

Oxford Historic District Guidelines

Overview

Oxford has charmed residents and visitors for many years. Its streets are lined with homes constructed in the late 1800's and early 1900's, although several residences date back to the 18th century. Various architectural styles are represented. The residences are oriented to the street and feature front porches.

Sidewalks are predominantly brick. The scale of the structures and building materials are relatively consistent and harmonious.

In December 2005 the National Park Service added the Oxford Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places, the Nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation.

Another historic aspect of Oxford is its economic diversity. The residents were watermen, boat builders, shopkeepers, bankers, grocers, etc. from all rungs of the economic ladder. This diversity is something to be treasured, and it is not the intention of these Guidelines to cause unnecessary economic hardship to anyone who wishes to live in Oxford. The Historic District Commission (HDC) believes that if these Guidelines are considered from the very beginning of a project, then the value of the individual property and the town as a whole will be enhanced.

Existing and future property owners are not impacted by these Guidelines unless they intend to make changes outside the scope of ordinary maintenance or repair.

Ordinary Maintenance includes repainting with the same color(s) and/or minor repairs with no additions or removals. Examples include replacing rotted porch flooring, rotted or damaged siding and/or trim, rusted screening or surface-mounted gutters, roofing of same type and color, and other essentially similar work.

The Guidelines will aid in accomplishing the following objectives:

- Provide current and future property owners with guidance in planning new structures, alterations, or additions to existing structures,
- Provide the Historic District Commission with criteria to assess applications for new construction, alterations, or additions within the historic district,
- Provide a consistent approach in evaluating applications for projects, and
- Preserve the value of property in the community.

Guidelines will be applied to all structures in the Historic District. Exceptions may be granted for new structures or structures of little or no historic significance. Guidelines will be more strictly applied to structures of historic significance. The HDC will

encourage restoration of these structures if at all possible. Whenever possible, repairs, alterations, or additions should incorporate historically correct materials, styles, and colors. A listing of historically significant properties is available in the Oxford Town Office.

***Historic Significance:** Structures with architectural elements, age, and/or history valuable to posterity.*

***Ordinary Maintenance or Repair:** Exterior painting, repair or replacement when materials, features, color or finishes are not changed.*

The Process

Building permits for projects within the Historic District require approval by HDC. Ordinary maintenance or repair does not require review by the HDC. A consultation with HDC may be scheduled if there is a question as to whether HDC approval is required.

Applicants are encouraged to present preliminary plans for initial review by the Historic District Commission before committing significant time and expense to detailed plans and specifications.

Oxford's Historic District Commission meets at 5:00 PM the first Monday of each month. A maximum of six significant submissions or consultations will be scheduled for each meeting. Submissions in excess of six will be addressed at a special meeting or at the next regularly scheduled meeting. Only (a) complete submissions or (b) requests for consultations will be scheduled.

Applicants with projects scheduled for review by the HDC should deliver the following to the Town Office no later than one week prior to their scheduled appearance. A complete submission must include the following:

1. Adherence to the requirements of Section 10.02 of the Zoning Ordinance, Applications for Building' Permits,
2. A short summary of the proposed work i.e. new home, renovation or expansion of existing structure, fence installation, etc.,
3. Three (3) sets of plans detailing the exterior of the structure including all four elevations. The plans must be specific as to proposed/existing materials, scale, trim, siding, windows, roofs, shutters, etc.,
4. Samples of the siding, roof material, brick, and paint colors. Samples are not required for wood clapboard, cedar shingles or standing seam metal, and
5. Three (3) copies of marked photos or drawings illustrating the streetscape with any physical changes proposed for the property. The streetscape scale should demonstrate the proposed structure's relationship to neighboring structures.

No building permit will be issued without approval from HDC.

Approval by HDC does not imply that an applicant is eligible for any historic preservation incentives or tax credits. Applicants pursuing incentives for historic preservation may need to comply with different standards.

Approval by HDC is part of the building permit process and is subject to the same six month time frame for commencement of work and 12 month limitation for completion of the work applicable to building permits.

Applicants have the right to appeal decisions of the Historic District Commission to the Oxford Board of Zoning Appeal.

General Design Elements

The following guidelines apply only to renovation, remodeling, or new construction of all structures including dwellings, sheds, fences, and accessory structures within the Historic District. They apply only if a building permit is required.

Precedent

Designs and changes approved or rejected previously in the Historic District do not act as a precedent for a design or change under consideration. All proposals will be considered individually based on their own merit and unique situation within the Historic District.

Streetscape/Scale, Massing, and Proportions

The Streetscape is the setting or expanse consisting of the street, landscaping, and structures along the street, as seen by the eye in one view. **Streetscape includes the harmonious mix of structures, sidewalks, and the distance at which the structures are set back from the curb edge.**

Architectural elements, both vertical and horizontal, should be designed to complement the local streetscape. Attention should be paid to compatible building size, shape, and set-backs from the street. Vertical elements should be sympathetic to and support the streetscape.

Scale is a measure of the relative size of a structure or building component in relation to a known unit of measure, such as the height of a person, or the customary size for such a component. The principle of scale applies both to individual buildings and to streetscapes.

In the Historic District, where each structure forms a part of a larger streetscape, scale is of paramount importance. Proposed new structures and renovations should take into account the existing height, bulk, and size of neighboring structures as well as the scale of properties throughout the district.

If neighboring structures are one story in height, new structures and renovations should be designed in a way that minimizes any apparent difference. If a new structure is taller

than its neighbors, setting the taller element back from the lower level at the street facade may be appropriate. Structures located on corner or through lots should utilize this type of setback on both frontages.

Massing and Building Proportions of established structures should be reflected in new structures and renovations. Massing refers to the overall bulk of a structure and how it is distributed in space. Proportion refers to how the parts or elements of the structure relate to each other in terms of dimensions. The purpose of proportion is to establish harmony throughout the structure. Harmony is achieved in a building facade when facade elements are proportional to each other and to the overall facade.

When similar massing or proportions are not possible to achieve, the structure facade of a dwelling can be broken into smaller elements creating an illusion of a smaller structure in scale with its neighbors.

Building scale should reflect the existing height and width of structures in the immediate vicinity and the general scale of properties throughout the Town.

Rhythm is the pattern and spacing of repeating elements, such as windows or porch columns in a facade. The spacing of structures in the Historic District streetscape creates a rhythm also. Building patterns and rhythms, which define the visual character, should be respected. A street will develop a certain pattern or rhythm giving cohesiveness to the whole streetscape. A sudden change in this pattern can appear disruptive and visually upsetting.

The Principal Architectural Facade should face the street. The main entrance to the building should also face the street. All principal and accessory structures located on a corner lot, or on a lot which runs through to another street, or which has water frontage bear additional responsibilities because of their increased visibility from the public way.

Specific Design Elements

Architectural Detail

Architectural details such as door and window trim, cornices, corner boards, chimneys, etc should reflect the traditional quality and quantity of detailing found on the Town's historic structures. The distinctive features of the streetscape, existing finishes, and construction of historic properties should be both observed and preserved.

The use of historically correct materials is desired. However, alternative materials to those historically correct may be acceptable, especially for new homes or homes of little or no historic significance. This applies to all of the specific design elements even if not repeated under the following sections.

Windows

Existing historic windows should be retained if at all possible.

Double hung sash windows (two over two; four over four; six over six) should match any existing windows and should be used where visible from the public way. Awning, casement, and sliding windows/doors will not be permitted on the front façade.

Windows should have muntins on the exterior of the window. If single glazed windows are used, insulation may be provided through the use of interior storm windows, "triple-track" exterior storm windows or exterior storm windows with small wooden frames. Exterior storm windows should be finished to match the color of the window and trim.

The pattern, size, proportion, casing, configuration of panes, muntin profile, and associated details of the period should be maintained and/or duplicated whenever possible.

An exception permitting the use of vinyl, metal, or metal clad windows may be granted. If an exception is granted, those windows should mimic true divided light wood windows.

Siding

Historic materials should be repaired rather than replaced. Care should be taken to not damage, remove or obscure the architectural features or character of the structure.

The siding style indigenous to Oxford is wood clapboard. German siding and wood shingle are also in evidence. The use of wood-like composite material other than wood siding may be acceptable if it mimics painted wood siding.

Wood siding (other than shingle) should be painted or opaque stained.

Wood or wood-like composite corner boards, trim, and fascia are preferred.

Shutters

Shutters, either raised panel or louvered (adjustable or fixed), are typical and should be of rail and stile construction. Shutters should be made of wood or other material that closely mimics wood and should be attached to the window frame with working hinges and appropriate holdbacks.

Shutters must be of the proper proportions (cover the window opening if closed).

Chimneys

Exposed portions of chimneys should be constructed of brick.

Prefabricated or metal chimneys are not acceptable

Stoops, Porches & Decks

Stoops, steps, and railings should be consistent with the historic style of the building.

Porches and decks should be constructed of wood and supported by brick piers.

Steps to porches or decks should be either brick or wood. Wood steps should be painted, varnished, or opaque stained. Risers must be closed

All vertical wood surfaces, ribbon boards, railings, and pickets should be painted or opaque stained. Horizontal deck surfaces should be painted, varnished, or opaque stained if viewable from the public way.

Roofs

Details that characterize the roof should reflect the style, slope, existing materials, soffit, overhang depth, and decorative trim common to the streetscape. A consistent pattern may not be apparent unless the entire block is considered.

Incorporation of character elements such as dormers, eaves, and secondary roof elements over bay windows, porches, etc., are encouraged to reduce the impact of large roof areas and to provide a sense of scale to the house. One principal roof form should be chosen for the main body of the house which will set the roof slope and material for all other roof elements.

The gable style roof is predominant in the Historic District; however, roof styles other than gable will also be considered if consistent with the streetscape. The roof pitch for gable roofs should not be less than 7/12 (7" vertically for every 12" horizontally).

Roofing material for homes of historic significance should be wood shingle, wood shake, standing seam metal, or should match existing materials. If composite roofing material is used, it should be a premium grade (no less than 300 lb. per square) and closely resemble natural materials (weathered Wood blend or antique slate blend colors). If applying composite roofing, the valleys should be metal - not woven. Wood roofs must be treated with fire retardant material.

Roof overhangs of at least 6" are common and are encouraged, as are cornice returns.

Fascias and soffits ideally should be constructed of wood and include appropriate moldings. Newer construction materials may be acceptable if they closely mimic wood materials and existing details are not omitted. If newer materials are used, the surface should have the traditional detail and appearance of painted wood.

Skylights

Skylights visible from the public way are not permitted.

Dormers

Gable dormers or single window shed dormers are acceptable if deemed appropriate for the front facade. Shed dormers with multiple windows are not considered appropriate if viewable from the public way.

Exterior Doors

The original doors and their hardware should be retained, whenever possible.

If original doors cannot be retained, the new door should duplicate as closely as possible the size, proportion and shape of the original door. Wooden doors are encouraged.

Screen or storm doors should minimize interference with the appearance of the main door.

Sidewalks and Driveways

Public walkways, entrance walks, and driveways should be constructed of brick, although other materials may be acceptable for driveways.

Lighting

Exterior lighting should be historically accurate, in scale, and compatible with architectural heritage of the structure. Lighting should not shine directly on abutting properties or in the normal line of sight when using the streets, alleys, or sidewalks.

Foundations

Foundations of rubblestone or brick are appropriate and are encouraged.

Block foundations may be acceptable if they are parged.

Fences

Wood fences should have vertical pickets. Post & rail or split-rail fences are not permitted.

Height transition with any neighboring fences should be kept to a minimum.

The finished side of the fence should face to the exterior (face the neighboring property, shoreline, or street).

Iron fences typical of the late 19th century are acceptable if painted black.

Chain-link fences viewable from the public way are not permitted.

Fences are to be painted or covered with an opaque stain.

Color

Buildings and fences should be painted in colors that are appropriate to the local streetscape.

Demolition

Applications for demolition of all or exterior portions of a structure within the Historic District require approval by HDC. Demolition of any structure within the Historic District is strongly discouraged.

Enforcement

Refer to Section 17. Penalties for Violation, Zoning Ordinance, Oxford, MD - Revised 2006