2

Steps leading to Conrad House were demolished to construct a parking lot in front of Judicial Center.

Winchester Historic District Design Guidelines

SITE DESIGN

The character of Winchester's Historic District is made up, not only of architecture, but also of the site that surrounds the building. While many of the following site elements currently do not come under BAR review, much of the distinctive quality of the residential areas of the district comes from the landscaped borders, foundation plantings, tall shade trees, spacious lawns and colorful flower beds. Outbuildings, walks, lighting, driveways, and parking areas also all play an important part in defining the setting for individual properties.

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There are a variety of significant historic site elements still remaining within the historic district. The majority of such features include limestone and brick walls, wrought iron and wood picket fences and some historic paving materials.

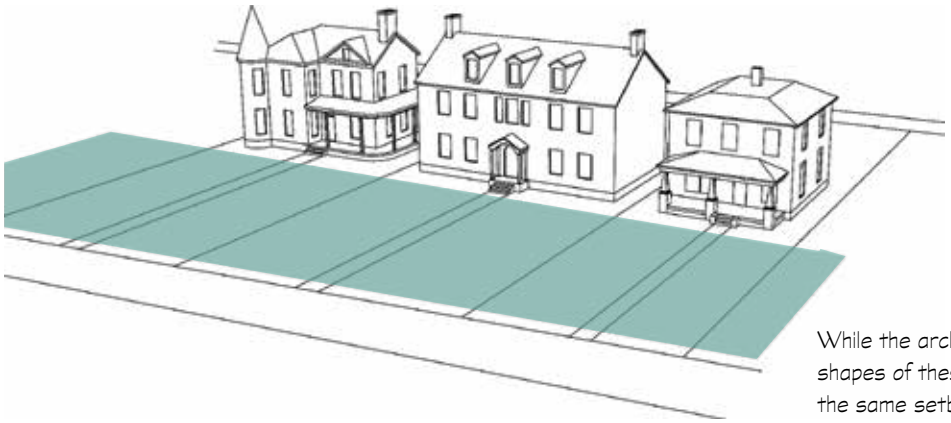
For these reasons, site design guidelines are addressed in this brochure and apply to both new construction and rehabilitation. These guidelines also apply to commercial buildings and rowhouses; however, their designs often result in a lack of significant site elements since the building covers so much of the lot.

Setback

Setback is the distance between the building wall and the property line or right-of-way boundary at the front of the lot. Setbacks in Winchester's Historic District vary greatly according to the subareas and streets. In most instances, the length of the setback relates to the size of the lot and house and increases as they do. On some of the residential streets, such as Fairmont Avenue and Washington Street, the lots are quite large and the dwellings have a deep set back. In other cases, such as the residential areas of Cameron Street and the commercial buildings on the mall, the setback ranges from several feet to none at all.

- Locate new construction between 85 and 115 percent of the average front setback distance from the street established by the existing adjacent historic structures. If all of the buildings in the block have similar setbacks, respect that line.

This row of American Foursquare styled houses all share the same setback



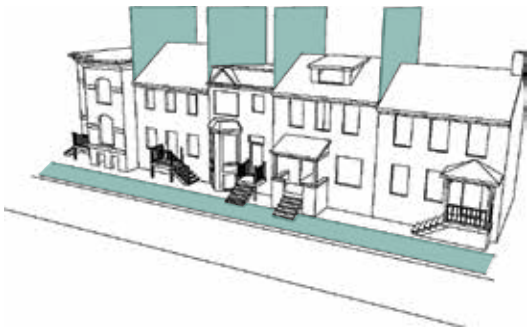
While the architectural styles, size and shapes of these houses vary, they all have the same setback.

Spacing

Spacing refers to the side yard distances between buildings. As with setback, spacing in Winchester's Historic District depends on the sub-area and there are three general sizes of spacing as already noted: large dwellings on large lots with ample spacing between structures; medium and smaller scaled houses which are relatively close together; and commercial buildings and rowhouses where there is minimal to no spacing between structures.

- Spacing for new construction should be within 15 percent of the average distance between existing structures on the block to respect the rhythm of the street. If all of the existing buildings have the same spacing, use that spacing for siting the new building.

Many blocks of the historic district have very limited spacing between resivdences.



The spacing and setback is very limited or nonexistent in blocks that have rowhouse designs.

The spacing between houses is usually similar within a block, but may vary throughout the district.

Driveways, Off-street Parking, and Walks

Providing circulation and parking for the automobile on private sites in Winchester's densely built up historic district can be a challenging task, particularly in the commercial and rowhouse areas where much of the parking is limited to on-street only. In the residential areas with larger lots, the use of appropriate paving materials for both driveways and private walks can help reinforce the character of the district or detract from it. Strategically placed landscaped screening can also help reduce the strong visual impact that on-site parking areas can create.

1. Driveways, in general, should be located only on large or medium size lots that can accommodate such a feature. Avoid placing driveways on small narrow lots if the drive will have a major visual impact on the site.
2. New parking should be located to the side and rear of existing buildings and should be screened with landscaping if the area is prominently visible from a public right-of-way.
3. Large paved areas for parking should not be placed in the front yard of any size property, except for on extremely large lots with deep setbacks.
4. Retain existing historic paving materials used in walks and driveways, such as brick, stone and examples of the early use of patterned concrete.
5. Replace damaged areas with materials that match the original paving.
6. Ensure that new paving materials are compatible with the character of the area. Brick pavers in traditional patterns and scored concrete are examples of appropriate applications. Color and texture of both surfaces should be carefully reviewed prior to installation. Avoid large expanses of bright white or gray concrete surfaces.
7. Consider using identical or similar materials or combination of materials in both walks and driveways.
8. Do not demolish historic structures to provide areas for parking.

In some neighborhood streets, houses with large lots have space for driveways.

NOTE: Consult Preservation Brief #32 for tips on making historic properties accessible. (Publication available at www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm or in the City Planning Office.)

Trees and Plantings

Landscaping of private sites is a critical part of the historic appearance of many of the residential areas of the district. Like setback and spacing, the character of the landscaping treatments changes throughout the district. Many properties have extensive plantings in the form of trees, foundation plantings, shrub borders, and flower beds. On some streets such as Fairmont Avenue, the dominant condition is open front lawns with large trees, while other streets with shallower setbacks have smaller yards with limited plantings.

1. Retain existing trees and plants that help define the character of the district. Replace diseased or dead plants and trees with appropriate species.
2. Install new landscaping that is compatible with the existing neighborhood and indigenous to the area.
3. When constructing new buildings, identify and take care to protect significant existing trees and other plantings.
4. When planning new landscaping, repeat the dominant condition of the street in terms of landscaped borders and heights of screening.
5. Limit the amount of landscaping in the front yard of small lots in order to retain the neighborhood scale of landscaping to the size of the house.

There is ample opportunity to provide plantings even on sites that have limited setback.

Fences and Walls

There are a great variety of fences and walls in the district, particularly in some of the residential areas. Fences and walls are rarely found in the commercial and rowhouse areas of the district. While most rear yards and many side yards have some combination of fencing, walls or landscaped screening, the use of such features in the front yard varies. The dominant condition on some streets is where front yards are partially enclosed with fences or low limestone or brick walls while other streets have open lawns leading to the street or sidewalk edge. Much of this variety in the residential areas relates to the difference in grade between the lot and sidewalk. Some walls and fences are very low while others are medium height. Materials may relate to materials used on the structures on the site and may include brick, limestone, wrought iron, or wood pickets.

1. Retain traditional fences, walls and hedges. When a portion of a fence needs replacing, salvage original parts for a prominent location from a less prominent location if possible. Match old fencing in material, height, and detail. If this is not possible, use a simplified design of similar materials and height.
2. Respect the existing condition of the majority of the lots on the street in planning new construction or a rehabilitation of an existing site.
3. The design of new fences and walls should blend with materials and designs found in the district. Commonly used materials are brick, limestone, iron, wood and plantings. Often the materials relate to the materials used elsewhere on the property and on the structures.
4. The scale and level of ornateness of the design of any new walls and fences should relate to the scale and ornateness of the existing house. Simpler and smaller designs are most appropriate on smaller sized lots.
5. The height of the fence or wall should not exceed the average height of other fences and walls of surrounding properties.
6. Avoid the use of solid masonry walls that visually enclose the property from surrounding more open neighboring sites.
7. Do not use materials such as chain-link fencing, and concrete block walls where they would be visible from the street.

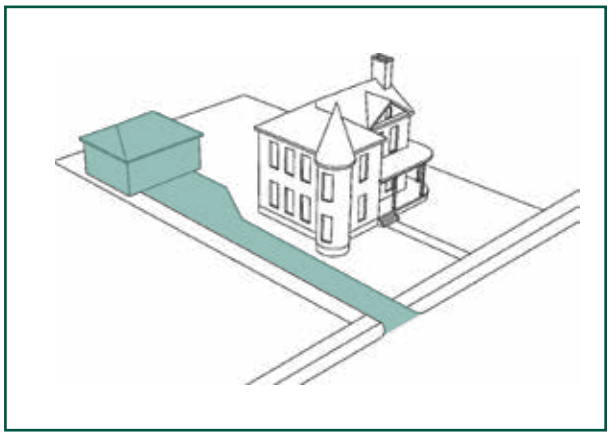
- If the majority of buildings on the street have a fence or wall, incorporate one into new site improvements.
- If the majority of buildings on the street have an open yard leading to the street, do not add a fence or wall to the front of the lot.

A combination of limestone base and a wrought iron fence creates an attractive and historic edge to the property.

Garages, Outbuildings, and Site Features

Many houses in Winchester's Historic District have garages, outbuildings, and distinctive site features, particularly properties that contain a large house on a large lot. Some typical outbuildings may include garages, carriage houses, or small residences built at the same time as the house. Site features vary considerably and may include fountains, ponds, pools, trellises and pergolas, as well as recreational features such as basketball courts and playset areas.

1. Retain existing historic garages, outbuildings and site features and follow the recommendations in *Brochure 3: "Guidelines for Rehabilitation"* if undertaking any work on such site elements.
2. Design new garages or outbuildings to be compatible with the style of the major buildings on the site, especially in materials and roof slope.
3. New garages or outbuildings should be located to the rear of the main house, or they should be placed to the side of the main house without extending in front of the centerline of the house.
4. The scale of new garages or outbuildings should not overpower the existing house or the size of the existing lot.
5. The design and location of any new site features should relate to the existing character of the property.



Garages and other outbuildings should be placed to the rear of lots that are large enough to accommodate them.

New garages can be designed with steep metal roofs and segmental arched openings to reinforce the historic character of the district.

Outdoor Lighting

Winchester's Historic District contains a rich variety of light fixtures located within individual properties. Most are electrified, although a few are illuminated using natural gas. Other properties have individual lamp poles, and most houses have attractive fixtures located on the house at various entry points.

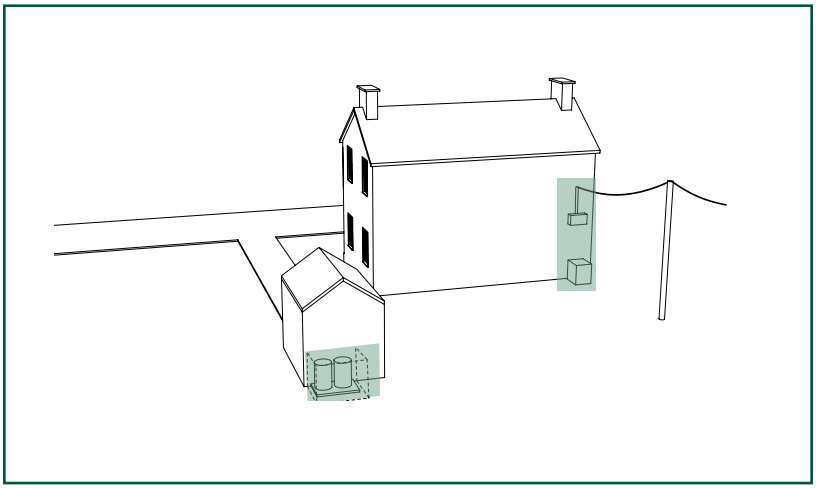
1. Retain and refurbish historic light fixtures where possible.
2. New lighting fixtures that are understated and complement the historic style of the building, while providing subdued illumination, are recommended.
3. Avoid using bright floodlights, and avoid lighting a site with rows of closely spaced lights along driveways and walks.

Historic light fixtures like this ornate example are an important site feature and should be preserved.

Appurtenances

Site appurtenances, such as overhead wires, fuel tanks, utility poles and meters, antennae, exterior mechanical units, and trash containers, are a necessary part of contemporary life. However, their placement may detract from the character of the site and building.

1. Place site appurtenances at inconspicuous areas on the side and rear of the building.
2. Screen site appurtenances with compatible screening or plantings as needed.



Place appurtenances in inconspicuous locations like behind the dwelling and garage in this example.

If exterior mechanical units cannot be place behind a structure consider screening them.

Additional City of Winchester Resources for Site Issues:

- Planning Department (Zoning and Subdivision Standards)
- Building Department (Building Code)
- Public Works Department (Tree Commission, Curb Cuts, Sidewalk Repair)

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