

PPS HISTORIC PROPERTY MARKER PROGRAM

Through its Historic Property Marker Program, the Providence Preservation Society recognizes buildings in the city that contribute to our appreciation and understanding of Providence's unique architectural and historical heritage. PPS Markers identify buildings of historical and architectural significance and, through heightened community awareness, encourage the continuing care and preservation of individual buildings and neighborhoods.

These guidelines are intended to help prospective applicants to understand whether a building may be eligible for a PPS Marker. For further assistance, please contact PPS staff. Decisions on PPS Marker applications are made by PPS's Planning, Architectural Review, and Marker Committees.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. The building owner must be a PPS Member.
2. The building should be at least 50 years old. PPS may make exceptions for buildings of the recent past that are deemed to have exceptional historic or architectural significance: for example, a rare building type, or a property associated with a significant event or person, or the work of a recognized master architect or builder, of the past 50 years.
3. The building must be well-maintained - no peeling paint, evident mold or mildew, obvious exterior repair needs, or overgrown landscaping.
4. All exterior work on the property (including basic maintenance and landscaping) must be completed before a marker can be awarded.
5. The building must be a well-preserved example of its historic type, period, and architectural style. "Well-preserved" means that its character-defining exterior architectural features are either original, or retain their original character even though past repairs, replacements, or alterations may have occurred. "Character defining exterior architectural features" include:
 - Height, massing, proportions, and overall design, especially of the primary façade
 - Roof forms and materials
 - Rooftop elements such as chimneys, dormers, balustrades, and towers
 - Wall materials
 - Masonry treatments, including repointing, cleaning, paint, or sealants
 - Trim and ornamentation
 - Windows, bay windows, and oriels
 - Shutters
 - Entryways, including doors, front steps, and handrails
 - Porches
 - Additions
 - Landscaping and site treatments

For commercial, institutional, public, or industrial buildings, character-defining features may also include storefronts, steeples, clock towers, colonnades, etc.

6. Buildings must meet the “Specific Criteria,” below, to be awarded a new or replacement marker.

7. In addition to the “Specific Criteria,” PPS may also consider:

- Whether the building is particularly notable, historically or architecturally.
- Whether the building is publicly or privately owned.
- Whether the building is also subject to design review by the Providence Historic District Commission. If so, any exterior work that was done prior to submittal of the marker application should also comply with the PHDC’s own design guidelines.

(Note: PPS expects that buildings awarded markers will continue to be well-maintained, using good preservation practices. However, since PPS has no jurisdiction over how the building is treated after a marker is awarded, some buildings that currently have markers may no longer meet the “Specific Criteria.” Marker applicants are cautioned against assuming that PPS approved a marker after inappropriate alterations were made.)

SPECIFIC CRITERIA

PPS reviews each marker application on a case by case basis, recognizing that most buildings have experienced some degree of exterior repairs, replacements, or alterations over time. Some of this work may be acceptable as part of the building’s history, but some will be deemed inappropriate modern intrusions. The following criteria will help guide PPS’s decisions on marker applications.

Exterior Walls –

- Original wall materials should be retained and preserved.
- Replacement materials should match the original in design, dimensions, proportions, texture, and color (if integral to the material), if known; otherwise, should be appropriate to the period of the structure.
- Wood generally should be painted, unless it was not painted originally.
- Masonry generally should not be painted, unless it was painted originally.
- Layering another wall material over the original (such as wood shingles over clapboards) should be avoided, as it can change the relationship between the wall and exterior details such as window and door surrounds and trim elements.

Roofs –

- Original roof forms and roofing materials should be retained and preserved.
- Original rooftop elements such as dormers, chimneys, balustrades, and towers, should be retained and preserved.

- Replacement roofing materials, such as asphalt shingles or synthetic slate, should strive to replicate the colors, textures, and patterns of the original. For most historic buildings, a dark color is appropriate.
- Rooftop additions, including roof decks and headhouses, as well as mechanical equipment, skylights, and solar panels, should be located on less visible areas of the roof, such as the side or rear.

Windows –

Windows are one of the most important character-defining features of a building. Historic windows were generally made of wood (except in some non-residential buildings), and were made in types and configurations specific to the building's architectural period, type, or style. Single hung, double hung, casement, fixed, picture, awning, or hopper sash; single pane, or multi-pane with muntins separating individual panes; leaded glass, stained glass, or spandrel glass – these are just some of the variables of historic windows.

Windows were also frequently subject to change during the historical era. A Colonial style building of the 18th century – where the original windows were 12-pane-over-12-pane double hung sash – may now have 6-over-6 sash from the mid-19th century, or 2-over-2 sash from the late 19th century. In such cases, the existing windows are still considered historic, even though they are not original.

- The material, type, and configuration of original or otherwise historic windows should be retained and preserved wherever possible,
- A good storm window can help to preserve historic fabric and make a historic window as energy-efficient as a thermal replacement window. Storm windows should be painted to match the trim color.
- Exterior half screens covering one sash in a double-hung window are acceptable. Full exterior screens are not appropriate.
- For buildings with replacement windows, markers will be awarded on a case by case basis.
 - Replacement windows installed during the historical era (50 or more years ago) may have achieved historic architectural significance on their own merits, and therefore can be acceptable even if they would not be characteristic of the original period when the building was constructed.
 - Replacement windows installed in the recent past (less than 50 years ago) should match the original or historic window in type, material, configuration, dimensions, and profiles. Applicants may submit documentation of original or historic windows (if known) to confirm that the replacement windows do match. Applicants may also submit documentation of prior approval of existing replacement windows in a specific building by the Providence Historic District Commission and/or the R.I. Historical Preservation Commission. Note, however,

that another agency's approval of replacement windows does not automatically guarantee approval of a PPS marker.

Other Exterior Details and Site Features–

- Original exterior details, including (but not limited to) cornices, trim, ornamentation, doors, entryways, balustrades, and porches, should be retained and preserved.
- Replacement details should match the original in design, materials, dimensions, proportions, texture, and color (if integral to the material), if known; otherwise, should be appropriate to the period of the structure.
- Site features such as fencing and landscaping should complement the historic character of the building; avoid chain link and stockade fencing. Parking areas should be kept to the side or rear of the building. Paving over a front yard for parking is discouraged.

DISQUALIFYING CRITERIA

Any of the following alterations may disqualify a building for a marker (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Vinyl or aluminum siding, or asbestos shingles.
- Any wall material that was installed on top of the original material in such a way as to change the depth of reveal between the wall and trim elements.
- Masonry repair, repointing, or cleaning that does not match original materials, colors, or joint profiles, or that has damaged historic material (such as sandblasting).
- Painting of brick or stone, where such materials were not painted originally. (Foundations may be excepted.)
- Vinyl replacement windows.
- Other replacement windows that do not accurately reproduce, in detail, the appropriate historic windows for the building.
- Shutters where the building would not have had shutters originally; that are the wrong size for the window opening; that are attached directly to the wall instead of using proper shutter hardware; or that are made of vinyl or aluminum.
- Window and door openings that have been closed down, enlarged, or relocated.
- Concrete or masonry front steps, if not historically appropriate to the building.
- Wrought iron porch posts and railings, if not historically appropriate to the building.
- Pressure-treated wood used for porch posts and railings, or any other non-structural features.

- Wooden elements (including wall materials, trim, and porches) that are stained rather than painted, unless staining would be the historically appropriate treatment.
- Skylights, solar panels, or mechanical equipment on a front roof slope.
- Any mechanical equipment or other visually intrusive non-historic elements (e.g., multi-unit mailboxes, intercom/buzzer panels, utility meters, etc.) on the primary façade.

PPS may at its own discretion determine other reasons why a building does not qualify for a marker. Such reasons will be explained to the applicant in writing.