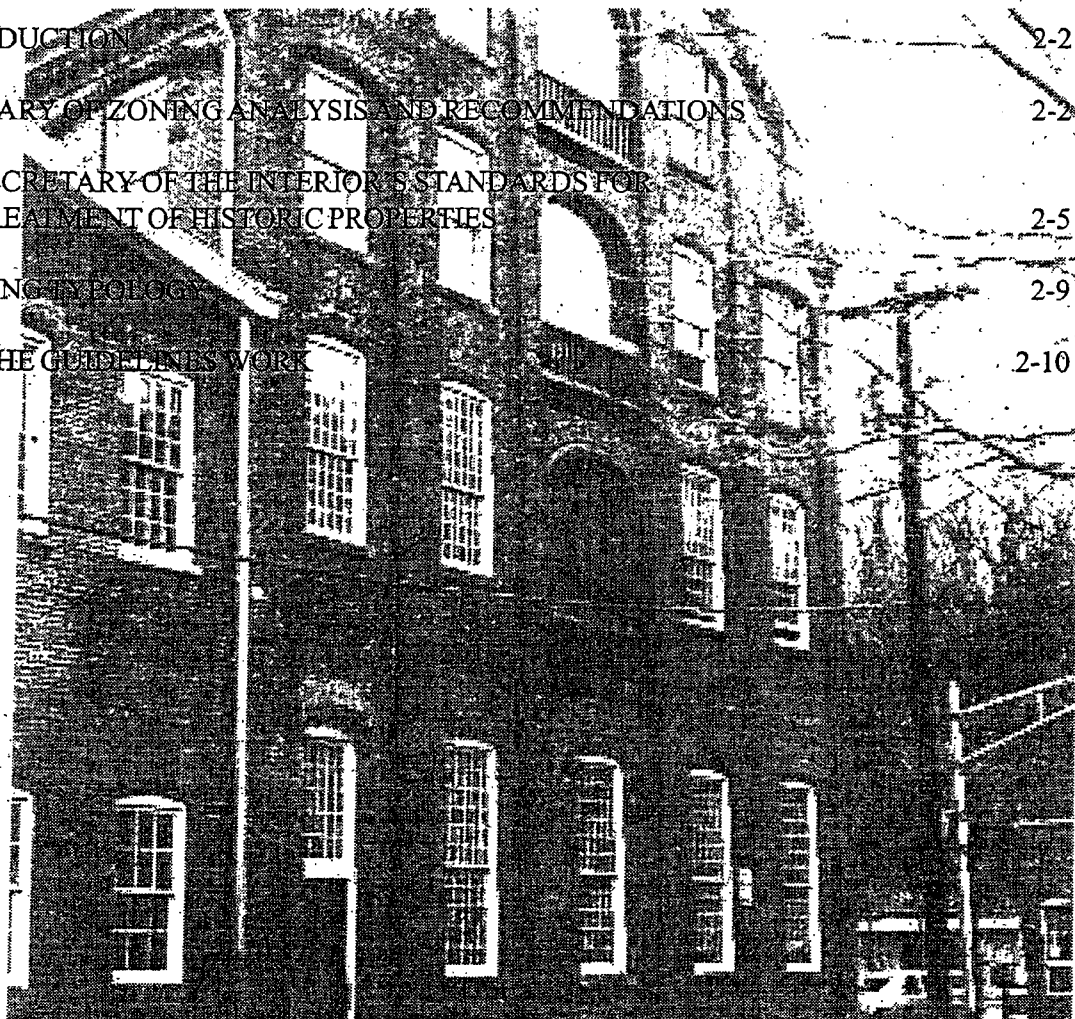

Chapter 2

Preservation Approach

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Chapter 2

Preservation Approach

Introduction

The overall approach to preservation within the city of Paterson is to direct and define development in a manner that reconciles the growth and change that are absolutely essential for a vital community with the goal of retaining and promoting the remarkable character of the Great Falls Historic District (GFH District). Paterson, as in few other historic landmark districts, represents a setting where development has strong potential actually to improve the character of the district, restoring some of the density that has been lost. Indeed, in Paterson preservationists should embrace development as an opportunity to restore the sense of industry that is the spirit of the place. The recommendations that are included in Chapters 3 through 7 are flexible enough to allow some measure of mutual benefit to what at first glance might seem to be the irreconcilable forces of development and preservation.

Summary of Zoning Analysis and Recommendations

The first step in the formulation of the design guidelines that follow was to analyze the existing zoning ordinance as it pertains to the preservation goals set by the Paterson Historic Preservation Commission, and to make recommendations as to where the ordinance might be revised to better serve the goals of preserving the historic character of the district.

Whether or not these suggested revisions, summarized below, are incorporated into the ordinance, both property owners and the Commission should be guided by their intent.

Section 513.1 Intent

- Acknowledge the national importance of the district as a historic resource.
- Refer to the intent to integrate the district into the life and fabric of the city.
- Stress the potential economic benefits that an appropriately developed historic district will offer the city.
- Acknowledge the mixed-use character of the district.

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- Emphasize the importance of the street as major public spaces and the building's role as infill.
 - State the pedestrian orientation of the district.
 - Introduce the concept of a network of small-scale green spaces throughout the district.
 - Introduce the concepts of appropriate scale and character for new construction within the district.

Section 513.2.1 Permitted Principal Uses/ Residential Uses

- Revise the ordinance to allow apartment buildings up to 60 feet tall or four stories in order to be consistent with that of nearby historic mill buildings. Establish limits for townhouse and garden apartment-type development. Prohibit this type of use in most of the district, particularly in the former location and adjacent to historic large-scale industrial use.

Section 513.2.2 Permitted Principal Uses/Commercial Uses

- Provide the restrictions on business use to allow or encourage a mix of commercial uses specific to the historic district, including stores intended to serve local residents as well as non-residents.
- Establish incentives and standards such as design guidelines, minimum or maximum square footage, maximum setback lines, a prohibition on vendor carts, a prohibition on certain kinds of signs in front window displays, and a prohibition on drive-through facilities.
- Include tourist hotels as a permitted use. Specifically, prohibit single room occupancy-type hotels. Require hotels to have facilities in addition to overnight accommodations, such as restaurants, common rooms, and conference facilities.

Section 513.2.4 Permitted Principal Uses/Community Facilities and Services

- Encourage the construction of enclosed multi-storied parking structures.

Section 513.3 Permitted Accessory Uses

- Amend Section 513.3 of the ordinance to allow and encourage signage that will enliven and contribute to the historic character of the district.

Section 515.0 Area Yard and Height Requirements

- Raise the height limitation of multiple-family residential structures from three stories to five and to 60 feet. Establish a minimum height limitation of three stories. Eliminate the 20-foot

minimum front yard setback requirement for all residential structures. Require lots to be built out either to the sidewalk or to the historic building line, eliminating or minimizing front yards.

- Eliminate the side yard requirement to encourage the infilling of the street wall. Create a maximum allowable side yard requirement such as 10 feet or 10% of the lot width, whichever is more, but not to exceed 30 feet total for both sides. Reduce the minimum allowable lot widths, so as to allow higher density of construction. Increase the allowable floor area ratio from 2.5 to 3 and increase the allowable lot coverage to 75%. Prohibit parking in front yards or on lots in front of any building. Restrict surface parking to rear yards and to side yards, limited to 24 cars. Side yard lots must have minimum 15-foot front yard setbacks that are landscaped to screen the lots from view.
- Where the existing street and property lines have been obliterated, such as the ATP site, they should be resurveyed and reestablished, so as to provide the ground plan for a recreation of the scale, density, and massing of that section of the GFH District. Establish a minimum height of three stories and a maximum height of four stories for buildings having business or industrial use. Prohibit the construction of one- and two-story buildings within the GFH District.
- Eliminate the minimum front yard setback requirement of 10 feet. Require lots to be built out to the sidewalk or to the historic building line, or set back only as far as there is historic precedence for on that particular block.
- The minimum lot area of 10,000 square feet and minimum lot width of 100 feet are rather small, given the large-scale precedent for business and industrial structures within the district. Mass infill buildings appropriately so that meeting the minimum requirement will not detract from the character of the district.

Section 516.04 Area Premiums

- Recommendation: Create an open space plan for the district. Priorities include development cost and a timetable tied to development.
- Require developers to participate in the implementation of the open space plan. For developers who propose to exceed the allowable floor area, a flexible regimen of requirements can be established, such as a fee in lieu that would be applied towards the maintenance and upkeep of public open space within the district or make specific improvements to open areas of his own property or adjacent land such as a courtyard.

Section 802.0 Off-Street Parking Design Standards

- Specifically prohibit parking in front yards within the GFH District. On corner lots, specifically prohibit parking on either frontage.
- Limit parking in side yard to 24 cars, with a minimum landscaped setback of 15 feet.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties

The recommendations contained within these design guidelines are based upon *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* (1978, revised 1983 and 1995). The durability of the *Standards* is testimony not only to their basic soundness, but also to the inherent flexibility of their language. The *Standards* are not design guidelines; they provide a shared philosophy and approach to the solution of problems to those involved with managing the treatment of historic buildings. In and of themselves, they cannot provide a property owner or reviewing authority with specific solutions for specific problems. The *Standards* inform judgment, but do not replace it. The *Standards* have served as reference points in developing these design guidelines, and they should continue to serve as references during the processes of design and design review.

The recently revised *Standards* identify guidelines for four different **treatments** for historic properties: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction. These treatments are briefly defined as follows:

Preservation. The act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of a historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new construction.

Rehabilitation. The act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions, while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

Restoration. The act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period.

Reconstruction. The act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location.

For the purposes of this document—intended primarily for the use of property owners and designers who are seeking guidance with regard to the design of maintenance and repairs, alterations, additions, and new construction—the treatments that are most relevant are **preservation and rehabilitation**.

Each treatment has specific *Standards* that go further to define general guidelines for the individual treatments. The guidelines for rehabilitation incorporate those for preservation and go on to include also guide-

lines for new construction and additions. Because they articulate basic philosophical principles which are fundamental to historic preservation and which have withstood the test of time, and because of their implications for property owners in Paterson, it is worthwhile to include an outline discussion of the Secretary's *Standards for Rehabilitation*. The *Standards for Rehabilitation* have been likened to the "ten commandments" of preservation, and are quoted in full as follows:

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historical significance on their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

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10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Standard 1, requiring *compatibility of use*, is the only standard in which the impact of a proposed reuse of a historic building is addressed. (Questions of use are typically fully and appropriately addressed in zoning ordinances and building codes.) The principle of this standard—that a proposed reuse of a historic structure for purposes other than that for which it was initially designed should have minimal distinctive architectural consequences—is to a certain extent self-evident. That is to say, reuses that will result in destructive architectural treatments are unacceptable. However, for reuses where the anticipated impact of a proposed reuse is not readily apparent, evaluation of the architectural treatment rather than the proposed use itself will still be required.

Standard 2, recommending the *retention and preservation of character-defining features*, is one of several statements in the *Standards* which emphasize preservation of as much building fabric as possible. Thus, alterations that accommodate existing original or historic building fabric are, under this standard, clearly preferable to those that require removals of such fabric.

Standard 3 recommends *historical honesty*, and is a clear endorsement of “true” versus “false” history. This standard is thus the basis for the prevention of such practices as conjectural restoration of building features or the grafting of architectural features taken from one historic building onto another. This standard also provides a clear basis on which to discourage, if not prevent, the practice of building new buildings in an historicized idiom.

Standard 4, which requires the *acknowledgment of physical evolution* of historic buildings, is a critical component in the evaluation of treatments for a historic building which has undergone many changes. This standard not only accepts but values the fact that most historic buildings contain the record of their own evolution and thus are valuable records of changes in taste and use. This standard would provide the basis for discouraging such practices as replacing historic metal roofing with wood shingles, even in cases where a wood shingle roof is known to have originally existed. It would also discourage tearing down a late-19th-century addition to an early-19th-century mill building.

The clear implication of this standard is that, unless it is intended that a building undergo an accurate restoration to a specific period based on adequate documentation, it is best to recommend repair and/or replacement of historic building features *in-kind*, whether or not they are part of the building’s first construction period.

Standard 5 requires *preservation of the distinctive components* of historic buildings, and is a straightforward endorsement of preservation whenever possible. Standard 6 requires *repair rather than replacement* where possible and, where it is not, *visually matching replacements*. These two stan-

dards articulate the strong preference in preservation for retaining the authentic materials, object, or building fabric, and not just something that replicates the real object. These two standards are particularly relevant to Paterson, where the distinctive components of the relatively unornamented buildings are integral to their design and construction.

Standard 7, by its *prohibition of damaging chemical and physical treatments*, reflects an awareness—often gained through painful experience—that certain treatments can irreversibly damage the historic fabric that the preceding standards are intended to protect. Sandblasting in particular, whether of wood for paint removal or masonry for cleaning, can irretrievably alter the surface characteristics of historic materials and thereby destroy not only visual characteristics but physical ones as well, and may accelerate further deterioration. Power washing and overly acidic chemical cleaning of masonry can also cause irreversible damage.

Standard 8 requires *preservation and protection of archeological resources*, and generally comes into consideration only when excavations are associated with a project. This standard clearly recognizes that historic properties will in all likelihood have associated archeological deposits, and recommends that efforts should be made to consider and protect those resources to the extent feasible. Considerations of expense and the likelihood of the presence of archeological resources must dictate the extent to which this standard affects the planning of privately-funded projects. It should be noted, however, that for projects within the National Historic Landmark District that involve federal or state funds, archeological mitigation will be required. It must also be noted that there are archeological resources virtually everywhere within the district.

The goals of Standards 9 and 10 are *compatibility, differentiation, non-destructiveness, and reversibility of additions, alterations, and new construction*. Both standards are intended to minimize the overall damage to historic fabric caused by building additions and to insure that new work will be differentiated from but compatible with existing structures, in order to protect the historic integrity of the property.

The same federal regulation which promulgates the *Standards* explicitly states that they are intended to be “applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.” Thus, the level of craftsmanship and detail as well as the quality of materials that are proposed for any rehabilitation project should be commensurate with the structure to which they will be applied. From the standpoint of the Secretary’s *Standards*, successful rehabilitation neither “improves” the original design nor detracts from it.

It is important to reiterate that the Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for Rehabilitation* provide a philosophical framework for the planning and evaluation of preservation activities. As summarized above, that framework is one which emphasizes preservation of historic building fabric, honesty of historical expression, and reversibility. It is a philosophical framework which assumes that historic buildings are repositories not only of visual satisfaction but also of information, and that as such, it must be possible to “read” the information they contain without having it clouded by conjecture.

Building Typology

Most of the buildings within the Great Falls Historic District were built for utility; the axiom that form follows function is particularly true within the district, and manufacturing was the primary function. What is remarkable about the architecture of the district is the evolution of building types driven by functional exigencies, as opposed to any kind of stylistic expression. The design guidelines that follow are based more on an evaluation of the types of buildings that are typical to the district than on a consideration of their style. A brief consideration of those building types follows:

The *mill buildings* that are the primary built image of the district are perfect expressions of their function. Sturdily built of stone and brick bearing walls and heavy timber trusses, the buildings were intended to be strong, fire resistant, flexible to provide for changes in the manufacturing process, with several large openings to provide daylight illumination for the manufacturing process. The repetitive bays reflect the need for an undifferentiated interior; it is as though having determined an ideal bay size, the mills could have been extruded forever. Ornamental details were kept to a minimum and were usually driven by functional imperatives. The brick corbelling (stepped projections) at the roof provided increased bearing for the heavy timber trusses (a wood cornice would provide a horizontal route for the spread of fire). Arched window openings did not require wood or steel lintels which would have been subject to damage by fire. The older mills are three and four stories, reflecting to some extent the fact that vertical movement of raw and finished materials was not desirable until the development of the elevator later in the 19th century.

The *office buildings* associated with the mills are much more detailed and finely scaled, although still fairly subdued. The facades of the Cooke Locomotive Company Office Building and the Rogers Locomotive Company Administration Building are carefully articulated, as befit their role as headquarters for important industries. The Cooke building is three stories and five-and-one-half bays wide and sits on a rusticated brownstone base. An elaborate brownstone surround at its entrance and brownstone belt courses at the level of window sills and heads are quite elegant. The Rogers building is two-and-one-half stories high and six-and-one-half bays wide with a granite watertable and window sills and steel lintels ornamented with medallions. The brick corbelling at the cornice features dentils that also appear in the roof dormers. The absence of vibration in these buildings permitted the floors to be supported on brick arches, providing increased fire protection.

The majority of *residential buildings* within the Great Falls Historic District are quite modest, often wood frame structures whose wood clapboard has been covered at least once, most prominently by aluminum or vinyl siding. Two and three stories tall and two or three bays wide, the houses have lost much of their original integrity. They serve to illustrate how close the workers lived to the mills, as well as the rather intimate scale of the neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the industrial district.

There are also several neighborhood *commercial buildings* within the district. These for the most part are typical late-19th and early-20th-century buildings, some with living quarters above. They vary in size, scale, and style, and include a few one-story buildings. They are consistently built to the scale of the residential structures, fill their frontage completely, and are built out to the sidewalk.

How the Guidelines Work

The design guidelines present three categories of treatments: approved, not approved, and not recommended.

- Those treatments that are “**approved**” are consistent with the sound and accepted preservation practices that are based upon the Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards* outlined above. Permit applications that propose approved treatments will receive letters of recommendation for approval from the Historic Preservation Commission.
- “**Not recommended**” treatments are practices that do not reflect the best preservation approach but whose deleterious effect to existing historic fabric or the character of the district may be minimal. The number of “not recommended” treatments proposed and their cumulative effect on a building’s historic fabric and appearance will be carefully evaluated by the Historic Preservation Commission. Permit applications that propose “not recommended” treatments may or may not receive letters of recommendation for approval from the Historic Preservation Commission depending on the final impact of these treatments on the building specifically and the district in general.
- Those treatments that are “**not approved**” are practices that will cause outright harm either to existing historic fabric or to the character of the district, or both. Permit applications that propose “not approved” treatments will receive letters of recommendation for denial from the Historic Preservation Commission.

The design guidelines are intended to provide as much flexibility as possible to the property owner, to the designer, and to the Commission members charged with reviewing building permit applications. It is not the intention of these design guidelines to prescribe one method or treatment, but to present a hierarchy of treatments for consideration. That is, given a particular problem or issue, what is the relative value of the range of possible treatments? It is understood that some recommended treatments will have a higher upfront cost than other less highly recommended treatments, but it is sometimes the case that better preservation practices are less expensive over time. As always, a premium is placed on the retention of existing historic fabric.

It is important to note that the specific guidelines are intended to provide guidance to property owners and to the members of the Commission who review building permit applications. But the review itself must be wholistic, considering the pros and cons of the entire project. A project that includes

the use of several “not recommended” treatments may be approved if the overall project represents a net gain for preservation within the district.

Remember:

- ✓ Projects that propose “approved” treatments will result in a letter from the Historic Preservation Commission recommending approval of a building permit application.
- ✗ Projects that propose one or more “not approved” treatments will result in a letter from the Historic Preservation Commission recommending denial of a building permit application.
- Projects that propose one or more “not recommended” treatments will be evaluated for their overall impact on the character of the structure and the GFH District as a whole. Depending upon that evaluation the Historic Preservation Commission may issue a letter of recommendation either approving or denying your building permit application.