

BOUNDARY ENCLOSURES

in Heritage Areas and to Historic Buildings

5

City of Cape Town Heritage advice pamphlet 5

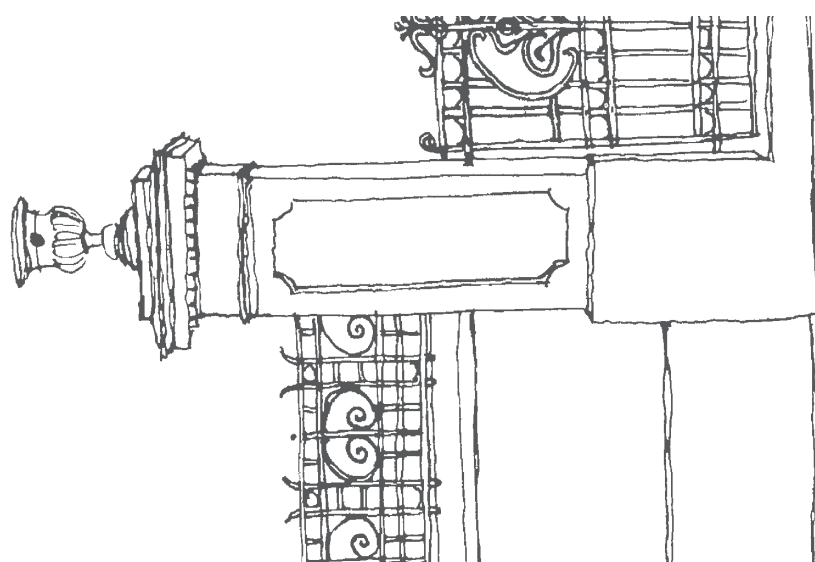
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CITY OF CAPE TOWN | IZIKO SAKAQA | SIID KAPSTAD

THIS CITY WORKS FOR YOU



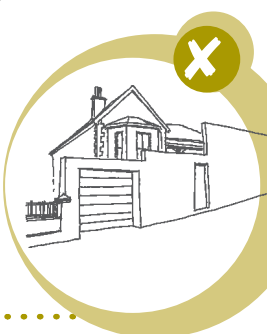
VEGETATION & TREES



NEW WALL WITH PLANTS ERECTED BEHIND HISTORIC WALL, MAINTAINING SCALE AND CHARACTER OF STREET



WALL IRREGULAR AND TOO HIGH, ALIENATING HOUSE AND CREATING HOSTILE STREETScape



RAISING THE HEIGHT OF ENCLOSURES

The desire for privacy and security has resulted in the need to increase the height of existing boundary walls. High solid walls can result in a bland and hostile street environment and can conceal intruders from the street. As a guide:

- If it is permissible to raise a wall, the character of the existing wall should be kept intact.
- Most low, masonry or stone walls can be raised with open steel railings, wrought iron or open timber slats so that the visual link from the street to the house can be maintained, enabling surveillance by neighbours.
- If the old wall has elaborate mouldings, wrought-iron work or other detail and would be destroyed by an alteration, a palisade fence could be built behind the existing, low wall. This fence can over time, be covered with planting.
- Similarly, a new, higher wall can be built behind the existing, low wall, allowing a planting bed between the two walls, thereby preserving the character of the street.
- Depending on the setting and the design of the particular wall, low stone walls could also be raised in height with stone, plastered brick or with a palisade fence.
- Depending on the context, some lower plastered brick walls can be extended or raised with the same type of wall. Mouldings and copings can sometimes be recreated to match the old details.

The recommended maximum height of any boundary enclosure in Heritage Areas is 1,8 m. At least a third of this height should be designed to be visually permeable using for example, open steel railings, wrought iron or open timber slats.

DESIGN ON SLOPING SITES

Sloping sites often give rise to high boundary walls which obstruct views to and from the house (see Heritage Advice Pamphlet No. 4: Design Guidelines for a Heritage Context: Building on sloping sites). As a guide:

- Gardens of sloping sites should be terraced and should not be raised artificially. This reduces the need for high retaining walls.
- Cut and fill should be carefully considered to minimise changes to the existing land forms. Low terraces following the form of the land are not only aesthetically pleasing but also prevent erosion and potential structural collapse.
- Where retaining walls are required, a combination of solid and metal fencing reduces the scale and impact on the street.
- Pillars or piers should be used where there is a step or a change of direction in the wall. Articulation of the wall with piers also assists to reduce the scale of the wall.
- Traditionally walls along a sloping boundary either followed the fall of the ground, or were stepped in regular intervals. Walls should not remain at one level, as this will result in a high wall at one end.
- Retaining walls made of interlocking retaining blocks are visually disturbing and damage the integrity of Heritage Areas. Design and materials for retaining walls should be based on traditional solutions and be sympathetic to the character of the Heritage Area.
- Existing stone retaining walls and terracing on a site should be carefully restored and protected and used as a design constraint/informant for alterations and additions and new construction.

CORNER PROPERTIES

Boundary walls on corner properties are usually at a 45 degree splay along the erf boundary to ensure visibility for traffic. These splayed walls should be treated, architecturally as part of the main wall.

It is generally not advisable for any part of the corner of a property to be "given over" to the street as these areas easily become an unintended wasteland. These areas should be planted or paved appropriately.

LIGHTING

Lighting improves safety and security at night. Traditionally light fittings are positioned on/against piers or columns at entrance gates or fixed to the side of the wall. As a guide:

- The choice of light fitting is very important in Heritage Areas and should be in keeping with the character and style of the house.
- Lighting must always be carefully positioned to prevent light pollution to neighbours. Municipal by-laws prevent private lights from shining beyond the individual property.
- Spotlights and floodlights are generally considered inappropriate for historic areas and buildings. Bright security lights should only be used if connected to movement detectors so that they switch off automatically after a few minutes. A normal bulb is usually sufficient for visibility and security reasons.
- Lighting can also be used creatively to light buildings and trees, adding interest and value to the area.

TREES AND VEGETATION

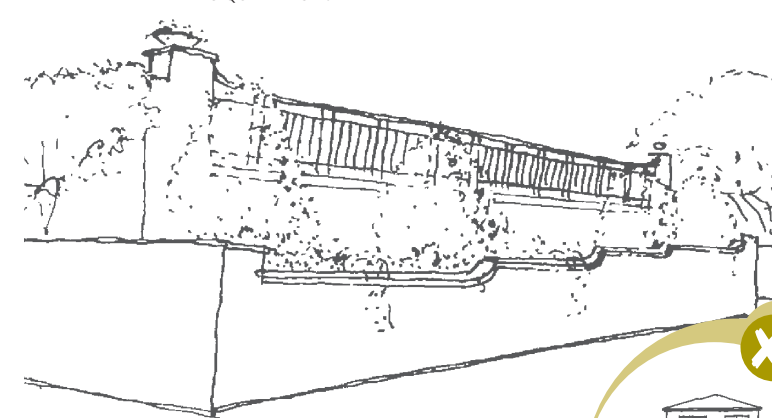
In most Heritage Areas mature trees and well-established gardens contribute to the special character of the area. Vegetation softens street boundaries, enhances the spaces between the house and the street and improves the streetscape. As a guide:

- Planting of high, dense hedges or other vegetation directly behind existing or new low walls is an environmentally sensitive device for obtaining more privacy and security.
- Thorny species have traditionally been used as boundary enclosures and successfully improve security.
- Boundary enclosures should be planned to minimise the impact on existing vegetation. Mature trees and hedges are protected in Heritage Areas and special permission is required for their removal. A formal, written application to the local authority should be made for the felling or radical pruning of any tree.

RETAINING WALLS



NEW RETAINING WALL AND PLANTED TERRACE BUILT BEHIND OLD WALL, MAINTAINING QUALITY OF STREET



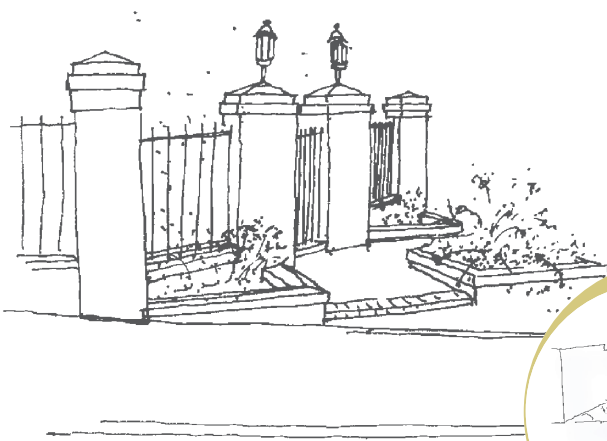
INTERLOCKING BLOCKS AND PRE-CAST WALLS ARE ATYPICAL IN HISTORIC AREAS AND DO GREAT DAMAGE TO THE AREA



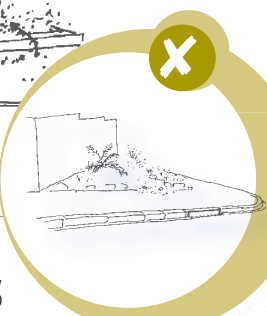
CORNER



CORNER TREATMENT: NEW ENTRANCE MOVED TO CORNER, ENHANCING QUALITY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF CORNER



CORNER DISPLAY ALIENATING LAND, CREATING UNTENDED WASTELAND



SIMPLE METAL FENCE SECURING 'MODERNIST' BLOCK OF FLATS, WITH PLANTING FOR PRIVACY



FRONT WALL CONVERTED TO BACK WALL STATUS, NEGATIVELY DISRUPTING GENERAL LOW WALL PATTERN OF STREETScape.



REQUIREMENTS FOR PROPERTY OWNERS

If your property is situated in a Heritage Area, your building is older than 60 years or you believe it may have heritage value, it is advisable to discuss your proposals in sketch form with your Local Planning and Environment Office and particularly with the Heritage Resources Section, who will advise you about any regulations that might impact on your proposed building work.

The officials of the Heritage Resources Section also advise architects and designers on appropriate designs for heritage areas and historic buildings. Other Heritage Advice pamphlets in this series include:

- Heritage Advice Pamphlet No. 1 Heritage Resources
- Heritage Advice Pamphlet No. 2 Heritage Areas
- Heritage Advice Pamphlet No. 3 Cultural Landscapes and Historic Vegetation
- Heritage Advice Pamphlet No. 4 Design Guidelines for a Heritage Context
- Heritage Advice Pamphlet No. 5 Boundary Enclosures in Heritage Areas and to Historic Buildings
- Heritage Advice Pamphlet No. 6 Garages and Carports in Heritage Areas and for Historic Buildings
- Heritage Advice Pamphlet No. 7 Roofs in Heritage Areas and of Historic Buildings
- Heritage Advice Pamphlet No. 8 Security in Heritage Areas and for Historic Buildings
- Heritage Advice Pamphlet No. 9 Langa Heritage
- Heritage Advice Pamphlet No.10 Company's Gardens

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SECURITY AND PRIVACY ATTAINED THROUGH VEGETATION PLANTED BEHIND OLD WALL



FRONT WALL CONVERTED TO BACK WALL STATUS, NEGATIVELY DISRUPTING GENERAL LOW WALL PATTERN OF STREETScape



INTRODUCTION

Boundary enclosures like walls, fences, hedges, or the sides of buildings are vitally important contributors to the character of the streetscapes in Heritage Areas.

The dense urban qualities of areas like Woodstock or Kalk Bay, or the low garden walled green environment of the Gardens and Oranjezicht, are created by their respective boundary enclosure patterns. These patterns create memorable places and the character of these needs to be conserved. New boundary enclosures and alterations to boundary enclosures have a great impact on this character.

This Heritage Advice pamphlet advises on the care designers need to take when planning new boundary enclosures and/or alterations to existing boundary enclosures within Heritage Areas, or to historic buildings outside of Heritage Areas.

REGULATIONS

Heritage resources and Heritage Areas are protected by law at local, provincial and national levels:

- At local level, the Zoning Schemes applicable to particular parts of the City define property rights and areas of special character. In certain areas the Zoning Scheme provides for the management of new development work, alterations and additions to the built fabric as well as the protection of mature trees and hedges.
- At local, provincial and national level, the National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999) provides for the conservation and management of heritage resources and empowers society to assist in this management. This Act is administered by the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA) at national level and Heritage Western Cape (HWC) at provincial level. Local Heritage Areas and related aspects of heritage resources are administered by the City of Cape Town.

GUIDELINES FOR DESIGN

The boundary is the threshold between the public world (the street) and the private world (the home). If a boundary enclosure is designed in such a way that it addresses both the requirements of the owner as well as the particular character of the surrounding built environment it will add value to both the environment and to the owner's property. As a guide:

- Historic buildings in a Heritage Area are most likely to express the architectural character of the area and should be used as precedents in the design of new boundary walls.
- Boundary walls which are unsympathetic to the character of the particular Heritage Area will generally have been built before the identification of the area as a Heritage Area and should not be used as precedent.
- Cities are living entities and change over time. The Heritage Resources Section of the City of Cape Town will support proposals which are contemporary in style or use modern materials, provided that they are contextually sensitive, and maintain or enhance the character of the Heritage Area (see Heritage Advice Pamphlet No. 4: Design Guidelines for a Heritage Context).

APPROACH TO DESIGN

Size, height, width, proportions and levels of detail of boundary enclosures need to be consistent with the architectural character of the existing building, of the particular street and should reinforce the historic character of the Heritage Area. Some useful questions for the designer to ask are :

- How the wall fits into the bigger picture? Is it a front, side, corner or back wall? The front and side walls are usually the most important public interface of the building and should respond appropriately. In certain areas, walls which are not visible to the street could be more solid and higher than the street boundary walls by agreement between neighbours.
- How does the wall relate to the general patterns in the street or area? How were the older walls designed in a similar situation? Are the walls generally low? Are there piers with plaster copings on top? Is there wrought iron on top of the walls?
- What kind of pedestrian gates are there? How do front gates differ from back gates? Where are they situated in the wall (middle or side)?
- How does the wall turn corners and how does it change from a side to a front wall?
- How does the wall deal with a sloping site?
- What kind of mouldings and copings are used? Is there more elaborate detailing on the front wall compared to the back wall? Is there more detail at the main entrance gate?

MATERIALS AND DETAILING

The choice of materials for boundary walls and fences in Heritage Areas and for historic buildings should be carefully considered. As a guide:

- Match materials and detailing with those of the old buildings or interpret them in a contemporary manner. Materials which are foreign to historic environments, such as pre-cast concrete walls and face brick, should be avoided.
- Ensure that new masonry walls or additions to existing walls, even low walls, should be at least 230 mm thick.
- Replicate construction details evident on the site or on older buildings in the area. They often have practical as well as aesthetic value, for example plaster copings on the tops of walls protect them from rainwater penetration and staining. Similarly stone plinths form a natural damp-proof barrier to the wall above.
- Use hard wood like meranti for exterior work (soft woods like pine deteriorate rapidly). Timber fences should have spaces between the vertical slats to ensure that the fence is visually permeable.

DESIGN OF GATES

Gates in Heritage Areas are traditionally made of cast iron or timber and are well detailed. Contemporary interpretations of this traditional level of detail enhances the quality of the gate. As a guide:

- Existing and original gates with distinctive historic character should be repaired or remade to match existing gates wherever possible.
- Gates should be made of open steel railings, wrought iron or open timber slats so that they retain the visual link from the street to the house.
- Driveway gates should match pedestrian gates in terms of their materials, design and character.
- Gates are not permitted to open outward across a public footway or slide onto the public footway.



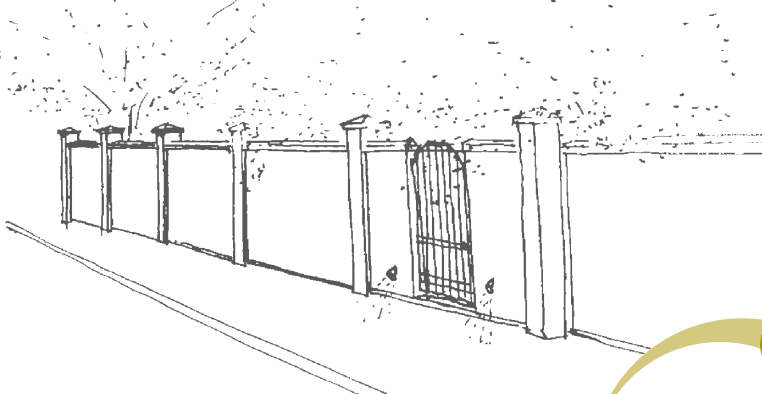
NEW WALL DESIGNED TO COMPLEMENT EXISTING HISTORIC RESIDENCE



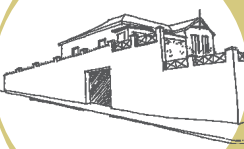
FRONT OF HOUSE DISAPPEARS BEHIND A TOO HIGH UNARTICULATED WALL, WITH IRREGULAR SPACED PIERS & STEPPING. INAPPROPRIATE GATE PEDIMENT.



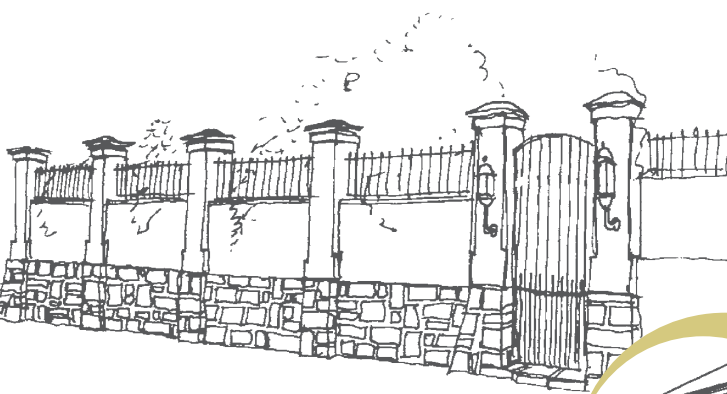
BACK WALL: 1,8 M HIGH SOLID BRICK WALL WITH PLASTER COPING AND PIERS.



SIDE WALL TOO HIGH, ALIENATING THE HOUSE FROM THE STREET AND CREATING A HOSTILE STREETScape.



NEW BRICK AND PALISADE FENCE BUILT ONTO OLD STONE WALL.



FRONT BOUNDARY CHANGED INTO A BACK WALL, RELATIONSHIP WITH STREET IS LOST



OLD PIERS EXTENDED WITH METAL PALISADE FENCE OVER OLD STEPPED BRICK WALL.



UNARTICULATED BLAND SOLID WALL DISRUPTING STREET PATTERN



OLD WALL EXTENDED WITH MATCHING PIERS AND NEW METAL FENCE, WITH PLANTING FOR PRIVACY.



POOR MATERIAL CHOICE, LACK OF DETAIL AND WORKMANSHIP NEGATIVELY AFFECTS THE STREET AND HOUSE

