

# **BOXFORD**



## **HISTORIC DISTRICTS** **DESIGN GUIDELINES**

Revised  
January 2007

## **Purpose of a Historic District**

Generally, local historic districts are designated to:

- *Preserve and protect the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant to the history of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and its cities and towns.*
- *Maintain and improve the settings of those buildings and places.*
- *Assure that new construction is compatible with existing buildings in the district(s).*

The goal of the Preservation and Historic District Bylaw is to maintain the integrity of individual structures and the District streetscapes. These guidelines are intended to explain the application of the bylaw by encouraging restoration and minimizing the physical and visual impact of renovation and/or new construction. **However, it is important to emphasize that each case is different, and must be reviewed by the Commission on its individual merits.**

## **What are the Standards for Review?**

There are many elements that contribute to the character of both a building and a neighborhood that are considered by the Commission in its deliberations. These may include architectural style, individual architecturally significant elements, and the degree of visibility of work under construction.

Section 7 of Chapter 40C of the State enabling legislation states:

*In passing upon matters before it, the Commission shall consider, among other things, the historic and architectural value and significance of the site, building or structure, the general design, arrangement, texture, material and color of the features of buildings and structures in the surrounding area. In the case of new construction or additions to existing buildings or structures, the Commission shall 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 in appropriate cases impose dimensional and set-back requirements in addition to those required by applicable ordinance or bylaw.*

*The Commission shall not make any recommendation or requirement except for the purpose of preventing developments incongruous to the historic aspects or the architectural characteristics of the surroundings and of the historic district.*

## **General Guidelines**

While recognizing that **each application is considered on its own merit**, the Boxford Historic Districts Commission tends to conform to the following:

- Original materials and features shall be kept and not removed or altered; if a replacement is necessary it should match the original in material and design.
- The use of artificial materials, including, but not limited to, vinyl, aluminum, asphalt, and artificial brick or stone shall be discouraged.
- Vinyl clad and aluminum windows in an historic district are inappropriate
- New openings on visible facades are discouraged, except to restore original or pre-existing conditions, or as otherwise required by applicable law.
- Restoration of missing design features should be documented by photographic, physical, or historical evidence.
- Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced, whenever possible.
- The use of new materials not originally found on the house is discouraged.
- The removal of artificial siding is encouraged.
- Demolition falls under the Historic Districts Commission's jurisdiction and is subject to review and approval.
- New construction should follow a pattern of site utilization similar to the character of the surrounding area. Clearly the three most critical factors to consider are the location, scale and massing of the proposed project.

"The scale of the structure should be appropriate to neighboring structures. Several factors contribute to scale: the height of the structure; the size of the window and door openings; the presence of decorative trim or other architectural elements, such as porches, bays, etc and the size of the of the building's footprint. Massing specifically refers to the form of the structure and the manner in which it is articulated into primary and secondary forms such as wings, ells, garages and barns: each with its own distinctive but related form. Careful use of massing can reduce the apparent scale of a large structure for instance by articulating it into a composition of manageable pieces. With these concepts in mind, the owner is advised to consider the scale of neighboring structures and to relate them on each of these levels as much as possible. Further, the applicant is advised to review the other relevant sections of these guidelines for specific information related to the features of the structures (i.e: windows, doors, siding, roofs, etc.)

Consideration should be given to the setback of the buildings from the street, the width of their facades and the spaces between them because these factors contribute to the rhythm and continuity of the buildings as seen together.

In historic districts it is imperative to conceal or minimize the visual impact of garages. Placement of the garage to the rear of the lot is preferred. Attached garages should appear as an addition to the house, preferably accessible from the side or rear, as in the continuous farmhouse, typical in many parts of New England. Whether attached or detached, the garage should be an integral part of the overall design concept.

The Commission does not suggest that new construction reproduce that which is found in the original historic structures within the districts, but rather that new construction not detract from the character of the place that they create. False reproductions of architectural styles not common to our area or location diminish the value of authentic examples within the districts. New construction should be sensitive to the past without copying the architectural styles that belong to it.

- New Additions: The most important factor in considering an appropriate design of a new addition to an existing structure is the size of the addition as it relates to the original. Additions are typically designed to be smaller than the original structure, are preferably located to the rear or to the side and are to continue the use of the same materials, siding, trim, windows, roofing, etc.

Larger additions should be set back from the main façade of the structure to preserve the massing of the original building. It should be noted that it is preferred that large additions be screened from the road. The materials and architectural detail should not overwhelm or diminish the original by reproducing it. It is important to note that the new

## **Style & Details**

The majority of historic buildings have undergone alterations over time, but can still be identified with a particular architectural style or historic period. Style may be expressed by certain features including windows and other architectural elements such as porches, bays or by decorative elements such as trim, door detail and shingle style. Historic details should be retained whenever possible.

New construction should not have a “blank” surface – total absence of detail is as inappropriate as stylistically incorrect or overused detail. New building(s) should be compatible with the style of neighboring structures.

## **Materials**

All historic building materials should be retained and maintained whenever possible. Replacement elements should be of the same material and design as the original. **Natural materials such as brick, stone, wood clapboards and shingles, and slate are preferred over industrial materials such as concrete, sheet metal, asphalt shingles, vinyl and plastic windows and siding, and insulated steel doors.** These modern materials generally represent a departure from the visual quality and craftsmanship that marks the majority of buildings within Boxford’s Historic Districts.

Removal of historic materials in favor of modern materials represents a loss of part of the original building fabric that is irreplaceable. Modern materials should be avoided in restorations, additions and on the exterior of all new construction. Neighboring buildings should be studied for examples of materials used.

## **Scale of Buildings**

New construction must be viewed as part of a larger setting, rather than a singular object. **Height, width, scale and general form** should reflect that of adjacent buildings.

## **Paint Color**

The wide variety of paint color schemes utilized during different periods is an interesting feature of our architectural history. Historic building owners are encouraged to research and identify actual or appropriate paint color schemes for their building. New construction should also use historic paint colors as a unifying element within a historic district.

All colors require Commission approval in advance of use. The choice of color should be consistent with the colors of adjacent buildings and the overall setting. A paint stirrer painted with the actual sample and listing manufacturer, paint name, finish and number are all required before approval will be granted. Suggested paint charts include, but are not limited to, the following: Benjamin Moore Historic Paints, California Historic Paints, SPNEA (The Society for Preservation of New England Antiquities).

## **Windows**

### *Fenestration*

This refers to the arrangement and proportions of doors and windows on a building. Generally, on additions, windows and doors should be set at the same level as those of the original building. Spacing and window size should also be consistent between building and addition. Window appearance is greatly affected by the use of small panes or large sheets of glass and the size and materials of window frames, muntins and mullions. Modern window materials may contrast greatly when juxtaposed with historic windows. Reproductions of historic windows that use thermally efficient glass are available. Save and repair windows whenever possible. If it is necessary to replace or add windows— the style and size of these windows should duplicate existing or original windows – or other appropriate windows on the building’s façade.

In new construction, historically appropriate windows with wooden sash trim and muntin bars should be used. True divided light windows are preferred; the use of snap-in muntin “grilles” should be avoided. Use of applied wood muntins on thermopane sash is discouraged. However, consideration will be given if such muntins are of an appropriate profile (relative to building type) and applied with weatherproof adhesive on both sides of the glass (with a spacer between the glass). Generally, vinyl and aluminum coated windows are not considered appropriate. Windows on a new building should harmonize with the scale, proportion, rhythm and materials of nearby buildings. As such, new construction should have a ratio of glass to wall surface compatible with other historically appropriate buildings in the district(s).

Twentieth century windows, including sliding glass doors, pre-fabricated picture windows, bay window units and horizontal tilt-out windows, etc. have little similarity to older windows found on historic buildings within the district and are therefore discouraged.

### *Skylights*

Not generally considered appropriate on the front roof plane of a building or, if the house is gable end to the street, on visible portions of the roof.

### *Storm windows*

Color should closely match the trim to which they are adjacent. Unpainted aluminum is discouraged.

### *Shutters*

When used, shutters should be of a wood louver design, with louvers slanted in the historically correct direction. (with louvers going up so that when closed they be down to keep water off). Each shutter should match the height and one-half the width of the window opening. It is recommended that shutters be installed on shutter hardware and be operable or made to appear operable.

## **Roofs**

Roof shape and pitch are important factors in the visual character of a building. Roofs on additions should be consistent with the form and style of the original structure, or simpler. Generally on all new buildings and additions the pitch of a gable roof should not be lower than 7/12 (although 9/12 or 8/12 are preferred). The exception is a gambrel – pitches may vary – but should follow proportions found on historic gambrel roofs. For new construction, consider the types characteristic of the district(s).

Historic roofing materials are typically wood shingles and slate. Depending on the age of the structure, asphalt (not architectural asphalt shingles) may also be considered appropriate. It is important that roof designs harmonize with others in the surrounding area.

## **Dormers**

The ideal dormers will add additional space while preserving the building's roof profile.

### *Shed Dormers*

Ideally, a dormer should be placed on the rear or less public side of a building with a side-gable roof. In most cases, a single dormer should be centered within the length of a side-gable roof. Paired dormers should in most cases be centered symmetrically within the roof area.

Setting the front wall of a dormer flush with the main wall underneath is not recommended; nor should the front wall of the dormer extend beyond the main wall of the building.

Removing the eave between the dormer's front wall and the main wall underneath is not recommended. The minimum recommended setbacks are - 3' from the gable end walls and 1'6" from the main walls underneath the eaves; at least 1' from the roof ridge (under appropriate circumstances the dormer roof may start at the ridge beam).

Pitch will vary according to the pitch of the main roof. In no case, however, should the dormer roof lack slope or be flat. The dormer should not rise above the ridgeline of the main roof.

Generally, windows (including trim) should account for at least 50% of the dormer's front wall face. Dormer windows should balance in style, alignment and proportion with the windows in the principal wall beneath the dormer. Exceptions may be made where asymmetrical placement and proportion could accentuate rather than diminish the architectural effect of the dormer.

The siding of a dormer should be the same material and color as the main walls of the building.

### *Gable Dormers*

See shed dormer section above for general information.

Gable dormers added in combinations, such as pairs or triplets, should be arranged symmetrically with the main roof so that they are centered and spaced proportionally. The distance between each dormer should be no less than one-half the width of each dormer structure. In the case of three dormers, where the central structure is larger than the flanking pair, the minimum distance between each should be set by the width of the central dormer.

### **Siding**

Original siding – generally clapboards or wood shingles - should be maintained or restored. When replacement is necessary, we recommend returning to original appropriate material. Vinyl and aluminum are not considered appropriate.

### **Gutters**

If gutters are installed, wood is encouraged, although other materials will be considered. Gutters, downspouts, and flashing should match house or trim color (as appropriate) and be non-obtrusive in appearance. Unfinished metal, other than copper, is not considered appropriate.

### **Lights/Lighting**

It is recommended that exterior lights, in proportion with the façade, be compatible with the period and style of historic buildings. Metal lanterns, either wall or post-mounted are often considered the most appropriate choice. Any landscape and security lighting is subject to review by the commission on a case by case basis.

### **Chimneys**

Any new chimney should be of a design appropriate to the period of the building, particularly in its placement and size. When repairs are necessary, proportions, details and materials should match existing chimney(s).

## **Doors**

Doors should always be appropriate to location, period and style of building. Natural materials are preferred, metal and vinyl doors are generally not considered appropriate.

French doors were traditionally used as ground floor access to rear gardens. They are not considered appropriate as a main entranceway and should only be used at the rear of a building. Sliding glass doors are not appropriate on any façade visible from public property

## **Porches, Verandas, Decks & Stairs**

Porches and verandas should not be of a size and placement that detracts from the integrity of the building. Decks should be restricted to only the first floor rear level of the building and should exhibit an attention to detail that is consistent with the style of the house.

Exterior stairs should generally be made of brick, wood or stone and should exhibit attention to detail in keeping with building design.

## **Fences**

Fences will be considered on an individual basis.

## **Foundations**

Exposed concrete (at no more than the minimum allowed by the building code) shall be hidden by landscaping or faced with appropriate materials.

## **Driveways**

Driveways, if not of gravel, stone, or brick, may be asphalt with a covering of pea stone pressed into the asphalt. (“chip sealing”) or of “Lynnpack” (also known as quarry dust or “crusher waste”). Additionally, driveways should not be unnecessarily wide or visually dominant.

## **Miscellaneous**

### *Handicapped Access*

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board Regulations, all public buildings must be handicapped accessible. In an historic building, care must be taken to create entrances that comply with the Act and regulations, while causing the least impact on the building's historic character and façade. Materials used for ramps or new entrances should be compatible with the original building, and should be designed to reflect the building's architectural character.

### *"Modern" Attachments*

Including satellite dishes, antennae, air conditioning or heating units and septic system vents should ideally be placed so they are not visible from public streets or ways. If this is impossible, they should be screened so that they have the least visual impact when viewed from a public way.

### *Roof Walks or Cupolas*

New construction of these items is generally not appropriate (exception is a cupola on a barn) as they were not traditionally used in historic Boxford architecture.

### *Retaining Walls*

Should be used only where necessary to mediate large grade changes or to create planting areas. It is preferred that they be kept inconspicuous and to the rear of the lot. Retaining walls should be faced with brick or stone. Exposed cement block, concrete walls and pressure-treated lumber are not appropriate.

## **Resources**

The Secretary of the Interior

*Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*

*Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*

Nantucket Historic District Commission

*Building With Nantucket In Mind*

Town of Marblehead

*Guidelines for alterations to existing buildings and new construction*

Boston Landmarks Commission

*Standards & Criteria*

Acton, Groton and Stow

*Preserving Villages, Archaeological Sites and Archives: common themes and proposed guidelines*

Brookline Preservation Committee

*Design Guidelines*

City of Cambridge Historical Commission

*Design Guidelines for Roof Dormers*

## **Filing Applications with the Boxford Historic Districts Commission**

The Boxford Historic Districts Commission (HDC) meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month, 7:30 p.m. at the Boxford Community Center, on Elm Street.

1. All applications for Certificates of Appropriateness and Certificates of Non-Applicability shall be on a form approved by the Commission and shall be signed by the applicant or someone duly authorized by him/her. Applications are available at Town Hall from the Town Clerk or HDC or the Chairman. Applications must be filed at least two weeks prior to the meeting date to allow enough time to notify abutters of a public hearing. The application fee for a Certificate of Appropriateness is \$10.00. Checks are to be made to the Town of Boxford.
2. A Certificate of Non-applicability shall have no expiration date and a Certificate of Appropriateness shall expire in *one year* from the date of issuance if not used within that period.
3. Each application **MUST** include a description of the work for which the Certificate of Appropriateness is requested. This includes the exterior architectural features of the building or structure or addition to be erected, reconstructed, altered, restored, moved or demolished. It should also include – where appropriate – the texture and material (shingles, clapboards, etc.), trim, gutters and leaders, windows and sash, doors and door frames, number of stories and roof pitch. In the case of a sign, a shop drawing of the sign showing its size, wording, color(s) and material is required.
4. In the case of new construction, reconstruction, or major renovation or alteration, **A REGISTERED LAND SURVEYOR’S PLOT PLAN, SKETCHES AND SCALE PLANS OR DRAWINGS SHOWING EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS AND CONTAINING EXACT DIMENSIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED.** In other smaller projects, sketches, scale plans or drawings and photographs may be required by the Commission in order to enable it to act upon the application.

Please include any other information reasonably necessary to enable the Commission to visualize changes to exterior appearance that will result from the proposed work. Interior floor plans are not necessary.

### **Note**

If you do not provide a thorough and complete package of information (as outlined above), the Commission will deny your application. You will be asked to refile.

6/28  
passed

---

# Clean Energy Installation Supplement to Boxford Historic Districts (HDC) Guidelines

---

## *Guidelines Supplement Adoption Vote, an Agenda topic for the June 2023 HDC Meeting*

### Introduction

Recognizing there is a degree of conflict with Massachusetts promoting actions to adopt Clean Energy sources and simultaneously preserve Historic properties, some basic HDC guidelines are needed to accommodate both regulatory interests.

This Guidelines Supplement is intended only to provide guidance and shall create no entitlement to approval of an Application, which the HDC will grant or deny only after full and appropriate consideration of the Application and its surrounding circumstances as provided in Boxford Bylaws, HDC Rules and Regulations, State Laws, and Department of Interior Standards.

In making a determination for a Certificate of Appropriateness, the Boxford Historic Districts Commission will use the following general Standards and Descriptions as a basis for its consideration and decision making process regarding Clean Energy Installations. Fundamentally, the older, more historically significant or architecturally unique a building is, the less willing the HDC is to agree with an intrusive Clean Energy Installation.

### Standards and Description

1. The historic character of a property and its contribution to the character of the District as a whole shall be retained and preserved. An individual Clean Energy Installation with features that diminish the historic aspects or the architectural characteristics of the surroundings and of the historic district shall be avoided.

By definition in this Supplement, Boxford District properties will fall into two distinct categories for purposes of a Clean Energy Installation, **Modern** and **Historic**. Properties built since January 1950 are herein designated as **Modern**, and properties built prior to January 1950 are designated as **Historic**.

When used in this Supplement, for brevity convenience in description, the term **Clean Energy** shall broadly include any and all manners of Energy collection, generation and storage requiring a new, additional or modified structure or equipment, such as, a windmill, water wheel, roof solar panel, ground-mounted solar array field, heat pump, geothermal, etc.

2. While the HDC appreciates there is a growing interest and genuine need for expanded Clean Energy Installations use and access, an Installation visible from the governing street in the District should be avoided.

3. **An Example:** An Application for a solar panel Clean Energy Installation may be submitted for consideration on a **Historic** building's roof visible surfaces that front on (that is, face) the governing street on which the building is located. Please recognize a solar panel installation which permanently alters the building's historic fabric or its defining architectural features, or detracts from the nature of the overall district, is inappropriate to the Historic Districts and is strongly discouraged.

An Application for a solar panel Clean Energy Installation located on a **Modern** building's roof surface that does front on (that is, face) the governing street but is visible from that street, particularly if the panels are partially obscured (e.g., by other roof lines, architectural features, such as, a chimney or dormer, or other architectural protrusions) may be viewed more favorably. Solar panels may also be located on accessory buildings if the size, shape and location do not dominate the roof surface visible from the governing street.

4. **General Historic and Modern building's Installation Consideration:** Solar panels should be installed so that they are parallel to the roof plane and preferably located in an area that is not visible from any public way. Solar panels should be installed in the least publicly visible area possible, not on the street facing roof of the principal structure. Installation, whether on a rear ell, subordinate wing, accessory building or on the ground, must have negligible visual impact upon the site as a whole, including incongruous impact on the surrounding properties and overall Historic Districts.

Solar panels otherwise permissible should be prohibited if there is an alternate location for the panels which would fulfill the main Clean Energy objective of the solar installation but which would be less visible from the governing street.

5. **Details for Modern and Historic building's Solar Installation:** Any solar panel permitted on a building's roof must be parallel to the roof surface, no more than three inches above the surface, and must minimize visual disruption of the roof surface in general, with panels held back from the roof edge at a distance appropriate under the circumstances. The HDC shall determine as necessary the solar panel setback distance on a case-by-case basis considering the visibility of the solar panels from the governing street. Piping, cables, rodent screening and all other associated equipment must be concealed from view and blend with existing roof and building color and surrounding area.

The solar panel installation must be reversible without damaging any feature of the building on which installed. Once a solar installation is no longer in functional use, the property owner agrees to promptly remove the solar installation and perform necessary restoration.

6. **Freestanding solar array of ground-mounted field installations** avoid the complications associated with altering an historic district structure, but are still not visually appropriate within the Historic Districts. As such, care should be taken to install these systems entirely in areas not visible from the public way.

7. **In general, a HDC Application for any type Clean Energy Installation system should include:**

- Manufacturer's information on the proposed equipment including an installation dimensional layout drawing and full materials list. Such information should include details on the materials, dimensions, number and dimension of panels, colors, etc. as well as photographs of the proposed structures. A sample of the materials may also be requested;
- Recent photographs of the existing buildings and site. Photos should also show the visibility of the proposed location from any surrounding public ways; and, for roof or building mounted systems, detailed architectural drawings may be required to show how the system will be incorporated into the existing structure; and,
- For a freestanding fixtures installation, a site plan showing the proposed location of the equipment and how it will be screened from view with hardscaping, if applicable. Depending on the complexity of the project, a professionally completed site plan, done to scale with all relevant placement and elevation topographic information, may be required.

8. If a Clean Energy Installation system will not be visible from any public way, either the contractor or the homeowner must apply for and receive a **Certificate of Non-Applicability** before such installation. The application must state the location of the installation, the dimensions and design of equipment to be placed on the exterior of a building and on site, details of operation and the route of all peripherals including exterior wiring and piping if any.

9. **Other Modern Attachments and Equipment Installations:** The set of exterior site installation equipment includes, but is not limited to, such items as backup power generators, satellite dishes, cell and radio towers, antennas, air conditioning, septic system vents and gas vents, electric utility meters, cable communication boxes, etc. Such equipment should be installed, to the degree possible, in the least publicly visible area and ideally in an area which has no visibility from any public ways. Proposed hardscaping is to be shown on the Application site plan drawing.