

# Preservation Guidelines for Designated Landmark Properties and Properties in Preservation Districts

August, 2005

## Contents

Introduction

A. Residential Architectural Styles

B. Windows and Shutters

C. Doors and Garage Doors

D. Porches and Decks

E. Storefronts

F. Awnings

G. Signs

H. Landscaping, Fences, Walls and Pavement

I. Roofing

J. Siding

Prepared for the Rochester Preservation Board  
by Peter Siegrist, AIA and Katie Eggers Comeau  
The Landmark Society of WNY

## Introduction

Residents of Rochester and visitors to our city appreciate the extra effort required of owners in maintaining their historic properties. These places connect us to our past and help make our city distinct from communities elsewhere. In an era when houses and commercial buildings everywhere look alike, Rochester's abundance of historic places makes our city special.

Rochester has eight preservation districts encompassing over 1,000 properties. The first district was designated in 1969, the latest in 1993. In addition to the districts, city government has designated 75 individual properties as city landmarks. Many other neighborhoods and properties are eligible for designation, and may be nominated for landmark status by any city resident.



The law that governs city-designated landmarks is Rochester's Preservation Ordinance. Under the ordinance, a property owner is responsible for getting approval for any alterations to the exterior of his or her property. Approval is required for all non-maintenance exterior work, including any alteration, any removal of features, demolition and major landscaping. Paint colors are regulated only on buildings that are individual landmarks, including those that are within preservation districts.



c0000769.jpg Rochester City Hall Photo Lab

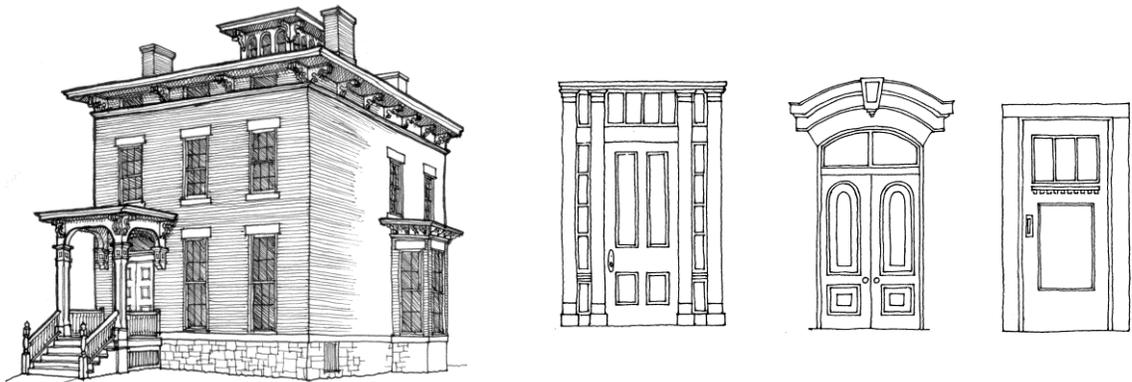
Approval is granted in the form of a Certificate of Appropriateness, once an application is made to the city's Bureau of Buildings and Zoning. The name of the certificate is telling: the new work must be appropriate to the property and to nearby properties. That is, it must "fit" aesthetically with its surroundings. Because it is sometimes difficult to define "fit", most applications are reviewed by the Rochester Preservation Board.

The Preservation Board is made up of city residents with knowledge of preservation, architecture and landscape architecture, and an interest in protecting our historic neighborhoods. Members are appointed by the mayor and confirmed by City Council. By law, the board must have at least one registered architect, four residents of city preservation districts, one member of the Greater Rochester Association of Realtors, and one member of a historic society. The Board meets once each month to review and rule on applications.

## Using the Guidelines

These guidelines are based on preservation guidelines from other communities across the country, tuned to reflect the nuances of Rochester's architecture. As such, they can be considered the state of the art in preservation in 2005.

The drawings are meant to suggest solutions to some of the common changes proposed to historic properties. They are suggestions only; and certainly not the only solutions possible. Other solutions are welcomed and appreciated. In this light, the components drawn here should not be considered universal parts that can be plugged into any building. Certain windows that are correct for a Tudor style house, for instance, are inappropriate for a Queen Anne.



These guidelines were prepared to help property owners in three primary ways. First, they are meant to educate owners about historic styles and the elements that comprise these styles. The guidelines begin with a primer of the most common architectural styles in Rochester, each with a list of familiar characteristics and elements. Every historic style has its own appropriate elements, and not every element is correct for every style. Note that the building elements shown here are merely a representative sample, and are not the only ones appropriate to a specific property.

Second, the guidelines are meant to give owners a general idea of how a property might be altered while maintaining its historic character. Rochester's preservation ordinance is not intended to freeze properties into a certain era, preventing them from being altered. It is understood that properties often must change to remain viable and enjoyable. Therefore, alterations, including additions, are expected and allowed. Just as with the original property, alterations tell a story about how the occupants lived, and can themselves become historically significant. The guidelines address some of the more common changes that are appropriate.

Third, the guidelines are meant to show the level of detail that the Preservation Board addresses, so that owners can understand how best to describe their proposed changes to the Board. A historic property is comprised of many small details which, in combination with those of the other properties in a preservation district, yield a significant amount of historic character. The incremental loss of good details or the spread of inappropriate details throughout a district can markedly degrade the entire area. So, while it may seem that the Board can be overly fussy about small issues, its attention to detail over many years has helped maintain the city's overall historic character.

# Getting a Certificate of Appropriateness

The term "C of A" is used nationally for an approval to change a historic property, and:

- Is not a building permit, but is required to get one.
- Is required for all exterior construction, alteration, removal or relocation; new buildings in a district, some landscaping; and parking areas in side and front yards.
- Applies to the entire property, not just areas seen from public streets and sidewalks.

A "C of A" is not required for:

- In-kind replacement, repairs or maintenance. For example, new roofing is not reviewed if it is the same material as that being replaced.
- Improvements in the rear yard not deemed as permanent by the zoning office. A jungle gym probably wouldn't need review, but a storage shed might.
- Removal of diseased trees as certified by the City Forester.

To apply for a "C of A", applicants complete a simple form and submit it to the zoning office at least 30 days before the next hearing, with:

- Anything that will help illustrate the proposal, such as photos, drawings, or catalog sheets. Clarity is essential, although professional help is not.
- An environmental assessment form for work that may impact the environment.
- A \$100 fee and copies of everything.

After the application is submitted:

- The applicant posts a cardboard sign (provided by City Hall) on the property notifying the public that an application is pending.
- A hearing is scheduled with the Preservation Board.
- City Hall notifies property owners within 300' of the project.
- Prior to the Preservation Board hearing, each Board member reviews the application and visits the project site.

Preservation Board hearings

- Public hearings are held in City Council Chambers one evening per month.
- Applicants present their proposals to the Board.
- Public comments are taken.
- The Board deliberates in public, and usually makes an immediate decision. The Board can hold an application to await further information.
- The Board considers many subjective characteristics, including:
  - Scale
  - Height
  - Roof shapes
  - Walls of continuity
  - Proportions of openings
  - Proportions of the front façade
  - Directional expression of the façade
  - Rhythm of spacing and buildings on streets
  - Relationship of materials, textures and colors

Written findings are mailed to the applicant within 10 days, although results are known at the hearing.

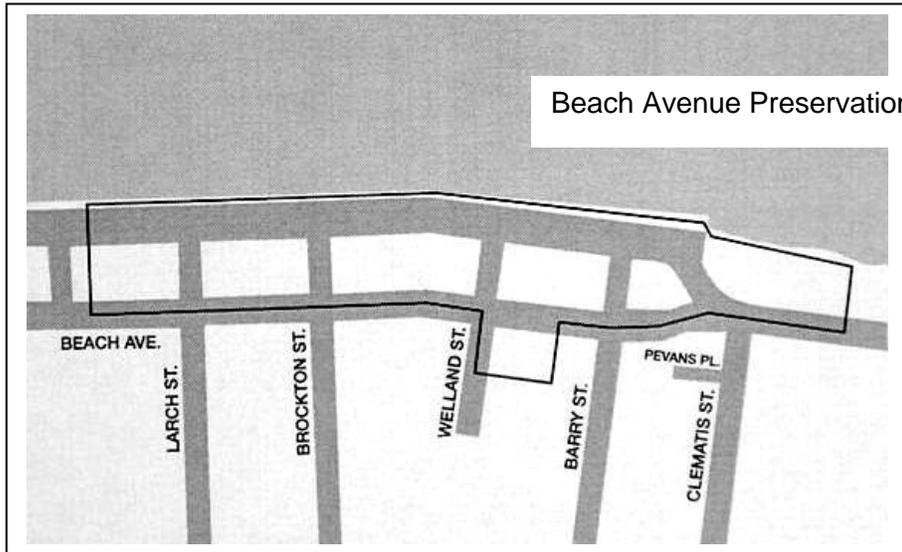
# Technical Advice

The National Park Service has prepared a series of technical bulletins on preserving, rehabilitating and restoring historic buildings. These Preservation Briefs now number 44, and can be fully accessed on the internet at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs>.

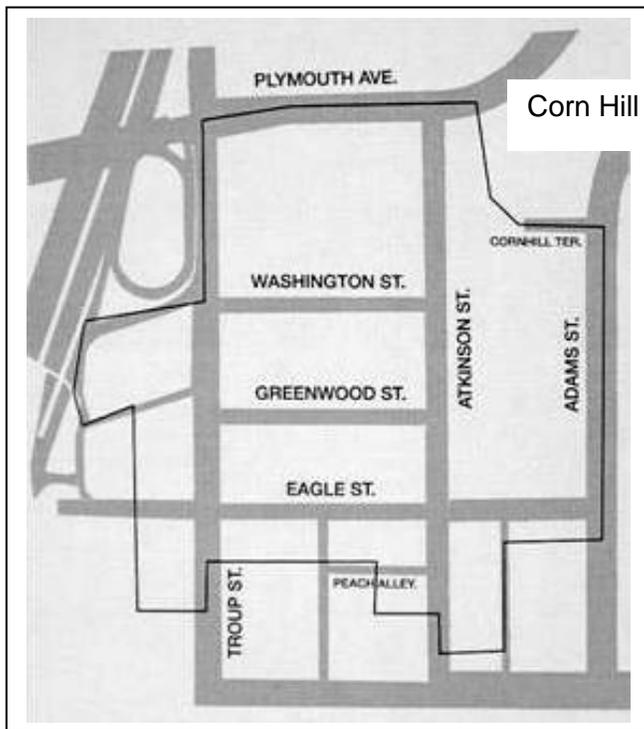
- 01: Assessing Cleaning and Water-Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings
- 02: Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings
- 03: Conserving Energy in Historic Buildings
- 04: Roofing for Historic Buildings
- 05: The Preservation of Historic Adobe Buildings
- 06: Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings
- 07: The Preservation of Historic Glazed Architectural Terra-Cotta
- 08: Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings: The Appropriateness of Substitute Materials for Resurfacing Historic Wood Frame Buildings
- 09: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows
- 10: Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork
- 11: Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts
- 12: The Preservation of Historic Pigmented Structural Glass (Vitrolite and Carrara Glass)
- 13: The Repair and Thermal Upgrading of Historic Steel Windows
- 14: New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns
- 15: Preservation of Historic Concrete: Problems and General Approaches
- 16: The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors
- 17: Architectural Character - Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving Their Character
- 18: Rehabilitating Interiors in Historic Buildings - Identifying Character-Defining Elements
- 19: The Repair and Replacement of Historic Wooden Shingle Roofs
- 20: The Preservation of Historic Barns
- 21: Repairing Historic Flat Plaster - Walls and Ceilings
- 22: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco
- 23: Preserving Historic Ornamental Plaster
- 24: Heating, Ventilating, and Cooling Historic Buildings: Problems and Recommended Approaches
- 25: The Preservation of Historic Signs
- 26: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Log Buildings
- 27: The Maintenance and Repair of Architectural Cast Iron

- 28: Painting Historic Interiors
- 29: The Repair, Replacement, and Maintenance of Historic Slate Roofs
- 30: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Clay Tile Roofs
- 31: Mothballing Historic Buildings
- 32: Making Historic Properties Accessible
- 33: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stained and Leaded Glass
- 34: Applied Decoration for Historic Interiors: Preserving Historic Composition Ornament
- 35: Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation
- 36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes
- 37: Appropriate Methods of Reducing Lead-Paint Hazards in Historic Housing
- 38: Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry
- 39: Holding the Line: Controlling Unwanted Moisture in Historic Buildings
- 40: Preserving Historic Ceramic Tile Floors
- 41: The Seismic Retrofit of Historic Buildings: Keeping Preservation in the Forefront
- 42: The Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Historic Cast Stone
- 43: The Preparation and Use of Historic Structure Reports
- 44: The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings: Repair, Replacement and New Design

# Rochester's Preservation Districts

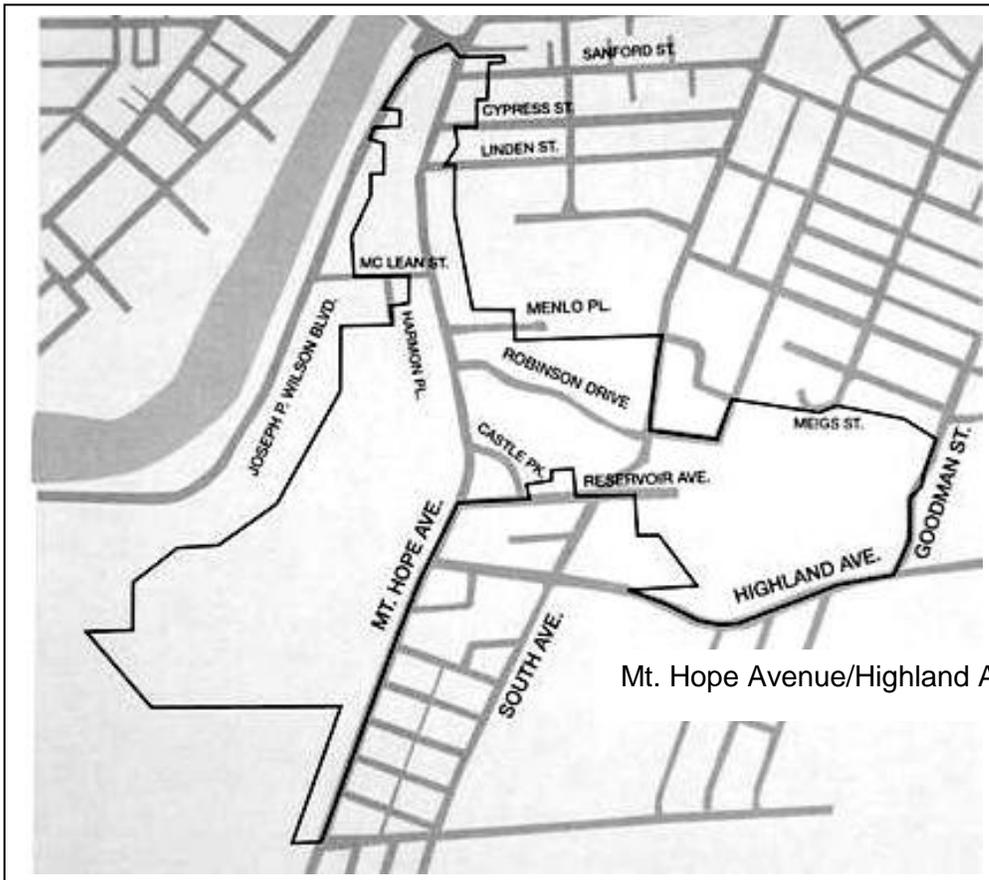


Beach Avenue Preservation District

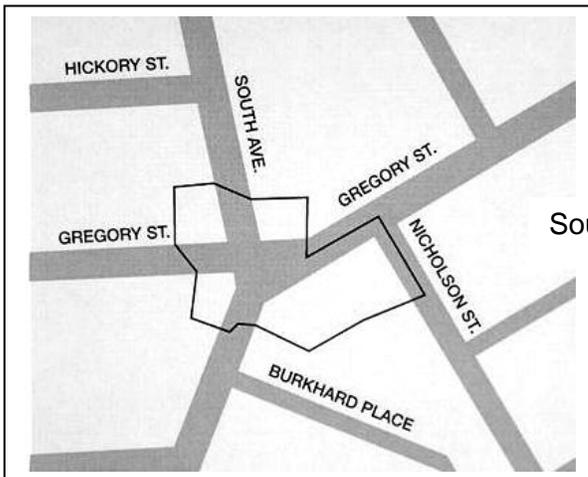


Corn Hill Preservation District

# Rochester's Preservation Districts Continued

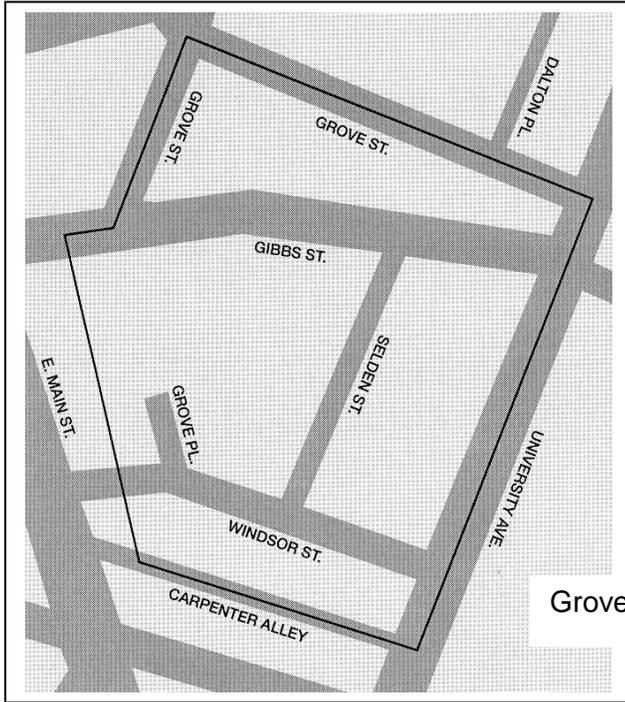


Mt. Hope Avenue/Highland Avenue District



South Avenue/Gregory St. District

# Rochester's Preservation Districts Continued



Grove Place District

Susan B. Anthony District

