

# Introduction

The Northwest Quadrant is an important neighborhood within the Beaufort National Historic Landmark District. Its houses and commercial buildings are tangible reminders of the lives and contributions made to Beaufort's history by the many people who lived and worked in this traditionally African-American neighborhood.

These design principles have been developed at the request of neighborhood residents to help insure that building rehabilitation projects and new construction within the Northwest Quadrant are consistent with its traditional character—defined by simple, small-scale buildings, typically built by people with limited financial resources who used readily available workmanship, design and materials.

These design principles form a basic approach to building rehabilitation and new construction that will help projects fit in with the traditional character of the neighborhood. Rehabilitation should respect the traditional character of the building and new construction should respect the character of the surrounding historic building stock.

New historical research is continually shedding light on our understanding of the history of building traditions within the historic district and its neighborhoods. As this new information surfaces, the community and the Board of Architectural Review (BOAR) should assess its impact on these design principles.

## **How were these design principles developed?**

The design principles in this document are the community's ideas about design in the Northwest Quadrant, as formulated in several public workshops and a neighborhood-based committee. Thus, they provide a common basis for making decisions about work that may affect the appearance of individual properties or the overall character of the neighborhood. However, they only provide guidance to certain design problems and do not dictate solutions. Instead, they define a range of appropriate responses to a variety of specific design issues.

This information is intended to help property owners understand the building elements that make up their neighborhood and what it takes for a new building (or a substantially altered historic building) to respectfully relate to the historic context. This approach does not require residents to spend more money on their projects or to make their buildings "look old." Rather, it is a means to help construction activity more closely relate to the mass, scale, form and setbacks of historic buildings that make up the context within which it is occurring.



*Neighborhood residents worked in public workshops to identify key features of the Northwest Quadrant that should be respected.*

When considering work in the Northwest Quadrant, relating to the established, historic context is encouraged, but not required. These principles are part of a suggested design approach and are provided as a suggestion to property owners, City staff and other residents who may engage in discussions about design in this neighborhood.

### **How do these design principles relate to the Beaufort Historic District Standards?**

This document provides a summary of the key design principles that apply to this portion of the historic district. The character of the Northwest Quadrant is distinctly different from other neighborhoods in the district and this document highlights the special features of the area.

These design principles will be used by the Board of Architectural Review to review rehabilitation and new construction projects involving properties in the Northwest Quadrant, which has been designated a Beaufort Conservation Neighborhood. The BOAR is charged with applying the city's preservation guidelines, which are published in *The Beaufort Preservation Manual* (John Milner Associates, 1979) and *The Preservation Manual Supplement* (John Milner Associates, 1990). Those documents apply to all properties within the entire historic and conservation district boundaries, which include a broad range of building types and historical periods. Footnotes in these design principles provide references to the *Beaufort Preservation Manual* and *Preservation Manual Supplement*.

### **How do these design principles relate to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards?**

These design principles are consistent with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*—which are basic rules for preserving historic buildings. The Secretary's rehabilitation standards form the basis for the *Beaufort Preservation Manual* and *Supplement* as well as this summary of *Design Principles for the Northwest Quadrant*. [See Appendix A]

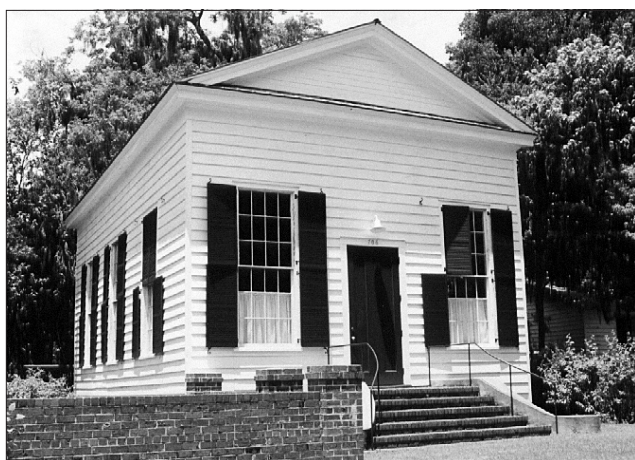
### **How will these design principles be used?**

All property owners within the historic and conservation districts who plan to make changes to the exterior of their properties must receive the approval of the City of Beaufort's Board of Architectural Review. In order to review each project in a consistent manner, the BOAR will use these principles as a basis for determining the appropriateness of the work proposed.

### **How do these design principles apply to historic buildings?**

Approximately 40% of the buildings in the Northwest Quadrant are considered historically significant. These properties are called "Contributing" properties, as indicated on the neighborhood map located on the inside cover of this document. (For more information, please consult the historic sites survey information maintained by the City Planning Department. The Historic Beaufort Foundation can also provide information about the history of the neighborhood and its properties.)

The city ordinance that establishes the Beaufort Historic District, also allows the City Council to designate individual properties within the Beaufort Conservation Neighborhoods as "Notable" properties. To be designated a notable property, a resource must embody a particularly high degree of significance to the historic district. The City Planning Department maintains a list of all notable properties. When reviewing projects involving notable properties, the BOAR will use the *Beaufort Preservation Manual* and the *Preservation Manual Supplement* rather than these principles.



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### ***The Concept of Historic Significance***

What makes a property historically significant? In general, properties must be at least 50 years old before they can be evaluated for potential historic significance, although exceptions do exist when a more recent property clearly is significant. Historic properties must have qualities that give them significance. A property may be significant because it conveys the character of early building designs in the neighborhood and it shows the quality of craftsmanship from that time.

When planning to rehabilitate a Contributing historic property, first determine the date of construction and identify any significant features and materials associated with the property. Retaining these details will greatly enhance the overall quality of the preservation project. If these features and materials are in good condition, then

selecting an appropriate treatment will provide for proper preservation. Follow this sequence: If a feature is intact and in good condition, maintain it as such. If the feature is deteriorated or damaged, repair it to its original condition. If it is not feasible to repair the feature, then replace it with one that is the same or similar in character (materials, detail, finish) to the original one. Replace only that portion which is beyond repair. If the feature is missing entirely, reconstruct it from appropriate evidence. If a new feature or addition is necessary, design it in such a way as to minimize the impact on original features.

Where these principles refer to the preservation or treatment of historic features or materials, they are referring specifically to Contributing historic properties within the neighborhood.

### **How do these design principles apply to existing non-historic buildings?**

Many existing buildings are considered non-historic, because they are more recently constructed or because they have lost much of their original character. These buildings are referred to as "Non-contributing" as indicated on the neighborhood map located on the inside cover of this document. For these buildings, the principles apply much the same as they would for the design of a new building.



*Many buildings in the NWQ are considered non-historic because they have lost much of their original character.*

### **How do these design principles apply to new construction?**

The design principles provide basic guidance for the size, shape, placement and landscaping of new buildings.

### **What help is available from the City?**

The City of Beaufort seeks to assist property owners in planning improvement projects and in deciding how to use the design principles. Planning Department staff is available for basic advice.

In addition, the City seeks to provide technical and financial assistance in some cases to encourage investment in the area. These programs, which will vary from time to time, may include design assistance and rehabilitation loans or grants. The Historic Beaufort Foundation also can help with historical research and information about other assistance programs. The Planning Department will maintain a summary of assistance programs.

### **Do these design principles determine taste?**

No, these design principles do not dictate taste. They reflect a basic approach to design that will help enhance the built environment in the neighborhood. They do not dictate style. However, they do reflect the feelings of community representatives and the values of long-term residents, including their goals to invigorate the neighborhood while building on its traditions. A key concept is that alterations and new construction respect the traditional setting.

### **How can a project be designed to respect its setting?**

Some basic principles apply. First, when building a new structure or altering an existing one, the traditional ways of building in the neighborhood should be considered. This includes how building fronts align with front yards of a similar depth, or the manner in which front doors all face the street. Where fronts of buildings line up on a street, for example, any new house should align with its neighbors.

These design principles draw upon comments from neighborhood residents in public meetings and also include information prepared by community residents, city planning staff and design consultants. They reflect a general agreement on the fundamental features of the Northwest Quadrant.

### **Why is it important to respect the design traditions of the neighborhood?**

Over the years, many people have invested their time, energy and money to make their neighborhood livable. In the past, they often constructed buildings in ways that helped to build a sense of community. That is to say that each building contributed to the greater whole of the neighborhood. The most cost-effective way to help invigorate the neighborhood is to reinforce these early work efforts by repairing existing buildings and constructing new ones to be compatible with their setting.

### **Will following these design principles be more expensive?**

In most cases, no; following the design principles will not cost more. They help direct *where* money is spent improving a property, not *how much* is invested. For example, the principles ask that a new building be placed in line with others on the block. This generally should not affect the cost of constructing the building foundation.

For example, in the case of new construction or non-historic properties, greater flexibility in the use of materials is appropriate, given the neighborhood context. This means that synthetic siding materials may be used when the appearance is similar to that of traditional wood siding. (These materials are not appropriate on historic buildings, however.)

For Contributing buildings, the principles will occasionally ask owners to take measures that could cost more. Repairing wood posts and details of an original porch, for example, may be more expensive than simply removing the worn material and installing a metal pipe. It is exactly for this reason that the City seeks to make assistance funds available, to help defray potential added costs in cases where following the guidelines might be more expensive.

### **How do these design principles relate to current building trends?**

In general, the design principles reinforce current national trends in the way in which people are improving their properties. In some cases, however, they may recommend an approach that is different from what some people might at first choose to do. For example, this document discourages the use of wrought iron porch columns and instead recommends returning to wood posts. That is because most of the houses in the area were built with wood posts originally and their porch designs have a stronger impact when these elements are used.

### **How will these design principles affect functional concerns for a property?**

While appearance is important, owners are also concerned that their properties be safe, easy to maintain and meet their functional needs. In general, the design principles take these interests into consideration and make recommendations for practical, cost-effective alternatives that will be compatible. For example, some owners may seek to improve security by erecting a chain link fence around their properties. This material was not a part of the tradition of building and generally detracts from the appearance of most building designs. Therefore, its use is discouraged. In most cases an alternative approach is suggested that will meet these functional requirements and still be compatible with the neighborhood.

### **Why is the Northwest Quadrant important?**

The Northwest Quadrant helps to tell the story of African-Americans who have contributed to the history of the city for generations. Its residents ran businesses, provided services and raised their families as a part of the community.

While this is a different story than what the “grand” houses may tell, it is also an important part of the community’s history. If the record of their lives is lost, then the story of the history of Beaufort is incomplete.

### **How to Use this Document**

This document is organized into four chapters that, taken together, provide the framework for making informed decisions about design in the Northwest Quadrant. The first chapter, *Historic Overview for the NWQ*, presents an abbreviated picture of how the neighborhood developed historically and introduces its architectural styles. The second chapter, *Character Defining Features*, builds on this history by discussing the fundamentals of building that make up the historic character of the neighborhood. Chapter three, *Design Principles*, provides the design principles on which BOAR decisions will be based. Finally, chapter four, *Appendices*, includes supplementary information that might help in making informed decisions about design in the neighborhood.

#### ***Important Note:***

*The BOAR will utilize the Beaufort Preservation Manual and Preservation Manual Supplement for all design items not covered in this document.*

Each of the design principles in this document contains the following components:

**Policy Statement**

A broad statement explaining the BOAR's basic approach for the treatment of the design feature being discussed is presented. This statement provides the basis for the more detailed design principles that follow. In cases where special conditions in a specific project are such that the detailed design principles do not appear to address the situation, this broad policy statement should serve as the basis for determining the appropriateness of the proposed work. These are numbered to indicate their relative position within the chapter.

**Background Information**

A brief discussion of the issues typically associated with the specific design topic is sometimes presented next. This may include technical information, such as factors associated with the repetition of building forms, as well as general preservation theory that might be relevant to the topic at hand.

**Design Principles**

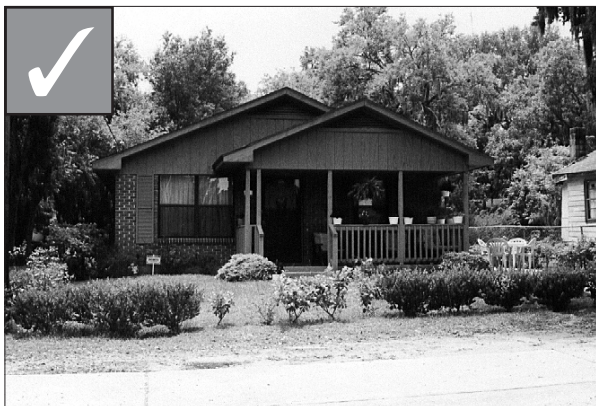
The specific design principles are presented as **bold face** statements under each policy statement. These are also numbered to aid in specific reference in the design process. Each of these is followed by a bulleted (•) statement that further clarifies options for meeting the principle, and whether the approach is *preferred*, *acceptable* or *not appropriate*. Design principles are further explained through the use of photographs and illustrations. Examples given should not be considered the only appropriate options. In most instances, there are numerous possible solutions that meet the intention of the design principles as well as the needs of the property owner. These principles are intended to be supplemental to the existing codes of the City of Beaufort.

**Additional Information**

Finally, cross-references to related information located in the *Beaufort Preservation Manual* and *Preservation Manual Supplement* are provided at the bottom of the pages.

**3**

**Maintain the traditional character of a front yard.**



*The existence of grass lawns enhances the pedestrian environment and contributes to the character of the neighborhood, and is therefore acceptable.*

Buildings in the Northwest Quadrant are typically set back a similar distance from the street edge. In cases where detached sidewalks exist, this setback may be even greater. These setbacks help to define a house's front yard. The existence of these grass lawns enhances the pedestrian environment and contributes to the character of the neighborhood; it should be maintained.

**3.1 Use a grass lawn in the front yard.**

- It is *preferred* that the front yard be similar in depth to neighboring houses.
- Minimizing the amount of hard surface paving for patios, terraces or drives in front yards is *preferred*.
- It is *not appropriate* to use rock and gravel in a front yard. If used, however, it should only occur as an accent element.

*A sample design principle.*