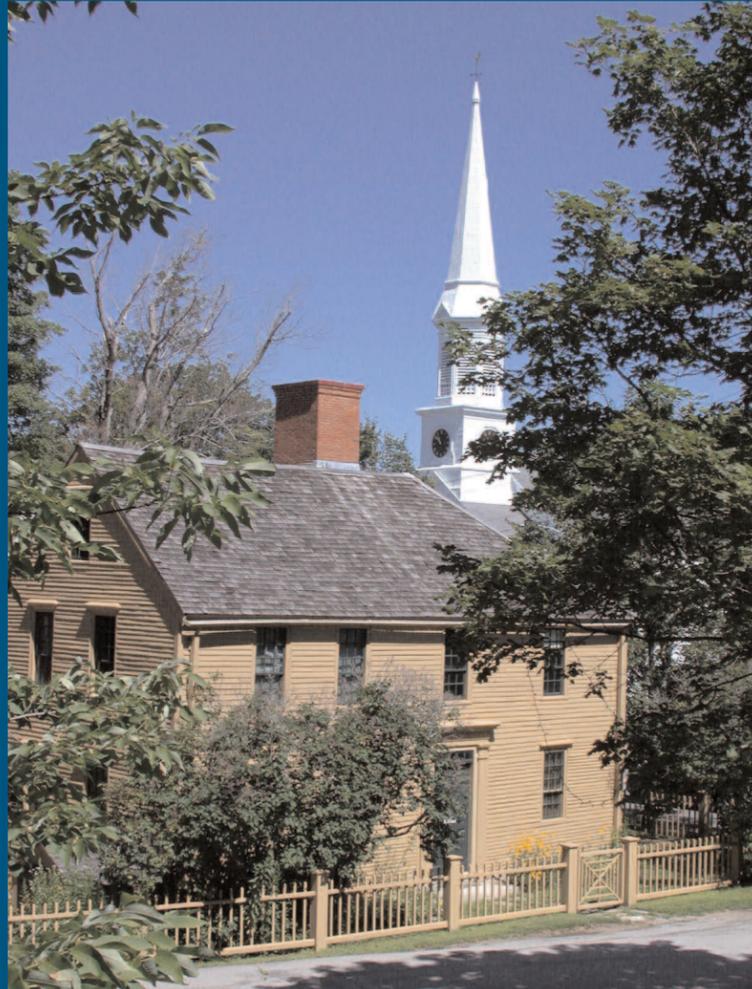


# Design Guidelines for Historic Districts and Sites



York Historic District Commission

York, Maine  
July 2005

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## INTRODUCTION

The specific design guidelines in this booklet are, as their name implies, guidelines intended to encourage appropriate design by applicants and foster predictability in Commission actions. While the Commission has the authority, in its exercise of discretion, to permit applicants to depart from the Guidelines, applicants are encouraged to follow them to the greatest extent possible and should not expect that the Commission will permit applicants to depart from them in most circumstances. The Commission does not anticipate departing from certain of the Guidelines, such as that regarding artificial siding. Further, it should be understood that certain properties, and the specific features of certain properties, may have greater than usual architectural or historic significance.

### Purposes of Local Historic Districts

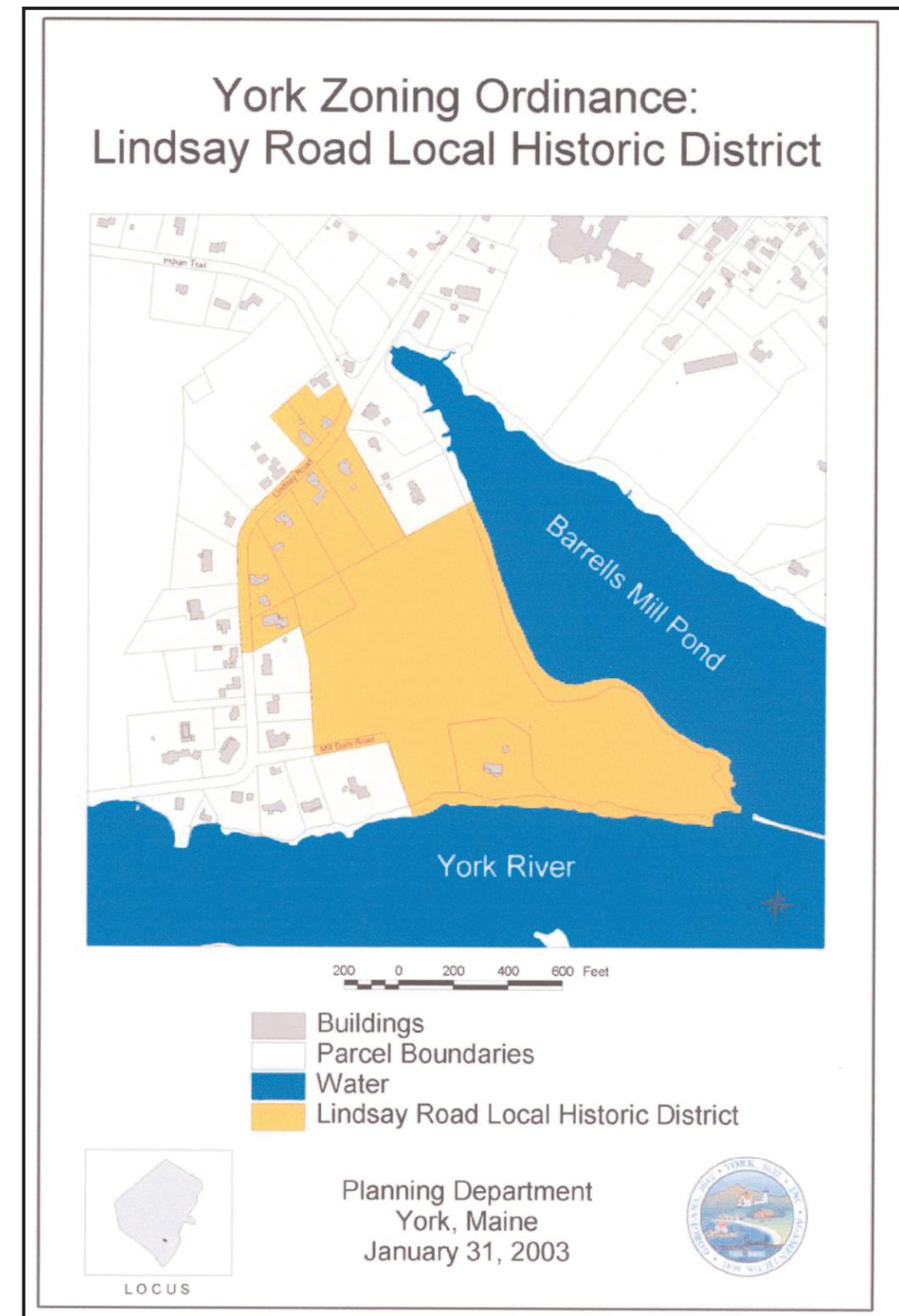
Local historic districts have three purposes:

1. To preserve and protect the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant to the history of the Town of York;
2. To maintain and improve the settings of those buildings and places; and
3. To assure that new construction is compatible with existing buildings and their historic relationship to other buildings in their vicinity.



*Shingle Style cottage in York Harbor Historic District, circa 1900 view (Courtesy Old York Historical Society)*

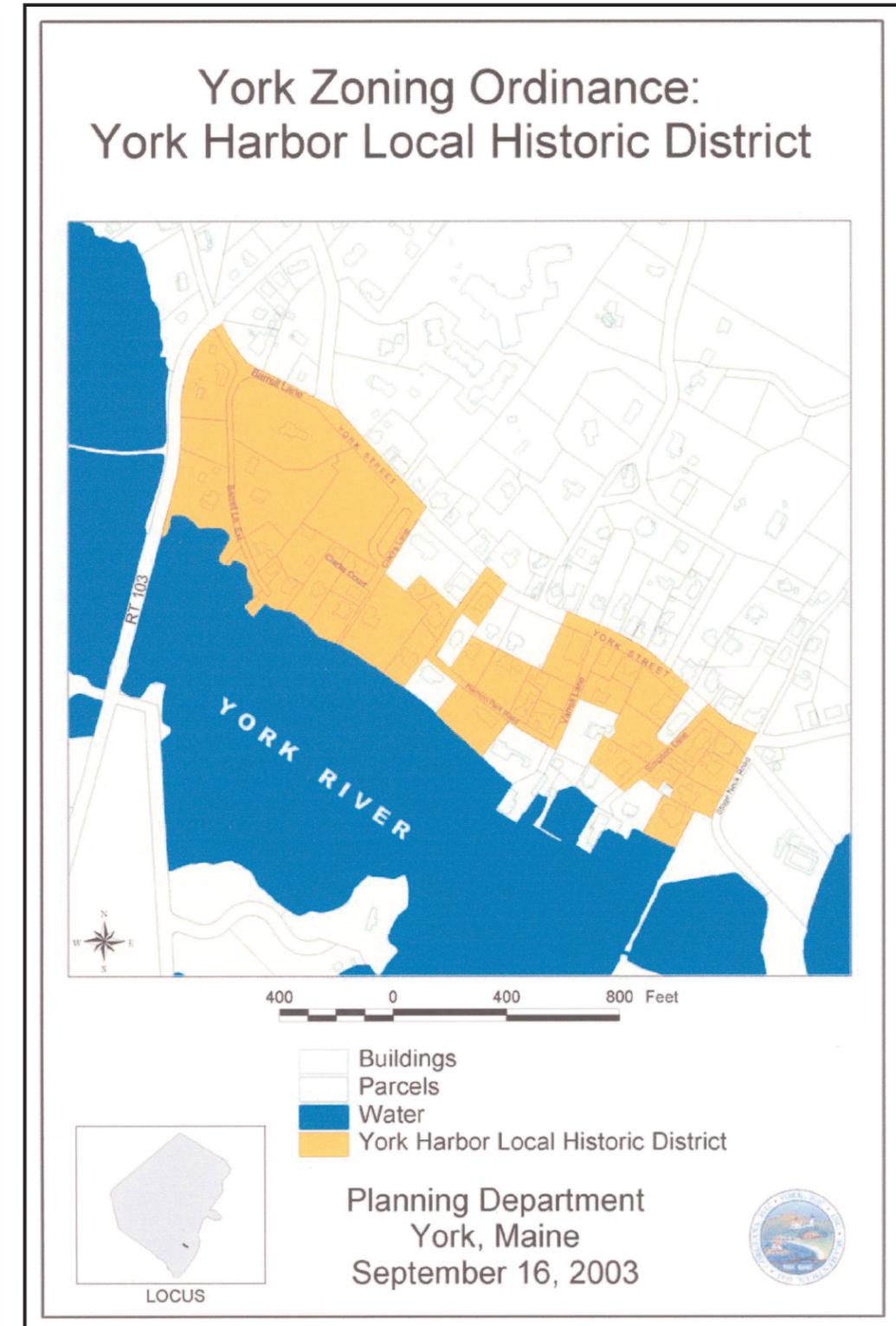
## LINDSAY ROAD LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT



## VILLAGE CENTER LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT



## YORK HARBOR LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT



## DESIGN REVIEW PRINCIPLES

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When reviewing individuals applications, the Commission will be guided by the following design principles, which have been adapted from the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* (1995):

- The historic character of a property should be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property should be avoided.
- Each property should be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, should be avoided.
- Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right should be retained and preserved.
- New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction that destroy historic materials, features and spatial relationships that characterize the property should be avoided. New work should be differentiated from the old and should be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale, proportion and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
- New additions and adjacent or related new construction which, if removed in the future, would impair the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment should be avoided.

## THE LOCAL DISTRICT AND LANDMARK APPLICATION PROCESS

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### Design Review Process

A completed application for work subject to review by the Historic District Commission must be obtained from the Code Enforcement Officer. Applications for either of Certificate of Appropriateness or Demolition shall be forward by the Code Enforcement Officer to the Chairman of the Historic District Commission. A completed application must be received at least seven days prior to a regularly scheduled meeting to be placed on the agenda. York's historic districts are outlined in Article 12 of the Town of York Zoning Ordinance. The ordinance is available on line at: [www.yorkmaine.org](http://www.yorkmaine.org) under Land Use Codes.

### What Changes Are Reviewed

All changes to the exterior of a building that are visible from a public way, park or body of water must be reviewed and approved by the Commission. Such changes include, but are not limited to, replacements and alterations to windows, doors, roofs, building materials, new construction, additions, fences, walls and landscaping. For the purposes of determining visibility, existing and proposed wooden fences and landscaping are considered impermanent and are deemed not to block sight lines from a public way. If there is a question regarding visibility, the final determination will be made by the chair of the Commission or the chair's designee.

### What Changes Are Not Reviewed

The Commission does not review paint colors and ordinary like-kind (exact duplicate) repairs and replacements of existing historic fabric. Shutters are exempt from review. However, shutters (and blinds, to use the correct term when they have louvers) are important historical features on a house. They also became important decorative features with the advent of the Colonial Revival style in the late nineteenth century. Property owners are strongly urged to retain wood shutters and blinds, and to have them mounted with hardware as they would if operable. Storm doors and storm windows are also exempt as easily reversible. Care should be taken not to damage or remove historic trim in their installation.



York Town Hall

# GENERAL GUIDELINES

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## General Guidelines

Although the points listed in these General Guidelines are covered in detail in the Specific Design Guidelines that begin on the following page, nine general guidelines are listed here to highlight their importance:

Ornamental and decorative detailing should not be removed.

Deteriorated ornamental, decorative and characteristic architectural features should be repaired, rather than replaced.

No artificial siding should be installed.

Wood windows should be retained.

There should be no new openings on primary façades, except to restore original or pre-existing openings.

Missing architectural features should be documented as authentic by photographic, physical historical evidence before they are reproduced.

Historic outbuildings, such as barns and automobile garages, should be preserved on their original sites.

New fences should not act as visual barriers from public ways.

Traditional building materials should be used when available.



*York Village, circa 1900 (Courtesy Old York Historical Society)*



*York Harbor, circa 1900 (Courtesy Old York Historical Society)*

## WOOD WALLS AND TRIM

Historic trim and detailing should not be removed.

Replacement wood clapboards or siding should replicate original dimensions and exposure.

Wood shingles should replicate original shingles in exposure and patterns. Wood shingle "shakes", which convey a rough corrugated appearance, are not historically appropriate for York architecture.

Artificial siding, including, but not limited to, vinyl, aluminum, asphalt, and artificial brick and stone, should not be used.

Awnings should be fabricated of canvas or like-kind material and mounted to be retractable.



Queen Anne style house in Lindsay Road Historic District with shingles, siding and ornamental trim intact.



Queen Anne style house in Kittery with synthetic siding added and trim removed.

## DOORS AND STEPS; PORCHES AND DECKS

Existing doors and door openings, including transoms and sidelights, should be repaired, not replaced.

Steps and railings should be compatible in materials and design with the porch.

If an applicant concludes that an existing door cannot be repaired or is an inappropriate door, the proposed replacement door should be made of wood and, if glazed with muntin bars, have true divided lights.

Porches and entrance porticos, including ornamental details, should be retained.

Open porches and porticos should not be permanently enclosed or glazed.

Porch and roof railings should be maintained in their historic design, including height.

Sleeping porches should be retained if original or historic additions.

Decks should be located on less visible elevations and should be constructed of wood with painted railings, posts and balusters consistent with the style of the structure. Elevated decks should be furnished with an authentically fabricated lattice or vertical board skirting below the floor.



Greek Revival style house with circa 1900s porch showing simple railing characteristic of York cottages.



Historic view of simple porch design. Note close spacing of balusters. (Courtesy Old York Historical Society)



Modern deck on rear wing of early nineteenth century house.

## ROOFS, DORMERS, CHIMNEYS AND GUTTERS

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Wood shingle roofs are encouraged as historically appropriate. Wooden "shakes" that attempt to replicate hand hewn shingles with their rough corrugated appearance are not historically authentic and should not be used.

Slate and terra cotta tile roofing should be repaired or replicated in kind, including color, decorative patterns and style. Synthetic slate or tile should not be used.

Rubber membrane roofing should not be used except in minimally visible locations.

Roof trim, such as cornices, fascias and rakeboards, should be maintained.

Historic dormers should not be removed or enlarged. New dormers should be added to unobtrusive locations, such as rear elevations, and should be designed in a scale to match the period of the house.

Skylights should be installed only where minimally visible and a flat low profile in a dark color to blend with the roof.

The height and dimensions of chimneys should be maintained, along with any decorative brickwork patterns.

All decorative metal, such as iron cresting, finials and weathervanes should be retained.

Wood gutters, when an integral part of an ornamental cornice or roof edge design, should be repaired and maintained. Copper gutters, which duplicate the original molding profile of wood gutters, may be considered as a replacement for wood gutters. Aluminum gutters should not be used.

Roof top HVAC and other mechanical elements, including soundproofing elements, should be placed out of view from a public way.

Roof ventilation with a continuous low profile ridge vent extended fully to the ends of the roof is recommended over box ventilators.

Roof decks and enclosures should not be added, unless historically documented.



*Chimneys are important architectural features.*



*Wood gutter forming a crown molding for a cornice. The original wood gutter was roofed over and a aluminum gutter and downspout tacked on.*

## ROOFS, DORMERS, CHIMNEYS AND GUTTERS

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*York cottages have a tradition of multiple dormers to provide light and air to upper stories, as in these York Harbor examples.*



*The original architectural character can be dramatically altered with enlarged modern windows, as in this Kittery example.*

## MASONRY AND STUCCO

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Unpainted masonry should not be painted.

Sealants should not be applied to masonry as a "maintenance" measure, unless a sealant is necessary to prevent further deterioration of damaged brick and stone.

Repointing masonry (sometimes referred to as tuck pointing) should be appropriate in terms of the type, color and aggregate of the mortar to be used and the width and profile of the joint. Joints should not be widened when cutting out old mortar. New mortar should be kept off the face of masonry.

Sandblasting should not be used to clean brick.

Stucco should be repaired with a mixture that matches the original as closely as possible. Non-traditional resin based stuccos do not replicate historic stucco.

## WINDOWS

Existing windows should be repaired, not replaced.

If an applicant believes that an existing window cannot be repaired, the applicant's proposal for replacing window[s] will be reviewed on a window-by-window basis.

If a replacement window is proposed, the material and design of the existing window, including the casing, size, number of panes and type of window, should not be changed, unless a more historically accurate design can be documented. If the window is not a character-defining feature of a primary façade, the Commission may approve minor changes in the proposed replacement window.

If a replacement window is proposed, it should not have muntin bars no greater than 7/8" wide unless otherwise historically documented.

If a window in new construction has insulating glass, it should have (i) permanently applied muntins no wider than 7/8" and (ii) dark colored internal spacer bars, but it should have neither flat muntin grids applied to the inside or outside panes, nor removable muntin grids.

New and replacement windows should not be clad in non-historic materials. Vinyl-clad and metal-framed sash should not be used.

Wood frames should not be metal panned and the dimensions of window openings, jambs and sashes should not be changed.

Stained glass or decorative windows should be retained.



*This historic sash cannot be replicated by modern vinyl clad windows with removal muntins that are not true divided lights separating each pane of glass.*



*Historic wood windows are much more durable than most modern sash due to the quality of wood and method of fabrication. They will last indefinitely when properly maintained.*

## STOREFRONTS

Storefronts (i.e., the ground story) have typically been remodeled many times over the years. Historic storefronts should be retained, including later remodeling that have acquired architectural significance as part of the history of the building.

New storefronts should be compatible with the style of the building in design and materials. Unless documented through historic photographs, avoid non-historic "Colonial" features such as small paned windows, pediments and shutters. Similarly, wood shingles, "shakes", wood, vinyl or aluminum siding and brick or stone veneer treatments should be avoided. Simplicity is usually the best approach in order to avoid having the storefront compete with the design of the upper floors of the façade.

If converting from a commercial to residential use, retain character-defining features such as storefront display windows.



*This historic view of a York storefront illustrates the simple treatment for display windows. (Courtesy the Old York Historical Society)*

## FENCES AND WALLS

If a new fence or wall is on or within two feet of the front of a retaining wall, then the height of the new fence or wall should be measured from the grade on the lower side of the retaining wall. If a new fence or wall is on or near a retaining wall, then the visual impact of the combined height from the lower side should be taken into account.

When possible, ground units should be located unobtrusively and screened with vegetation and/or fencing (including lattice fences.)

Fences running from the side of a building to a side yard fence should not be more than 42 inches high if a higher fence would obscure significant features on the side of the building or site.

Brick walls should use historically appropriate brick. Bricks and mortar joints should be compatible in color, aggregate and joint profile with the building.

Stone walls may be dry laid or set in a mortar that is historically appropriate in color, aggregate and joint profile.

The following should not be used for residential properties: (i) plastic fences, (ii) chain link fences, unless minimally visible, (iii) stockade fences, unless minimally visible and (v) lattice fences, except as a side or rear yard garden element.



*Emerson-Wilcox House with Colonial Revival style fence.*



*House in York Harbor Historic District with traditional picket fence.*

## OUTBUILDINGS

Outbuildings are integral to the historic character of many York buildings and should be maintained in their original physical relationship to the main building. As important and often rare historic structures, outbuildings are governed by the same guidelines used for principal structures.

Conversions for other uses should respect character-defining features, such as irregular fenestration patterns and large barn or garage door openings.



*Shingled barn with characteristic fenestration.*



*Barn with windows and doors altered with modern domestic fenestration that is not compatible with the historic character of the building.*

## PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS AND LANDSCAPING

Street furniture, including benches, lighting, paving, trash receptacles, and planters, should respect the historic character of the urban or rural surroundings of buildings. Generally, historic materials are the most compatible.

While lighting is a modern reality and a necessity for traffic safety and security reasons, its use in historic districts should be limited. Lighting should be kept at low levels, discretely designed to harmonize with the structure or landscaping and shielded to prevent glare or overspill of the light off the property.

The style and materials of light fixtures when visible from the public way should be appropriate to the historic character of the district.

Large expanses of paving are inconsistent with the character of York's historic districts. Landscaping, such as plantings and/or fencing, should be employed for screening the cars and pavement from public view.

The existing, natural contours and topography of the landscape should be preserved to the fullest extent possible. The preservation of mature trees is strongly encouraged. Native trees, plants and flowers should be given preference over other (exotic) varieties.

## DEMOLITION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

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Structures, including historically significant additions and outbuildings, should not be demolished.

The Commission will review all proposed alterations of, and additions to, existing structures and all new construction.

Alterations and additions should be compatible with the character of the building and earlier additions in terms of size, scale, massing, material, location and detail. The original portion of the building and earlier additions should continue to be recognizable apart from the addition by means of massing, articulation of setbacks, trim and ornamental detail. Additions should be designed so that the primary elevations of the original building remain clearly delineated.

New construction should respect the existing historic streetscape. The historic relationship of buildings to the street, including setbacks and open spaces, should be maintained.

The Commission will consider the appropriateness of the size and shape of the building or structure both in relation to the land area upon which the building or structure is situated and to buildings and structures in the vicinity. The Commission may impose dimensional and setback requirements in addition to those required by the Zoning By-law.

## NOTES

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## APPENDIX: PROPERTY TAX REFUND POLICY

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Section 12.6, Town of York Zoning Ordinance

**A. Purpose.** Historic resources are an integral component of the character of the Town, and the continued presence of the extensive, well maintained concentration of historic buildings in York is vital. Few of these properties are regulated under this Article, but this does not indicate a diminished value to the community. The purpose of offering a property tax refund for appropriate maintenance work is to provide an incentive for the owners of historic buildings to invest in upkeep and rehabilitation, thereby discouraging the loss of significant resources.

**B. Eligibility.**

1. Property. The building is a contributing structure within a National Register Historic District, individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places, a contributing structure within a local historic district, or is determined by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
2. Owner. There shall be no delinquent property taxes on any property in York owned by the applicant at the time of application.
3. Activity. Eligible work includes maintenance of the historic fabric by rehabilitation, restoration or preservation of the building. All work shall meet or exceed the standards adopted by reference in Article 12.14.1.

**C. Refund Amount.** The amount of refund shall be equal to the lesser of the following;

1. 10% of the actual cost of eligible work completed; or
2. the value of the total property tax paid on the property for the fiscal year in which the application is made.

**D. Application Requirements.**

1. Meeting with the Commission. Prior to submittal of an application, the applicant shall be required to attend a Commission meeting and present the project at a conceptual level. This shall be an opportunity for the Commission to offer non-binding guidance, advice and assistance to the applicant.
2. Application Form. The applicant shall complete an application form available from the Commission.
3. Supplemental Application Materials. The applicant shall prepare materials as necessary to supplement the application form. These materials shall include:
  - a. Work Plan. This shall document the scope, method and extent of work to be performed, in sufficient detail to demonstrate compliance with requirements of this program.
  - b. Maintenance Plan. This shall document activities to be performed and a schedule for performance of maintenance of the building for at least five years following the completion of the project.
4. General Timeline. The general timeline for this process is outlined herein to enhance understanding of the program. The Commission may vary the schedule by voting to adopt a different timeline.
  - a. Advance meeting with the applicant per Article 12.16.D1: any time.
  - b. Submittal of application materials: July 1 through September 15.
  - c. Application review and ranking: September 16 through November 30.
  - d. Budget process: December through to the May budget Referendum.
  - e. Time period for work, and fund availability: after July 1 through June 30 (the next fiscal year), subject to possible carry-forward to later fiscal years.

## APPENDIX: PROPERTY TAX REFUND POLICY

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**E. Application Review and Ranking**

1. Ranking. The Commission shall review all applications received to verify, refund amount and conformance with application requirements. The Commission shall rank all suitable applications. Rank shall determine the order in which funds will be allocated to projects in the event the program is not fully funded. Rank shall be based on the following criteria:

- a. The first ranking shall be based on the location (creating three priority classes), as follows:
  1. Buildings on property listed in Article 12.6 shall receive the highest ranks.
  2. Buildings on property in the National Register Historic District, or individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places, but not listed in Article 12.16 shall receive the next highest ranks. Other buildings shall receive the lowest ranks.
- b. Within each of these priority classes, rank shall be further refined based on two criteria. These shall be evaluated sequentially, as follows:
  1. First, buildings that have never received a refund under this program shall be ranked ahead of those that have (creating six priority classes).
  2. The final ranking within each of the priority classes shall be a first-come, first-served rank based on the date of receipt of the complete application.