

10: Balcony, Deck, Roof Deck & Pergola Guidelines



This “Juliet” balcony on a building in Staunton, VA would fit on some masonry buildings in the downtown. The brackets are attractive and take up no room on the (in this case) narrow sidewalks.

10.1. Purpose

As the commercial area becomes more successful, there will be a desire to use outdoor space as an extension of the buildings and an amenity for tenants, owners, and the public.

This is a complex subject that involves historic district guidelines, use of the public right of way (in some cases), public safety, and economic development, all within a compact urban environment. The City desires to support economic development in the downtown while maintaining standards for health and safety, and maintaining a high standard of quality and aesthetics for this important historic asset.

While it may not be possible to anticipate every possible permutation of these elements, this section is intended to establish some guidelines for design and a process for approvals. Creativity is encouraged within the context of the historic architecture and public safety.

Generally, changes to the sides and back of historic buildings are more flexible (such as adding a deck on the back of an historic building converted to upper floor apartments). If the building owner wishes to take advantage of historic tax credits, it should be kept in mind that if changes are made to the front facades of historic buildings that are not in keeping with the building's history, past or future tax credits and historic designations might be at risk. This will also be a consideration for the HDC when reviewing any proposed alterations.

On the other hand, as stated in the section on historic commercial facades, the treatment of commercial facades has changed with trends in retail sales and architectural styles over the many decades most of these buildings have been standing, and few commercial buildings now have the same storefronts that they had when built. This also is a consideration when reviewing proposed changes that may aid the business in achieving success.

These guidelines apply only to the commercial district within the larger historic district, and to any commercial buildings that may exist outside the downtown commercial core. Other sections of these guidelines deal with historic and new architecture and site guidelines in the historic district, and all city-wide zoning and building codes apply in addition to these guidelines.

Existing balconies, roof decks, decks and other elements covered in this section are grandfathered until changes, upgrades, or repairs are considered, at which time these elements must meet the guidelines.



10.2. Balconies

1. Purpose

With the revitalization of the downtown, the upper stories of many commercial buildings are being renovated for apartments and private residences. Although many people live in apartments because they don't have time or inclination to take care of a yard, there is still often a desire for a small green space, a seating area, or an outdoor view. Any of the elements in this chapter can provide these amenities, but balconies are more suitable for the front facade of buildings, as they are generally more ornate than decks so more in keeping with the commercial architecture of the downtown.



Top and above: Examples of Juliet balconies.

2. Balcony Types, Placement & Size

- a. Balconies include decorative or "Juliet" types, defined as shallow balconies or railings outside a window or doors. Examples are shown at left. Such structures should match the style of the building and each balcony would generally cover one set of windows or doors. More than one may be suitable if the size of the openings is uniform, or one may be suitable for a feature window or set of doors.
- b. Deeper balconies will require significant bracket support or column support that will extend into the sidewalk. Deeper balconies often extend under a set of windows and/or doors for the full width of the building, or under a similar set of windows within a larger facade. Examples of second floor balconies can be seen at bottom left and on the next page. Such balconies will generally be wide enough to accommodate outdoor dining and living areas.



Above: This balcony on the Waynesborough House in the downtown was until recently used primarily as a canopy. Since the second floor has become a catering facility it is now being used once again as a balcony.

- c. Balconies are not decks, although sometimes their definitions overlap. For purposes of this document, balconies are defined as projections narrower than decks, usually constructed of metal and/or masonry, usually on primary facades of buildings, and meant to complement the architecture of the building. Balconies seldom have overhead coverings, unless it is from a balcony above. See section 10.3 for the definition of a deck.
- d. Balconies are not porches, although again, sometimes their definitions overlap. Porches in residential architecture are usually covered extensions of the house extending from the main portion of the building. Sometimes such structures on the upper floors are referred



to as overhanging porches. Examples of multi-level porches would include the formal side porches seen in Charleston. An historic example of a covered porch/balcony structure on a commercial building in Oxford, Mississippi can be seen at left.

- e. Sometimes a covered entry feature is expanded to include a balcony or covered porch, either decorative or functional. Examples of this can be seen on the next page.

3. Design and Allowed Materials

It may be possible to add balconies to historic commercial buildings in downtown Goldsboro, but there are few local precedents to follow. Because of this, it is recommended that anyone wishing to add such a structure work with an architect well-versed in historic commercial architecture to design it. Any submission for consideration by the HDC will require structural and architectural drawings along with pictures of projects that may be considered precedents. All submissions must meet fire district codes.

It will be easier to incorporate such features into new/infill commercial and mixed-use buildings, and the incorporation of such elements is encouraged.

- All designs must be prepared by a NC licensed architect and/or engineer and reviewed by the HDC before a building permit can be issued;
- Designs must meet all the relevant requirements of State and City building, zoning, and fire codes.
- Materials selection should be guided by historic precedent and architectural compatibility, and may include:
 - Masonry;
 - Architectural concrete;
 - Wood or high-quality synthetic equivalents;
 - Appropriate/complementary roofing materials if the structure is covered.



Depending on definition, these are either balconies or covered porches.



This new mixed-use commercial/residential building in Morganton, NC has covered porches/balconies incorporated into the architecture. It will be easier to include such details on new buildings than to retrofit them on historic buildings.



Above left: Covered entries with balconies/porches above (Montreal); Above middle and right: Upper story balconies in Charleston. Supports are from the building. Many of these balconies are too ornate for the more basic architecture of many (but not all) of Goldsboro's historic commercial buildings.

4. Not Recommended/Allowed

- Design and materials, construction methods and elements that would be more suitable for a deck;
- Architectural styles and materials not in keeping with or complementary to the architecture of the building;
- Structural supports that impede pedestrian movement along the sidewalk;



Balconies can provide views and/or space for a small garden. Note the plexiglass panels at left to enhance views.



Two recently constructed decks (above) near the corner of Walnut and John Streets.



Decks could be more ornate to fit the style and period of the historic buildings.

10.3. Decks

1. Purpose

Decks are generally wood (or synthetic wood) structures intended to provide outdoor living space. In commercial areas, decks should be placed at the side or back of buildings not visible from the street.

2. Placement & Size

- Decks must be placed on side or rear elevations of buildings within the property line, and not plainly visible from the adjacent sidewalks. They are never allowed on the main facade or immediately adjacent to the sidewalk;
- Limits on size are determined by property lines and any required setbacks;
- Supports for decks must not interfere with access by delivery trucks, fire equipment, vehicles if on an alley, or emergency access/equipment;
- Consult with City and Utilities to ensure decks are sufficiently clear of overhead lines.
- Decks may be built over mechanical equipment, storage areas, or lower story entries and windows;
- Decks may not be built over loading docks.

3. Design and Allowed materials

- The design for a deck must be prepared and sealed by a licensed architect and/or engineer and approved by the HDC before a building permit will be issued.
- The design must meet all the requirements of State and City building, zoning and fire codes.
- Materials allowed for supports and decking include wood, synthetic wood, and other materials with review and approval.
- Materials for railings may include wood, synthetic wood, or metal. Plexiglass panels to enhance views may be allowed with review and approval. Railing heights must conform to all local and state requirements.



This roof deck on Mulberry Street is the only roof deck in downtown Goldsboro at present.



Building blocks for a roof deck include a floating roof deck system such as this that allows minimal contact with the roof and leveling for uneven roof surfaces.

10.4. Roof Decks

1. Purpose

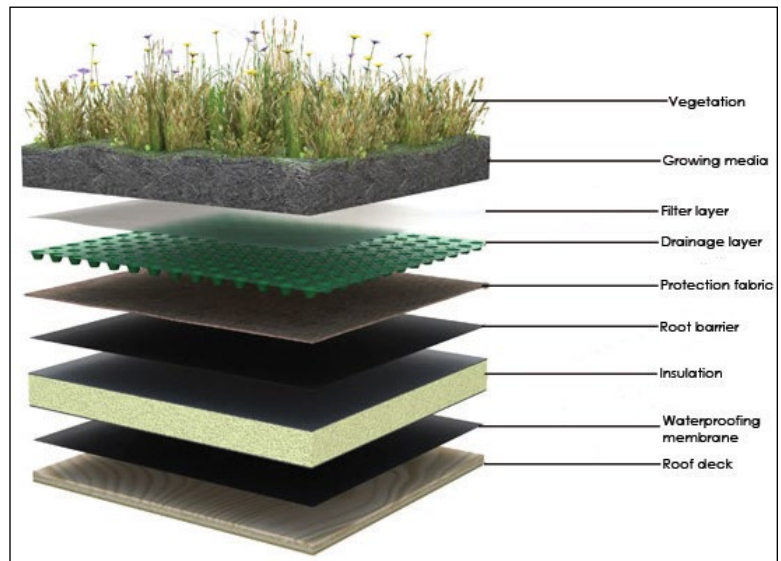
Roof decks are an untapped resource for private outdoor space in the downtown. The “real estate” already exists for these spaces, and as upper-story rentals and owner-occupied buildings increase, these will probably increase in number.

Roof decks offer more opportunities for configurations and uses. Provided the roof is sufficiently strong to support it, such uses as outdoor seating and dining areas, food preparation areas, hot tubs, water features, and planting areas (green roofs) are all possible.

Because there are few examples of such uses in Goldsboro, close cooperation between City departments, the HDC and property owners will be required to ensure attractive, functional, and appropriate design and implementation of roof deck uses.

2. Placement and Size

- Roof decks may be placed on any roof structure above the first floor that is configured appropriately and strong enough to support it.
- Where a roof deck adjoins a side of the building visible



Planting areas are possible on rooftops through the use of a variety of systems that prevent water from penetrating the roof, create a root barrier, and provide a lightweight growing medium for grass or planting beds. Such systems can also greatly reduce runoff. Of course, many people elect to simply use plants and small trees in containers instead. Similar waterproofing would be used for a small water feature.

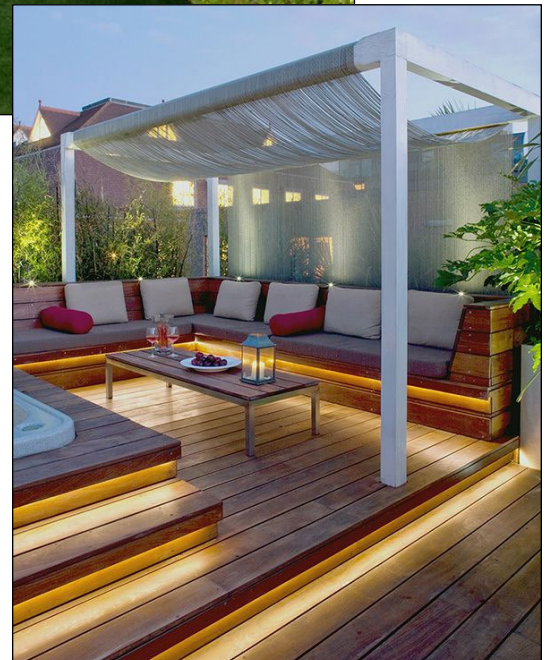
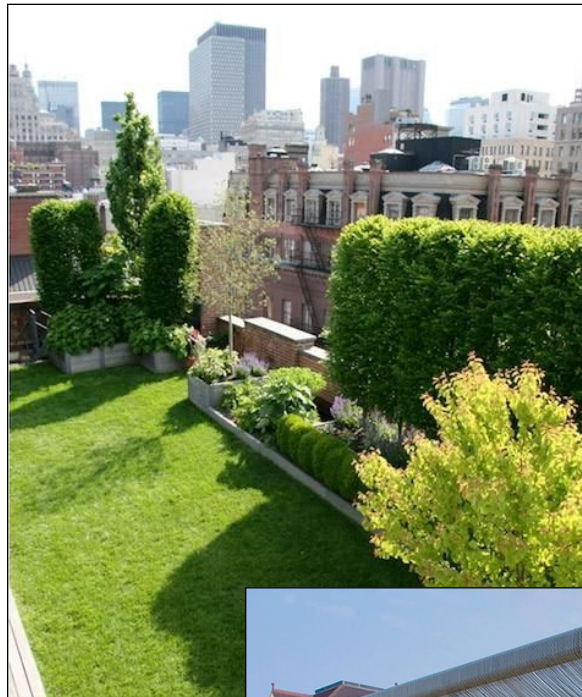


from the street, care should be taken in the design of the fences to ensure compatibility with the architecture of the facade.

- In many cases, a roof deck will be hidden part by the parapet on an historic building. If none exists at present, it may either be restored from historic photos if it existed in the past, or the visible portions of the roof deck should be designed to complement the facade(s) of the building, and must be 1' behind the roof edge. The roof deck may be as large as the structure can support and the roof allows.

3. Design and Materials Allowed

Photographs showing various examples of roof decks are shown on this page and the next.





The combination shown above of lattice fencing and a pergola would be appropriate for a roof deck where screening views from adjacent buildings was desired.



It is not hard to imagine a private alley or courtyard transformed with plants and a pergola into a green refuge.

- All materials and designs must meet building and fire codes.
- All designs must be prepared and stamped by appropriate professionals (architects, engineers, landscape architects).
- Materials for roof deck surfaces may be wood, synthetic wood, stone, or lightweight concrete pavers designed for such use.
- Materials and fittings must be appropriate for outdoor use. In particular, any furniture must be sufficiently heavy or fixed in place to ensure that it will not be moved or become airborne during bad weather.
- Structures, shelters, and barriers may be wood, synthetic wood, metal or other materials with review and approval.
- Fences/barriers must meet the height and maximum opening requirements of any applicable City and State guidelines and ordinances. Fences may include vertical or horizontal steel cable railings or clear plexiglass or acrylic panels to allow views out from the roof deck (see example of plexiglass panels on the bottom left of page 80). Materials must be of sufficient weight and strength to act as an effective and safe barrier.
- A wide range of materials may be appropriate for fittings for roof decks. Wood, metals, synthetic wood, plant material, built-in or sufficiently heavy moveable furniture and other amenities, water features, outdoor lighting, irrigation, and other materials and accessories as reviewed and approved.
- Design of the decking materials and supports is critical to the success of the roof deck and the integrity of the roof. A professional with experience in this type of work is highly recommended.
- Outdoor lighting on roof decks should not cause glare for any surrounding buildings or properties.

10.5. Pergolas

1. Purpose

Garden structures attached to buildings are more often used in California and the Southwest than in the South, but if designed appropriately they may be an interesting and unique addition to buildings here to add interest and mitigate the hot sun in the summer. It may be that they will prove more appropriate for side yards, rear yards, and courtyards in the commercial downtown, or more suitable for new buildings rather than historic buildings, but designed properly they will also be considered for the front facades of historic commercial buildings. They would serve the same purpose as canopies and awnings, or may extend into the sidewalk as far as sidewalk enclosures in some cases with review and approval. Because there are few precedents, each proposal will be considered carefully, especially at first.

2. Placement and Size

Pergolas either as attachments to a building or, if space permits, as free-standing structures, will be permitted on any available side of the privately-owned portion of commercial buildings, much as they would be on a private residence. They could also be incorporated into second-floor decks or into roof decks.



The courtyard with a pergola shown above is next the sidewalk and near restaurants and a hotel. The metal pergola above a deck shown below would work well for a restaurant or living space above a store.



A building-supported pergola (right) could take the place of an awning or canopy. A more rustic pergola such as the one below might be suitable for courtyard dining where screening views of the backs of nearby buildings would be desirable.



A pergola/fence such as this might be appropriate for an alley, side- or rear-yard living or dining area.

Pergolas that are incorporated into the front or visible sides of commercial buildings, on the public right of way, are not prohibited, but will require careful review before approval by exception. The pergola's most likely to be acceptable are those self-supported from the facade of the building, serving as an alternative to a canopy or awning. They may or may not have plants growing on them as part of the design.

3. Design and Materials Allowed

At least initially, all plans for pergolas will need to be reviewed and approved. Drawings should be prepared by an appropriate professional, especially if the structure will be attached to an existing building, and should include images or sample of materials to be used.

- Wood, preferably pressure treated, tropical or hardwoods for ease of maintenance and longevity
- Synthetic wood with review and approval
- Metal
- Stone (columns, paving etc.)
- Fiberglass column post covers
- Plant materials
- Containers for plant materials of terra-cotta, architectural concrete, commercial grade resin, or wood (see above bullet item for approved types of wood)
- Brick or concrete for paving materials.

10.6. Routine Maintenance

(COA not required)

- Repainting, repair or replacement with like materials of previously approved balcony, deck, roof deck or pergola elements.

10.7. Certificate of Appropriateness Required

- Because there are few existing examples of commercial buildings with the elements presented in this section, all balconies, decks, roof decks and pergolas must be reviewed and approved by the HDC before obtaining building permits to ensure compatibility with the historic context.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)