



TOWN OF RYE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION Guidelines for Site Elements



Granite, which is readily available in Rye, is a very durable material that is ideal for the construction of landscape walls. This dry-laid granite wall includes larger stones held in place by smaller ones, all topped by a relatively flat capstone.

SITE ELEMENTS

Site elements frame the architecture of a streetscape. In some areas, established features such as sidewalks, street trees, walls, fences, walkways, and driveways provide a consistent setting that strongly defines the unique character of a neighborhood.

When considering alterations to a site, property owners are encouraged to develop an understanding of the environmental characteristics of the immediate surroundings of the site, and to allow that understanding to direct the design of the alterations. This will allow a more compatible relationship between a property and its neighborhood.

These *Guidelines* were developed in conjunction with the Town of Rye's Historic District Commission (HDC). Please review this information during the early stages of planning a project. Familiarity with this material can assist in moving a project forward -saving both time and money. The Building Department is available for informal meetings with potential applicants who are considering improvements to their properties.

Guidelines and application information are available at the Rye Town Hall and on the Commission's website at www.town.rye.nh.us/historic-district-commission. For more information, to clarify whether a proposed project requires HDC review, or to obtain permit applications, please call the Building Department at (603) 964-9800.

Paving

Paving, which includes sidewalks, walkways, patios, and driveways, has changed significantly with the development of new materials. Historic paving could be as simple as gravel or crushed shells, or hard materials such as brick or stone, laid in simple or ornamental patterns. Materials popularized in the 20th century include concrete and asphalt, and more recently cast concrete pavers, often colored and shaped to resemble brick or stone.

In an effort to retain the quality of the Town's historic properties and districts, the retention and maintenance of existing historic paving materials is encouraged. Property owners are also encouraged to minimize new paving, and to use porous paving whenever possible to minimize runoff onto neighboring properties and into storm drains.

Since the character and context of every property is unique, each application for changes in paving location and material is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. When submitting an application for proposed paving, applicants should provide detailed, dimensioned site plans indicating the size and location of all existing buildings, paving, and proposed paving changes.



This brick walkway has a herringbone pattern with a running-bond boarder providing a formal entrance using a traditional material.

Zoning Requirements

Lighting, fencing, walls and paving are all subject to the requirements of the Town of Rye's Code Book. The ordinances dictate the height and location of fences and walls, the amount of paving permitted, the level of illumination allowable, and other requirements. These are separate and independent from historic preservation review, and it is highly recommended that applicants contact the Building Department at (603) 964-9800 to review requirements prior to filing.



Fences, walls, and gates can be found throughout Rye, marking property boundaries.

FENCES, WALLS AND GATES

Fences, walls and gates are important elements of the overall character of a neighborhood. They:

- Identify boundaries
- Provide privacy and security
- Often represent a major element of a streetscape, separating public from private property
- Often relate to a building's design



The granite piers with the metal chain are an unusual style of fencing, while the painted rail board fence is more typical.

Fences

Wood is a traditional fence material in the Town of Rye with some metal also present. Traditional fencing types not only mark the boundaries of a specific space, but also allow visual access between the historic structures on a property and the street. To retain visibilities of historic properties, fences in front yards should be limited to 42" in height, and should use a picket style that is at least 50% open. There is greater flexibility for side and rear yards including solid wood and metal chain link fencing.

Walls

Landscape walls are typically constructed of stacked granite, fieldstone or brick, and can include a stucco finish. Historically, the materials and style of walls were often related to a building's design.

The construction of walls that visually block primary building façades from the public way, particularly at historically important buildings, is discouraged. The recommended height limit of new walls in front yards is 36". While new walls that are stylistically compatible with the property may be appropriate, the construction of walls made of incompatible materials, such as concrete block, is discouraged.



The dry-laid stone wall has smaller stones wedged between larger stones without the use of mortar.

Gates

Pedestrian gates, traditionally along a walkway, are generally 3 to 3½ feet wide. Gates for residential vehicular access are generally 10 to 12 feet wide. When installed with a fence, gates tend to be of the same material and similar design as the fence, although often more elaborate. When installed with a wall, they are generally flanked by piers or gate posts that can be either wood, metal or granite.



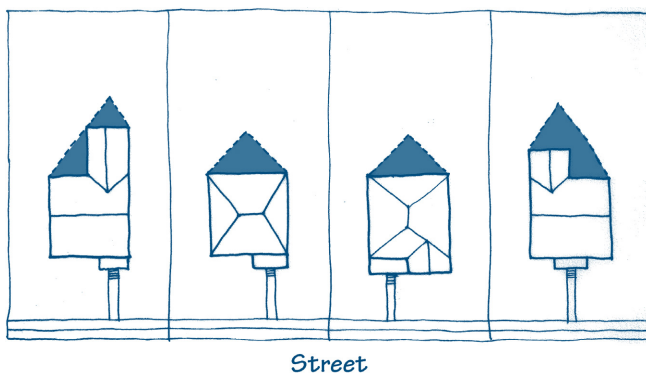
Gates at wood fences tend to reflect the pattern of the fencing. Paired gates are typically used at larger openings.

Modern Landscape Features, Equipment and Small Structures

Modern site amenities can greatly increase the enjoyment of a property as well as serve functional needs. However, many of these amenities can be visually obtrusive and are not appropriate within a historic context or setting.

- **Landscape Features:** Landscape features such as pergolas (appropriate at a few properties), fountains and sculpture, and play equipment such as jungle gyms, swimming pools, hot tubs and tennis courts can add to the outdoor enjoyment of our properties, but can be visually obtrusive in a historic setting.
- **Ground-Mounted Equipment:** Air-conditioner condensers, generators, solar collectors, trash dumpsters, and satellite dishes are all examples of modern, ground-mounted mechanical equipment that can affect the historic integrity of a site and its surroundings.
- **Small Structures:** Small structures can be functional and provide enjoyment for property owners. Generally less than 100 square feet in size, they include tool or garden sheds, play houses, dog houses, permanent sun shading canopies, building, or wall-mounted awnings and gazebos. These modern alterations can affect the historic integrity of a site and its surroundings. Small structures that are visible from the public way are generally more appropriate if their walls and roof are constructed of the same historic materials as those of the existing main building. The installation of pre-manufactured sheds visible from the public way, particularly those with metal or vinyl wall cladding, is strongly discouraged.
- **Refuse and Recycling:** Refuse and recycling bins can be enclosed in small structures and bins, as well as behind fences and shrubs to minimize their public visibility.

To minimize their visual impact, modern landscape features, equipment and small structures should be located in the rear yard and should not block the view of historic buildings or features from the public way.



The HDC's jurisdiction extends to all portions of a designated parcel, whether visible from a public right-of-way or not. This diagram illustrates the areas of a property that are out-of-view from a public right of way (concealed by buildings). Although still subject to HDC review, it is generally more appropriate to conceal modern landscape features, equipment and small structures from the public way, and to minimize their visibility.



Lighting should be compatible with it's surroundings. It should be installed in a manner that illuminates the needed areas, such as next to an entrance door, while minimizing spillover onto adjacent properties or into the night sky.

Outdoor Lighting

Outdoor lighting is an amenity of modern life that can essentially be thought of as two components, the luminaire (light fixture) and the illumination (light). For a historic house, outdoor lights should highlight the architecture and be of a style appropriate for the historic building. A wide variety of wall-mounted or free-standing reproduction replica historic lighting is available to meet the lighting needs of historic properties.

Residential lighting should be installed to illuminate only pathways and access routes, limiting the spillage onto adjacent properties and the public way. Generally, lighting on one property should not extend onto the neighboring lots or into the night sky. To minimize light spillage, many lights are available that cast light downward where it is needed to illuminate walking surfaces. In addition, existing lights can often be fitted with hoods or shields to direct light downwards.

If security lighting is desired, it is recommended that it be located as discretely as possible, generally limited to side and rear elevations. The number of security lights should be limited, and they should be activated by motion sensors whenever possible.

Site Element Review

The HDC encourages:

- Keeping views of historic buildings open to street
- Front yard development with traditional, simple arrangements, appropriate to the historic context
- Planting regionally native plants well-adapted to the site environment to minimize the use of water and chemicals in their upkeep
- Retaining, repairing, and maintaining historic paving, wall and fence materials
- Minimizing the amount of paving on a site
- Installing permeable small-scale paving, such as gravel or oyster shells, instead of poured concrete or asphalt
- Installing patios instead of raised decks
- Using traditional materials for walls, fences, gates and other boundary markers in an appropriate manner
- Installing fence posts towards the interior of a property
- Unobtrusively locating landscape features, small structures and ground mounted equipment where they are not visible from the public way
- Screening landscape features, play equipment, small structures, and ground-mounted equipment that might be visible from the public way with either dense planting, a wall or wood fencing
- Lighting fixtures that complement the building's architectural style and material
- Unobtrusive lighting of historic properties that limits light spillage onto neighboring properties and into the night sky

The HDC discourages:

- Removing historic paving materials, walls, or fences
- Placing parking areas in the front yards of residences
- Installing asphalt at walkways
- Blocking views to historic buildings and settings with solid walls, or dense fencing materials or planting
- Front yard fences that are greater than 42" in height, or walls that are greater than 36" in height
- Use of non-traditional fencing materials such as vinyl
- Use of chain-link fencing
- Visually prominent landscape features, play equipment, small structures, and ground-mounted equipment
- Obtrusive lighting of historic properties that illuminates neighboring properties
- Highly visible security lighting
- Security lighting that is constantly "on"

Site Maintenance

Exterior maintenance extends beyond a building's perimeter to include the surrounding property. Seasonal property maintenance also includes cutting grass, raking leaves and snow removal. Larger maintenance issues include: water management on the site, trimming trees, and regular repairs to fences, walls, walkways, and paved surfaces. Specific maintenance might be required for specialized site elements including water features such as pools and ponds.

Keeping a site clear of debris will aid in drainage during a storm and reduce the potential for debris becoming airborne in high winds. In addition, if not promptly removed some types of debris, such as garden waste and wood items, can become a home for termites and other pests.

Site Drainage

Substantial damage to a building can occur through ground water. One of the best ways to mitigate damage from storm water is to establish positive site drainage away from a building to prevent standing water along or near foundation walls. In addition, the drainage pattern of a property should not be modified in a manner that increases storm water runoff to a neighboring property.

Snow and Ice Removal

The use of salt and chemical snow and ice removal techniques can damage stone and brick foundations and to be harmful to the environment. In addition, melting snow against wood elements such as building siding and fences can saturate woodwork. Removal of snow away from a building by shoveling or a snow blower is recommended.

Trees, Shrubs and Plantings

Rye benefits from a well-developed tree canopy that provides shade in the summer and a colorful display in the fall. Rye's tree canopy contributes to the overall character of the community. Property owners are encouraged to maintain the trees on their parcel as well as large-scale shrubs and plantings.

Secondary Structures

For more information regarding secondary structures such as garages, larger sheds and carports please refer to the *Guidelines for Additions and New Construction*, page 07-9.

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