



# CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

## Historic District Landmarks Commission

### Guidelines for Site Elements



#### SITE ELEMENTS

Site elements frame the architecture along a streetscape. In some areas, the established site patterns and components, such as sidewalks, street trees, fences and walkways provide a consistent setting that is unique to a neighborhood.

When considering altering a site, the HDLC encourages property owners to develop an understanding of the environmental characteristics of their immediate surroundings and allow that understanding to direct their design. This approach will allow a more compatible relationship between a property and its neighborhood.

**All applicants must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness (CofA) as well as all necessary permits prior to proceeding with any work.** Please review this information during the early stages of planning your project. Familiarity with this material can assist in moving a project quickly through the approval process, saving applicants both time and money. Staff review of all details is required to ensure proposed work is appropriate to the specific property.

Additional *Guidelines* addressing other historic building topics are available at the HDLC office and on its web site at [www.nola.gov](http://www.nola.gov). For more information, to clarify whether a proposed project requires Historic District Landmarks Commission (HDLC) review, to obtain property ratings or permit applications, please call the HDLC at (504) 658-7040.

#### SECTION INDEX

The HDLC reviews all site elements, installations, demolitions, modifications, materials and features that are visible from the street including:

- Fences, Walls and Gates – Page 10-2
- HDLC Guide for Fences, Walls and Gates – Page 10-4
- Paving – Page 10-7
- Landscape Features and Play Equipment – Page 10-8
- Small Structures – Page 10-8
- Ground-Mounted Equipment – Page 10-8

The only plantings subject to HDLC review are those required for screening of non-contributing site elements.

#### USING THESE *GUIDELINES*

The first step in using these Guidelines is to understand the rating. The rating corresponds to the historical and/or architectural significance of properties and determines what will be permitted within local Historic Districts or at local Landmarks under the jurisdiction of the HDLC.

- S** *Significant Properties – Retain the highest degree of architectural and historical merit.*
- C** *Contributing Properties – Contribute to the overall District and city character.*
- N** *Non-Contributing Properties – Do not contribute to the overall District character.*



*Cast iron fences often occur adjacent to masonry walls.*

## FENCES, WALLS AND GATES

Fences, walls and gates are important elements of the overall character of a neighborhood. They:

- Identify boundaries, provide privacy and security
- Are often a major element of a streetscape – separating public from private property
- Are often related to a building’s design
- Are often specific to their neighborhood – (Refer to *Historic District* descriptions, Page 10-4)

## FENCES

Fences constructed prior to the 1850s at front yards in New Orleans were typically wood picket fences, typically 4’-0” to 5’-0” in height, some very elaborately designed. At Greek Revival houses, wood fences often had 1” square pickets with a pointed top. These open types of fencing allowed the front elevation of buildings to remain visible from the public right of way. A common issue with wood fences is that they rot and need regular replacement. Solid wood fencing, made of vertical boards capped by a molded top, was often only installed at side and rear yards around gardens.



*This fence includes 1” square wood pickets over a heavy bottom rail, supported by large wood posts – a style that was common in Greek revival homes.*

Beginning in the 1850s, cast iron became more prevalent and provided a much longer lifespan than wood. The casting of metal into molds allowed fences and gates to be made of highly elaborate and detailed patterns. Wrought iron tends to be used for simple, slender pickets. One of the advantages of iron fencing is that it is visually “thinner” than wood, increasing the view of the front of the building from the public right of way.

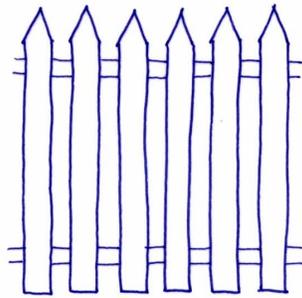
Taller and highly elaborate fences were often installed at grand, high-style homes, while simple, low wrought iron fences were often installed at simpler houses like shotguns. Historically, some homes, such as bungalows and Arts and Crafts style houses of the 1910s to 1920s, were built without fences. By the 1940s most new houses did not have fenced front yards, but back yards were typically fenced for privacy.



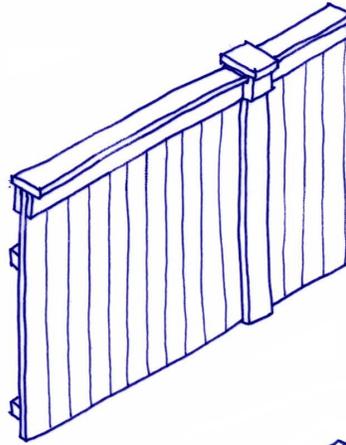
*Wrought iron fences are often installed on low masonry chain walls less than 18” tall. Also note that the fence is relatively simple and made from narrow pickets, while the cast iron entrance gate posts are fairly ornate.*

## GATES

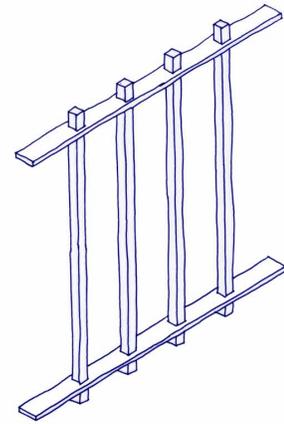
Pedestrian gates, traditionally along a walkway, are generally 3’-0” to 3’-6” wide. Gates for residential vehicular access are often about 10’-0” wide with a 12’-0” curb cut. When installed along a fence, gates tend to be of a similar material as the fencing. Gates providing the public entrance to the property, and their flanking gate posts, are often more elaborate than adjacent fencing. Gates to rear or side yards are often simpler than those at front yards. When installed at a masonry wall or pier, gates can be either wood or metal.



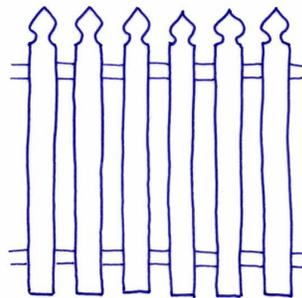
A. Pointed Wood Picket



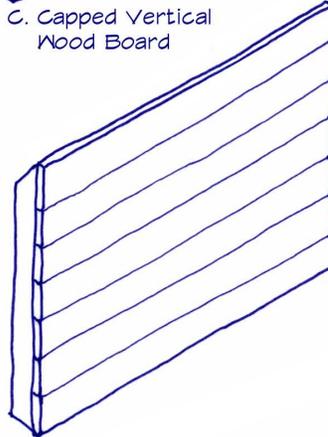
C. Capped Vertical Wood Board



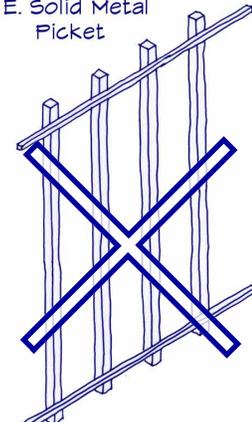
E. Solid Metal Picket



B. Gothic Style Wood Picket



D. Horizontal Wood Board



F. Metal Picket With Welded Bars

There are a variety of fence styles and types in New Orleans' neighborhoods. Wood picket fences, with either a pointed or gothic style top, (Examples A and B) are often found in front yards and are generally about 3'-0" to 4'-0" in height. Vertical or horizontal wood board fences (Examples C and D) are typically about 6 feet tall and are generally located in rear and side yards. Metal picket fences vary in height, but cannot exceed 5'-0" including chain wall if located at a front yard. If installing a metal picket fence, the pickets should be solid and punched through the horizontal bar as shown in Example E. Pickets welded onto a bar (Example F) are not permitted. (Traditionally fences follow the rise and fall of the adjacent site grading and do not always have a leveled top. The HDLC measures the height of fences from the lowest flanking grade.)



This brick wall has a decorative pattern that suggests panels and piers. The rear yard gate is located within the arched opening.

## WALLS AND PIERS

Landscape walls and piers are typically constructed of masonry with either a brick or stucco finish. They can be installed either alone or in combination with metal fencing. Low walls, also referred to as chain walls, are generally 12" to 18" in height, and topped with a metal fence.

The HDLC discourages the construction of walls that visually block primary façades from the public right of way, particularly at Significant or Contributing properties. In addition, although the HDLC does permit the construction of walls and piers with concrete blocks, they must have either full-size brick or a stucco finish.

Similar to masonry on buildings, brick and stucco walls and piers require regular maintenance. Refer the *Guidelines for Masonry and Stucco* for additional information.



*A 3'-0" to 4'-0" foot high wood picket fence with a simple point is generally appropriate for the front yards of most properties except those in the St. Charles Avenue Historic District.*

## APPROPRIATE FENCES, WALLS AND GATES FOR DISTRICTS

Each District has its own character and typical features, including fences and walls. However, there is no single fence or wall type that is appropriate for every District or property. Some Districts tend to have a predominant fence or wall type while other Districts have a greater variety of options.

- **Lower Garden District**

The Lower Garden District features residences of varying scale, style and age with different types of fencing. Several homes retain original or early fencing or walls that can provide the basis for new fence design. Wood fences with 1" pickets were common at Greek Revival homes. Cast and wrought iron fences are also found in the District, varying in height from 3 to 6 feet. Walls are relatively rare but can be found along the side and rear property lines of very grand houses and served to protect and conceal house work in yards. In limited cases, walls could be approved for use to provide privacy for a side or rear yards; but they will not be approved at the front yards of Contributing or Significant properties.

- **Esplanade Ridge and Treme**

The Esplanade Ridge and Treme Historic Districts feature residences of different scales, styles and ages, and their fences vary accordingly. Historic fences at grand houses along Esplanade Avenue tend to be cast and wrought iron, 3'-0" to 5'-0" in height, and can be ornate. As the building and lot size diminishes on smaller streets, the fences are simpler and their scale is reduced. By contrast, many of the homes in Treme are similar in style to those in Marigny, and are built at the front property line. In both Esplanade Ridge and Treme, the majority of fences constructed on properties in the second half of the 19th century were wrought iron. As a result, a 3'-0" to 4'-0" high metal fencing is generally an appropriate option. For early Treme buildings located at the front property line, such as Creole cottages, a fence or wall between properties with a wood entrance gate facing the street would generally be appropriate.

- **Faubourg Marigny**

Most buildings in the Faubourg Marigny are built at the front property line and very close together, typically without front yards. In cases where front yards are present, either a simple low wood or metal picket fence would be appropriate. Historically, capped solid board, vertical wood fencing or horizontally laid heavy boards secured to heavy wood posts were used to separate side and rear yards. An entrance gate of vertical wood boards was often located between the houses on a street to provide access to side and rear yards.

- **St. Charles Avenue**

Fencing is an important visual feature along the Avenue which has large scale lots and residences set back from the sidewalk. Many original fences are wrought iron, allowing public view of the historic home beyond. In considering new fences for historic homes in the District, it is important that this visual quality be respected. If considering the installation of a new fence, a simple detailed metal fence is appropriate for St. Charles Avenue. If a chain wall is desired, it should generally be limited in height to maintain visual access of the front façade from the public right of way.



*Most homes on St. Charles Avenue are set back from the street and include cast and wrought iron fences along the front property line.*



*Traditional horizontal board fences are constructed using 10-12" boards with beveled top and bottom edges installed horizontally. The use of beveled boards allows the fence to appear solid despite the space between boards.*



*Vertical board fencing should include a protective wood cap. (Refer to drawings, Page 10-3.)*

## FENCE, WALL AND GATE GUIDE

### ***THE HDLC REQUIRES:***

- Staff review and approval of all details and materials for compliance with HDLC standards

### **Front Yards and along Streets or Sidewalks**

#### ***THE HDLC REQUIRES:***

- Fences, walls and gates that are historically consistent in style with type and style of main building
- Appropriately scaled pickets for wood picket fence, typically pine, cedar or redwood
- Metal fencing can be either wrought or cast iron, or an alternate material, such as aluminum, typically with a matte black painted finish
- Metal pickets to be punched through horizontal rails and not welded to the face of rails
- A smooth transition between lower and higher adjoining fences
- Walls or chain walls that are limited to 18" in height with a brick or stucco finish that is approved by HDLC Staff with regard to color, type, texture and pattern
- Vertical board fences include a wood cap

#### ***THE HDLC RECOMMENDS:***

- Locating all pickets of boards on the outside of the posts facing neighbors or public right of way
- A painted wood finish or stained finish to appear as painted finish (Paint, stain or preservative treatment helps protect the wood, making the fence or gate last longer)
- Simple detailing of metal fences
- New fences, walls and gates that are consistent in height and front property line setback as the heights

### ***THE HDLC DISCOURAGES:***

- Elaborate ornamental detailing for metal fences except at high-style homes
- Fencing taller than 5'-0" when located between the street and main building façade
- The removal of existing historically appropriate historic fences that are in good condition – Applications will be reviewed on a case by case basis

### ***The HDLC Does Not Permit:***

- Vinyl or synthetic fencing or gates
- Chain-link fencing
- Lattice fencing
- Hollow tube metal fencing
- Stockade fences of the type used in western forts, with wide boards cut to a point at the top except where its installation can be supported by historic documentation
- Barbed wire, concertina wire, razor ribbon wire and other similar security devices
- Solid wood fencing or walls in front yard of a Significant or Contributing building
- Exposed concrete block walls or piers
- Wood fencing at the front yard of properties in the St. Charles Avenue Historic District
- Fencing located on porches, stoops or stairs

### **Side Yards or Alleyways**

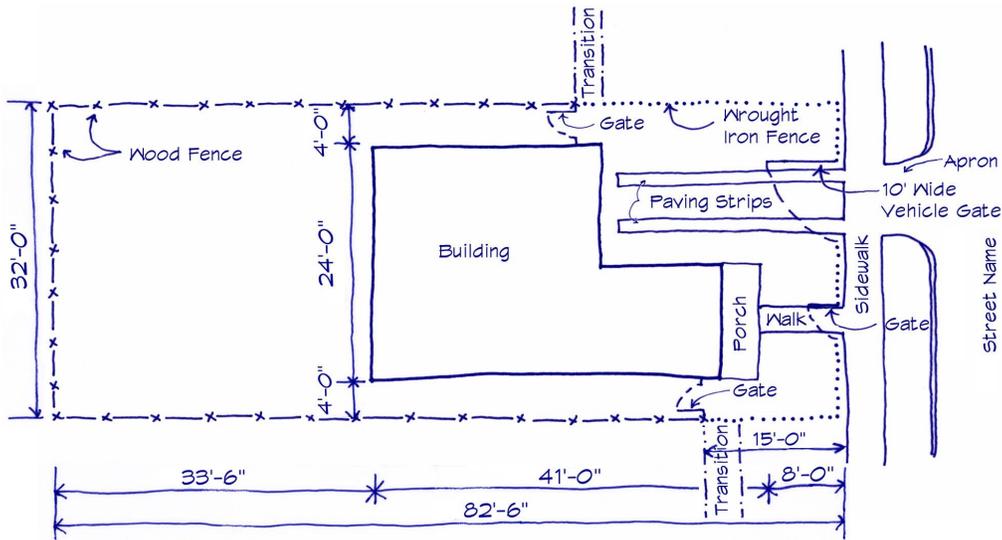
- All fences, walls and gates which are approvable in front yards are also approvable in side yards.

#### ***The HDLC Recommends:***

- Wood fences, typically pine, cedar or redwood, with a wood cap (*The cap will help the fence last longer*)

#### ***The HDLC Does Not Permit:***

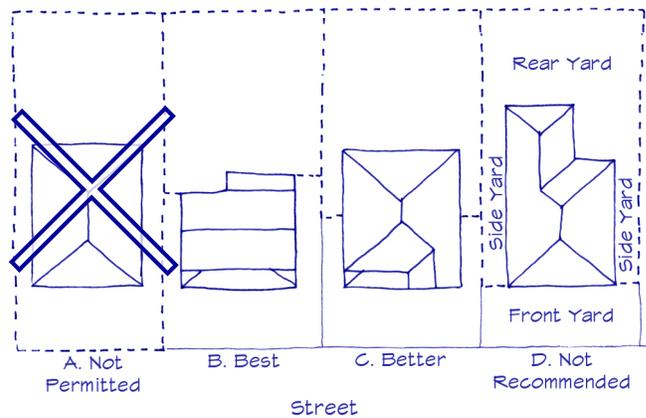
- Solid wood fencing that is closer to the front property line than the main building street façade
- A masonry wall taller than 18" that is closer to the front property line than the main building façade



Site plans should include the location of all buildings, paving and fencing; dimensions for the width and length of the lot; the size of all building; and the distances between the buildings and property lines.



A smooth transition between a shorter front yard fence and a taller side yard fence should be installed as in the example above.



Solid wood fences over 5'-0" tall, shown as the dashed lines, are preferably limited to rear yard enclosures, Example B. Side yard fences, Examples C and D, might be permitted. A solid wood front yard fence, Example A, is not permitted.

Fence, Wall and Gate Review	
Remove historic fence, wall or gate	<b>S C N</b> Commission review.
Remove historically inappropriate fence, wall or gate	<b>S C N</b> HDLC Staff review.
Install new appropriate fence, wall or gate	<b>S C N</b> HDLC Staff review.
Install new inappropriate fence, wall or gate	<b>S C</b> Commission appeal. <b>N</b> HDLC Staff review.

### COMMISSION REVIEW AND APPEAL

Any fence type not covered by this Guide and any appeals of an HDLC Staff denial will be reviewed by the Commission on a case by case basis.

### ADDITIONAL FENCE AND WALL REVIEWS

In addition to HDLC review, proposed fences, walls and gates must conform to all requirements of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and Building Codes.

### LIGHTING

Residential site lighting is generally located at porches. The HDLC discourages the installation of site or security lighting elsewhere on a property. (Refer to the *Guidelines for Porches, Balconies and Galleries*, Page 09-10 for additional information.)



*Herringbone pattern brick is a traditional paving material. Property owners are encouraged to retain historic paving.*

## PAVING

Paving, which includes sidewalks, walkways, patios and driveways, has changed significantly from the 19th century with the development of new materials. Historically, paving could be as simple as crushed oyster shells or hard materials, such as brick or flagstone, laid in simple or ornamental patterns. Materials popularized in the 20th century include concrete and asphalt, and more recently cast concrete pavers, often colored and shaped to resemble brick.

In an effort to retain the quality of the City’s historic properties and Districts, the HDLC encourages the retention, repair and maintenance of existing historic paving materials. Similarly, the HDLC encourages minimizing new paving and installing traditional paving materials in new installations whenever possible. If using non-traditional paving such as concrete, asphalt or concrete pavers, the HDLC encourages the use of landscaping to minimize its visual impact. Since the character and context of every property is unique, each application for a nontraditional paving material is taken on a case by case basis.



*Parking strips are an appropriate alternative to a driveway.*

## ZONING REQUIREMENTS

The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance dictates the amount of paving permitted on a lot. Please contact the City Planning Commission or Department of Safety and Permits to review allowable paving at your parcel prior to submission of a CofA application to the HDLC.

## PAVING GUIDE

The HDLC has jurisdiction over all paving on private property.

### THE HDLC REQUIRES:

- Detailed, dimensioned site plans indicating the size and location of all proposed paving changes

### THE HDLC RECOMMENDS:

- Retention, repair and maintenance of historic paving materials
- Minimizing the amount of paving on a site
- Installing more permeable small scale paving materials, such as gravel or exposed aggregate paving instead of poured concrete or asphalt
- Simple, steel-troweled concrete finish – design and color of stamped concrete is subject to HDLC review
- Narrow parking strips instead of driveways or parking pads
- Patios instead of raised decks

### THE HDLC DISCOURAGES:

Removal of historic paving materials

### THE HDLC DOES NOT PERMIT:

- Parking areas in the front yards of residences
- Asphalt at walkways

## Paving Review

**Remove historically inappropriate paving;**

**Replace or repair historic paving in-kind**

**S C N** HDLC Staff review.

**Remove historically appropriate paving; Install new or additional paving; Replace existing paving with a different material**

**S** Commission review.

**C N** HDLC Staff review.

## SIDEWALKS

Although the HDLC does not have jurisdiction over sidewalks, property owners are required to maintain them. The HDLC encourages the retention and use of historic and traditional materials at sidewalks. Contact the following Department for additional information:

- **Sidewalks:** Department of Public Works
- **Street Trees:** Department of Parks and Parkways

## LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLAY EQUIPMENT

Landscape features, such as gazebos, pergolas and fountains; as well as play equipment such as swing sets, jungle gyms, swimming pools, Jacuzzis and tennis courts can all add to our outdoor enjoyment of our properties. Similar to ground mounted equipment, these are all examples of modern alterations that can affect the historic integrity of a site and its surroundings. Property owners are encouraged to locate landscape features and play equipment in a rear yard to minimize their visibility. Where the proposed location might be visible from the public right-of-way, the HDLC requires appropriate screening.



*Shrubs and landscaping would provide screening of the play equipment and air conditioner units.*

## SMALL STRUCTURES

Small structures can be functional and provide enjoyment for property owners. They are generally less than 100 square feet in size, include tool or garden sheds; play houses; dog houses; permanent sun shading canopies; building or wall-mounted awnings, and gazebos. These are all examples of modern alterations that can affect the historic integrity of a site and its surroundings. Small structures that are visible from the public right-of-way should be constructed of materials that are approved for the existing main building such as walls and roof (Refer to appropriate *Guidelines* sections.) The installation of pre-manufactured sheds that are visible from the public right of way, particularly those with metal or vinyl wall cladding, are discouraged and shall be reviewed on a case by case basis.

To minimize their impact, small structures should be located in the rear yard to minimize their visibility from the public and ensure that they do not block the view of historic buildings or features. Where the proposed location might be visible from the public right of way, the HDLC might require screening.

## GROUND-MOUNTED EQUIPMENT

Ground-mounted equipment, which includes air conditioner condensers, generators, ground-mounted solar collectors, trash dumpsters, satellite dishes and antenna, and mobile telecommunication equipment are all examples of modern mechanical equipment that can affect the historic integrity of a site and its surroundings.

Property owners are required to locate ground-mounted equipment in a rear yard, or when this is not possible, at a side yard a minimum of 20'-0" back from the front of the building to minimize visibility. In addition, the HDLC requires that all ground-mounted equipment that is visible from the public right of way be screened either with appropriate solid fencing or landscaping, such as shrubs. All satellite dishes must be mounted a minimum of 10'-0" back from a street elevation of a residence.

### SECONDARY BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

For information regarding secondary buildings and structures such as garages, larger sheds and carports please refer to the *Guidelines for New Construction, Additions and Demolition*, Page 12-20.

### Ground Mounted Equipment, Landscape Features, Play Equipment and Small Structure Review

**Install unobtrusive ground-mounted equipment, appropriate landscape features, play equipment and small structures with required screening – Minimum 20'-0" back from the front façade (and side in the case of a corner property):**

**S**

Commission review.

**C N**

HDLC Staff review.

**Install unobtrusive satellite dish – Minimum 10'-0" from front building wall, or front and side in the case of a corner property:**

**S**

Commission review.

**C N**

HDLC Staff review.

**Install new visually prominent or inappropriate landscape features, play equipment, small structures and ground mounted equipment**

**S C N**

Commission appeal.

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