

Criteria for Review of Visible Dormers

Adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks Permit Review Committee
May 6, 2010.

The following additional criteria shall be considered in evaluating whether proposed new dormers on front-facing gable-roofed cottages in the Old Town Triangle District will have an adverse effect on the district when such dormers would be visible from the public right-of-way. Such factors as relative visibility of any proposed dormer, given the building size, the site conditions (e.g., unusually wide side yards or a double lot) and the surrounding context, as well as the proposed location, size, massing and design of the dormer itself, will be considered in the review of such projects on a case-by-case basis.

Note that depending on the specific conditions and circumstances, there may still be limited or no potential to construct a visible dormer even with these additional criteria. Also, due to the high degree of visibility, these criteria do not apply to visible dormers on the street side of a front-gabled cottage on a corner property, and such dormers would therefore not be allowed under these criteria; Additionally, these criteria would generally not apply to new or expanded visible dormers on buildings which already have visible dormers, particularly where such dormers are highly visible and do not conform with these additional criteria. Finally, visible dormers that are not necessary in order to achieve minimum code-required interior ceiling heights will not be considered pursuant to these additional criteria.

1. Alternative dormer locations and/or configurations are not possible such as where the dormer or other addition would otherwise not be visible from the public way;
2. The proposed visible dormer is minimized in size and configuration to minimize its visibility from the public way and its impact on the historic rooflines of the building as much as possible (e.g., inseting the rear portion of a dormer so that it is effectively screened from public view by the front portion of the dormer and thereby reduces its visibility);
3. Regardless of visibility, no more than one dormer (including existing dormers) is proposed per building side; furthermore, if a dormer exists and/or is proposed for both sides of the building, the visibility of each individual dormer as well as the cumulative visibility (e.g., if both dormers would be visible from the same vantage points) is taken into consideration in evaluating the potential adverse effect;
4. The proposed visible dormer is set back from the front facade of the building as much as possible, but with a setback of at least 25 feet or 60% of the length of the principal (main) gable roof of the building, whichever is greater;
5. The roof of the proposed dormer is as low as possible relative to the existing main ridge height of the building, generally at least 1'-0" lower than the main ridge, and in no instance higher than the main ridge [note that, depending on the specific conditions, there may still be limited or no potential to achieve minimum code-required interior ceiling heights];
6. The proposed dormer has a simple gable or shed roof, depending on the dormer's location, size and visibility, with as perceptible a slope as possible, and generally minimal overhangs;
7. The proposed dormer is sided with materials compatible with that of the building and, depending on the dormer's relative visibility, generally also the color of the roofing material to further minimize visibility;
8. The proposed dormer does not have windows facing the front of the property; and,
9. The design and detailing of the proposed dormer is simplified.