

## **Ocean Grove Residential Structures -Facade Design Guidelines**

### **VII. FAQ's - Frequently Asked Questions**

The following is a summary of the most frequently asked questions concerning repairs, renovations, alterations, reconstructions and additions to single and two-family residences in Ocean Grove.

1. *What is the (BAR) HPC ?*
2. *Do I really need a Building Permit for my project?*
3. *I am doing all the work myself and I know what I want.  
Do I need an Architect's Drawings to apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness from the HPC?*
4. *How long does it take to get an approval from HPC ?*
5. *Why do I need to get another approval from the Building Department if HPC said it was OK ? How long will that take ?*
6. *How close can I build my addition to my property line ?*
7. *I want to keep the low height of my existing porch guard rails. If I replace them, will they make me build it higher ?*
8. *What is an acceptable railing type and spacing?*
9. *When do I need a handrail on an exterior step ?*
10. *How wide can I make my front steps before I need handrails ?*
11. *If I want to replace a deteriorated existing side (or rear) window (that is 2 feet or less from the property line) in the exact same location, can I do it ?*
12. *Can I make an existing side/rear window or door bigger ?*
13. *Can I add another side (or rear) window or door ?*
14. *Do I have to provide large egress type windows in all the bedrooms if I start a renovation ?*
15. *Do I have to provide fire rated exterior materials on my addition ?*
16. *Can I use vinyl siding ?*
17. *Can I clad over existing siding? What if existing shingle is asbestos?*
18. *Can I clad over window and door surrounds and exterior trim?*
19. *How high can I build my addition ? How high can I build my turret or tower ?*
20. *Can I just demolish part of my house which is rotted beyond repair and replace it with a new addition ?*
21. *Can I eliminate existing door and window openings?*
22. *What era do I select for my existing home?*
23. *I have seen a similar treatment elsewhere in Ocean Grove.  
Can I do the same thing? Why not if someone else has done it?*
24. *Are synthetic architectural ornamental detail and trim acceptable?*
25. *How do I select the right paint scheme?*

1. **What is the (BAR) HPC ?**

The HPC (*formerly the BAR or Board of Architectural Review*) was formed by Township Ordinance in 1982 and acts in an advisory capacity to the **Planning Board** and the **Zoning Board of Adjustment** for the Township of Neptune, and has final authority in the review of all projects not requiring approval of either of those boards.

All proposed work involving exterior finishes and elements such as paint, color, doors, windows, siding, roofing, porches, fences and railings or any other physical element or improvement within the limits of the lot will be subject to review by the **Historic Preservation Commission, hereafter referenced as HPC.**

Upon application for review and demonstration of compliance with **The Design Guidelines**, the HPC will issue a *Certificate of Appropriateness*.

The review of proposed improvements is limited to the architectural form and treatments on the exterior of the structure even if interior work is part of the overall scope.

Projects limited to interior work need not obtain approval from the HPC.

Simple items, minor improvements and emergency repairs are often handled administratively by HPC. The *Certificate of Appropriateness* in such instances are issued without need of further meetings and public presentations. All others will be required to appear at a public meeting in order to obtain HPC approval.

2. **Do I really need a Building Permit for my project?**

Repair and maintenance projects are authorized to proceed upon written receipt of a *Certificate of Appropriateness* from the HPC but may still require a *Construction Permit*.

No Construction Permit is required when proposed siding work is less than 25% of the total building wall exterior and/or work does not include new construction or structural work.

All other renovations, alterations, reconstructions and new construction projects always require a Construction Permit.

3. **I am doing the work myself and I know what I want. Do I need Architect's Drawings to apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness from the HPC ?**

**No**, if proposed improvements are limited to repairs and maintenance type work such as new roofing, porch decking and railing repair, paint or exterior siding work. **HPC's** policy is that use of an Architect is optional. The Applicant is to submit simple sketches, samples of materials and colors. It is, however, advisable to retain the services of an Architect if proposed improvements include substantial renovations, alterations, additions or new construction.

Scope of proposed work may require retention of an Architect for Building Department Permit issuance purposes. It is advisable to consult with your Building Department Official or Architect.

When services of an Architect are required, four (4) sets of signed and sealed construction documents (professionally prepared and detailed plans and exterior elevation drawings) are to be submitted for **HPC** review.

**4. How long does it take to get an approval from HPC ?**

**HPC** meets monthly. Upon approval, a *Certificate of Appropriateness* is usually issued in approximately 10 days.

**5. Why do I need to get another approval from the Building Department if HPC said it was OK? How long will that take?**

Projects requiring a *Construction Permit* are subject to code compliance plan review by the Township of Neptune **Construction Code Enforcement** staff. Approvals may be obtained within a 2 to 6 week period depending on the scope of proposed work and review activity. Reviews are to be performed within the statutes and guide of New Jersey State Law and the Uniform Construction Code.

**6. How close can I build my addition to the side and back property line?**

Zoning will ultimately determine setbacks, but generally a 2 foot from the side property line rule applies and zero from the rear. The proximity to the property line governs the provisions for construction wall assembly type, fire-rating and percentage of allowable window and door openings.

**7. I want to keep the low height of my existing porch guard rails. If I replace them, will they make me build it higher ?**

**No**, not if the structure is a single or two-family residence within the Historic

District of Ocean Grove. The **Rehab Code** allows for such deviation when existing railings are being repaired under **Section 6.33(b)10**. In most cases, a letter from an Architect certifying the existing height and indicating that such a porch guard rail is being replaced will satisfy **Construction Code Enforcement**. However, a 30 inch minimum high railing is always required where a finished porch deck is 30 to 48 inches above grade.

**8. What is an acceptable railing type and spacing?**

Acceptable railings may be flat slatted type cut in appropriate pattern, be 1 1/2 inch square or ornamental turned spindles. Spacing is not to exceed a dimension which will permit a 4 inch diameter sphere to pass. Therefore, clear space shall not exceed 4 inches, or technically 3 15/16 inches in clear space dimension. Closer spacing of 2 to 3 inches may be more appropriate or preferred.

**9. When do I need a handrail on an exterior step ?**

Handrails are required where stairs have three (3) or more risers.

**10. How wide can I make my front steps before I may need a handrail ?**

Width is not a factor. Handrail requirement are determined by height from grade when three (3) or more risers create a stair situation or a drop to grade of greater than 18 inches is proposed.

**11. If I want to replace a deteriorated existing side (or rear) window (that is 2 feet or less from the property line) in the exact same location, can I do it ?**

**Yes.** The key word here is "existing" window. New windows must be at least 3 feet from a property line and comply with allowable percentage of opening tables as established by Code. Architect's plans and calculations are usually required.

**12. Can I make the existing side (or rear) window or door bigger ?**

**No,** unless specific design criteria are met such as a distance of at least 3 feet from the property line are met and compliance with allowable percentage of opening tables, as established by Code are observed in the proposed work. Architect's plans and calculations are usually required.

**13. Can I add another side or (rear) window or door ?**

Depends on proximity to property line, construction type and percentage of total window and door opening. New window and door openings are not permitted within a distance less than three (3) foot of a side property line. Consultation with your design professional and/or Neptune Township Construction Code Official is recommended.

**14. Do I have to provide large egress type windows in all the bedrooms if I start a renovation ?**

**No**, unless new windows are framed or new bedrooms are created. Existing windows need not be changed but replacement windows must comply with the Rehab Code requirements of a total of 5.7 square feet of clear window opening.

**15. When do I have to provide fire rated exterior materials on my addition ?**

All wall assemblies within 3 feet of a property line must be fire rated. A rating of 1-Hour fire resistance is required with treatment of both sides of the wall assembly.

Use of FRT or fire retardant sheathing is not acceptable. Approved Fire Rated exterior grade gypsum board must be used as an exterior sheathing application beneath the placement of exterior siding, shingles or other finishes.

The use of such sheathing does not affect the exterior appearance of the structure.

**16. Can I use vinyl siding ?**

**HPC** strongly discourages the use of vinyl siding on the front facade of all residential structures. In some cases vinyl siding may be used at side and rear areas where it may not be visible from the street, however, the application of wood facings and siding are preferred. Cement siding board and wood are preferred alternatives.

In addition, all vinyl sidings are not the same. Check the manufacturer's listing for approved rating. Most vinyl sidings also emit toxic gases when burning.

In the event a vinyl or fiberglass or other similar polymer or synthetic material is used, by choice of the Owner, the product must comply with all aspects as detailed in **The Design Guidelines**.

In brief, horizontal boards must be seamless in length and application; be of an appropriate narrow face dimension; and be smooth faced in texture and finish. Stamped wood grain is not acceptable. Shingles may be perfect cut, split, scalloped or "fish scale", diamond or other historically appropriate shape and configuration. Application of synthetic siding material on residential structures deemed either as "key" or "contributing", as described herein, may result in the application for *Certificate of Appropriateness* to be denied.

**17. Can I clad over the existing siding? What if it is asbestos shingle?**

Covering a problem siding, with either new vinyl or wood, is a way of hiding it but does not resolve issues of rot and infestation. Removal of problem siding may actually expose well preserved and handsome details and siding worthy of preservation. Cladding also increases the depth or profile dimension of the siding which causes problems at points of window and door surrounds and trim. Cladding is unacceptable and discouraged.

Asbestos shingle may either be removed and disposed by qualified contractors or encapsulated. This is the one exception to the use of cladding.

**18. Can I clad over window and door surrounds and other exterior trim?**

No, cladding with aluminum or vinyl is unacceptable. Cladding obscures detail and creates unsightly corner joints.

**19. How high can I build my addition ? How high can I build my turret or tower?**

Single-family residences may be **35 feet to mean roof height**. The mean roof height is defined as the average roof height measured from the bottom of the roof overhang eaves to the top of the roof ridge.

All proposed towers, turrets cupolas and steeples are subject to **zoning** approval and will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Multi-family residential structures are subject to review by zoning officials to determine conformity with zoning requirements.

**20. Can I just demolish part of my house which is rotted beyond repair and replace it with a new addition?**

Partial demolition must be reviewed by **HPC**. Demolition of marginal rear of dwelling segments is usually considered. Demolition of original front of dwelling facades is not.

Requests for demolition will be heard on a case by case basis and merits of each request shall be considered.

**21. Can I eliminate existing door and window openings?**

The elimination of historic or original existing window and door openings should always be avoided with the exception where such openings may pose a fire safety concern. Elimination of such openings on rear or side elevations or generally not visible from the street, will be considered by **HPC**.

**22. What era do I select for my existing home?**

The rule is to go back to the structure's original style and form. It is understood that many structures evolve over time with various alterations and additions. However, all such alterations and additions may neither be enhancements nor architecturally appropriate.

Each proposed improvement will be reviewed the **HPC** on a case by case basis.

Appropriate architectural styles are illustrated in Section V, **Illustrations of Appropriate Architectural Treatments**, which provides examples of historically appropriate architectural solutions.

**23. I have seen a similar treatment elsewhere in Ocean Grove. Can I do the same thing? Why not if someone else has done it?**

All existing architectural treatments found in Ocean Grove are not examples to be replicated. Some may be historically inaccurate, inappropriate, or non-compliant with **The Design Guidelines**.

The combination of architectural treatments, trim, ornamentation and details from various structures of different eras may result in an inappropriate hybrid...inconsistent and in conflict with the heritage and predominant architectural styles of Ocean Grove.

**24. Are synthetic architectural ornamental detail and trim acceptable?**

The use of fiberglass, polymers and other synthetic architectural ornaments, details and trim is acceptable in all remote locations so as to eliminate paint and maintenance requirements. Use of painted wood products is always welcomed and encouraged at building fronts and within immediate pedestrian interface.

**25. How do I select the right paint scheme?**

Definitive color schemes are not a set as an absolute rule, however, paint manufacturer's, such as Benjamin Moore and Sherwin Williams, offer catalogs and reference sheets indicating appropriate historic color combinations. As a general guide, and whenever possible, building color should accurately reflect its original era. Historic colors are not appropriate to all historic homes. Suggested paint color treatments are described in **The Design Guidelines**.