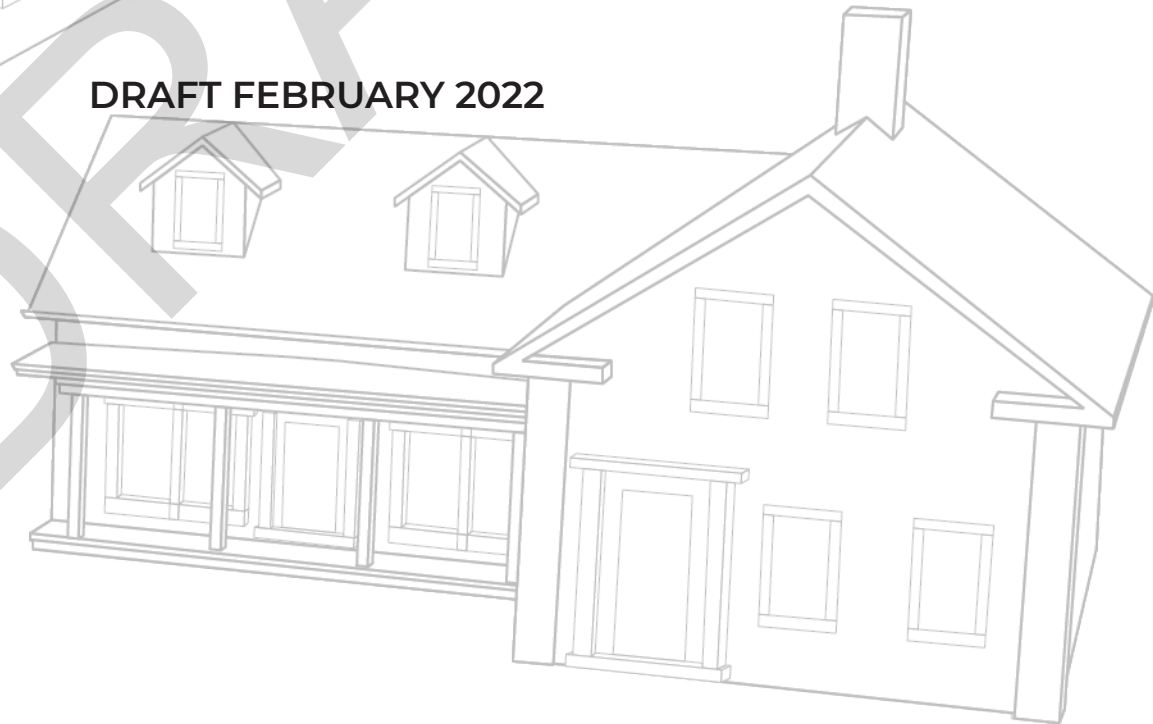


# **WEST HARWICH SPECIAL DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES**

**DRAFT FEBRUARY 2022**



# Introduction

These design guidelines were developed to complement the zoning regulations adopted at Fall 2020 Town Meeting for the West Harwich Special District (District). Two of the purposes of the District relate specifically to community design: preserve the significant historic and architectural resources in the area, and guide development to be consistent with the area's unique character. The District also seeks to promote small-scale businesses consistent with the area's character. The following guidelines provide specific recommendations to help achieve these goals, and are divided into two parts: one focusing on development that involves historic structures and one focusing on new construction.

## PURPOSE

The primary purposes of these guidelines is to depict and describe best design practices for development in the West Harwich Special District (Article XXIV of the Zoning By-law, Chapter 325 of the Harwich Code). Town officials will also employ these guidelines to assist in determining whether proposed development is consistent with the District's applicable review standards and special permit criteria contained in the Zoning By-law. When considering the appropriateness of proposed development, design coherence within the District will be considered in addition to compatibility with adjacent, neighboring, or surrounding buildings and structures.



*West Harwich looking East from Silver Street, circa 1900. Historic buildings with gable roof forms and a consistent street setback are key to the character of West Harwich.*



*Old postcard view looking west from the Herring River, shows that fences and hedges helped define the street edge in the early 1900s.*

# Historical Narrative

Known historically as Crook's Neck prior to the political establishment of the Town, the Herring River watershed exhibits evidence of continuous human habitation for over six thousand years. So-called "Indian deeds" from the 1640s reveal the area's perceived agricultural and navigational value. The early division of lands defined the East-West tranche now recognized as "Captains' Row," and Captain Job Chase, Sr.'s generous easement enabled access to coastal commerce and related trades that took shape on the Herring River. The District's architectural variety reflects an ongoing, indeed generational, "conversation" about community that has demonstrated remarkable consistency and quality for nearly three centuries.

The District spans the segment of Route 28 between the Herring River and the Dennis town line. Known as Captains' Row, this area displays its deep historical and cultural significance in its wide array of buildings, each a fine example of a major style of American residential architecture from the 1740s to the 1940s. It represents a multi-generational architectural dialogue, from the modest Cape Cod houses of its colonial days, through the Greek Revival and Victorian homes from the age of the great sea captains, and on to the late Victorian styles that signaled the region's early tourism development.



LEFT IMAGES: *The Captain Park House, a Second-Empire-style building seen in 1897 and in 2020, is one of many well-preserved historic homes that convey the unique history of West Harwich.*

RIGHT IMAGE: *These Greek Revival houses, built in the 1840s, mirror each other in form. They represent almost 200 years of continuous use and preservation in West Harwich. Image: Google maps.*



## **HISTORIC STRUCTURE GUIDELINES**

**GUIDELINE 1: Re-use Historic Structures**

**GUIDELINE 2: Preserve Original Forms and Details**

**GUIDELINE 3: Place Additions to the Rear**

**GUIDELINE 4: Respect a Building's Evolution**

**GUIDELINE 5: Keep Historic Buildings Prominent**

**GUIDELINE 6: Design Compatible Additions**

**GUIDELINE 7: Repair Rather than Replace**

**GUIDELINE 8: Make Changes Reversible**



## **NEW CONSTRUCTION GUIDELINES**

**GUIDELINE 1: Orient Buildings to the Street**

**GUIDELINE 2: Follow Established Setback Patterns**

**GUIDELINE 3: Landscape to Define the Street Edge**

**GUIDELINE 4: Massing and Articulation**

**GUIDELINE 5: Scale and Proportion**

**GUIDELINE 6: Façade Design**

**GUIDELINE 7: Façade Materials**

**GUIDELINE 8: Windows**

## Guideline 1: Re-Use Historic Structures

Renovate, rehabilitate, re-use and incorporate historic structures into new development proposals. Many historic structures in West Harwich have been successfully expanded or adapted with compatible new uses while preserving the original building. This tradition of preservation and evolution should continue. Reconstruction, which involves demolition and building a replica of an historic building, does not preserve historic significance and is not favored in the District. As an incentive to re-use historic structures, the West Harwich Special District permits some uses by-right in historic structures while in new construction or in non-historic structures they would require a Special Permit.



*This circa 1890 building, which combines architectural details from Victorian and Colonial Revival styles, has been successfully adapted several times to serve as a residence, a library, an inn, and a restaurant. Image: Google maps.*



*This barn, built circa 1850, survives even though the original house it supported does not. Its re-use as an antiques shop has preserved its unique door and window configuration. Image: Google maps.*

## Guideline 2: Preserve Original Forms and Details

Retain the original roof form and building massing, arrangement of doors and windows, and architectural detailing such as cornices, corner boards, window and door surrounds, original porches, bay windows, and siding materials on historic structures. Some changes to the location of doors and windows may be appropriate on secondary building façades, but details of the primary façade should not be altered. If new roof dormers are proposed, they should be set back from all edges of the roof by several feet.



*The Captain Bearse house maintains its circa 1890 Queen Anne style porch, bay windows, and cornices, as well as its series of rear additions.*



*A one-story shop was added to this circa 1840 building without altering its original building form and many architectural details. Image: Google maps.*

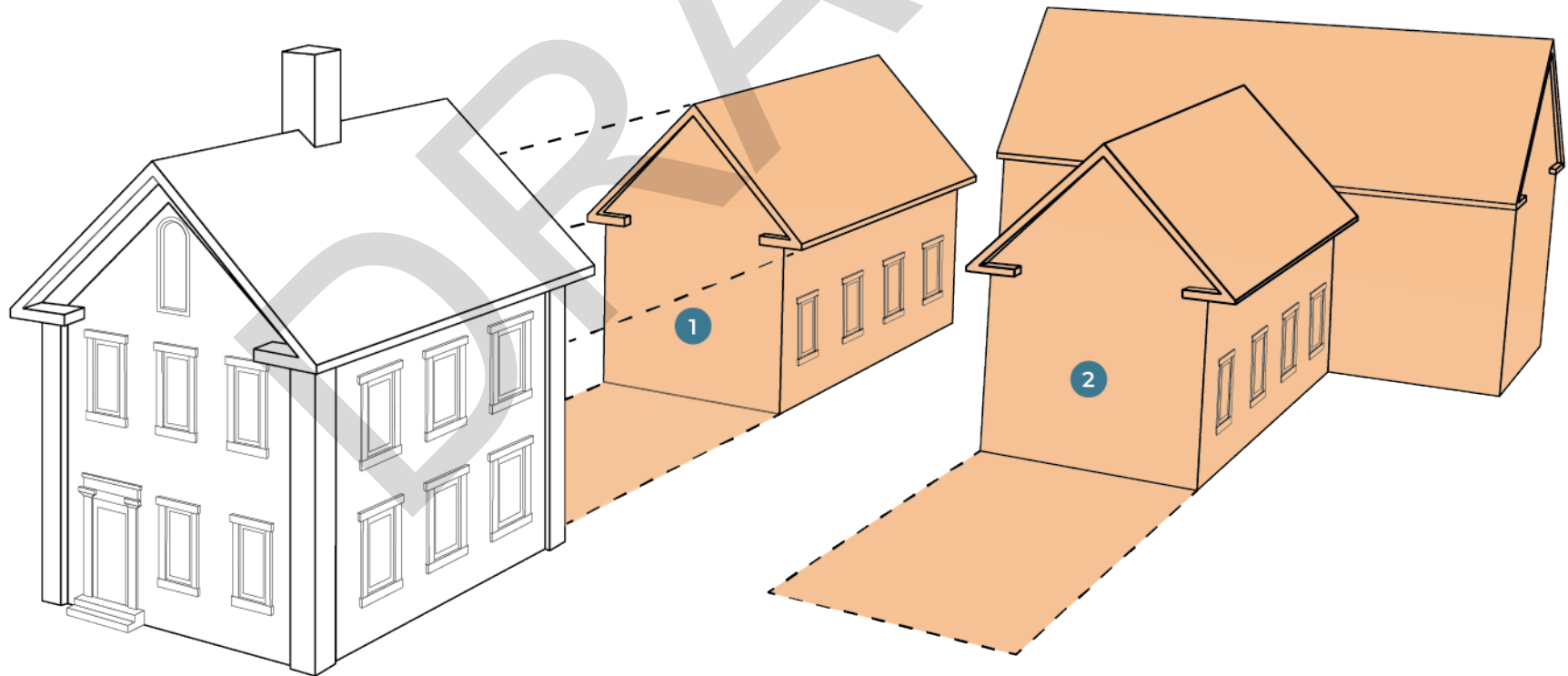
### Guideline 3: Place Additions to the Rear

Locate additions to historic structures on secondary facades and stepped back from the original structure to limit demolition of original materials or distinctive features. This follows long-standing regional traditions of expanding buildings to the side or rear. Small additions that form a bridge between a historic structure and a larger addition may also be appropriate.

- 1 Small addition only
- 2 Small addition forming a bridge between historic structure and larger addition



Additions placed well to the rear of this circa 1870 Italianate building allow expansion while preserving key architectural features. Image: Google maps.



## Guideline 4: Respect a Building’s Evolution

Changes which have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and evolution of a building and may have acquired significance in their own right. Historically significant additions and alterations should be preserved whenever possible.



LEFT IMAGE: This building’s evolution is preserved in the series of small additions appended to the rear, making it easy to see how the building expanded to accommodate 19th and 20th century improvements and a growing family.

RIGHT IMAGE: An aerial view of a portion of the West Harwich Special District shows historic buildings with multiple additions to the side and rear, revealing their gradual expansion over time. Image: Google maps.





## Guideline 5: Keep Historic Buildings Prominent

Locate new structures and outbuildings well behind the front façade of a primary historic structure, or well to the side of it so that the historic building remains prominent when viewed from the roadway. The West Harwich Special District allows a larger footprint for structures and buildings that are screened by siting them behind other buildings.



LEFT IMAGE: Large additions set well back on the lot appear smaller when viewed from the street and have less impact on nearby historic buildings. Image: Google maps.

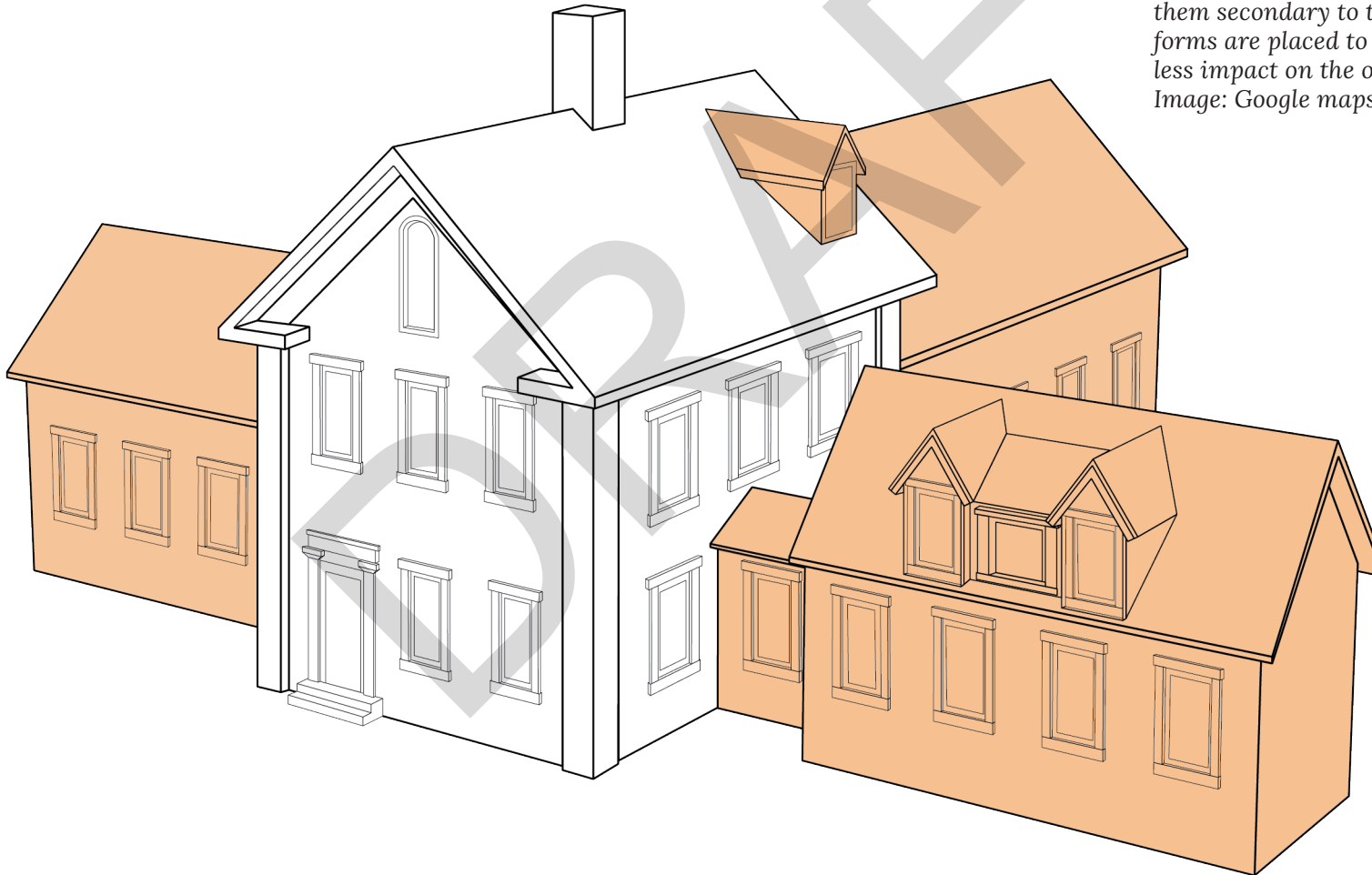
RIGHT IMAGE: Modern additions placed behind the historic structure preserve its prominence in the streetscape. Image: Google maps.

## Guideline 6: Design Compatible Additions

New additions should be compatible with the overall scale and character of the historic property. Contemporary alterations and additions can be compatible with historic properties when they do not destroy significant cultural, historical, architectural, or archeological material and when the designs are compatible with size, scale, color, material, and character of the historic property. Dormer additions should be significantly stepped back from the front facing roof edge to lessen visual impact. New additions should be products of their own time and should not try to replicate an earlier appearance.



*Additions to this historic building have pitched roof forms and lower ridge heights to make them secondary to the historic building. Larger forms are placed to the rear where they have less impact on the original building scale.  
Image: Google maps.*



## Guideline 7: Repair Rather Than Replace

Deteriorated historic architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by historical, physical, or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of architectural elements from other structures or objects.



LEFT IMAGE: *Original windows should be repaired rather than replaced to preserve their unique projecting frames and details. The tight wood grain in 18th and 19th century trim makes it naturally rot resistant and long-lasting.*

RIGHT IMAGE: *Early architectural details were made with craftsmanship and materials not readily available today.*

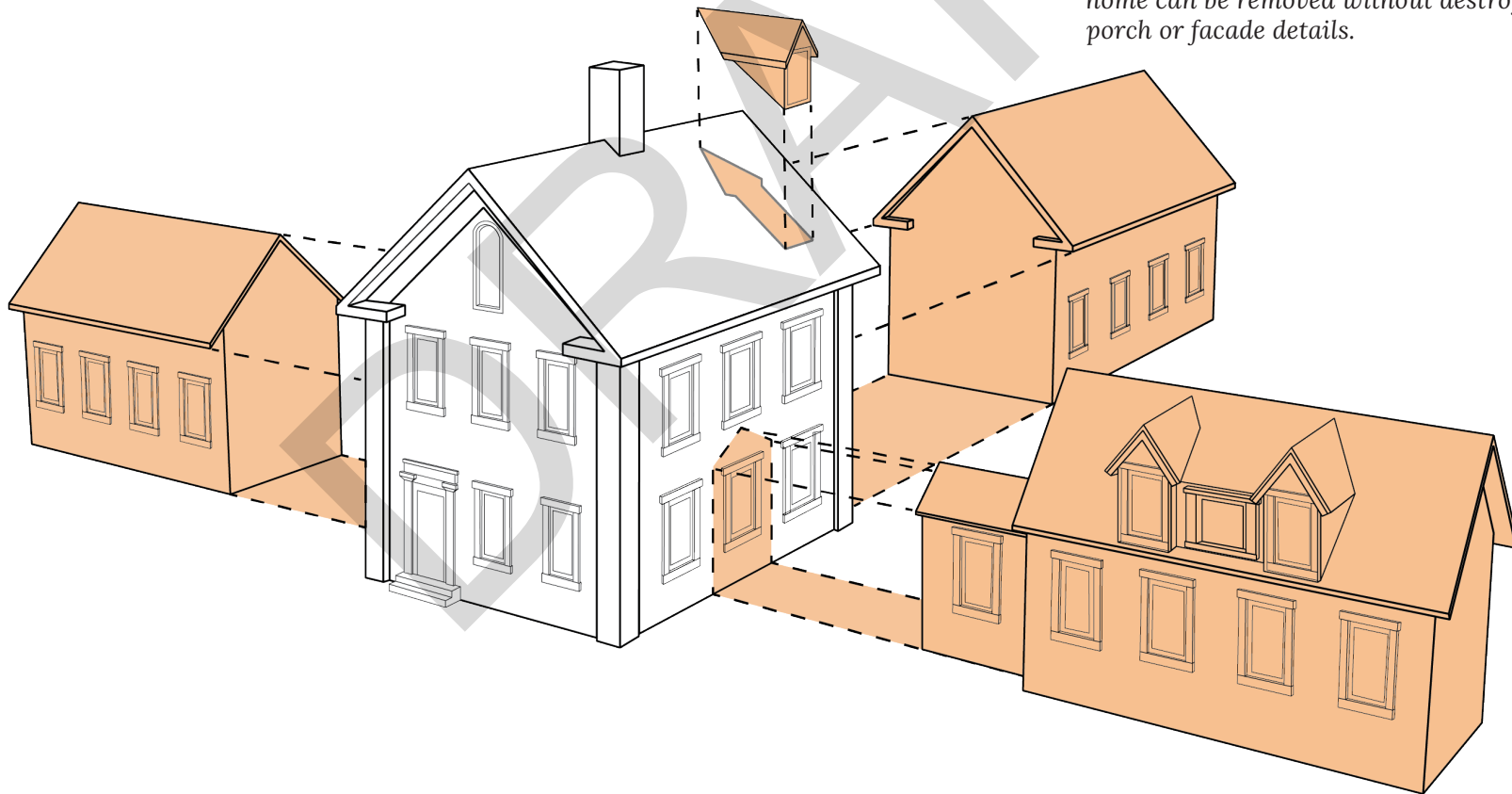


## Guideline 8: Make Changes Reversible

Design any changes or alterations to historic structures to be reversible, so that they can be undone in the future without loss of significant historic materials and original architectural features. This allows future generations to see how these buildings have evolved and to better appreciate the development history of West Harwich.



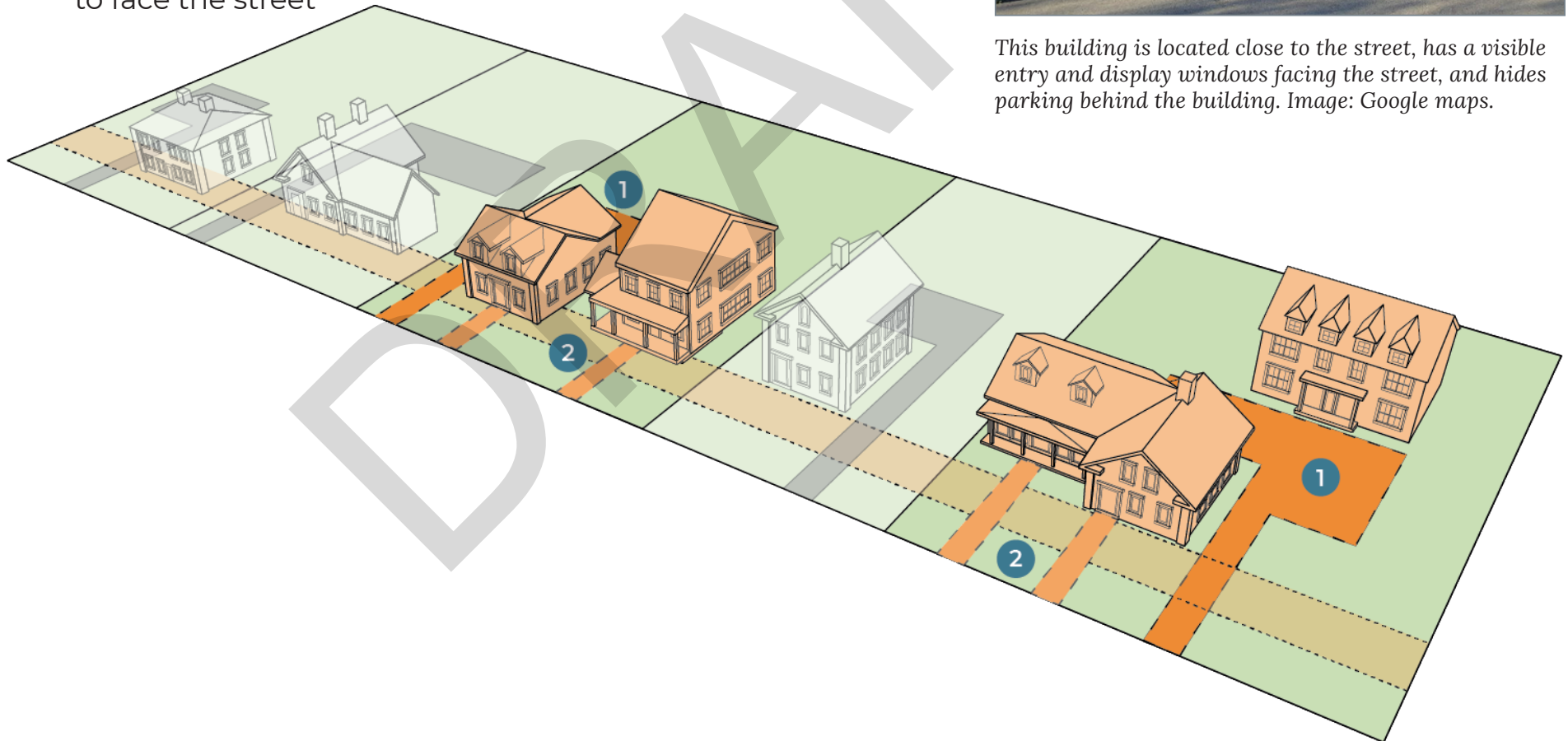
*The glass enclosure added to the entry of this historic home can be removed without destroying the original porch or facade details.*



## Guideline 1: Orient Buildings to the Street

New buildings should respect established patterns of building placement in the West Harwich Special District, orienting primary facades and primary entrances to face the street (or to the primary street, as applicable), and concealing parking to the rear of the lot.

- 1 Conceal parking to rear of lot
- 2 Orient primary facades and entrances to face the street



*This building is located close to the street, has a visible entry and display windows facing the street, and hides parking behind the building. Image: Google maps.*

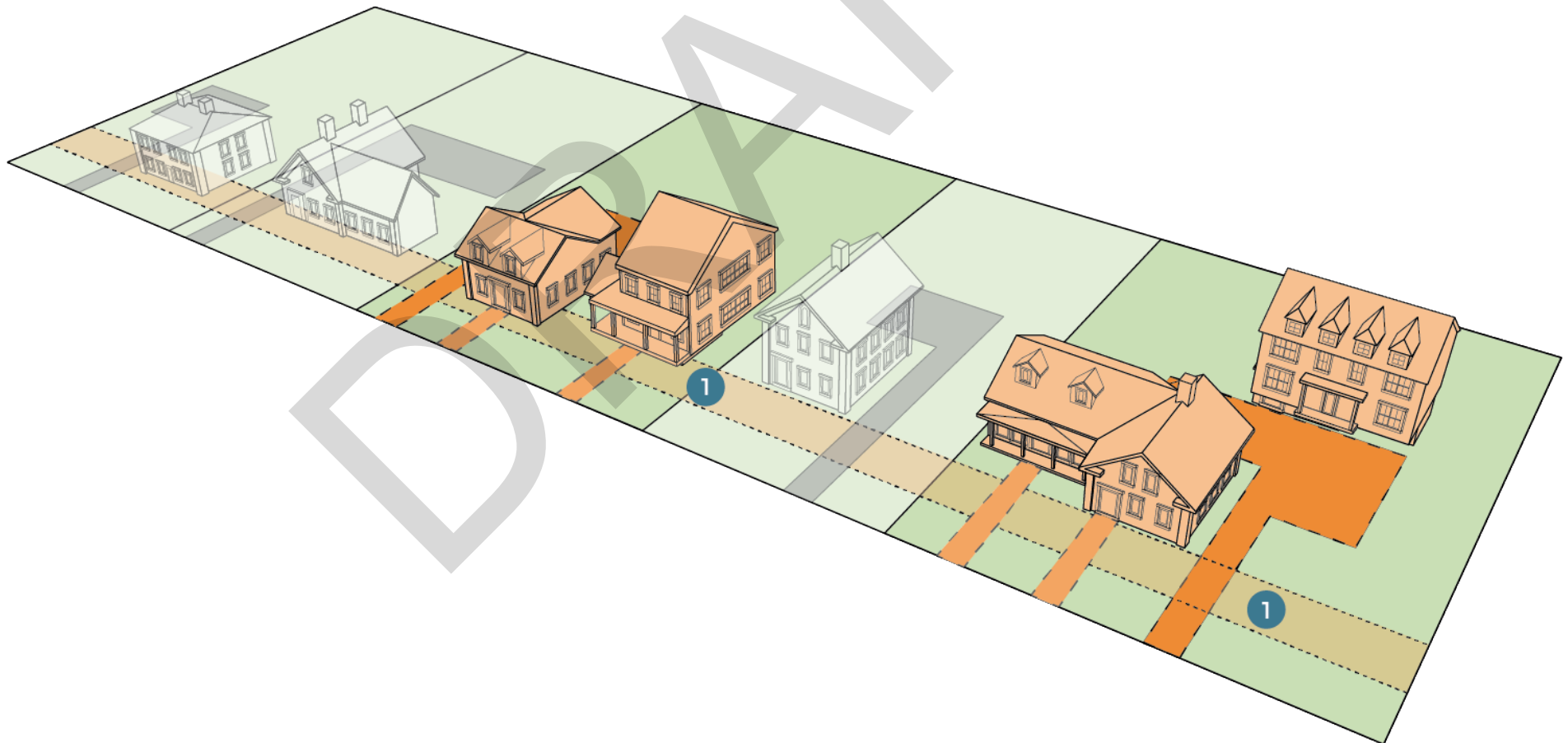
## Guideline 2: Follow Established Setback Patterns

Infill buildings should match the setback from the front lot line of the immediately adjacent buildings and support the streetscape; if the setbacks do not match, the infill building may match one or the other, or effect an average of the two. Infill buildings should continue the patterns of height on adjacent existing properties. The West Harwich Special District requires new primary buildings to have a front setback of 20-40 feet to maintain the traditional setback pattern.



*The established setback pattern in West Harwich includes some buildings set close to the street and others set behind a front yard, but in all cases buildings are oriented to the street. Image: Google maps.*

- 1 Building setback of 20-40 feet



## Guideline 3: Landscape to Define the Street Edge

Front setbacks, adjoining setbacks, and walkways between buildings should be maintained as attractive features of the streetscape and enhance the continuity among existing buildings. The front yard setback should be landscaped with a mix of shrubs and low plantings to support the residential ethos of the district. Landscaping should define street edges where needed for safety, but screen potentially negative features (e.g., loading areas and parking). Plantings should not obscure entrances, exits, or intersections. Tree species should be selected to maintain adequate height clearances for sidewalks and desired visibility of façade. Existing healthy and mature trees that characterize the neighborhood should be preserved to the extent possible and be incorporated into the proposed site plan.



LEFT IMAGE: Plantings in front of a low picket fence help define the front lawn area and the street edge.

RIGHT IMAGE: Parallel rows of plantings and hedges link the main entrance to the sidewalk while highlighting the front facade. Image: Google maps.



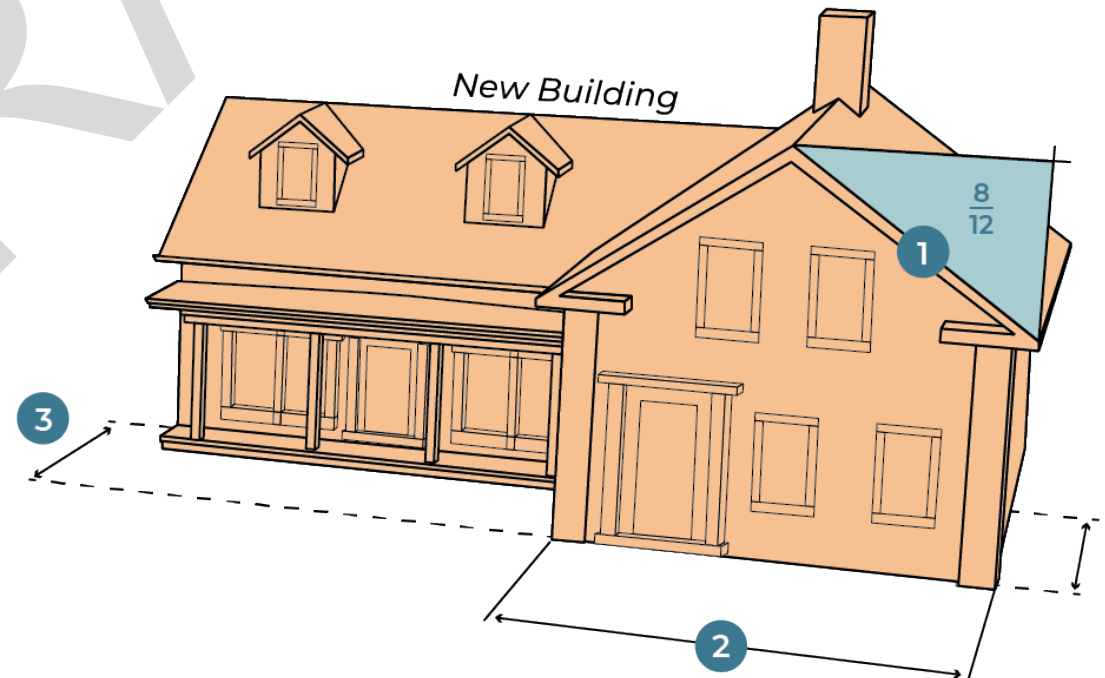
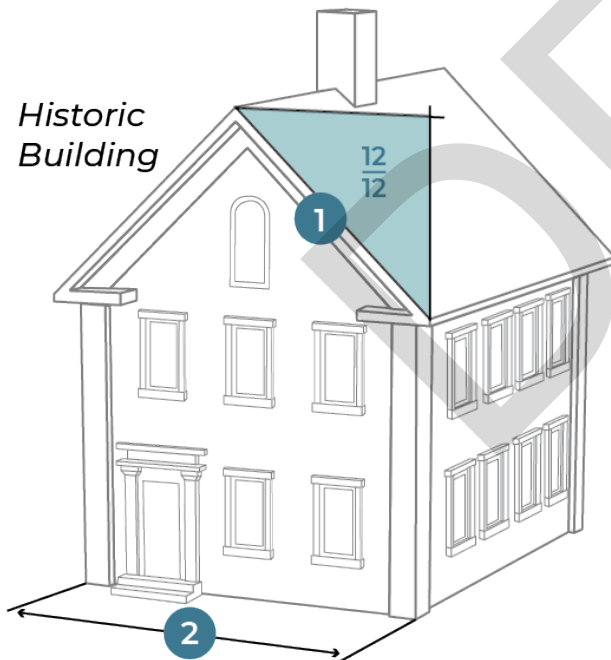
## Guideline 4: Massing and Articulation

New construction should incorporate massing and design elements of existing historic buildings such as front gable roofs, cross-gables, balanced window patterns, and front porches, and employ decorative elements that harmonize with the existing range of stylistic expression where possible. Roof pitches on primary roof forms should be between 8/12 and 12/12 to maintain established neighborhood patterns. The West Harwich Special District limits the width of any principal building façade to 50 feet to preserve the existing pattern of buildings in the district. Any adjacent street facing façades must be stepped back at least 10 feet. Separate massings should have distinct roof forms to differentiate them.

- 1 Roof pitches on primary roof forms between 8/12 and 12/12
- 2 Maximum building façade 50 feet
- 3 Adjacent street facing façades stepped back at least 10 feet



*This new building incorporates narrow gable roof forms, a stepped back second floor, and street-facing display windows to continue historic building patterns.*



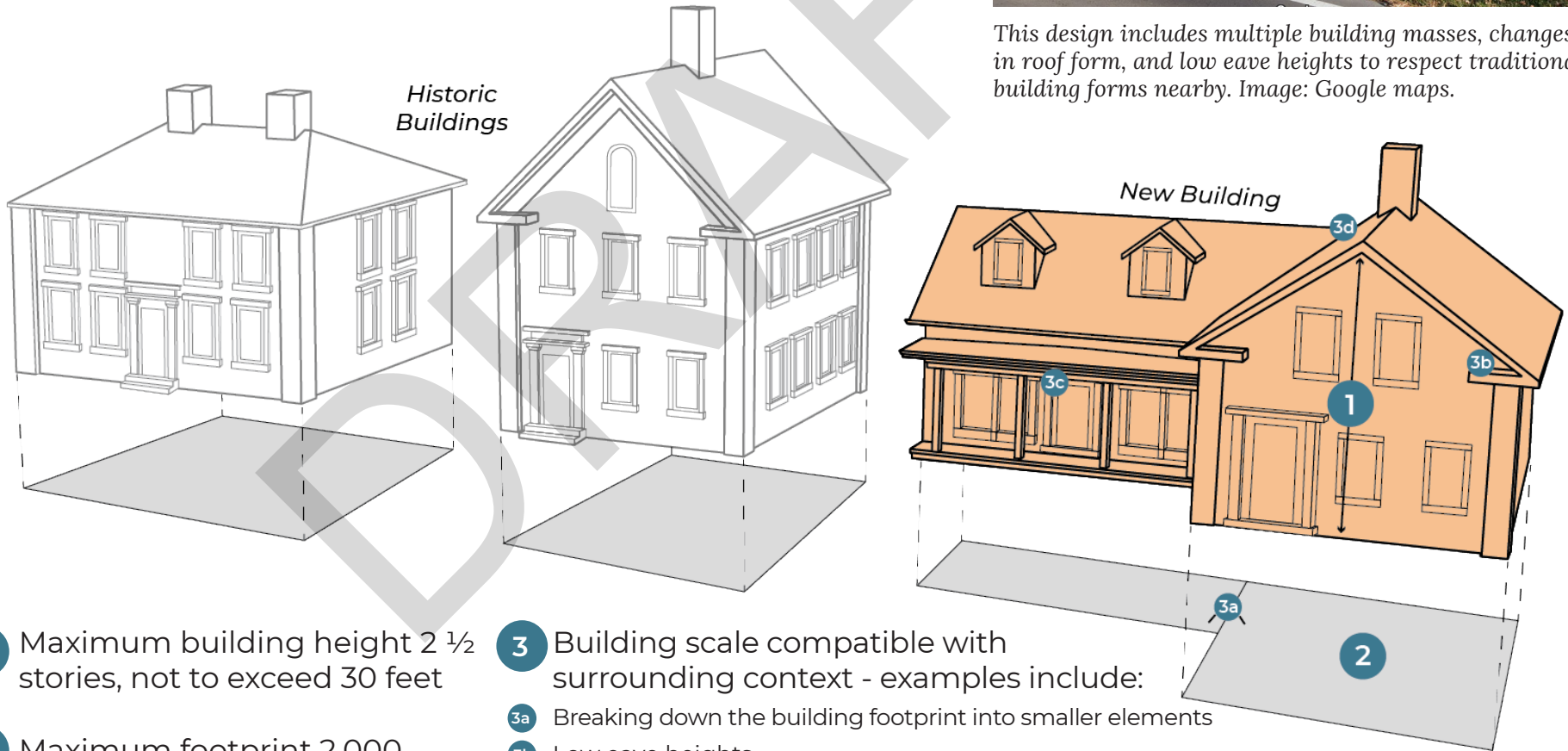


# Guideline 5: Scale and Proportion

The scale of proposed new construction should be compatible with the surrounding West Harwich context. Elements that may help to relate building scale proportionally include: breaking down the building footprint into smaller elements that resemble traditional building scale, changes in roof form, low eave heights, canopied entries, porches, and deep eaves. The West Harwich Special District limits building height to 2 ½ stories, not to exceed 30 feet. It also limits the footprint of new street-facing buildings to 2,000 square feet. Buildings sited behind a street-facing building can be slightly larger.



This design includes multiple building masses, changes in roof form, and low eave heights to respect traditional building forms nearby. Image: Google maps.



- 1 Maximum building height 2 ½ stories, not to exceed 30 feet
- 2 Maximum footprint 2,000 square feet for street-facing buildings

- 3 Building scale compatible with surrounding context - examples include:
  - 3a Breaking down the building footprint into smaller elements
  - 3b Low eave heights
  - 3c Porches
  - 3d Change in roof form

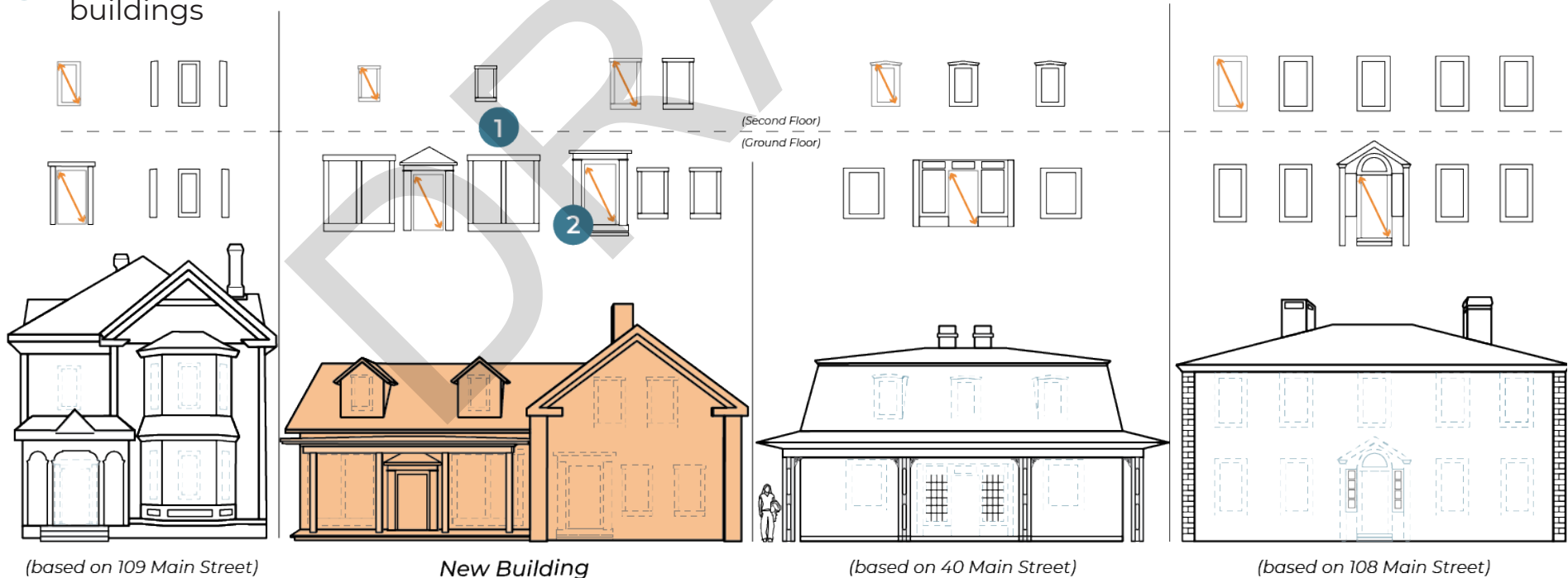
# Guideline 6: Façade Design

The primary building elevations of new infill buildings should be compatible with the facade design of neighboring buildings so as to create continuity across projects and the street line. Compatibility is achieved through the coordination of significant design elements and proportions with the corresponding features of adjacent buildings without necessarily replicating them, although mirror images of abutting buildings exist. The scale and proportion of entrances and windows are important elements of the front facade. Blank walls facing the street are not appropriate in the West Harwich Special District.

- 1 New building with familiar arrangement of window and door openings
- 2 Window proportions are similar to those on existing historic buildings



Stepbacks in the facade, multiple entries, and varied window patterns with vertical shapes help this building reflect traditional facade designs. Image: Google maps.



## Guideline 7: Façade Materials

Exterior building materials, including trims and cladding, should incorporate traditional siding materials such as wood clapboard and wood shingles or should reference traditional materials with high quality modern materials that have a similar texture and color palette. Roofing materials visible from the street should be of high quality and durable, and emulate the traditional palette in the District.



LEFT IMAGE: *Clapboard siding and roofing in natural wood tones, along with steep roof pitches and traditional window configurations, help new construction blend in with historic neighborhoods.*

RIGHT IMAGE: *A mix of clapboard and shingle siding, along with decorative trim and window surrounds are typical features in historic areas. Image: Google maps.*

## Guideline 8: Windows

New construction should acknowledge and respond to existing adjacent window patterns in proportion, scale, rhythm, and number of openings. Continuous horizontal or vertical ribbon windows are to be avoided. Window coverage on new, commercial buildings should not exceed 70% on ground floor façades facing Route 28, and window coverage should not exceed 30% on ground floor façades facing secondary-streets. Upper story windows should conform to the existing residential pattern of neighboring structures. Mirrored glass is not appropriate.



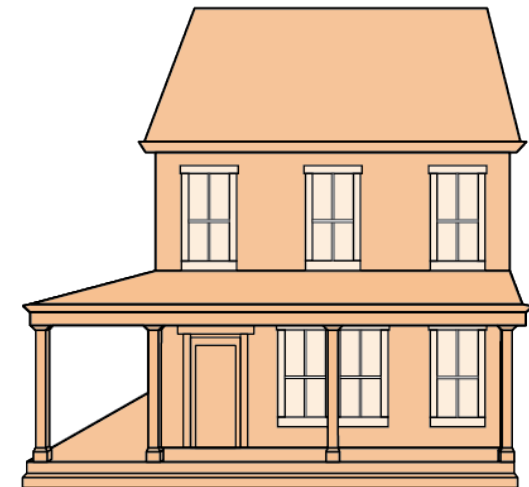
*Windows of different proportions and patterns can be appropriate as long as they relate to traditional patterns in the district. Image: Google maps.*



*Historic Building - residential-scale  
~20% window coverage on ground floor*



*New Construction - residential-scale  
< 70% window coverage on ground floor*



*New Construction - commercial-scale  
< 70% window coverage on ground floor*