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Corporation of Harpers Ferry

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Dear Residential and Commercial Property Owners,

We are so glad you have chosen to call Harpers Ferry home. Whether you are a new or longtime resident, we want to take the opportunity to reach out and share some resources with you. While we have no doubt that you are aware of the historical significance of our town, we want you to know that you play a vital role in helping us to maintain the history and charm of Harpers Ferry. Understanding your role as a resident and homeowner in how you maintain your property is an important first step.

To help you become more familiar with the guidelines, ordinances, and permit processes, we have enclosed some links, general information, and resources. We have provided you with a brief overview of the guidelines for some of the structural elements most commonly added, repaired, or replaced: fences, gutters or downspouts, roofs, and windows. You will also find selected excerpts from Appendix A: Historical District Standards and Guidelines and permit forms attached.

Thank you for taking the time to review this important information and to explore the resources provided. We look forward to working with you in maintaining this national treasure!

Sincerely,
Harpers Ferry Historic Landmarks Commission



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P.S.: Our deepest thanks to HLC-alum Karen Twigg Sagisi for leading the development of this letter with help from Pat Morse.

Historic District
Where the Shenandoah Meets the Potomac

Resources for Harpers Ferry Property Owners

Corporation of Harpers Ferry: <https://www.harpersferrywv.us> (304) 535-2206

Harpers Ferry Town Hall is located at 1000 Washington Street. You can find a wealth of town information including town history, links to the Town Council and various commissions, Water Works, Police Department, Ordinance Compliance Officer, and town ordinances. Sign up for the Town's email and newsletter to keep up with the latest happenings in town.

Zoning Compliance Applications: https://www.harpersferrywv.us/forms/zoning_comp_app.pdf

Ordinance Compliance Officer, Kevin Hamilton can be reached at khamilton@harpersferrywv.us.

Harpers Ferry Historic District: Want to know more about your historic home? Need to share more information or give updates about your historic home? Check out this interactive map.

- **Historic Harpers Ferry Interactive Map:** <https://bit.ly/hfhistory>

Explore all the architectural styles and character defining features of our historic district homes built between 1790 and 1958:

- **NRHP Property Inventory:** <https://wvculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Harpers-ferry-historic-district-additional-info.pdf>

Historic Harpers Ferry Interactive Map: <https://bit.ly/hfhistory>

Bolivar-Harpers Ferry Public Library: <https://www.bolivarharpersferrylibrary.com/> (304) 535-2301

The library is located at 151 Polk Street. Need a spot to do further research? Our town's library offers an array of print and electronic media, computers with internet access, copy and notary services, and a wide variety of programs for all ages.

Standards and Guidelines:

The following section contains an overview of some of the structural elements most commonly added, repaired, or replaced: fences, gutters and downspouts, roofs, and windows. For the full guidelines for these elements and more, please refer to *Appendix A: Historical District Standards and Guidelines* attached and available at <https://www.harpersferrywv.us/ordinances/appendix-a.pdf>.

Fences and Walls

The design of new fences and walls shall complement materials and designs that are historically appropriate to the structure or are found in the neighborhood.

- Historically appropriate materials include wood, brick, iron, stone, concrete and plantings.
- Chain link fences, concrete block fences, plastic or fiberglass fences are not appropriate.
- The height of a fence in the front yard shall not exceed 4 feet. Other fences or walls in the property shall not exceed 6 feet.
- Painted or stained fences of wood pickets, balusters or spindles are appropriate for front yards.
- Solid board fences that obstruct visibility of the premises are not appropriate for use in front yards and shall be avoided.
- Traditional plantings such as hedges and shrubs are acceptable alternatives for fences.
- Existing historic fences and walls shall be retained and repaired. Where this is impossible or impractical, existing historic fences and walls shall be replaced with matching materials and shall replicate the original in height, and detail.
- Replacement of existing fences and walls must be approved before beginning work.

- The historic materials of existing walls shall not be painted, parged, or stuccoed unless there is evidence that they were originally covered with these materials.
- Clear water-repellent or waterproofing treatments on masonry shall only be used with the approval of the Ordinance Compliance Officer or the Mayor's designee or the Historic Landmarks Commission.
- Fences of iron or other historically appropriate material may be added to buildings if suitable to the architectural period and style of the construction.

Gutters and Downspouts

- To ensure that gutters drain properly, make certain they slope toward a downspout.
- Ensure an adequate number of gutter support brackets.
- Consider half-round replacement gutters rather than "K" or ogee. Downspouts round in cross-section were typical on historic properties and their use is highly encouraged.
- Gutters and downspouts shall not be removed if they can be repaired.
- Gutters and downspouts that are removed shall be replaced in kind with like materials and with the same historic profile.
- Replacement gutters and downspouts shall match the original in size, location and design unless new contributing factors dictate the need for a design change.
- New gutter materials shall be physically and chemically compatible with the existing materials on the building. Copper, for example, reacts with uncoated and galvanized steel, and direct contact between those metals must be avoided.
- Architectural features shall not be obscured, removed or damaged by the installation of gutters and downspouts.

Roofs

- The choice of roofing materials is an important consideration in the design of any rehabilitation work on a historic structure as well as for new construction.
- The roof slope ratio for new construction shall be appropriate to its architectural style.
- Roof materials shall be consistent with the visual characteristics of traditional roof materials in Harpers Ferry such as slate, wood shingle and standing-seam metal.
- Skylights shall have a low profile and skylight tops shall be flat, not convex or of a "bubble" design.
- Small metal flues, plumbing vents in the roof, and attic exhaust vents required for 20th century functional requirements should be located on visually inconspicuous areas of the roof. Such metal flues and vents should be painted to match the existing color of the roof material in order to reduce visibility.
- New dormers should align with the existing windows or be centered between the windows. The style of dormers should match existing dormers. All dormers should be appropriate to the architectural style of the existing structure.
- Existing roofs shall be retained in their original configuration, form and pitch, with original features such as cresting, chimneys, finials, dormers, balconies and cupolas.
- Original materials shall not be removed unless they have failed. Original materials and finishes shall not be removed to create a new appearance.
- Alternative materials may be considered as a replacement option but shall be considered as the final option. Alternative materials shall convey the same visual appearance as the original and shall be physically and chemically compatible with any retained materials from the original.
- New dormers, skylights, roof decks, balconies or other additions shall only be introduced on non-principal façades and additions of this type shall not be prominently in the public view.

- Roofs requiring vents shall have ridge or gable vents rather than pot vents where practical.
- Historic vents and skylights shall be preserved.
- Standing-seam metal roofs shall use a narrow panel width consistent with historic convention.
- Roof lines that replicate the more common styles and pitch in the Historic District are preferred. Breaking up the roofline of a large building into smaller components, such as intersecting gables, may help reduce the perceived mass of large buildings.
- New wood shingles are appropriate for most early 19th century buildings. Standing seam metal roofs are appropriate for later 19th century buildings.

Windows

Harpers Ferry's windows are simple and symmetrically balanced. Standards for all properties in the Historic District:

- Vinyl windows may be used on buildings where vinyl was available at the time of the original construction.
- Original windows may be repaired, or if repair is not feasible, replaced with new windows appropriate to the period, materials, and style of the building.
- Horizontal, picture, round, octagonal, or bay windows and bow windows shall not be installed unless appropriate to the architectural style of house.
- Storm windows with built-in lower screens are permitted.

Standards for Historical Resources:

- Windows and their decorative features shall be preserved in their original location, size, design, and numbers of panes (glass lights).
- Window openings that are not original shall not be added to the principal façade of a building or where visible from a public right-of-way.
- Historic window openings shall not be eliminated from the principal façade of a building.
- Windows shall be repaired rather than replaced.
- Windows that are missing or beyond repair shall be replaced with windows that replicate materials, operation, and pane configuration. Only those elements of the window which are missing or beyond repair shall be replaced. Where an entire window is approved for replacement, the new window unit shall meet the criteria below:

Design, dimension, and operation of the original window:

- Maintain the original dimensions and shape of the window.
- Match the height and width of the original opening.
- Match the width and depth of the historic meeting rail.
- Maintain the existing glazed surface area.

Retain associated details such as arched tops, hoods, and decorative elements:

- Maintain the original or historic number and arrangement of panes.
- Use true divided lights, or three-part simulated divided lights with integral spacer bar and interior and exterior fixed muntins to give depth and profile to windows. Do not use clip-in/false muntins or removable internal grilles.
- Historic decorative glass windows shall be preserved in their original location, size and design and with their original materials and glass pattern.
- Dark tinted windows or windows with reflective glass and coatings shall not be used if they are in the public view.

Screens

- Screens shall be correctly sized to fit window openings without overlap, including openings for arched windows.
- Screen shall be sized to fit without the need for a subframe or panning (a filler panel) around the perimeter.
- Screens shall be constructed of painted wood or aluminum with a baked-on enamel or anodized finish. Raw metal screen frames are not acceptable. Screen window panels shall be of a full-view design or have meeting rails (or support bar) that match the windows behind them.

Storm Windows

- Storm windows shall use only clear glass.
- Storm windows shall be constructed of painted wood or aluminum with a baked-on enamel or anodized finish. Raw metal storm windows are not acceptable. Storm window panels shall be of a full-view design or have meeting rails (or support bar) that match the windows behind them. Interior functioning storm windows are recommended.
- When interior alterations necessitate the removal of a window visible from a public right-of way, design treatments should be used to maintain the appearance of the window on the exterior of the building.
- When replacing a historic window on a principal façade and a matching window exists on a subordinate façade, consider moving the window to the principal façade and installing the replacement window on the subordinate facade.

Information on Historic Preservation Grants and Tax Credits: These are helpful in that they assist financially and that they ensure work complies with the Secretary's Standards, in short, good for the community and good for preservation:

- <https://wvculture.org/agencies/state-historic-preservation-office-shpo/grants/>
- <https://wvculture.org/agencies/state-historic-preservation-office-shpo/tax-credits/>

NPS Technical Preservation Services "preservation by topic" guide: Can help homeowners pin down exactly the materials and features one is working on and how best to preserve them:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/preservation-by-topic.htm>

Jefferson County Property Records Database - e.g., deed tracing:

<http://documents.jeffersoncountywv.org/>

Jefferson County Museum and Online Database: <https://jeffcomuseumwv.org/>