

PORCH REPAIR & RECONSTRUCTION



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
**OFFICE OF HISTORIC
PRESERVATION**

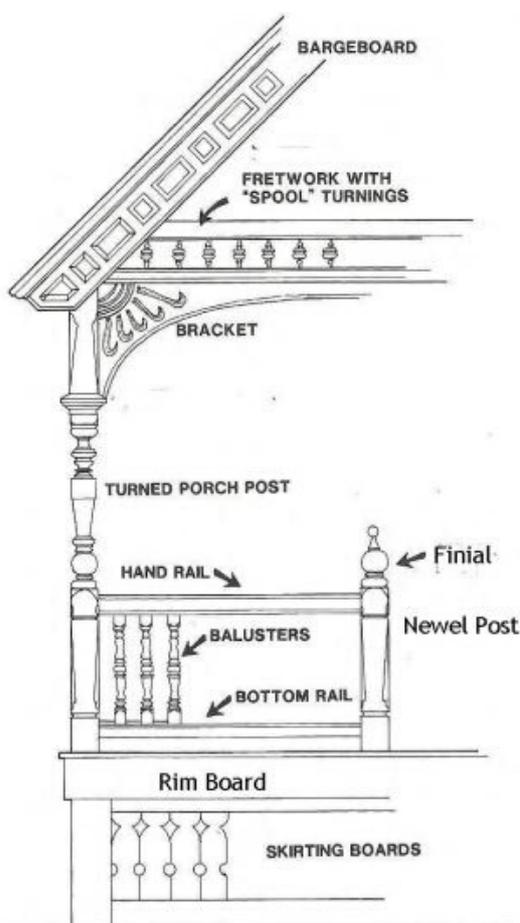
CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
HISTORIC DESIGN GUIDELINES
PORCHES POLICY GUIDE

DRAFT
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WHY DO PORCHES MATTER?

Porches play an important role in both the design and function of any historic house. Porches protect entrances from the weather, often define the structure's architectural style, and establish a rhythm for not only the house to which they are attached, but often the entire block face. Therefore, porch repair and reconstruction should be undertaken in a manner that preserves or is respectful of a house's original architectural character.



Since porches are open to the elements, they are vulnerable to rot and deterioration. Neglect and deferred maintenance are leading reasons for the loss of historic porches and their original elements. Consistent with the [Historic Design Guidelines for Exterior Maintenance and Alterations](#), this guide provides best practices and recommendations for replacement of original, deteriorated porch elements and the introduction of new features were original porch elements have been lost over time.



Did you know?

That porches main feature architectural elements that are not original, but may still be contributing? When identifying the porch's character defining features, keep in mind that elements from different decades may be contributing to the structure's historic integrity and character.

PORCH REPAIR

Due to exposure to the elements, porch elements are especially susceptible to rot and decay. The Guidelines for Exterior Maintenance and Alterations prioritize the preservation and repair of original porch elements such as columns, balustrades, and decking materials. However, when replacement due to substantial deterioration of original wood materials is not feasible, many homeowners consider incorporating low-maintenance and long-lasting substitute materials for traditional wood elements.

Any new materials should match originals in terms of **color, texture, dimensions, and finish**. Composite or fiberglass materials may be appropriate when proven to be a true match in terms of appearance. Any replacement material should meet the following standards:

- **Color** - All materials should be paintable in order to match the appearance of painted wood.
- **Texture** - Faux wood grain or artificial textures are not appropriate. All new materials should be smooth in finish to match the appearance of wood when painted.
- **Dimensions** - Replacement elements, such as columns, should be identical in diameter and overall dimensions as the originals.
- **Finish** - Manufacturer's colors or factory finishes are not recommended.

The following section will cover fiberglass columns, composite decking.

REPAIR: DECKING

Due to its exposure to the elements, porch decking is especially susceptible to rot and decay. Even modern-day, treated wood decking requires a rigorous maintenance and re-painting regimen in order to last through the years. Many property owners look to composite decking products as a low-maintenance and long-lasting substitute for traditional wood decking.

*Certain product specifications and installation methods have proven to be **consistent** with the Historic Design Guidelines and are eligible for administrative approval:*

- **Do** utilize individual decking boards that are 3 inches in width and 7/8 of an inch in height.
- **Do** utilize products with a smooth finish and tongue-and-groove profile which mimic the appearance of wood decking when painted.
- **Do** install decking boards "back-to-front" and with a slight slope toward the front of the porch.



*Actions which **remove or detract** from the architectural character of your historic property are not recommended and may be subject to HDRC review with no guarantee of approval:*

- **Do not** fully-replace original decking materials where a majority of original wood decking is intact and determined to be repairable.
- **Do not** utilize dimensional lumber that is inconsistent in size and appearance with historic tongue-and-groove decking.
- **Do not** utilize composite decking products with integrated coloring or a faux wood grain.
- **Do not** install decking boards left-to-right or parallel to the front facade.



Consider This: When selecting a substitute material, consider the overall life-cycle and carbon footprint of the replacement product. Choose from materials containing recycled content or that feature an eco-friendly manufacturing process.

PORCH RECONSTRUCTION

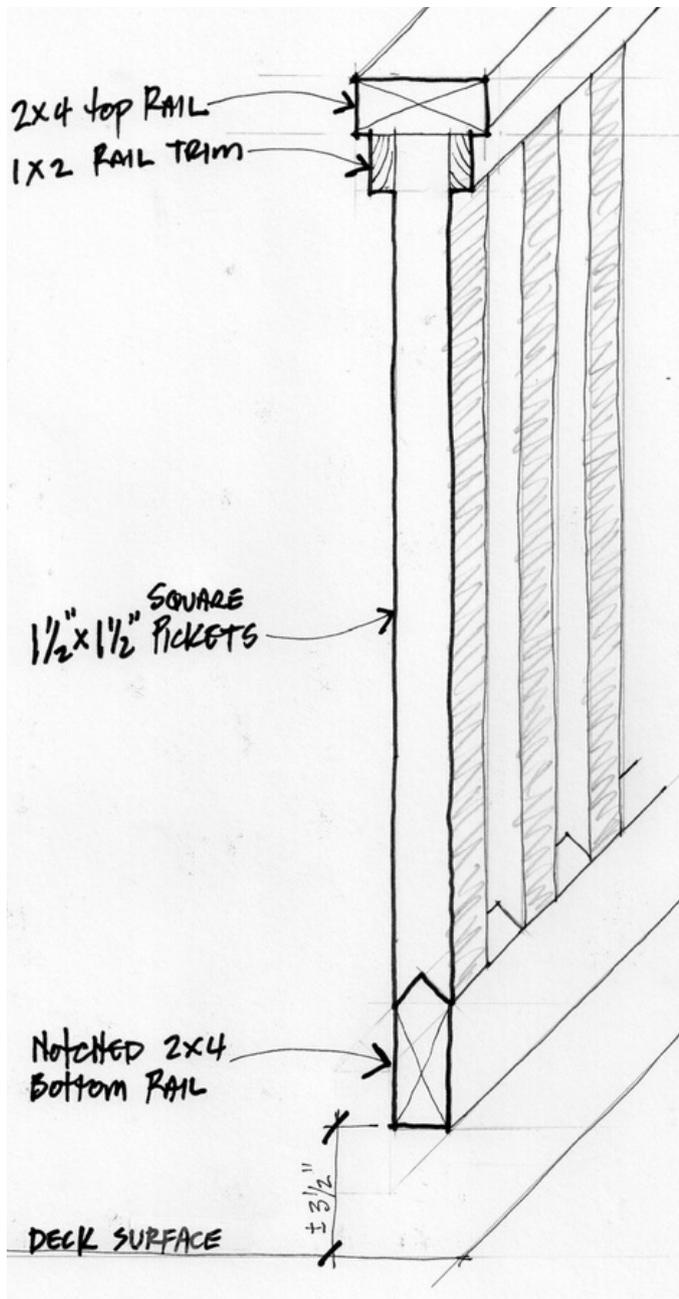
Many homes in San Antonio's local historic districts lack original porch elements such as columns, balustrades, or even decking. It is not uncommon for original, wood porches to have been previously replaced by wrought-iron columns and concrete slabs.

When reconstructing porches, keep the following in mind:

- Keep it **simple**. New elements should not create a false historic appearance. When photograph evidence is not available, design new porch elements to replicate features found on nearby historic houses with similar architectural styles.
- Reference the architectural **style** of your home and avoid the introduction of incompatible elements.
- Utilize the construction **details** provided in this Guide, or develop similar specifications for your project. New porch elements that are consistent with this Guide are eligible for **Administrative Approval** by OHP staff.

This section will cover appropriate specs for new columns, new railings, and reconstruction of porch deck / stairs.

NEW RAILINGS



When proposing new porch railings, ensure that an appropriate design is used for the style of your historic house. For example, turned balusters would not be appropriate for a Craftsman house.

Never should new or replacement columns feature ornamental elements that were not found historically on the structure.

Porch railings should:

- Feature both top and bottom rails.
- Feature simple designs that do not detract from that of the historic structure.
- Feature a separation from the deck surface.

Porch railings should not:

- Feature ornate elements unless based on photographic evidence of the original.
- Feature imitation elements.
- Feature inappropriate scales or profiles.

Porch railings are found commonly on historic houses in San Antonio; however, not every house featured railings originally. Railings may be added if designed appropriately.



Do not install balusters or other railing elements that are mass produced, unless they are historically accurate. Often, mass produced balusters feature profiles that are inconsistent with those found historically.

RESOURCES

Office of Historic Preservation Staff. Consult with a historic preservation specialist to receive property-specific guidance on landscaping plans and the Historic Design Guidelines.

www.sapreservation.com | (210) 207-0035 | info@sapreservation.com

Your neighborhood association. Your registered neighborhood association can provide guidance on landscape characteristics, assistance in design and contractor referrals, and more. To find your association, visit **www.sanantonio.gov/nhsd/neighborhoods** or inquire with Office of Historic Preservation staff if you live in a historic district.

https://www.historicbostonedison.org/resources/Documents/Newsletters/Porch_Guidelines.pdf