

HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN STANDARDS

CITY OF NORTHVILLE, MICHIGAN



SEPTEMBER 20, 1999



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	iii
Acknowledgments	ii
Mission and Boundaries	iii
Mission	iii
What is a Historic District?	iv
Northville Historic District Boundaries	iv
District Map	v
How to Use the Standards	vii
PART 1 BACKGROUND	1-1
Brief History of Northville	1-2
Historic Architectural Styles in Northville	1-4
PART 2 DESIGN STANDARDS INTRODUCTION	2-1
Definitions	2-2
What is a Historic Structure?	2-2
What is Preservation?	2-4
Applying the Guidelines	2-5
Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation	2-5
When do the Historic District Guidelines Apply?	2-6
Federal Tax Credits	2-7
PART 3 RESIDENTIAL STANDARDS	3-1
Preserving Historic Residential Buildings	3-2
Landscaping	3-2
Fences	3-4
Preserving Roofs and Roofing	3-5
Preserving Windows	3-6
Preserving Doors	3-8
Preserving Ornament and Details	3-9
Preserving Porches	3-10
Preserving Siding	3-11
Preserving Atypical Styles	3-12

PART 3 RESIDENTIAL STANDARDS, CONT.

Residential Additions and New Construction	3-13
Setback and Spacing	3-14
Mass	3-16
Height	3-17
Scale	3-18
Proportion	3-19
Hierarchy	3-20
Rhythm	3-21
Materials	3-21
Details	3-22
Special Types of New Residential Construction	3-23
Decks	3-23
Dormers	3-23
Garages and Carports	3-24
Adaptive Reuse of Historic Residential Buildings	3-26

PART 4 COMMERCIAL STANDARDS 4-1

Preserving Historic Commercial Buildings	4-2
Glossary	4-3
Preserving Storefronts	4-4
Preserving the Setback	4-5
Preserving Windows	4-6
Preserving Cornices	4-8
Preserving Commercial Doors	4-9
Preserving Ornament	4-10
Preserving Atypical Styles	4-11
Commercial Additions and New Buildings	4-12
Development Objectives	4-12
Variety	4-12
Streetscape Amenities	4-12
Pedestrian Orientation	4-13
Parking	4-13
Setback and Spacing	4-14
Mass	4-16
Height	4-17
Scale	4-18
Proportion	4-19
Hierarchy	4-20
Rhythm	4-20
Materials	4-21
Ornament	4-22
Special Types of New Commercial Construction	4-23
Awnings	4-23
Signs	4-24
Combined or Divided Facades	4-26
Rear Facade Development	4-27
Adaptive Reuse of Historic Commercial Buildings	4-28

PART 5 PRESERVING BUILDING MATERIALS 5-1

Maintenance	5-2
Wood	5-3
Masonry	5-4
Terra-cotta	5-6
Roofing	5-7
Slate	5-8
Asphalt Shingles	5-9
Metal Roofing	5-10
Stone	5-12
Windows	5-14
Metal	5-16
Vinyl, Aluminum and Asbestos Siding	5-17
Paint	5-18
Application	5-18
Color Selection	5-18
Interiors	5-19

PART 6 CODES AND BUILDING SYSTEMS 6-1

Building Codes and Life Safety	6-2
Michigan Barrier Free and A.D.A.	6-4
Building Systems	6-7
Mechanical and Electrical Systems	6-7
Energy Conservation	6-8
Structural Systems	6-9

PART 7 REVIEW PROCESSES 7-1

Review Process	7-2
Where to go for Assistance	7-3
Historic District Commission Review	7-4
Building Department Review	7-6
Building Codes and Zoning Ordinances	7-7
Building Permit	7-7
Construction Board of Appeals	7-10
Barrier Free Design Rule Exception	7-11
Sign Permit	7-12
Sample Forms	7-13

PART 8 REFERENCES 8-1

General References and Bibliographies	8-2
History and Architectural Styles	8-2
Preserving Building Materials	8-2
Interiors	8-4
Paint and Color	8-4
Magazines and Catalogs	8-4
Glossary	8-5

FOREWORD

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Northville City Council

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John G. Hardin
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Northville Historic District Commission

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MISSION AND BOUNDARIES

Mission

Over 25 years ago, in 1972, the City of Northville recognized that its unique and historic architectural character was worthy of preservation. The Northville Historic District Committee documented over eighty distinctive buildings in downtown Northville. Through their efforts, the area containing those buildings was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in July of 1972. National Register listing is an honor reserved for those places that have architectural, social and cultural significance "by which present and future generations can sense the heartbeat of the United States."

Northville City Council passed the Historic District Ordinance in 1974. The purpose of the ordinance is to:

1. Safeguard the heritage of the City of Northville by preserving a district, which reflects elements of its cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history;
2. Stabilize and improve property values in (the) district;
3. Foster civic beauty;
4. Strengthen the local economy;
5. Promote the use of historic districts for the education, pleasure and welfare of the citizens of the city.

The Ordinance also established a group of professionals and citizens, called the Historic District Commission, to review plans for construction, alteration, repair, moving, or demolition of all buildings within the district. The Historic District Commission review insures that the integrity of the district is not compromised by proposed changes. Rapid growth and the availability of new building materials has lead to an exciting challenge for the City of Northville and the Historic District Commission: to balance vital development and technological advances with preservation of Northville's historic architectural character. It is not a matter of "either" growth "or" history.

The Ordinance and the Commission have taken a very strong anti-demolition stance, and it is obvious that irreversible destruction of Northville's historic fabric should be prohibited. Questions about alteration, repair and new construction are more complex, however. A clear approach and criteria will enable the HDC to evaluate each project methodically and will let owners know what to expect. They will give building owners, businesses, planners, builders, and architects a framework within which creative yet sensitive design solutions can be made.

A major benefit of adopting the *Design Standards* is that the Northville Historic District may gain Certified Local Government status. Certified Local Governments are eligible for state and federal funding for preservation activities, on competitive basis.

What is a Historic District?

A historic district is an area with special historic character or a "theme" that ties an area together, and that the community feels is worth preserving. In 1974, Northville City Council passed a resolution that the architectural theme for the Northville Historic District is Victorian, in the era from mid 1850's to the latter 1800's. More specifically, the greatest concentration of notable buildings are "Gothic Revival" style. The Historic District Commission exists to encourage preservation of the theme and to provide information which will educate and assist property owners in keeping their properties compatible with the theme.

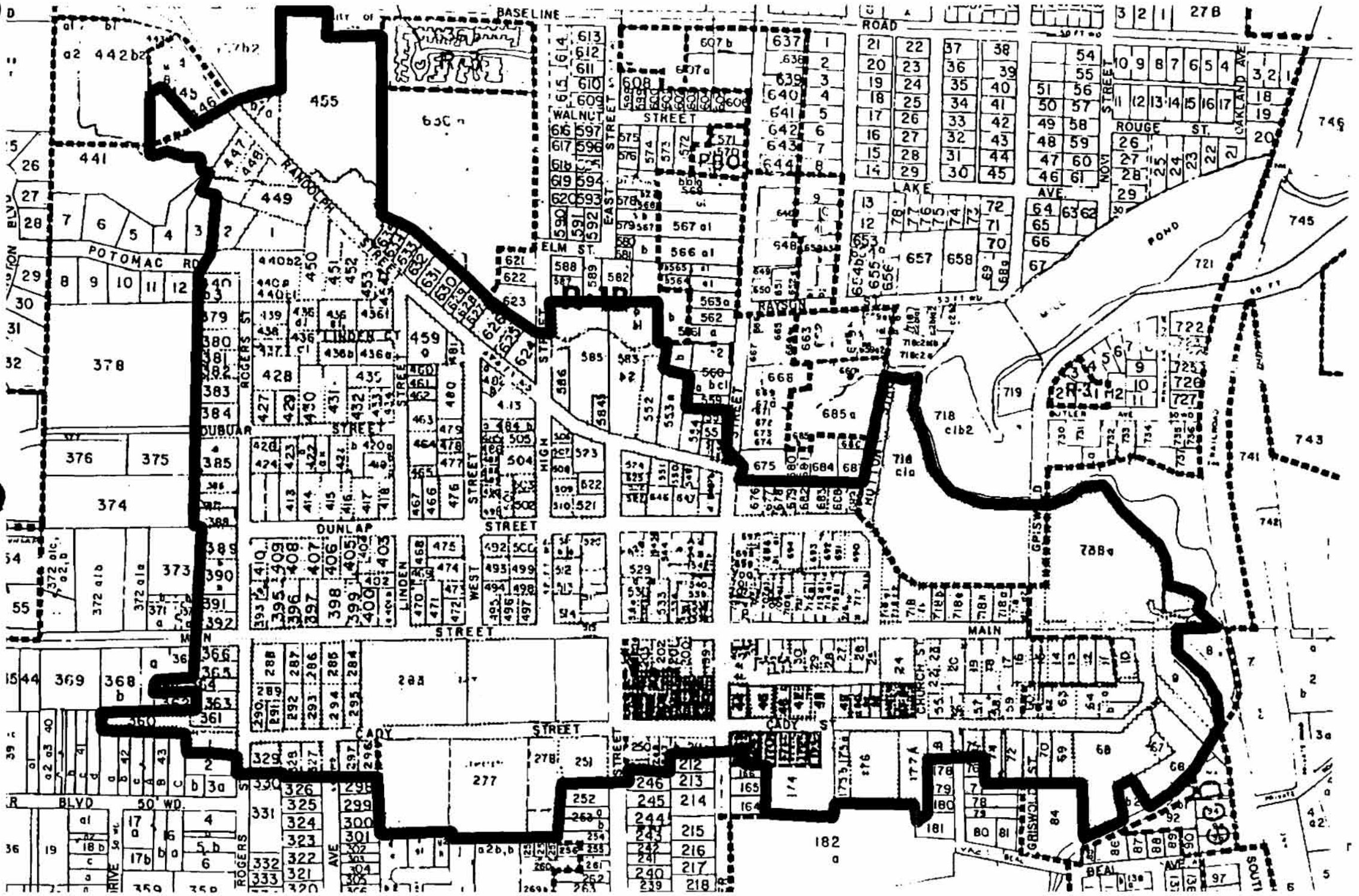
Most of the buildings in a historic district must be "historic" according to the basic definition that they are more than 50 years old. There are also "non-historic buildings" (built within the last 50 years) that can maintain the character of a district when they are compatible in scale, materials, and siting. Some of the buildings may be of outstanding architectural character, some may be of local social or cultural significance, and some may be ordinary, but all of them affect the character of the area, and therefore all of them are protected under the local Historic District Ordinance.

District Boundaries

The Northville Historic District generally includes the entire central business district and the surrounding residential neighborhood. The boundaries are clearly, and legally defined:

Beginning at the Eastern extremity of Cady Street, thence west along Cady Street to Rogers Street, thence north along Rogers Street to the northern extremity of said street, thence east along the north line of lot 439, Northville Assessors Plat, to the west line of lot 450, thence north along the west line of lot 450, to the south boundary of lot 449, thence west along the south line of lots 449, 448, and 447 to the west line of lot 447, thence north along the west line of lot 447 to Randolph Street, thence southeasterly along Randolph Street to Center Street, thence south along Center Street to Dunlap Street, thence east along Dunlap Street to Hutton Street, thence south along Hutton Street to Main Street, thence east along Main Street to Park Place, thence southerly along Park Place to the point of beginning, and including all properties within these boundaries and all properties abutting the boundary lines.

Note that properties on BOTH sides of the boundary streets are included in the historic district.



NORTHVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT

HOW TO USE THE STANDARDS

The first goal of historic preservation, and therefore the goal of the Northville Historic District Design Standards, is to keep what remains of the historic integrity or character of a building or district. This book provides the details about HOW to preserve historic integrity. The *Standards* aim to be specific, but in any evaluation of design and the built environment, good judgement and interpretation must be used. The Historic District Commission has the right, and the responsibility, to interpret the *Standards* as it sees fit in order to uphold the Historic District Ordinance.

Part 1, "Background," contains a brief history of Northville and puts the development of the area into a historic context. Descriptions of some of the major historic architectural styles are described and illustrated in Part 1. The key features of the various styles are indicated so that they can be recognized, preserved, or restored.

In Part 2, "Design Guidelines Introduction," preservation terminology used throughout this report is defined. The section also describes what kinds of projects need to follow the *Standards* for Historic District Commission review.

Specific recommendations for residential and commercial projects are presented in Part 3, "Residential Guidelines" and Part 4 "Commercial Guidelines." If you are considering any work to your building in the historic district, you should become familiar with the *Standards* early in the design process. In each of these sections there is a list of recommendations for work on specific building elements (such as windows, roof, etc.). This is followed with an explanation of design qualities that the Historic District Commission will consider when reviewing new construction: setback and spacing, mass, height, scale, proportion, hierarchy, rhythm, materials and details.

Techniques for preserving historic construction materials are given in Part 5, "Preserving Building Materials." These techniques will be helpful to plan repairs and maintenance. They will also enable building owners to discuss proper repair methods with contractors.

Building codes, structural, mechanical, and electrical systems are not monitored by the Historic District Commission, but have great impact on rehabilitation and new construction. Part 6, "Codes and Building Systems," explains some of the requirements of the building code (BOCA), Michigan Barrier Free, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. This section is by no means inclusive, but it is a good introduction to the codes. Recommendations for updating and repairing structural, mechanical, and electrical systems in ways that minimize damage to historic buildings are also given in this section.

FOREWORD

Part 7, "Review Processes," outlines the application and review processes for Historic District, Building Department, and Planning Commission review. Charts and time lines describe the relationship between the review processes. All of these review processes take time, and building owners must be familiar with the procedures and allow time for appropriate reviews. The section also includes sample forms and phone numbers and addresses of organizations that can provide information. Sample forms are included at the end of the section.