of compatible materials and techniques (in restoration work).

Repairs and Replacement

When needed, repairs and the in-kind replacement of historic materials and elements are encouraged by the HARB. These activities help maintain historic buildings and can prevent the need for more intrusive work later.

The HARB recommends:

- non-intrusive repairs that respect your building’s important materials and architectural elements;
- replacement (only after repairs have been deemed impossible) using original materials and techniques to the extent possible;
- the use of compatible materials and techniques (when in-kind replacement is impossible) that are similar in design, color, texture and visual quality to the historic element.



Demolition in the Historic District

The HARB discourages demolition within the Historic District because it alters the character of the streetscape, surrounding buildings and the demolition site. All attempts to preserve the historic building should take place before considering demolition, since once destroyed, the structure can never be replaced.

The HARB does not recommend demolition unless:

- demolition involves a modern addition on a non-significant portion of the building, provided that the demolition will not adversely affect those parts of a building that are significant;
- demolition involves a non-significant accessory structure, provided that the demolition will not adversely affect those parts of a building that are significant.
- demolition is a **final** alternative when all other options have been exhausted.

Maintenance is preservation

An on-going maintenance program for your home can enhance its value. By investing smaller amounts of money on a regular basis--to identify and correct potential problems--large and more expensive repairs can be avoided or certainly forestalled. The HARB encourages property owners to prolong the life of original materials on historic structures through regular maintenance and to avoid replacement with newer materials.

Important Considerations

The following are the major considerations that property owners and HARB take into account:

- Effect of proposed change upon general historical and architectural nature of the district
- Appropriateness of exterior architectural features which can be viewed from the street
- General design including: proportion, size, spacing and texture.

Application Procedures

When a homeowner is considering doing work to the property’s exterior, he/she should consult early with the HARB---even before hiring a contractor. That way, the homeowner may discuss different options with the HARB. The homeowner can talk about various materials, different shapes, and various approaches to meet the homeowner’s needs. Such an “*advisory*” discussion lays the foundation for a successful, helpful review by the HARB.

An application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (review) is required for all exterior work visible from a street or public right of way. This application may be obtained from the Borough Code Enforcement Officer. Some projects may not require a review.

Upon determination that a review is required, homeowners may need to submit drawings, plans, and photographs (as many as possible) so that the proposed changes are clear. The completed application and supporting documentation must be submitted 12 days prior to HARB’s next regularly scheduled meeting. This is done so that each member of HARB may have the opportunity to visit the property and review such proposed changes.



COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: *What is the difference between an addition, alteration, repair or replacement-in-kind?*

A: For purposes of these guidelines, *addition* is defined as new construction to the exterior of a building. *Alteration* involves returning a building to a useful state, while saving those building parts which represents its historical, architectural or cultural significance. *Repair* is maintaining a building as it exists today by making it weather resistant and structurally safe. *Replacement-in-kind* reproduces, by new construction, the exact portion or detail of part or all of a lost building, to its original appearance.

Q: *How do I make sure that my project will get HARB approval?*

A: Begin by reviewing the Historic Ordinance and HARB design guidelines brochures most appropriate to the project.

Q: *When should I hire an outside professional?*

A: The HARB Certificate of Appropriateness process does not require that you hire an outside professional to gain approval for your project. However, outside professionals can be helpful if your project is more than a simple repair, repainting what has already been painted on the exterior or replacement of specific building elements with exact replacements. Architects, contractors, and other specialized professionals in the buildings trades may be able to expedite the approval process if you have serious time constraints on your project.

Q: *I am planning a complex project and want to know HARB's concerns before I get too far along in the design process. What can I do?*

A: The HARB encourages any applicant, with a project large or small, to consult with them early on in the design process--- ideally before an architect or contractor is hired. The HARB is available on an informal basis to provide feedback on projects. The HARB encourages this kind of dialogue before substantial sums are paid for plans and specifications.

Q: *Is the architectural review process expensive and time-consuming?*

A: No. The key to a successful experience is preparation. Before spending money on architects or contractors, review this application package and the appropriate design guideline brochures for the project. If a building professional is involved, be sure they have experience working in Historic Districts, and ideally with the HARB. It is important that they also review the guidelines and submission checklists included in this application package *before* beginning any design work.

Be sure to submit ALL requested materials to the Code Enforcement Officer at least 12 calendar days prior to the next scheduled HARB meeting. The HARB is eager to work with applicants to develop a project plan that is compatible with the character of Ridley Park's Historic District *and* that will fit the owner's needs and budget. There is no fee for the application or any of the consultations or preliminary reviews of the project.

Basic Reading and Resources for information about maintenance and preservation

Check for these books in your local library or bookstore.

Kitchen, Judith L. *Caring for Your Old House, A Guide for Owners and Residents.*

Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1990.

Kitchen, Judith L. *Old-Building Owner's Manual.* Columbus, OH:: Ohio Historic Preservation Office, Ohio Historical Society, 1983.

Maddex, Diane, ed. *The Whole Preservation Catalogue.* Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1983.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, U.D. Department of the Interior, 1991.

<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/rehabstandards.htm>

Technical Preservation Services, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior. *Respectful Rehabilitation: Answers to Your Questions About Old Buildings.* Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1982.

A list of books about Historic Architecture and Preservation is also available at the Ridley Park Library, and on the Ridley Park Borough website, www.ridleyparkborough.org.

Investment tax credit for rehabilitation

Federal tax incentives for rehabilitation have been available for several years for *income producing properties*. This incentive is administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior through the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The rehabilitation investment tax credits effectively reduce the costs of rehabilitation to the owner (and certain long-term lease-holders).

To qualify for the 20% federal investment tax credit:

- your building must be listed or be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places either individually or as a contributing building within Ridley Park's Historic District;
- the project must meet a "substantial rehabilitation test" and be finished within two years;
- after rehabilitation, the building must be used for an income-producing purpose for at least 5 years;
- the rehabilitation work must be completed according to the Secretary of Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation*.

If you need more information about whether your building is eligible to use the investment tax credit for rehabilitation, contact any member of HARB or the Borough Manager at (610) 532-2100. You can also find information on the National Park Service website under Preservation (www.nps.gov/history/laws.htm#tax).

WHO CAN HELP ME?

If you are considering a building project with any exterior work including putting in new windows, or adding artificial siding, contact the HARB to discuss your project in its earliest stages.

If you would like to discuss your project informally, the HARB has reserved time during each monthly meeting to provide advice and consultation to any member of the public. This informational meeting with the HARB will allow you to review your project and get feedback on potential concerns before you finalize your plans. Photographs, drawings, sample materials, etc. are helpful even at this early stage.

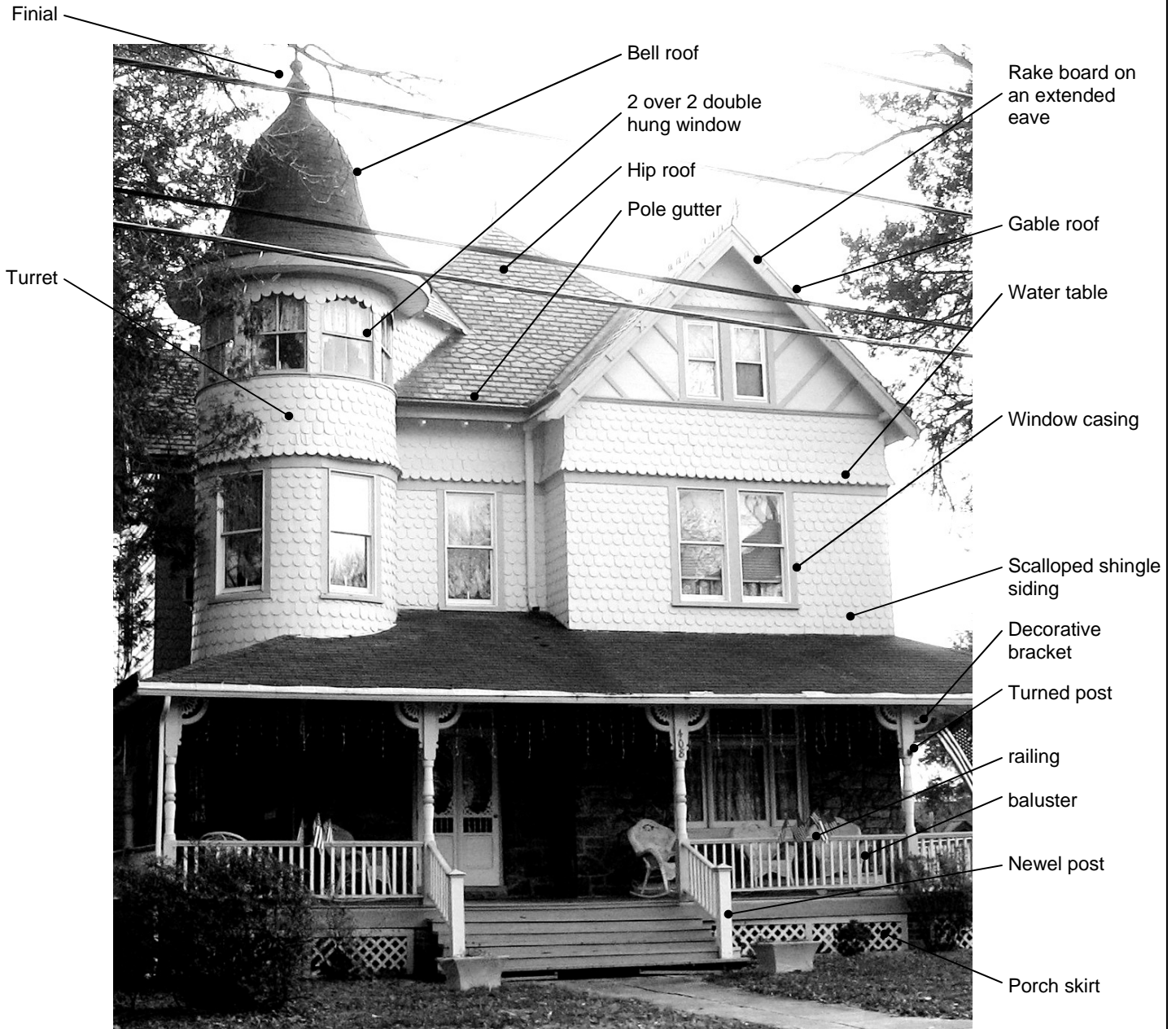
To obtain information about dates and times of the HARB meetings, check your Borough Calendar, the Borough Website (www.ridleyparkborough.org), or call the Borough Manager at (610) 532-2100.



H A R B

Glossary of Terms

Houses in Ridley Park's Historic District span from the Victorian to Colonial Revival styles, with a great concentration of handsome vernacular and architect designed homes from the late 19th Century to World War I. The following illustration provides a basic vocabulary of terms used to describe specific building elements.





Borough of Ridley Park
105 E. Ward Street
Ridley Park, PA 19078



Please deliver to:

BULK RATE
US POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 16
Ridley Park, PA 19078