

SECURITY AND LIGHTING GUIDELINES  
DRAFT FOR COMMISSION REVIEW 05-10-23

The Detroit Historic District Commission (HDC) is aware that many residents in historic districts are concerned with the security of their property and thus may have an interest in undertaking measures to address the issue. Within Detroit's historic districts, common exterior deterrent interventions include the installation of security lighting, steel doors, window bars, cameras, fencing, and glass block basement windows. The HDC recognizes that these interventions can be deployed in a manner that does not alter character-defining features or spaces. The HDC has therefore developed the following guidelines to assist property owners in their effort to develop security strategies which comply with local historic district requirements. Please note that the guidelines are not meant to advise residents on measures that will be most effective in protecting your property. Rather, they provide general guidance to ensure that the desired security devices are installed without having a negative effect on the property's historic character.

Note that HDC approval and a permit must be obtained prior to undertaking any of the below-described work. Please contact HDC staff at [hdc@detroitmi.gov](mailto:hdc@detroitmi.gov) in the initial planning stage of your project to ensure that all work is undertaken in compliance with the HDC's review procedures. HDC staff is authorized to review the installation of security devices that meet the below guidelines. Any other requests must be forwarded to the HDC for their review at a regular monthly meeting. Staff is available to provide guidance on what features at your property might be considered to be ornamental or character-defining.

### **Fencing**

Please refer to the HDC's *Fence and Hedge Guidelines* at [Fence and Hedge Guidelines.pdf \(detroitmi.gov\)](#)

### **Glass Block Basement Windows**

Please refer to the HDC's *Glass Block Guidelines* at [Glass Block.pdf \(detroitmi.gov\)](#)

### **Security Lighting and Cameras**

- The installation of new equipment shall not result in the removal of existing distinctive character-defining historic light fixtures. Such historic light fixtures shall be retained and, if in non-working condition, may be repaired. If deteriorated beyond repair, the fixture shall be replicated.
- New security equipment shall be minimally visible from the public right-of-way. Except for doorbell cameras, new equipment shall not be installed on a building's primary façade (typically, the front side of a building featuring its main entrance). Rather, it shall be installed in the eaves or gable end of the roof, on a secondary façade/wall, or within the site/yard in a manner that will not call undue attention to itself or detract from significant architectural or landscape feature(s).

- If installed at a primary façade/entrance, doorbell cameras shall only be located at the wood casing/trim of the primary entry doorway, or other surface of minimal impact to historic materials.
- Mounting hardware shall not permanently damage significant architectural or landscape features. If the equipment must be affixed to a masonry wall, it shall be secured in mortar joints rather than into the brick or stone.
- The installation shall be as small and limited in number as feasible. The equipment shall be unobtrusive and simple in form, without decorative embellishment.
- The equipment shall be shop finished or painted a color to match that of the building surface to which it is affixed. If installed within the site/yard, the equipment shall display a neutral finish color.
- If the installation requires a conduit, it shall be not visible or minimally visible. The conduit shall not be placed on or across ornamental features and shall be shop finished or painted a color to match that of the building surface to which it is affixed. If the conduit must be affixed to a masonry wall, it shall be secured in mortar joints, not the brick or stone. If there are multiple proposed or existing installations, associated conduit shall be combined to the maximum extent feasible.

### **Window Security Bars**

- The installation of new security bars shall not result in the removal of existing distinctive character-defining historic bars. Such historic bars shall be retained and, if in deteriorated condition, may be repaired. If deteriorated beyond repair, the bars shall be replicated.
- Window security bars shall be installed at basement and first-story windows only.
- Window security bar installations shall not permanently damage significant architectural features. The installation's design shall generally relate to the home's style or be of a simple design which is compatible with the building's historic character. The bars shall be finished a color that is compatible with the building's trim color
- The bars shall fasten to the window frame or surround at limited attachment points and will not include continuous perimeter framing.

### **Security Doors**

- The installation of new security door shall not result in the removal of an existing distinctive character-defining historic door.
- Security doors installed in front of historic doors shall have minimal framework as not to obscure the elements of an existing distinctive character-defining historic door. The door shall be of a simple design which is compatible with the building's historic character and shall be finished a color that is compatible with the building's trim color.
- Security doors should fit the opening of the doorway. Door openings should not be altered to fit a new door.

