

Draft La Alma Lincoln Park Customized Design Guidelines

Intent:

The La Alma Lincoln Park neighborhood was the heart of the Chicana/o movement and is a significant part of the Chicano/Latino story of Denver. The neighborhood was initially established near the railroad and Burnham Yards as a working-class immigrant community of the 1870s and 1880s. The architecture of the neighborhood reflects the early development of the area and illustrates the changes over time as it evolved into the center of the Denver Chicano Movement.

To better reflect the history, architecture, and culture of the district, Landmark staff worked with community members to customize design guidelines for this potential historic cultural district. The customized design guidelines address the early vernacular architectural styles and the evolution of the buildings over time. Staff, with community input, changed or altered the phrasing of design guidelines to better fit the neighborhood and removed guidelines that were not consistent with the historic fabric of the La Alma Lincoln Park.

Since the number of buildings being torn down in the neighborhood is relatively small, the streetscapes, the rhythm of buildings, and the size of structure has historically remained the same. However, over time there have been changes to some of the materials, cladding, porches, and fences in the neighborhood. As a result, the guidelines that address massing or form remain the same, but greater flexibility is provided in the areas of materials, cladding, porches, and fencing. For example, since stucco siding, vinyl windows, and chain link fences are prevalent in the proposed district, all of those materials are allowed with the customized design guidelines.

How to Use of Customized Design Guidelines:

The *Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures and Districts* are used to review all projects in historic districts. For projects in La Alma Lincoln Park, the citywide *Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures and Districts* would apply. However, two chapters would be replaced with customized design guidelines. These chapters, which address Preserving Historic Buildings (Chapter Two) and Sitework and Fencing (Chapter Five), would be an appendix in the citywide design guidelines. These customized chapters would provide property owners in the La Alma Lincoln Park neighborhood with greater flexibility in materials, site work, and fencing.

A list of distinctive features for most properties is included in the proposed designation application of the La Alma Lincoln Park neighborhood. These distinctive features are characteristics that are important to keep and would be given special consideration in design review. Examples of distinctive features are porches, PermaStone cladding, transom windows, and decorative wood or brickwork. These distinctive features would provide property owners, Landmark staff, and the Landmark Preservation Commission a consistent basis for reviewing proposed changes to properties in the district.

La Alma Lincoln Park:

As the park has long been central to the community, the continued use of the park is important to the vitality of the neighborhood. Within the park, a few features and structures have been noted as contributing to the historic cultural district – the amphitheater, the historic rock retaining wall, the La Alma Recreation Center, and the Neighborhood House. Alterations to the contributing features will follow the customized design guidelines.

However, beyond these features, there should be great flexibility in design review to allow for the park to change and evolve in order to continue serving the community. While the Landmark Ordinance, Chapter 30 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code, will require all projects on the exterior of a building or site that requires a building or zoning permit to be reviewed, the intent of these customized design guidelines is to provide increased flexibility to make changes as necessary. Changes to the non-contributing features should be compatible with the nature of the park and its character defining features. Additionally, Landmark Preservation does not have purview over vegetation and will not review changes to the natural landscape. The murals on the exterior and interior of the La Alma Recreation Center are under the stewardship of Denver Parks and Recreation, and are highly significant to the community and the understanding of the Chicano culture; they are of particular interest to the community.

While currently Landmark Preservation cannot require the preservation of the murals, we highly encourage their preservation.

Customization of Design Guidelines

- Grey text is existing guideline that will not be altered
- Black text is part of existing guideline that will be altered
- Green text is new language
- Strikethrough is the existing language to be removed

Add Original or Historic

For properties in La Alma Lincoln Park, throughout the entire Design Guidelines, “original” will mean “original or historic.”

GENERAL DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR SITE & LANDSCAPE DESIGN

5.1 ~~Retain and restore historic site and landscape features.~~ Where they are part of the historic context, preserve and repair historic site features, including street facing fences, masonry site walls and retaining walls, when feasible.

- ~~When possible, preserve original landscape and features, such as walkways, fences, site walls, street trees, historic stairways and special plantings or ornamental site features that are character-defining features of the property or historic district.~~
- ~~Preserve historic stone sidewalks. See “Historic Sidewalks” at left for more information.~~
- When necessary ~~If beyond repair,~~ replace deteriorated historic site features with features of similar material and design (matching features, including design and materials).
- ~~Retain original open space patterns at the sides and rear of a structure~~
- When possible, preserve an original wire fence when where it is a character defining-feature of the historic district (a new chain link fence is not allowed).
- When possible replace only those portions of an original fence, site wall or retaining wall that are deteriorated.

5.2 ~~Preserve established trees and historic tree lawns.~~

- ~~Preserve established and specimen trees in the front yard area and tree lawn. Assess tree conditions and ensure measures of protection/preservation are included in any development plans.~~
- ~~Maintain grass and/or low water ground cover in an existing or new tree lawn (the landscaped area between the street and the sidewalk).~~
- ~~Do not cover or pave an existing tree lawn, except for ADA compliance or to provide necessary connections to the sidewalk.~~

5.3 Plan new site and landscape features to respect the character-defining features of the historic district ~~or individually designated Denver landmark.~~

- ~~Landscape the street-facing portion of a lot to be consistent with historic landscape patterns on the street, such as matching tree types where one is missing along a consistent tree row.~~
- ~~Where an established tree has been removed, replace it with a similar species.~~
- When introducing a new site feature or modifying an existing feature, such as a stairway, fence or retaining wall, respect historical patterns in terms of placement, proportions and design compatibility with surrounding historic context.

- b. When designing a new sidewalk walkway or path, use colors, styles and finishes similar to those seen in nearby historic sidewalks walkways.
- c. Avoid introducing new site features that convey a false sense of history.
- d. Avoid introducing new readily visible site features, such as curb cuts, which were not historically present on the property, or prevalent in the historic district.
- e. Use decorative modular pavers, a cellular paving system or recycled historic site materials (such as stone or brick) to minimize the visual impacts of a larger paved surface area.
- f. Avoid introducing topographic features, such as berms, that were not historically present, especially if other front yard areas on the street do not include similar features.

5.4 Maintain front yard landscape areas.

- a. Reserve most of the front yard area for a grass lawn or a designed xeriscape that uses low-water plantings while maintaining the appearance of a landscaped front yard.
- b. Where grass is not used, plant less water-intensive ground coverings.
- c. Use decorative modular pavers, a cellular paving system or recycled historic site materials (such as stone or brick) to minimize the visual impacts of a larger paved surface area.
- d. Avoid introducing topographic features, such as berms, that were not historically present, especially if other front yard areas on the street do not include similar features. Changes to grades can also impact the watering and health of existing yard and street trees.

5.5 Maintain the character of a “Denver Hill” sloping front yard area.

- a. Preserve the character of a “Denver Hill” sloping front yard area where it is a character-defining feature of the historic district or a characteristic of the block. See “Historic Background & Treatment Strategies for the “Denver Hill”” on page 98 for more information.
- b. Where the slope is unstable, use plant materials, or subterranean retaining walls to stabilize the slope, whenever possible. See Guideline 5.10 on page 97 for more information.

GUIDELINES FOR FENCES & WALLS

5.6 Where they are part of the historic context, preserve and repair historic front yard and street facing fences, masonry site walls and retaining walls.

- a. Replace only those portions of an original fence, site wall or retaining wall that are deteriorated.
- b. Preserve the character of the original mortar joints when re-pointing an original masonry site wall or retaining wall
- c. Preserve an original wire fence when it is a character-defining feature of the historic district (a new chain link fence is not allowed).

5.7 Add a new front yard or street facing fence only where at least one of the following conditions is present:

- a. An open front yard is not a character-defining feature of the historic property or district.
- b. Historic or legally built fences or site walls are present on several properties in the surrounding context/block.
- c. It is not possible to create a usable enclosed side or rear yard area.
- d. Constructing a low fence at the top of a “Denver Hill” sloping front yard area would provide a compatible alternative to removing the slope. See “3. A Fence at the top of the slope” on page 98 for more information.

5.8 Design a new front yard fence to minimize impacts on the historic context (when warranted based on the criteria in Guideline 5.7):

- a. Design a new front yard fence to be simple, open, and low (unless taller fences are typical of the historic district or surrounding historic context). The maximum front yard fence height should be 48" or less.
- b. Use compatible but simplified (less ornate) versions of historic fences and walls present in the historic district or in the surrounding historic context.
- c. Use historic fence and wall materials present in the historic district or in the surrounding historic context. Do not use vinyl or other nontraditional fence materials.
- d. Do not install a new chain link fence in the front yard (an existing chain link fence should be preserved when it is a character defining feature of the district).
- e. Do not install opaque fencing of any kind. A fence should be more than 50% open

5.8 Design a new front yard fence to be consistent with those historically found in the district.

- a. Design new fences and walls to appear similar to those used historically within the district in terms of their scale, transparency, character, and variety of styles and materials.
- b. Use historic fence and wall materials present in the historic district, such as wire, cast metal, wood picket, or chain-link. Brick, stone, and stucco columns may be combined with open metal fencing. Do not use vinyl fence materials.
- c. Front yard fence styles and materials may be mixed on one lot or parcel or yard.
- d. The maximum height of new front yard fences should be 48" or less.
- e. A fence should be partially open. Do not install opaque fencing.

5.9 Add a rear yard fence consistent with historical patterns of the property and surrounding historic district.

- a. Locate a rear yard fence to have minimal visibility from public view. Design new fences to be similar in height, style, and design to other fences in the surrounding historic context.
- b. Situate a rear or side yard fence return at least one foot behind the front corner of a historic house façade, and to be located behind important architectural features, such as bay windows and chimneys whenever possible.
- c. Use a rear and side yard fence type and materials traditionally found in the historic context, (such as a wood privacy fence or chain link fence simple iron or wooden solid or open picket fence. Only use stone, brick, or a stuccoed wall if it is consistent corresponds with the historic property and surrounding historic context.)
- d. Design new fences to have traditional height, style and design to blend with historic building and surrounding historic context.
- e. When installing a wooden fence, ensure that the pickets face to the exterior and the framing faces to the inside.
- f. Locate a rear yard fence along traditional lot lines. If a non-traditional fence, such as a dog run, is proposed, locate in a way as to be concealed from public view.

GUIDELINES FOR NEW RETAINING WALLS

5.10 Explore alternatives before proposing significant alterations to the "Denver Hill."

Alternatives to explore include:

- a. Using stabilizing plant materials with drought tolerant planting and other ground cover that does not require mowing or a high degree of maintenance, rather than constructing a new retaining wall.

- ~~b. Constructing a low, open style, fence at the top of the slope to provide an enclosed front yard area for children or pets, rather than replacing the slope with a new retaining wall.~~
- ~~c. Constructing a subterranean retaining wall to stabilize the slope.~~

~~5.11 Avoid adding a new retaining wall unless necessary and all alternatives have been explored.~~

- ~~a. Add a new retaining wall that will alter the slope of a “Denver Hill” front yard area only where at least one of the following conditions is present:
 - ~~The “Denver Hill” is not a character-defining feature of the historic district.~~
 - ~~1. There is a high level of variety in the treatment of front yard areas among adjacent properties, including retaining walls.~~
 - ~~2. The front yard slope is unstable, threatens the foundation of a historic structure, and other stabilization strategies have failed.~~~~

5.12 Locate and design a new retaining wall to minimize impacts on the historic district or historic property (when warranted based on the criteria in Guideline 5.11).

- a. Use a low kick wall, up to one foot in height, to help stabilize the yard while maintaining most of the historic slope.
- b. Design a new retaining wall to minimize visual impacts on the character-defining features of the historic property, block and district.
- c. Use materials that are common to the historic district or that relate to the historic property, such as stone, poured concrete, concrete block, brick, and railroad ties. For example, if a stone wall is a part of the design tradition, the wall should be stone, or stone-faced.
- ~~d. Avoid using terraced retaining walls.~~
- ~~e. Do not completely replace the slope with a tall retaining wall.~~
- d. Low retaining walls are commonly combined with front yard fencing. When both are used, fencing should be placed on top of the retaining wall. The total height should not exceed 48”.

GUIDELINES FOR STREETScape & PARKING

5.13 Use pedestrian-scaled design elements to enhance the historic streetscape.

- a. Locate street furniture near heavily used pedestrian areas, such as major pedestrian routes, building entrances and outdoor gathering places.
- b. Design street furniture to complement the character-defining features of the historic district (See page 88 for more information on site furnishings in courtyards, plazas and patios).
- c. When a new fence and/or retaining wall is needed for security purposes, design a new open-style fence and/or retaining wall to be as low in height as possible and with a simple design to minimize visual impacts. Refer to 5.8, 5.9 and 5.12 for additional guidance.
- d. Do not impede a primary pedestrian way with street furniture.
- e. Plant street trees to enhance historic buildings and offset heat island effects of commercial areas. (Contact the City Forester for specifications on planting trees in hardscape).

5.14 Design a patio or dining area in/adjacent to the public right-of-way to maintain views of a historic building from the street and sidewalk.

- a. Use high quality materials for patio railings and furniture.
- b. Use simple, low, patio railings.
- c. Avoid highly decorative patio railings.
- d. Do not locate walls or other solid enclosures between the sidewalk and a patio or dining area.

- e. Do not affix umbrella holders or planters to patio railings because they reduce visibility between the sidewalk and building.
- f. Do not obstruct a sidewalk with an at-grade patio or dining area. See Guideline 4.28 on page 88 for more information.

5.15 Locate and access surface parking areas to minimize impacts on the historic streetscape, rhythm of the built environment and disruption to pedestrians.

- a. Minimize the visual impacts of a surface parking area (note that this is especially important in, and adjacent to, historic residential areas).
- b. Locate surface parking areas to the side or rear of buildings.
- c. Provide access to surface parking areas from an alley, when feasible.

GUIDELINES FOR ALLEYS & SERVICE AREAS

5.16 Site and access service areas and ground-mounted mechanical equipment to minimize impacts on the historic streetscape and disruption of the pedestrian environment.

- a. Locate service areas and ground-mounted mechanical equipment to the side or rear of buildings.
- b. Where possible, place a service area or ground-mounted mechanical equipment within a building alcove, especially if it is not located to the side or rear of a building.
- c. Provide access to service areas from an alley, where present.
- d. Avoid locating a service area (including trash containers), or mechanical equipment, adjacent to residential property or directly against a public sidewalk.

5.17 Minimize the visual impacts of a new service area.

- a. Orient a service entrance, waste/compost disposal area or other service area toward alleys or service lanes, and away from public streets and residences.
- b. Locate a service area to minimize potential noise impacts or other residual effects on nearby properties.
- c. Screen ground-mounted mechanical equipment.
- d. Screen a service area with a wall, fence or planting.

~~**5.18 Minimize potential security issues in an alley or parking area.**~~

- ~~a. Install vandal-proof security cameras, whenever possible.~~
- ~~b. Minimize hidden areas or tight spaces between buildings and service areas.~~
- ~~c. Use compatible lighting to improve security in an alley or parking area. See Guideline 5.23 on page 103 for more information on compatible lighting.~~

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SITE & BUILDING LIGHTING

5.19 Preserve historic light fixtures.

- a. Supplement, rather than remove, historic light fixtures.
- b. Adapt historic light fixtures with better illumination and glare control while maintaining the original physical appearance of the fixture.
- c. Repair and retrofit historic light fixtures whenever possible.
- d. Replace missing light fixtures if sufficient documentation exists.
- e. Where historic fixtures remain and additional lighting is needed, add new fixtures to be subordinate to the historic fixtures in terms of placement, scale, design and illumination.

5.20 Coordinate lighting with historic streetscapes and buildings.

- a. Coordinate light fixtures to be compatible with the design of the historic structure, historic district and surrounding historic context.
- b. Coordinate storefront lighting along the street whenever possible.
- c. When considering street lights, avoid conflicts with street trees. Street lights should be located below the street canopy and at least five feet from street trees.

5.21 Design lighting to be compatible and subordinate to historic buildings and the surrounding historic context.

- a. Use existing or ambient streetlight or storefront lighting rather than adding new lighting whenever possible.
- b. If new light fixtures are necessary, use a contemporary design, or simplified historic lighting design that is compatible with the placement, design, materials and quality of lighting on adjacent historic buildings.
- c. Limit the level of illumination to be sufficient to perform the needed lighting task.
- d. Design and orient new light fixtures to provide down-lighting.

5.22 Design site lighting to be compatible and subordinate to historic buildings and the surrounding historic context.

- a. Base site lighting designs on historic site or building lighting patterns if they are known.
- b. Scale new site lighting fixtures to the building and to be subordinate to adjacent historic structures.
- c. Use low, shielded, fixtures with down-lighting, or light bollards within landscaping to illuminate pedestrian walkways if needed.
- d. Use modest site lighting to illuminate building entrances and entries into parking areas.
- e. Use fixtures that provide even lighting for a plaza, courtyard or patio area.
- f. Do not install site lighting that conveys a false sense of history, such as faux historic street lights.
- g. Do not provide greater illumination in parking areas than at building entrances or for pedestrian walkways.
- h. Do not use site lighting that is brighter than historic building lighting.

5.23 When necessary, design and install new building light fixtures that are compatible with the historic building and surrounding historic context.

- a. Install lighting at the ground level of buildings only.
- b. Design and locate new light fixtures to be perceived but not seen, incorporating lighting into recessed entries, porches, canopies and alcoves whenever possible.
- c. Scale new light fixtures to the building (i.e., use monumental light fixtures only on monumental buildings)
- d. Consider using building light fixtures with a contemporary design that are compatible in materials, quality and design with the historic building.
- e. Consider using period reproduction fixtures if they can be matched in style, quality and materials with the historic building, and are subordinate to historic building architecture and features.
- f. Do not design lighting for the sole purpose of attracting attention to building architecture or to building uses.

5.24 Use lighting sources and illumination levels that enhance historic building and district character.

- a. Use illumination with a warm white light which does not distort the color of building materials or finishes.
- b. Do not install flood lights or fluorescent tube lighting on street elevations.
- c. Do not use colored bulbs or gels, or lighting with changing colors on historic buildings, **with the exception of institutional buildings.**
- d. Do not install light fixtures that cast light upward into the sky or onto the façade of a historic building, except as noted in design guideline 5.25 below.

5.25 Use building illumination that is appropriate to the significance of the building.

- a. Direct floodlights, or other façade illumination, only onto important ~~civic~~ **institutional** buildings while avoiding illumination on adjacent façades or the sky.
- b. Limit lighting of detached houses to entries and walkways.
- ~~c. Coordinate security lighting with other building lighting, where possible.~~
- ~~d. Use professionals when designing floodlighting for civic buildings to avoid distortion of building features and unnecessary glare.~~
- e. When designing architectural lighting for a ~~civic~~ **institutional** building, use the smallest possible fixtures hidden underneath cornices and parapets to minimize visual impacts to the extent feasible.

5.26 Minimize negative impacts to a historic building façade when installing lighting.

- a. Locate and install light features so they may be removed without significant damage to historic building fabric.
- b. Do not install lighting conduits, junction boxes and wires on primary building façades.