

Town of Sudbury, MA

HISTORIC DISTRICTS COMMISSION GENERAL GUIDELINES

The following general guidelines are used to determine appropriateness. More detail on specific kinds of changes (e.g., changing roofing, changing windows, etc.) is provided in the HDC Specific Guidelines.

- The historic character of a property and neighborhood will be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property should be avoided. Whenever possible and feasible, like materials and construction methods will be replaced for existing materials and construction methods.
- Within each of Sudbury's five historic districts, there are a variety of houses of differing ages. What is appropriate for a fifty year old house is different than what is appropriate for a two hundred year old house. In particular, where there are clusters of newer houses (less than 50 years old) materials, massing, texture, colors, and general design elements that might not be allowed for structures in older neighborhoods are often considered appropriate and in keeping with more recent construction methods.
- Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right, regardless of age or listing in a historic registry, will in general be retained and preserved.
- Exterior or facade changes to exteriors that would alter historic features, except when such changes replicate historic features, restore previously damaged historic features, or are otherwise compatible with the detail and character of the district, shall be avoided.
- In the case of new construction and additions to existing structures, the Commission considers the appropriateness of size, shape, scale, overall massing, and architectural merits of the structure or addition in relation to the land area upon which the building or structure is situated and the integrity of the property and its environment. The Commission may in appropriate cases impose dimensional or set-back requirements in addition to those required by applicable zoning bylaw.
- Demolition, removal, and moving of any structure that is visible from the street requires a Certificate of Appropriateness. Demolition and removal of structures is considered a substantial change to the historic character of a property and generally is not considered appropriate without remediation (e.g., reconstruction or new construction).
- All signs that are visible from the street that are larger than 12" in width or 12" in height require a Certificate of Appropriateness.
- Following Sudbury's bylaw, Chapter 40 of the Special Acts of 1963, the Historic Districts Commission has jurisdiction over changes that are "visible from a public street, way, or place." Visible from a public street, way, or place means visible at any time of the year (for example, in winter, when leaves are off trees), and when temporary structures (for example, fences) and vegetation (for example, shrubs) may hide the view. In general, the Historic Districts Commission considers cases on an individual basis whenever "visible" may not easily be determined.

SUDBURY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

Older and Newer Houses in Sudbury's Historic Districts

In Sudbury's four historic districts there are both older houses and buildings dating back to the 18th century and new houses and structures that are less than 50 years old. One will find neighborhoods of houses from roughly the same period as well as isolated houses that are of a different time period from the houses surrounding it.

The Historic District Commission's Guidelines are written with older homes in mind. If your home is a newer house, the standards the Commission applies may be less strict. For example, for a house built at the end of the 20th century or later, the Commission might approve aluminum clad windows whereas for a house built in the early 1800's it would likely only approve wood windows. In other instances, however, the age of your house may be less of a factor than the neighborhood you are in. If your house is newer but most of your immediate neighbors live in older houses, the Commission might only approve a gravel or stone driveway because it is more in keeping with the historic character of your neighborhood whereas if most of your neighbor's houses are newer, it might approve an asphalt driveway, a material popularly used in the last 50 years.

In general, owners of newer houses should know that each case brought before the Commission is different and that two factors among the many we consider are the age of your home and the historic character of the houses surrounding it.

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

Additions

Alterations and additions should be compatible with the character of the original building and earlier additions in terms of size, massing, material, location and detail. When designing additions, applicants are strongly encouraged to follow the patterns for expansion used in Sudbury over the last several centuries. 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, and the original building is not rendered subordinate to or overwhelmed by the addition.

Barns, Stand Alone Garages, and Outbuildings

The maintenance and repair of barns and outbuildings is strongly encouraged.

In new construction the Commission considers size, scale and placement of garages and outbuildings. Spacing and mass in relation to other structures and size of lot and adjacent lots is considered.

When outbuildings such as carriage houses and barns are converted to new uses, the original design elements and materials should be retained to the extent possible.

Chimneys and Brickwork

Chimneys should be constructed of brick, stone or stucco masonry. Brick should be water-struck, sand-struck or wire cut, in colors ranging through oranges, reds and browns.

Detail drawings of chimney work, to scale, and samples of brick and mortar color must be submitted at hearings.

Demolition and Reconstruction

Demolition of any structure, including additions and outbuildings, is strongly discouraged. As a rule, demolition will only be allowed if a structure is inappropriate beyond repair and if plan for reconstruction or replacement is presented as part of the proposal.

Dormers and Cupolas

Dormer and cupolas should be proportioned to the structure and period. Generally the width of a cupola should approximate one-twelfth of the length of the ridge beam.

Gutters

Gutters are part of the eave profile and as an architectural element should be maintained or replaced if necessary in most existing buildings and strongly considered in new construction. Gutters should be wood replicating a crown molding or half-round metal. Gutters only became widely used towards the end of the 18th century and for some 18th century houses and structures, particularly country houses, they may not be appropriate.

Doors

Original or later appropriate doors should be retained and repaired wherever possible. If replacement is approved, the original entrance design and arrangement of door openings should be retained.

Storm doors should be made of wood and be consistent with the style and history of the house.

All door hardware should be historically correct.

Driveways

Pre-1900 houses should generally have crushed stone, packed gravel, or packed dirt driveways. When consistent with the age and style of the house real brick, granite cobblestone, asphalt, and stone aggregate will be considered.

Fences

Fences should be of natural wood, stone, or other period-appropriate materials. Vinyl and other synthetic materials are not allowed. Fences should be compatible with the existing building in material, proportion, style and historic period and should enhance the streetscape.

Fences along a public street, way, or place should typically not act as visual barriers and generally be no more than 42" high. Fences distant from public view built for screening can be solid and taller but their visual impact should be minimized.

Landscaping

The following landscaping changes that are visible from the road require a certificate of approval from HDC. 1.) the addition, revision, or removal of man-made structures such as: fences, stone walls, pergolas, trellises, decks, walkways, play structures, and permanent benches. (See specific requirements in these guidelines.) 2.) the removal or material alteration of plantings (trees, shrubs, vegetation) that have been mentioned as conditions to the granting of a certificate of appropriateness.

Lighting (exterior)

All lighting fixture changes visible from a public street, way or place require a hearing, including:

Original historic light fixtures should be repaired or restored.

New light fixtures should be of a design and scale that is appropriate to the style and period of the building. Light bulbs should be of a traditional shape with a color temperature of Kelvin 2700-3500.

Up-lighting and façade lighting is discouraged.

Temporary or seasonal and holiday lighting does not require a permit but must be removed shortly after the event is over.

New Construction

New construction should be sympathetic to the pre-twentieth century local vernacular in line, detail, and scale and should respect the existing streetscape. The historic relationship of buildings to the street and to other properties in the District, including setbacks and open spaces, should be maintained. The Commission will consider the appropriateness of the size, massing, scale, height, and shape of the building or structure in relation to the land area upon which the building or structure is proposed to be situated and to buildings and structures in the vicinity.

New structures should be finished on the exterior with materials, composition, and architectural details that are consistent with the architectural style predominant in the vicinity. Individual features such as doors and windows should be compatible in proportion, size, shape, location, and pattern with similar features on other contributing structures in the district. Materials used in construction should present a genuine and historic appearance.

The Commission strongly encourages applicants to employ an architect who is skilled in the design of buildings respectful of New England's architectural heritage.

Paint Colors (exterior)

Paint colors exterior should be historically appropriate. Painting your house or structure white and shutters black (if you have them) does not require approval from HDC. Trying to evaluate the original color of your house can be of value. An historic color that you have discovered your house or structure was once painted is generally always approved. (For more information and guidance about historic colors click on Links in the HDC website. <https://sudbury.ma.us/historicdistricts>.)

Porches

Proposals to add, alter, remove, or enclose a porch that is visible from a public street, way, or place require approval. Size, proportions, style, detailing, decorations, and features such as columns and railings are important elements of a porch design. Original or later porches and stoops that contribute to the historic appearance of the structure should be retained. New porches should be consistent with the period and style of the building. Enclosing porches and steps so as to modify their original appearance is discouraged.

Roofs

The roof shape and slope are integral parts to the period and architecture of the building. In new construction, harmonious roof pitches are a major consideration. The roof shape, slope, and materials should be appropriate to the style of building or structure. The color and texture of the roofing material should reflect the color of the original, historic roofing material. Cedar wood shingles standing seam or painted terne metal roofs, and slate roofs are approved. Re-roofing with the same materials and color does not require a Certificate.

Shutters

Existing shutters should be retained and repaired whenever possible. Where replacement is necessary, new shutters should match the original or be of an appropriate style for the building. Shutters should be made of wood and reflect their original use so that they cover the entire window without extending below or above the casing. Operable shutters should be replaced by operable shutters and tiebacks. Slats should point up when shutters are open, and down when closed over the window. Removal of shutters requires approval from the Commission.

Siding, Trim, and Moldings

Siding should be made of wood and reflect the style and history of the structure. Neither vinyl nor aluminum siding is allowed.

Moldings and Trim should be wood, proportioned to the scale and period of the house, and reflect the style and history of the structure.

Signs

Signs and the posts that support them should be of wood. Lettering should be painted or incised or carved. The size and shape of the sign should be in scale with the setting, placement, and/or size of the structure it is past of. Signs do not need approval if they are no more than one square foot and there is only one such sign per building.

Signs must follow the Town's zoning bylaws and need to be approved by the Design Review Board in addition to the Historic District Commission. Neon signs and other self-illuminating signs are not appropriate in historic districts.

Materials to submit with a sign application:

- Scaled drawings and/or manufacturer's specification sheet showing thickness, materials, colors, and typeface to be used.
- Details and specifications for proposed brackets/hangers, installation ^[]_{SEP} methods, light fixtures, etc.

- Photographs of the building from various relevant angles with the panel layout rendered on the photos.

Skylights

Skylights are strongly discouraged and normally considered inappropriate in historic districts. Skylights may be approved in specific cases if it can be established that the skylights are appropriate for the architectural style of the building or if the skylight can be appropriately screened from view.

Solar Panels

The Commission strongly supports energy conservation and has approved solar panels to this end. Design of the panels is a major consideration. As a rule, panels should be black architectural of a uniform size and all panels in a given plane are to be oriented in the same direction and massed in a single group. Any panels visible from a public space should be mounted close to the roof deck and at the same angle as the roof deck. Mounting hardware should not extend beyond the margins of the panels. The number of panels should be minimized if too many are to the detriment of the building's appearance.

Stonewalls

Indigenous stonewalls must be preserved. Stonewalls may be dry laid or set in a mortar that is historically appropriate in color, aggregate and joint profile. If set with mortar the mortar should be hidden from view. Changes or the removal of a stonewall require approval from the Commission.

The following still need to be discussed and approved.

Walkways and Patios

Brick, pea stone or gravel walkways and patios are appropriate in most cases. Asphalt is discouraged.

Windows

Windows are one of the most important design elements of a historic building. This means that the size, number and placement on the exterior wall, as well as, trim and sash details, such as casing, size, number of panes and type of window, are all of significance to the history of the structure and the district.

For original windows and windows that are more than 50 years old, trim, and features should be retained and repaired. If the Commission approves the replacement of windows they should be all wood and of the same dimensions, design, and number of panes as the original or existing window. Windows should be single paned true divided light. Muntins should be wood and profiles should match or be similar to the original windows or be historically accurate.

If an owner is considering replacing windows, documentation needs to be brought to the hearing to substantiate why replacement is felt to be necessary. The documentation should include photos and a written evaluation of the window conditions prepared by a firm or individual specializing in the restoration of wood windows.

Storm windows of wood or aluminum are considered appropriate. Storms that minimize obstruction or are low profile such as “invisible” storms should be considered. Interior storms are recommended for consideration and do not need approval from the Commission.

For new construction, windows should be wood. Single-paned, historically accurate, true divided light wood windows are most appropriate, but simulated divided light windows may be considered depending on age, significance, and prominence of structure. Windows with snap-in or removable muntins not supporting glass will not be approved. In structures and houses less than 50 years old, aluminum clad windows may be considered.

For more information about windows, storm windows, and window restoration click on Links on the Historic Districts Commission website:

<https://sudbury.ma.us/historicdistricts/>