

Kenmore Blvd General Design Guidelines - September 26, 2018

History & Historic Analysis

The Akron Realty Co. developed the village of Kenmore by consolidating several Coventry Township farms in the early 1900s and subdividing the land into roughly 1,500 lots. Kenmore's chief backers were Noah R. Steiner, president of Akron Realty; William A. Johnston, manager of the Barberton Land and Improvement Co.; and Will Christy, president of the Northern Ohio Traction Co. The plan of the development included a business district along a tree-lined boulevard, (Kenmore Boulevard) with a streetcar line running through the center. The developers envisioned a primarily residential area between Akron and Barberton with the Northern Ohio Traction Company streetcar line connecting the two thriving communities. This form of development, common to the early 20th century, is often referred to as a "street car suburb". The development was very successful, with lots selling at a rapid pace due to the Akron Area Rubber Boom of 1900-1928. In late 1907 and early 1908, the residents voted to become a village and incorporated. The first elected officials were in office by March of 1908. The village continued to grow, and by 1918 boasted a population of over 18,000. However, within a short period of time the residents of the village and the adjacent larger city of Akron, voted to annex Kenmore. In 1928, just 20 years after its incorporation, Kenmore ceased to be its own village and became part of Akron.

The Kenmore community is still distinct and identifiable by its vernacular housing types, and the high architectural integrity found in the Kenmore Boulevard Commercial District. The wide boulevard is lined with early 20th century commercial structures. Unique to the district is the angled facades along the zero set back lots that line the curving boulevard. Although the streetcar tracks have been removed and the curbs have been changed, commercial district retains the character, feeling and association of the original design. Although somewhat separated from the district, some of the more distinguished structures are the brick masonry street car shed buildings at the north east end of the boulevard.

The commercial district has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Preliminary Guidelines

General

There are numerous resources that can provide guidance for changes to properties with historic significance in the City of Akron. First and foremost is the City's Programmatic Agreement with the Ohio Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service. Another nationally recognized standard is the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. These standards provide general guidelines on how to address alterations. They can be summarized by a few key statements:

- Do not damage historic materials and features by improper or harsh treatment
- Repair, rather than replace historic materials and features
- New work should be contemporary, but compatible with the original design.
- Do not add embellishment that would not have been part of the original design

Masonry

Repair of historic masonry should be done under the guidance of an architect with experience in historic masonry. In order to avoid long term damage to the masonry, specific guidance is needed to address proper cutting techniques, finding appropriate matching units for replacement, formulating a correct mortar mix, and tooling of mortar correctly.

Storefronts

If storefronts are to be replaced, the design should be based on historic photographs, drawings, or evidence. In absence of historic information, the design should follow the common 3-part formula with a bulkhead (base), display windows, and transoms. Entrances were typically recessed.

Entrance Doors

Like storefronts, if entrance doors are to be replaced, the design should be based on historic evidence. In absence of historic information, entry doors should be wide style wood or painted metal, style and rail type doors. The door should have a tall bottom rail. A single flat panel, solid or glass (full light) is acceptable for most historic time periods. For secondary entrances, leading to upper floors, two panel or half-light doors were more common. Multi-panel doors, especially highly decorative ones, should not be used unless historic evidence shows that they were part of the original design.

Windows

Historic windows should always be repaired rather than replaced. Studies have shown that a historic wood window, with an aluminum storm panel will provide better thermal performance than a new insulating glass window. Furthermore, the seals on insulating glass windows have an expected service life of 20 years or less. If the original windows are missing, new replacements can be installed. New window styles should match the historic windows, based on photos or other evidence. If no historic information is available, new windows should be one-over-one double hung sash. New windows should be custom sized to fit the existing openings. If storm windows are used they should be narrow profile, and the frames should align with the pattern of the windows. Storm windows should also be custom sized to fully fit the openings. Windows and storms should have a painted finish.