

**Cox / Adams  
Landmark  
Conservation District  
Design Guidelines**

**City of Johnson City, Tennessee**

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Copies of the Design Guidelines are available from the Johnson City Planning Department,  
601 East Main Street, Johnson City, TN.

For information on obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness and on historic conservation  
district design standards, call the Johnson City Planning Department at 423/434-6071.

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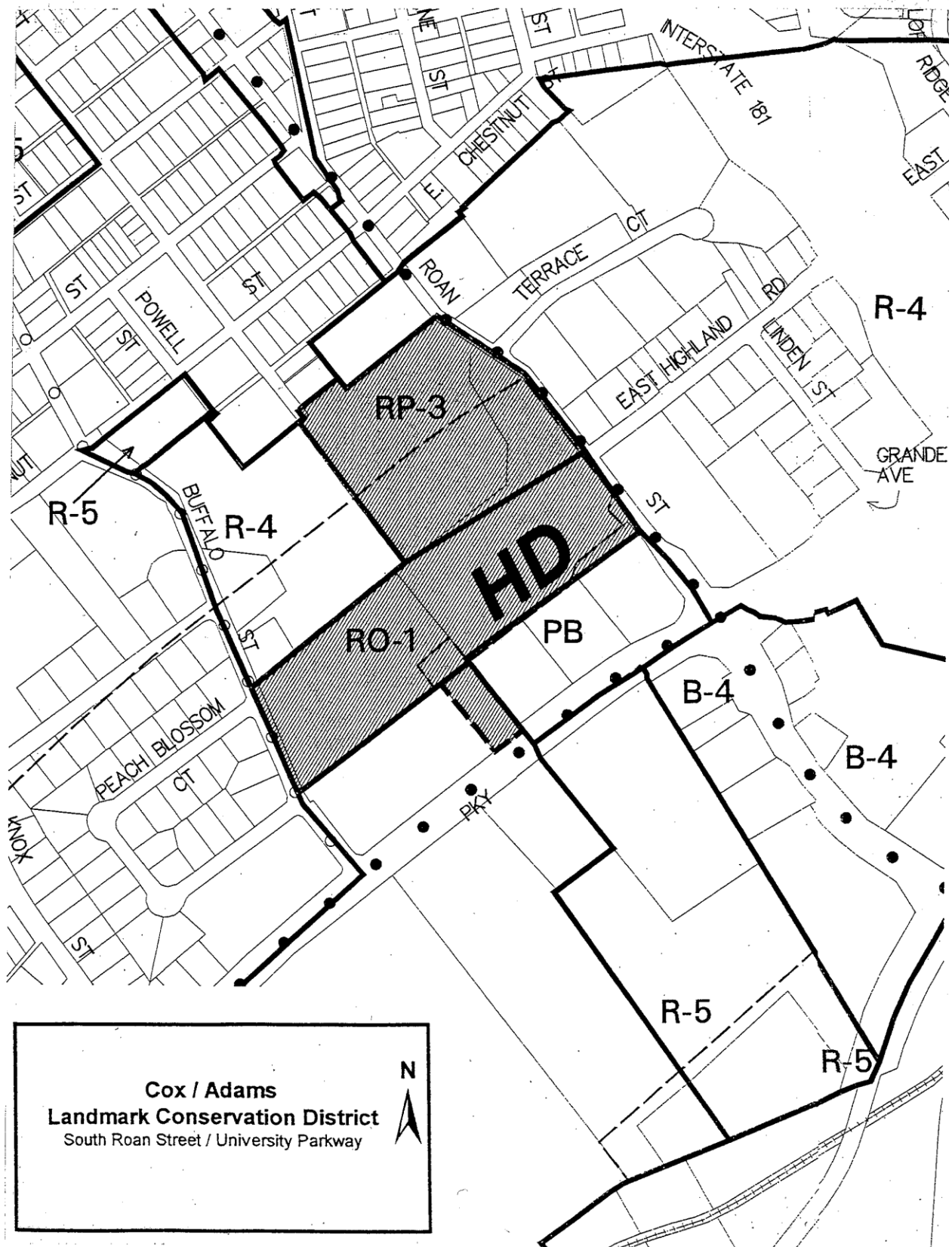
## **THE COX / ADAMS LANDMARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES**

### **Introduction**

The Cox / Adams Landmark Conservation District (the "District") is located near the intersection of South Roan Street and University Parkway. It comprises approximately 20.2 acres, which includes the mansion, "The Oaks," and the surrounding gardens and a single-family residence. The Oaks was constructed between 1918 and 1922 in the Italian-design.

The major feature of the property is the mansion constructed by Judge Thad. Cox. The mansion is a four-story stone and brick Italian Villa style structure. The mansion is a three-story structure with the fourth story being the tower, which is a prominent feature of the structure. The mansion is essentially in its original state with no major alternations to the exterior of the structure.

Included in the District is a detached two-car garage located to the southeast of the mansion off the circular drive. A single-family residence located on the property is also included in the District. Although located on the property direct access to the residence is off Buffalo Street and not through the main property.



## Statement of Purpose

The Cox / Adams Landmark Conservation District Design Guidelines are intended as the starting point for the design of buildings, additions, and renovations in the District. The guidelines are design criteria to be used for future development in the District. They are intended to encourage design creativity utilizing modern materials and techniques and yet blend in with the existing architecture. The Guidelines do not encourage copies of existing architecture. The design characteristics which the Historic Zoning Commission will review are following:

**roof line**  
**overhang**  
**building shape**  
**window and door proportions**  
**window and door grouping**  
**garage placement**  
**porches**

Incorporating certain design elements will go a long way towards making an appropriate overall design. The roof line, building form, use of porches, and the proportions and groupings of windows and doors should harmonize with those of the mansion.

Remember, new construction should not be “copies” --- they should be “good neighbors.”

## Design Review

The Johnson City Historic Zoning Commission (HZC) is responsible for reviewing the expansion of habitable space and new construction in the Cox / Adams Landmark Conservation District to see that it is compatible with the existing mansion in the conservation district in scale, materials, and siting. A Certificate of Appropriateness from the HZC is required before building begins.

The HZC staff prefers to meet with the property owner and builder at pre-design stages to become familiar with the site and discuss the guidelines. This will help ensure that the site plan, proportions, and details will have a comfortable relationship to the mansion and gardens that have earned the district historic conservation status.

The HZC reviews any addition, renovation, and new structure that increases the habitable space and is visible from the street (public or private). Buildings moved into the area also come under review, and no structure can be demolished until reviewed by the HZC. In each of these cases, a Certificate of Appropriateness is required. Interior changes, paint colors, and routine maintenance, repair, exterior alterations (when they do not affect habitable living space) are not reviewed. Appropriate design characteristics will be approved for a Certificate of Appropriateness and inappropriate design characteristics will not be approved for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

## Procedure

- Owner decides to build or alter in the District
- Owner meets with his/her designer to go over guidelines
- Preliminary meeting with HZC staff
- Submit application for review
  - site plan / measured drawings / material information
- Commission reviews application
- When approved owner receives certificate of appropriateness
- Obtain building permit and begin construction



## General Terms

Design Review Guidelines (the “Guidelines”) are criteria and standards which the Johnson City Historic Zoning Commission (the “Commission”) must consider in determining the appropriateness of proposed work within the District.

Appropriateness of work must be determined in order to accomplish the following goals of historic/conservation zoning as outlined in the guidelines and bylaws of the Johnson City Historic Zoning Commission:

- (a) To promote the educational, cultural, and economic welfare of the people of Johnson City;
- (b) To preserve and protect the historical and architectural value of building, other structures, or historically significant areas;
- (c) To ensure the compatibility within the Historic/Conservation District by regulating exterior design, arrangement, texture, and materials;
- (d) To create an aesthetic appearance which complements the historic buildings or other structures;
- (e) To stabilize and improve property values;
- (f) To foster civic beauty and community pride;
- (g) To strengthen the local economy;
- (h) To establish criteria and procedures to regulate the construction, relocation, demolition or other alteration of structures or appurtenances within any Historic/Conservation District; and
- (i) To promote the use of Historic/Conservation Districts for the education, pleasure, and welfare of the present and future citizens of Johnson City.

These Guidelines shall be interpreted and constructed in such a manner as to foster and preserve the predominant ‘Estate’ character of the District.

These Guidelines shall not apply to ordinary repairs and maintenance.

For the purpose of these Guidelines the following definitions shall apply:

**Building:** Any structure having a roof supported by columns or by walls and intended for the shelter, housing or enclosure of persons, animals, or personal property.

**Exterior:** The outside wall. The part of the structure that is visible from the public right-of way and/or from the property lines.

**Ordinary repairs and maintenance:** The reconstruction or renewal of any part of any existing building for the purpose of its upkeep. The process to restore and keep a building in sound condition.

# **PRESERVATION GUIDELINES FOR EXISTING STRUCTURES**

**Definition:** The alternation of any façade of the existing mansion within the District are subject to review by the Commission pursuant to the Historic/Conservation District Ordinance.

## **General Principles**

Since the purpose of historic zoning is to protect historic properties, the alternation to any façade of the existing mansion should be avoided since the façade contributes historically and architecturally to the character and significance of the district. The provisions of this section shall apply only to the facades of the existing mansion.

## **Design Characteristics for Existing Structures**

In considering the appropriateness of alternations to the existing mansion, the Commission shall consider the following design considerations:

- A. Windows and Doors**  
There shall be no alternation of size or shape to any fenestration (window or door) in the existing mansion.
- B. Roof**  
The existing roof shape of the mansion shall not be altered.
- C. Painting**  
No previously unpainted masonry surface shall be painted.



# DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

## SECTION I. NEW CONSTRUCTION

**Definition:** The construction or erection of any free-standing structure or improvement within the District, including new construction which utilizes existing party walls and any additions to existing buildings which are subject to review by the Commission pursuant to the Historic/Conservation District Ordinance.

### A. General Principles

The provisions of Section II shall apply to the exterior of buildings, to areas of lots visible from public or private streets, and especially to principal elevations of buildings.

The principal facades (front) and street-related elevations of proposals for new buildings shall be more carefully reviewed than other facades. New buildings should continue the tradition while complementing and being compatible with other buildings in the District.

New construction should be consistent with the existing mansion in terms of height, scale, rhythm and other design characteristics. The dominance of that pattern and rhythm of design characteristic must be respected and not be disrupted.

## **B. Design Characteristics for New Construction**

In determining the appropriateness of proposed new construction, the Commission shall consider, among other factors, the compatibility and consistency of the proposed design of the new construction with the designs of the existing mansion in terms of the following design characteristics:

### **B1. Height**

New buildings should not be constructed in a manner that will diminish the importance or stature of the existing mansion. New buildings should be limited to three stories (40 feet in height of habitable space).

### **B2. Scale and Massing**

The size of a new building, its mass in relation to open spaces, and its windows, doors, openings, and porches should be visually compatible with the existing mansion.

### **B3. Orientation**

The site orientation of new buildings should be complimentary to the existing mansion along the applicable street and should be visually compatible.

### **B4. Relationship of Materials, Textures, and Details**

The relationship and use of material texture, details, and material color of a new building's principal facades should be visually compatible with and similar to those of the existing mansion or should not contrast conspicuously.

### **B5. Proportion and Rhythm of Openings**

The relationship of width to height of windows and doors and the rhythm of solids to voids in the new buildings should be visually compatible with the existing mansion.

### **B6. Roof Shape**

The roofs of new buildings should be visually compatible with the roofs of the existing mansion, by not contrasting greatly with the roof shape and orientation.

## **C. Additions to Existing Buildings**

The following factors should be considered in reviewing proposed additions to existing buildings:

### Additions to Principal Facades

New additions to facades of existing buildings should be avoided and, if required, should be kept to a minimum, be reversible, and should be visually compatible in scale, materials, and texture; additions should not be visually jarring or contrasting.

### Enclosure of Covered Areas

The enclosure of carports, porches, porte cocheres, and other covered areas on principal facades, to create additional habitable square footage, is usually not appropriate. Notwithstanding, if such enclosure is permitted, it should be accomplished in a manner that preserves the original character of the original principal facade.

### Additions in General

An attached exterior addition to a historic building expands its "outer limits" to create a new profile. Because such expansion has the capability to radically change the historic appearance, new additions should be designed and constructed so that the character-defining features of the historic building are not radically changed, obscured, damaged, or destroyed in the process of rehabilitation.

## **D. Outbuildings and Appurtenances**

### Outbuildings

Garages and storage buildings should reflect the design character of the principal building on a lot and should be compatible in terms of height, scale, roof shape, materials, texture, and details

The location and design of outbuildings should not be visually disruptive to the design character of the surrounding buildings.

### Appurtenances

Appurtenances related to new construction, including driveways, sidewalks, lighting, fences, and walls, shall be visually compatible with the environment of the existing estate and sites to which they relate. Garages, storage facilities and similar structures should generally be placed at or towards the rear of the principal building on the lot.



## **E. Development Standards**

The following standards and guidelines shall apply to all new construction:

### **E.1 Mechanical Equipment**

All ground mounted mechanical equipment shall be screened from view from public or private streets by the use of walls, fences, or landscaping. All roof mounted mechanical equipment shall be properly screened to minimize visual impact, where such screening will be effective. Where screening will not be effective, the color of the equipment shall be the same as the building.

### **E.2 Service, Loading, and Equipment Storage Areas**

Service areas, including storage, special equipment, maintenance, and loading areas, shall be screened with landscaping and/or architectural features so as not to be visible from public or private streets. Refuse collection areas shall be visually screened with a solid perimeter wall consisting of materials and colors compatible with those of the adjacent structure and shall be roofed if the contents are visible from public or private streets.

### **E.3 Parking**

All parking shall be located outside the required front yard setback and any required setback from an arterial street.

### **E.4 Signage**

All freestanding and development identification signs shall be ground mounted signs with a maximum height of ten (10) feet and a maximum size of one hundred (100) square feet. The following types of signs shall be prohibited: Animated Signs, Balloons, Festoons, Menu Boards, and Off-Premise Advertising Signs.

### **E.5 Lighting**

The maximum height of lights not located in the public right-of-way shall be twenty-five (25) feet.

## SECTION II. FEATURES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

### A. Porches

Porches give a building a feeling of openness to the site and welcome the visitor. The details and materials should be similar to the mansion.

The principal facades and facades of street-related elevations shall be more carefully reviewed than other facades.

### B. Materials

The mansion built between 1918 and 1922, possesses a richness of materials and detail not usually seen in modern houses. Interesting combinations of brick, cut stone, stucco, concrete, wood, slate, iron, tile, shingles, and glass were used to create eye-catching textures.

New structures or additions in the district should be built of materials similar to the mansion. Two or more contrasting materials should be used. Exciting combinations are possible, so long as the texture and feeling of materials harmonizes with the mansion nearby.

Some modern materials such as plastic, vinyl, and mirror glass are not compatible and should be avoided in new construction.

### C. Windows

Most original windows in the district are wood, but there are a variety of different windowpane configurations.

For new construction or additions, it is recommended similar materials to the existing windows be used. The openings should relate well to the overall facade. Irregularly shaped windows or odd shapes and sizes not found in the district are inappropriate.

The relationship of width to height of windows and doors and the rhythm of solids to voids in new buildings should be visually compatible with the existing mansion.

### D. Doors

Original doors in the district are wood with a variety of glass and panel designs. Many doors have transoms and sidelights.

It is recommended that new doors be of wood, with a minimum height of 7 feet. The door features might include panels, hoods, trim, and glass transoms and sidelights. Full glass doors or those with patterns that complement the front door are appropriate.

# DEMOLITION

Definition: The complete or partial tearing down of a building, object, structure or the removal of a building, object, or structure from the District.

## General Principles

Since the purpose of historic zoning is to protect historic properties, the demolition of a building, object, or structure which contributes historically or architecturally to the character and significance of the district is inappropriate and should be avoided. Should a proposed demolition be deemed appropriate by the Commission, such demolition should proceed only when an immediate reuse is envisioned for the property. The proposed design of new construction should be submitted to, and reviewed by, the Commission in conjunction with the submission and review of the proposed demolition.

## Guidelines for Proposed Demolition

Demolition is appropriate:

1. If a building, object, or structure has lost its architectural and historical integrity and importance and its removal and the proposed new construction will not, in the Commission's reasonable discretion, result in a more negative, less appropriate visual effect on the District;
2. If a building, object, or structure does not contribute to the historical or architectural character and importance of the District and its removal and the proposed new construction will, in the Commission's reasonable discretion, result in a more positive, appropriate visual effect on the District;
3. If the Commission determines by the provisions outlined in the Historic/Conservation Ordinance for Economic Hardship for demolition based on financing; or
4. If the demolition is required by a final and nonappealable order or ruling of a court, governmental body or agency having appropriate jurisdiction, and such order or ruling does not allow for the restoration and continued use of the applicable building, object, or structure.

Demolition is inappropriate:

1. If a building, object, or structure is of such architectural or historical interest and value that its removal would be detrimental to the public interest and the goals of historic zoning set forth above in Article I;
2. If the proposed reuse and new construction would diminish or detract from the predominant 'Estate' character of the District;
3. If a building, object, or structure is of such old or unusual or uncommon design and materials that it could not be reproduced without great difficulty and expense; or
4. If its proposed replacement or lack of replacement would, in the Commission's reasonable discretion, make a less positive visual contribution to the District, would disrupt the character of the District, or would be visually incompatible.

# RELOCATION

**Definition:** Moving a building into the District or from one site to another within the District. Removal of a building, object, or structure from the District shall be considered and reviewed as a demolition of the building, object, or structure.

## General Principles

Moving an existing building which still retains architectural and historical integrity and which contributes to the architectural and historical character of the District should be avoided.

Moving a building which does not contribute to the historical and architectural integrity of the District or which has lost architectural integrity due to deterioration and neglect is appropriate if its removal or the proposal for its replacement will result in a more positive appropriate visual effect on the District.

## Guidelines for Relocation

Relocated buildings must be carefully rebuilt to retain and maintain original architectural details and materials.

A building may be moved into the District if it maintains a sense of architectural unity in terms of style, height, scale, massing, materials, quality of construction and texture with the existing mansion.

A building may be moved from one site to another in the District if:

1. the integrity of location and setting of the building in its original location has been lost or is seriously threatened;
2. the new location will be similar in setting and siting;
3. the building will be compatible with the buildings, adjacent to the new location in style, height, scale, materials, and setback; and
4. the relocation of the building will not result, in the Commission's reasonable discretion, in a negative visual impact on the site and surrounding buildings from which it will be removed.



## ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

**Definition:** This section contains recommendations which concern the relationship of significant buildings or groups of buildings to the setting in which they are found. In considering a district, it is particularly important to preserve features of the built environment, such as street or sidewalk paving, gateway structures, landscaping and street lighting or signage; these features are indicative of the age and character of an historic area, and make as important a statement about design as the buildings themselves. Whether considering the entire District or an individual structure, these features which show age and historic character should be preserved.

### General Principles

These guidelines shall apply only to areas of lots visible from public or private streets.

The distinguishing original qualities or character of a street, site, and its environment shall not be destroyed. For example the removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural or environmental features should be avoided if at all possible. If removal or alteration of historical materials can not be avoided, i.e. landscape features such as stone walls, steps, etc., then these features shall be reused in a like manner elsewhere on the property.

Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize an environment, or site shall be treated with sensitivity.

## **Guidelines for Conservation of Environmental Features**

The landscape for the Cox /Adams property was been planned around the mansion, which is the centerpiece of the property, giving the feeling of an “Estate”. There are numerous large oak trees that give the property its name. Boxwoods are located throughout the property and especially around the mansion and the formal gardens. Stone is used on the pathways, steps, and walls.

Natural contours and the location of sidewalks and walls should be maintained where possible. A new structure must conform to the surrounding site. A good site plan definitely takes into account the preservation of existing trees.

### **District**

#### Appropriate:

Retaining distinctive features such as the size, scale, mass, and material of buildings including roofs, porches, doors, windows, and steps that give the District its distinguishing character.

#### Inappropriate:

Introducing new construction into the District that is incompatible with the character of the District because of size, scale, mass, and materials.

### **Streets and Paving**

#### Appropriate

Retaining or repairing early or existing streets, walkways and other pavings. Constructing new drives, parking, and walkways that are substantive to the existing site and required by Zoning Code or Building Code when the original use of the property is no longer viable.

#### Inappropriate:

Destroying the relationship of buildings and their environment by widening existing streets or by introducing inappropriately located new streets and parking lots that are incompatible with the character of the District.



## Landscape Features

### Appropriate:

Retaining landscape features such as gardens, gateway structures, sidewalks, streets, alleyways, carriage trails, and building set-backs that have traditionally linked buildings to their environment.

Using new plant materials, fencing, sidewalks, and street and/or landscape lights that are compatible with the character of the District in size, scale, and material.

### Inappropriate:

Introducing street lighting, new plant materials, fencing, sidewalks, and paving materials that are out of scale or inappropriate to the District.

## Building Site Features

### Appropriate:

Identifying and retaining plants, well-established trees, fencing, walkways, archaeological features, signs, benches, outbuildings, and other items, that reflect the property's history and development.

Basing decisions for new site work on actual knowledge of the past appearance of the property found in photographs, drawings, newspapers, and tax records. If changes are made, they should be carefully evaluated in light of the past appearance of the site.

### Inappropriate:

Making changes to the appearance of the site by removing old plants, trees, fencing, walkways, outbuildings, and other elements before evaluating their importance in the property's history and development.

Leaving plant material and trees in close proximity to the building if the plant material and trees are found to be causing deterioration of historic fabric.

## Parking

### Appropriate:

If provided, parking should be done in a manner that does not detract from the historic integrity of the District, street, structure, building, or site. Off-street parking in the rear of the property or in areas that do not interrupt the existing gardens is encouraged.

Screen parking with material and design that are compatible with the character of the District. Screening of parking areas should not be cause for incompatible design of parking area.

### Inappropriate:

Removing structures that contribute to the character of the District to provide parking spaces.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### **Effective Date and Presumption**

These Guidelines shall take effect upon the date this District is designated a historic conservation district by the City Commission of the city of Johnson City or as otherwise ordered by the Commission. Upon such date, property owners owning property within the District and all who shall thereafter become property owners of property within the District, shall be presumed to have knowledge of the provisions of these Guidelines and shall be deemed subject to the provisions of these Guidelines.

### **Amendment**

These Guidelines or the boundaries may be amended from time to time by the property owners of the District, upon:

1. application by any property owner of the District to the Historic Zoning Commission; and
2. notice to all property owners in the District of the proposed amendment(s); and
3. approval of such amendments by the Historic Zoning Commission and any other governmental bodies which are required by applicable law to approve such amendments.

### **Severability**

If any provisions of these Guidelines is determined by a court of law or equity, or other governmental body, having appropriate jurisdiction, to be void or unenforceable, such provision shall be deemed severed from these Guidelines, and the remaining provisions shall continue in full force and effect.

### **Boundaries**

The actual boundaries of the District shall be designated as a Historic/ Conservation District (HD) on the Zoning Map.