

Decks On Historic Buildings



St. Joseph Landmark Commission

Functioning as an outdoor living area in a fashion similar to that of the traditional porch, decks have become popular gathering areas for a variety of outdoor activities. As with other additions, careful attention must be given to the placement of the deck in order to avoid compromising the historic building's integrity and character. Decks, as a rule, should not overwhelm the historic building.

Decks should be located in side or rear yard areas and be screened from public view by shrubbery, fencing, or other means. Efforts should be made to tie the deck to the building in such a manner as to allow for future removal with minimal damage to historic fabric. Decks should not obscure a building's significant architectural features. Deck railings, skirt boards, foundation piers, and skirting should tie the deck to the house in a manner similar to that of a porch. Whenever possible, decks should be close to the ground in order to eliminate the need for handrails and extensive structural framing and screening. The intent of this positioning is to minimize the visual presence of decks in the historic districts.

Decks on Historic Buildings: Guidelines

1. Locate decks in side or rear yard areas and screen from public view by shrubbery, fencing, or other means.
2. Construct decks so that they can easily be removed in the future without damaging the historic building.
3. Design decks to be compatible with the building in terms of style, detailing, materials, and scale.
4. Use wood as the predominant material for the new deck construction. Alternative materials may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
5. Design decks so that they do not obscure or damage the historic building's significant architectural features.
6. Paint or stain a deck to blend in with the color scheme of the building.
7. Consider using low decks or patios that may not require railings, extensive structural framing, and screening.
8. Use a treatment such as wooden lattice, brick skirting, or opaque shrubbery when screening deck framing.
9. Do not install permanent deck-top appurtenances such as built-in benches or gazebos.



Deck railings, skirtboards, foundation piers and foundation infilling should tie the deck to the house in a similar manner as a porch.