

Doors on a duplex

When converting a duplex with two front doors to single family use, the treatment depends on whether the building was originally a duplex or not.

4.37 Preserve both front doors on a duplex when they are original.

- Retain both front doors; one may be made inoperable.
- Alternatively, replace one of the doors with a window and leave the other door as-is.

4.38 A previously altered front entry may be restored.

- If a building was converted from single-family use to a duplex, and historical evidence for a single front entry door is available, you may restore the front entry to its original configuration.

Installing a door in a new location

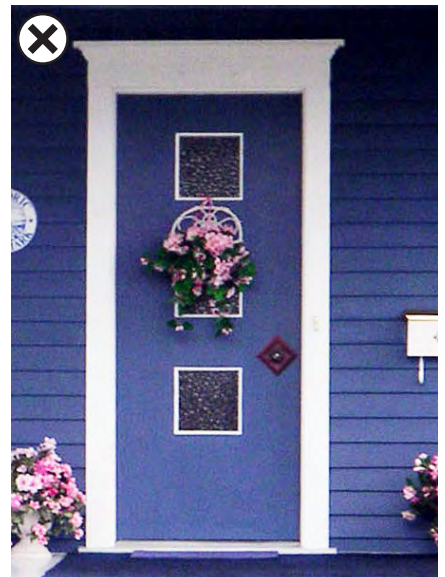
In some cases, a new door may be needed in a location that did not have one historically. This may be considered where (a) the new door would not be highly visible from the street and (b) creating the opening would not destroy any key other character-defining features. (See page 2-7 for diagrams that illustrate sensitive and less-sensitive locations for alterations.)

4.39 Design the new door to be compatible with the historic building.

- Use a design that is simple in character and of its own time, so that the door will be easy to identify as being new.
- More flexibility in door design, including size and detailing, may be considered farther back on the side wall of a building.



Preserve the proportions of a historic door and its opening.



This replacement door is a style popular in the mid-20th century and would be inappropriate for a contributing building in the Houston Heights Historic Districts.



A wrap-around porch

Porches

Porches are one of the most important character-defining features for houses in Houston's historic districts. Front porches frame and shelter primary entrances, and they often include distinctive decorative details which help to define an architectural style. Front porches often establish a consistent one-story line along a blockface. Some porches *wrap around* from the front to one or both sides of a house.

Separate side porches are present on some historic houses. When visible from the street, side porches contribute to the character of both the property and the historic district, particularly when the house is located on a corner lot and the side porch faces a street.

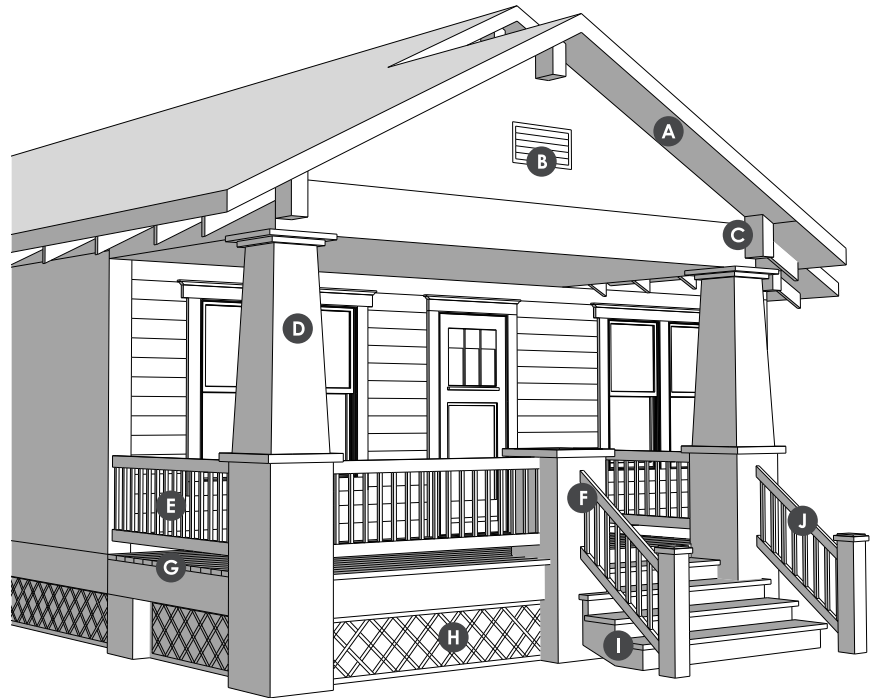
Porches typically consist of the following parts: a hipped, gabled, or shed roof, which is supported by posts or columns and finished with a ceiling; a guardrail/balustrade between the posts, which includes top and bottom rails, with balusters in between; a floor or deck; and steps from the ground to the porch, which may be flanked on either side by posts or piers and sometimes handrails.

Note: Please refer to the Houston Building Code for additional requirements for guardrails and handrails.

TYPICAL PORCH FEATURES

KEY:

A	Porch Eave
B	Gable Vent
C	Decorative Roof Beam/ Triangular Knee Brace
D	Column
E	Balustrade/Guardrail
F	Raised Pier
G	Porch Deck
H	Skirting/Screening
I	Stringer
J	Handrail



Porches are such important visual elements that inappropriate changes can have a negative impact on the entire house. For example, original porch materials may have been replaced with inappropriate designs, porch components or details may be missing, or a porch may have been partially or completely enclosed to create more living space. Most of these alterations are, fortunately, reversible; many off-the-shelf products match historic designs, and custom fabrication is readily available when necessary. A property owner who wishes to restore a porch should refer to historic photographs of the property and consult with Historic Preservation Office staff, who can provide helpful guidance.

For Existing Porches

4.40 Preserve an original porch, including its form, materials, and details.

- Keep wooden porch elements painted.
- Maintain the height and pitch of a porch roof.
- Do not enclose a front porch in a way that alters its open character.
- When screening a porch, do not damage or remove existing porch elements, such as posts and railings.
- Maintain the original location of front porch steps.

4.41 Repair, rather than replace, damaged portions of a porch.

- For small areas of damage, consider using a wood consolidant to preserve the original wood.
- If a patch or Dutchman repair is appropriate, remove the least amount of material needed to properly execute the repair. Use wood as close to the original material as possible (same species, grain pattern, and color) for a less visible result.
- Do not replace an entire porch when repair is possible.

REPAIRING PORCH RAILINGS

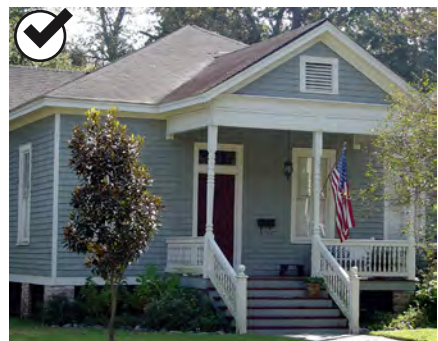
Avoid removing original materials that are in good condition or that can be repaired in place.



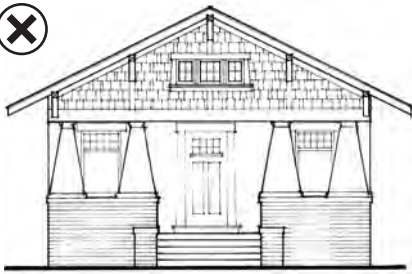
Before: A deteriorated handrail



After: Handrail repaired and the post replaced in kind



This original porch has been preserved in an appropriate manner.



Oversized columns like these are a modern interpretation of historic details and are appropriate for new construction, but not an existing historic porch.



Consider restoring a porch to its original condition. This porch enclosure is inappropriate.

4.42 If repair is not possible, replace only those elements of the porch which are not repairable.

- Replace a historic porch element to match the original.
- Use materials that match the style, texture, finish, composition, and proportion of the original.
- Match the guardrail (balustrade) of a historic porch in scale, profile, and character.
- Replace wooden porch steps with the same size material and profile. Substitute materials, such as composites, may be appropriate if their appearance matches that of the original material.

4.43 Replace porch decking with similar materials.

- When replacing deck boards, use the same size material and profile (such as tongue-and-groove). Substitute materials, such as composites, may be appropriate for porch decking.
- Do not replace undamaged deck boards.
- Do not replace a wooden porch deck with concrete.
- Do not cover porch decking with tile.

Adding a New Porch to an Existing Building

A new porch may be added in a location where it will not affect the integrity of the contributing building, such as at the rear of the building or toward the rear on a side wall. A new porch can also be included as part of a larger addition, particularly when the porch helps to reduce the perceived mass and scale of the addition. A new front porch may be added to a noncontributing building where one did not originally exist.

4.44 Design a new porch to be compatible with the existing building.

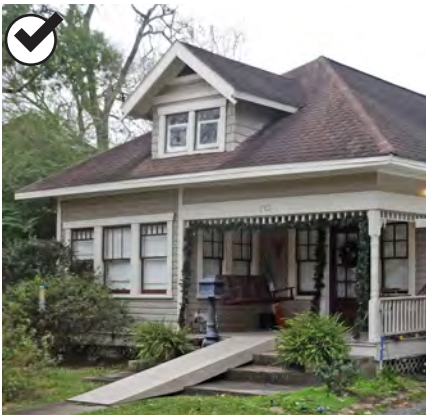
- Keep the scale, proportion, and character of the new porch compatible with the historic structure.
- Match the finished floor height of the new porch to the existing building.
- The eave height of a new porch can match the eave height of an existing front porch or be lower.
- Use materials that are similar in scale, proportion, texture, and finish to an existing front porch.

4.45 If a porch element or the entire porch is to be reconstructed, base the new design on historical evidence.

- Where an entire original porch is missing, base the replacement design on physical evidence (such as ghosting of post profiles remaining on wood surfaces) or on photographic evidence. Sanborn maps can show the location of the previous porch and whether it was full or partial width. If no photographic evidence exists, look at houses of the same style in your context area and design the porch using simplified versions of those porch elements.
- Size columns and posts appropriately for the porch roof they are supporting and for the bases on which they rest. For example, slender posts will be visually out of balance with large roofs and massive bases.
- Select columns and posts that are appropriate for the architectural style of the house. For example, slender turned wood columns are typical for Queen Anne houses, while thicker square-tapered columns are typical for Craftsman houses.
- Do not use metal columns or railings unless there is clear evidence that they were used historically.
- Use a brick base beneath a wood column only for a Craftsman house and where evidence is available that this previously existed. Stone is not appropriate in the Houston Heights Historic Districts.
- Choose a railing that is in character with the style of the building, and not more elaborate than what existed historically.
- If a one-story porch has its own roof, the height of the porch roof should be lower than the main roof.
- The roof of the porch may be hipped, gabled, or shed. It is not required to match the main roof of the house.



Replacement porch elements (unpainted) match the original components.



A temporary ramp that does not alter character-defining features is appropriate.

Accessibility

If accessibility solutions, such as ramps or lifts, are needed, owners of historic properties should comply to the fullest extent possible with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Texas Accessibility Design Guidelines (TAS) provisions, while also preserving the integrity of the character-defining features of their buildings and sites. Design accessibility solutions to minimize impacts on a historic structure.

Installation of accessibility ramps and lifts require a Certificate of Appropriateness but can be approved administratively by the Planning Director. The **removal** of ramps and lifts does not require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

4.46 Adapt historic doorways to make them accessible.

- Instead of widening an existing door opening, install offset or “swing wide” door hinges to increase the usable size of a door opening by two inches.
- Consider replacing door thresholds with beveled alternatives, no higher than $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, to allow wheelchairs and scooters to maneuver over them easily.
- If historic door hardware is removed for replacement with accessible alternatives, such as lever handles, store the original hardware in a secure location where it will be protected from weather, so that it may be reinstalled at some point in the future.

4.47 Add ramps or lifts to provide access to at least one door.

- The Americans with Disabilities Act recommends that a ramp to be used by someone in a wheelchair or scooter should have no more than a 1:12 slope; that is, for every one inch in height between the starting point and ending point, the ramp should be one foot long.
- If porch components must be removed in order to create access for a ramp or lift, take photographs to document the original condition of the porch. Use hand tools and take care that the components to be removed are not damaged. Store the original components in a secure location, away from weather, with a copy of the photo documentation (also protected from weather). Additional notes about the project may help someone to re-install the removed porch elements in the future.