

# Utilities



St. Joseph Landmark Commission

One of the greatest challenges in the management of the City's historic districts is the sensitive treatment and integration of utilities in the landscape. Left unabated, these features often contribute to visual clutter. When introducing new mechanical and electrical equipment and lines, care must be taken so that historic elements of the building and important landscape features are not damaged or obscured. Frequently meter boxes and air conditioning condensing units are located outside in close proximity to the structure. Such equipment should be located in side or rear yard locations and be sufficiently screened from the public view by plantings, fencing, or other means. Whenever practicably possible, utility lines should be located underground. Whenever a brick sidewalk or street is impacted, effort should be made to repair the sidewalk or street by relaying the original brick in its historic pattern.

In addition to private individuals, all public and private utility providers shall be required to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) prior to initiating any changes in utility installations or structures on easements or streets located within the City's locally designated historic districts or landmarks. Utility installations will be evaluated by the Commission on the basis of design, scale, massing, color, compatibility with surrounding streetscape features, and overall visual impact on the historic district.

A COA is not required for ordinary maintenance or repair in kind of utility lines and support structures. Landmark Commission approval is also not necessary for replacement of street fixtures in the event of equipment failure or damage as a result of accidents or natural disasters such as electrical storms, tornadoes, and ice storms.

## Utilities: Guidelines

1. Locate utilities in side or rear yard areas and screen from public view through plantings, fencing, or other means.
2. Locate vents and mechanical connections through historic walls or foundations on non-character defining elevations or inconspicuously on side or rear walls of buildings where they are not visible from public view.
3. Paint meter boxes, vents, and other utility connections in colors that will allow said connections to blend in with the historic building. Screen them from public view.
4. Install utility services underground to eliminate overhead lines and poles whenever possible. Repair brick sidewalks and streets by carefully removing bricks and relaying them in their original pattern.



Paint meter boxes and other utility connections in colors that blend with the color scheme of the building.



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Screen utilities from view with landscape elements such as fencing.

## Utilities: Guidelines continued

5. When installing utility fixtures in the public right-of-way such as street light poles, street light fixtures, etc., take into account the impact of said fixtures on the character of the streetscape and the Historic District. Said fixtures will be evaluated in terms of design, scale, massing, color, compatibility with surrounding streetscape features, and overall visual impact on the Historic District.
6. Avoid the radical pruning of trees in areas with overhead wires. Such pruning practices permanently damage the form and long term health of the tree. If a tree must be removed, it is recommended that the tree be replaced with another species that will not interfere with overhead utilities.
7. Bore utilities, if possible, under trees, sidewalks, fences and other landscape features in the Historic District in order to avoid damage to or destruction of historic landscape resources.