# Minimal Traditional Style Guide

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# Minimal Traditional Style Guide

## Table of Contents

Minimal Traditional (1930-1950) 1
Additional Examples of the Style 2
Building Form and Massing 3
Roof Shape and Materials 3
Cladding 4
Foundation 4
Railings and Balustrades 5
Windows 6
Awnings 7
Doors 7
Garage Doors 8
Porte-Cochères 8
Lighting 9
Paint Colors 11

DRAFT

This section of the Long Beach Historic District Design Guidelines is part of a larger document created as a planning tool for the City's **historic districts**. The guidelines are intended to provide recommendations, inspiration, and advice as part of an instructive framework that will help guide sensitive changes to historic properties and encourage rehabilitation. By their nature, design guidelines are flexible. As such, outcomes may depend on the resource, the surrounding district, and the goals of the proposed project.

Any changes to the exterior of the property must be given prior approval by Historic Preservation staff through a **Certificate of Appropriateness**, and all projects may be subject to other City requirements not listed within these guidelines.

The first instance of certain terms throughout the Guidelines are highlighted in **bold** text. These terms are defined in a glossary in *Chapter 5: Additional Resources.*

For additional information, please refer to the other chapters of this document:

Chapter 1: Purpose, Procedures & Overview
Chapter 2: Guidelines for Maintenance and Repair
Chapter 3: Design Guidelines by Historic District
Chapter 4: Architectural Style Guides
Chapter 5: Additional Resources

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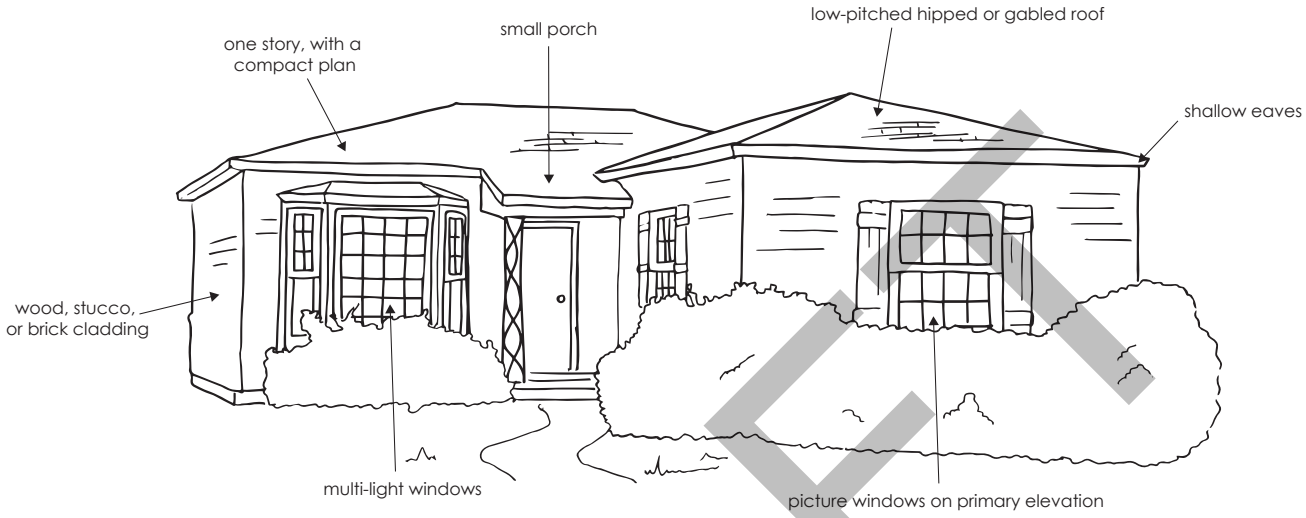


# MINIMAL TRADITIONAL (1930-1950)

The Minimal Traditional style emerged in the 1930s as a product of the Great Depression. The economic slump effectively halted new home construction, prompting the development of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which would provide loan insurance and guidelines on home construction. Architects, professional journals, and agencies like the FHA published guidance, plans, and pattern books for compact, efficient homes that would help ensure construction funds for new housing. At the onset of World War II, the functionality and easily reproducible nature of the Minimal Traditional style made it the perfect solution to the increased demand for housing during and after the war. As such, it was the dominant type of house built throughout the 1940s; millions of this type of home were constructed throughout the United States to house defense workers and returning veterans. By the 1950s, the style would be superseded in popularity by the sprawling Ranch style as postwar prosperity increased.[1]

Minimal Traditional homes are characterized by their compact size and sparse detailing, which was initially necessitated by the need to keep costs low and secure construction funding. "Nonessential features" like gables, dormers, or elaborate detailing were discouraged by published guidance, both as a cost-savings measure, and to help the houses appear larger and less "restless" or busy. Traditional details like a small porch, bay windows, or simpler elements of the Colonial or Tudor Revival styles, such as window shutters, may be present.[2]

Most Minimal Traditional homes include a one-car garage, and the placement of the garage is a good indicator of when the house was built. Prior to World War II, the garage was typically detached and located at the back of the property; following the war, the garage was usually attached to the house.[3] In Long Beach, examples of Minimal Traditional houses can be found in areas like California Heights, in housing tracts north and east of downtown, or as infill in areas that developed prior to World War II.

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# Additional Examples of the Style

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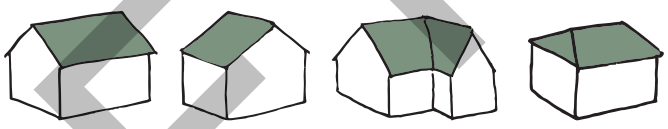
# Building Form and Massing

Minimal Traditional homes are almost always one story in height. Two story, usually multi-family, examples of the style exist, but are quite rare. They typically have compact rectangular or L-shaped plans; the L-shape forms a front-facing wing that is often punctuated with a large, multi-light picture window.

# Roof Shape and Materials

The most common roof shape is a cross-**gabled** or cross-hipped form over an L-shaped plan, although side-gabled and front-gabled examples do exist.



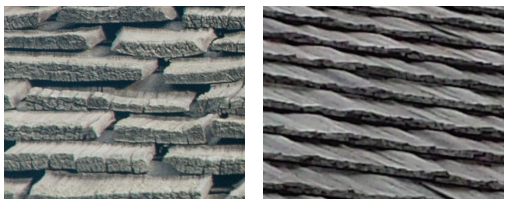
*Side-gabled* *Front-gabled* *Cross-gabled* *Hipped*

Roofs are low-pitched with very shallow **eaves**. The eaves may be boxed and/or finished with a simple, narrow **fascia board** (A), or left open with shallow rafter tails left exposed (B). Rain gutters are often installed along the roofline, obscuring all or some of the eaves (C).

*(A)* *(B)* *(C)*

While some Minimal Traditional residences would have had wood shingle roofs, composition roofing materials, like asphalt roofing shingles, were the most common roofing material as these houses were being built.[4] This type of material was not intended to last more than thirty to fifty years, even in ideal conditions; therefore, the original material is unlikely to be present on any maintained Minimal Traditional home. Composition shingles in a darker, neutral color are a compatible roofing material. Shingles should consist of individual units laid in a traditional, alternating pattern. If there is evidence to suggest that the home originally had wood shingle roofing, replacement wood shingles or a visually similar substitute are also appropriate. Please see *Chapter 2: Maintenance and Repair* for additional information on wood roofing materials.

*Composition shingles in an appropriate color, like the above examples, would be acceptable for a Minimal Traditional residence. Shingles should be in a darker, neutral color, but not so dark as black.*



*Wood shingles (left) or a visually similar substitute (right) would be compatible with a Minimal Traditional residence.*

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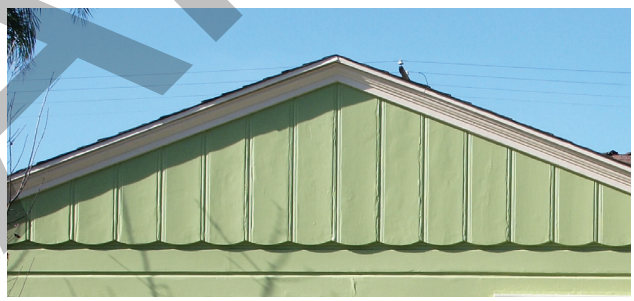
# Cladding

Minimal Traditional residences are clad in wood siding, stucco, or brick, or occasionally a combination of materials. If two materials, such as stucco and wood siding are used, they are often painted the same color, to avoid creating too much contrast and making the small house appear smaller.

*Stucco*

*Horizontal wood clapboards*

*Brick*



*Horizontal wood siding is often used as cladding in gable ends, and may feature a subtle, scalloped edge.*

# Foundation

The foundation on a Minimal Traditional home is not a focal point of their design. It may be exposed concrete slab, or clad in an extention of the exterior cladding to minimize its appearance.

# Chimneys

Chimneys are a common feature for the style. They are typically modest in scale, made of masonry, and will usually be interior chimneys or arranged on a side elevation.

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# Porches and Entryways

Minimal Traditional homes may have a flush entryway or a smal projecting porch, often accessed by a series of shallow steps. Porch supports, where they exist, will typically consist of simple wood or wrought iron posts. Smaller overhangs sheltering the front entry may be supported by simple brackets.

# Railings and Balustrades

Railings and **balusters** are not typically found on Minimal Traditional residences as they are so simple. If railings are needed, compatible options would be simple wood or wrought iron railings.

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# Windows

Windows on a Minimal Traditional home are typically **double-hung** wood sash or multi-light steel **casements**. Double-hung windows may be multi-light or one-over-one. Particularly on L-shaped Minimal Traditional homes, there is frequently a larger picture window, bay window, or group of windows centered under the front-facing gable of the wing.

*Wood double-hung*

*Multi-light steel paired casement*

*Grouped window*

*Bay window*

*Picture window*

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# Awnings

Awnings are period-appropriate for Minimal Traditional homes. They were often installed, as the shallow roof eaves provided little to no shade.[5] The awnings should be canvas in a traditional, triangular shape. The fabric may be solid or striped, and may have scalloped valances if desired. Aluminum awnings may be appropriate on later examples, as this type of awning was widely available by the 1950s.[6]

*Canvas*

*Aluminum*

# Doors

Minimal Traditional houses typically have simple paneled wood doors, with or without partial **glazing**.

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# Garage Doors

Minimal Traditional homes almost always included a garage as more and more households owned personal automobiles. Early examples typically had a detached garage to the rear, while later examples are more likely to have a garage attached directly to the residence.

The doors were most often tilt-up doors consisting of one piece of wood, occasionally with pieces of applied trim for ornamentation.[7] Contemporary garage doors are available through various retailers are compatible in appearance and operate using convenient electric openers. The use of real wood garage doors is encouraged, but not required. Compatible doors should be simple in design with discreet hardware.

*Wood tilt-up doors*

# Porte-Cochères

Porte-cochères are not a characteristic feature for a Minimal Traditional home, and they should not be added.

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# Decorative Features

Minimal Traditional houses are sparsely decorated. When decorative features are present, they typically consist of wood window shutters, scalloped edging along gable ends, and/or exposed rafter tails in the eaves. Decorative features should not be added without evidence to suggest they existed historically.

*Louvered wood window shutters*

*Scalloped edges in gable ends*

# Lighting

Minimal Traditional homes take a number of design cues from the Colonial Revival style. Consider simplified traditional, "lantern" shaped lighting fixtures, including sconces and pendant lights, with a light or dark metal finish. More modest fixtures such as "jelly jar" sconces and globe lights or more modern, industrial- or nautical-inspired fixtures are also compatible with Minimal Traditional residences.

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# Fencing

Compatible fencing for a Minimal Traditional property may consist of a low, wood fence with vertically oriented posts. The fence should have voids or spaces like the examples shown here. Wood fences may be painted or stained in a light neutral color, preferably white.

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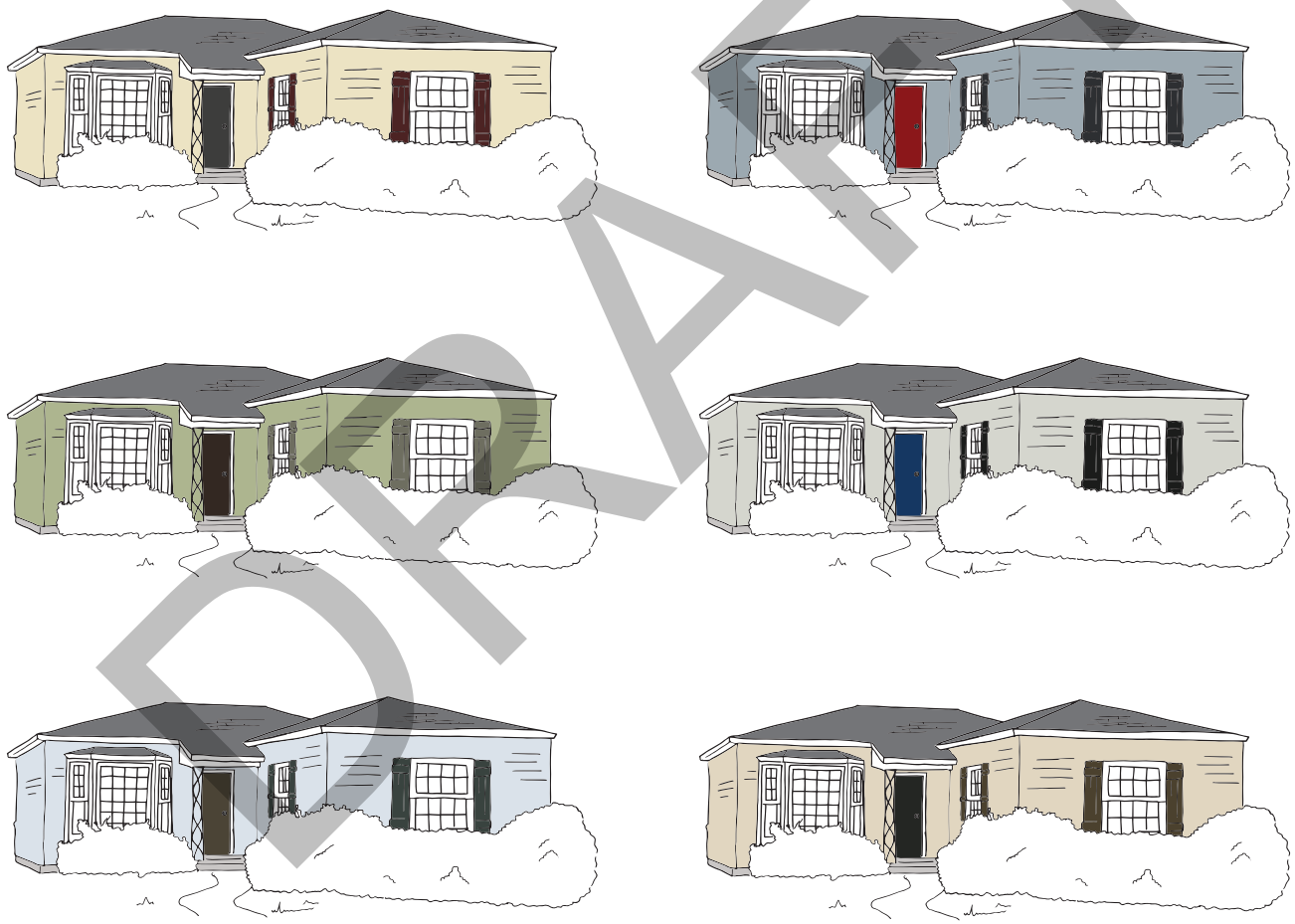
# Paint Colors

Consider a lighter neutral color for the exterior cladding. If the home is clad in two different materials, such as wood and stucco, they are traditionally painted the same color. For contrast, consider a darker color for features like doors and window shutters. Windows and trim, such as door surrounds, fascia boards, and window surrounds, are traditionally painted white.

Masonry cladding should not be painted unless there is evidence to suggest it was painted historically. Below are some color scheme ideas.



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