

TOWN OF OXFORD

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PREPARED FOR:

Town of Oxford

325 Main St
Oxford, MA 01540

PREPARED BY:

Central Massachusetts
Regional Planning
Commission

One Mercantile St.
Suite 502
Worcester, MA 01608
508.756.7717



HOUSING OPPORTUNITY OVERLAY ZONE DESIGN GUIDELINES HANDBOOK

Prepared by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission with support from the Town of Oxford.



This guide is intended to inform the development of multi-family housing proposals within the Housing Opportunity Overlay Zone in the Town of Oxford.



Overarching Principles

PRESERVING THE CHARACTER OF OXFORD

Building more housing does not mean changing the fundamental character of the community. Affordable housing development can be pursued in a manner that is consistent with, and complementary to what came before. Existing housing should serve as a reference point such that the character or architectural aesthetic can form the basis for new housing development.

DESIGN AESTHETIC

These Design Guidelines cannot depict every possible building configuration that can be built on a particular site. Rather, an attempt is made here to consider what is possible. These design guidelines have been informed both by our understanding of the aesthetic character of the town, in consultation with local experts including the Oxford Planning Board and Department of Public Works. Using these resources, we have learned the design should be modest and well-integrated into the neighboring structures and the surrounding community.

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

While affordable housing is highly needed in Oxford, every effort should be taken to ensure that any development has a minimal impact on the town's natural resources. Any development proposal should strive for the highest sustainable and ecological principles, employing green technologies, materials, and low impact design standards whenever possible.



ENCOURAGE

- ALL BUILDINGS SHOULD HAVE A PRINCIPAL FAÇADE AND ENTRY FACING AN OPEN SPACE OR COMMON AREA. BUILDINGS MAY HAVE MORE THAN ONE PRINCIPAL FAÇADE AND/OR ENTRY.
- ENCOURAGE DESIGN STYLES THAT ARE RELEVANT TO THE TOWN'S ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY, CULTURE, AND REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE WITHOUT COMPROMISING INNOVATIVE AND CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATIONS OF THESE STYLES.
- BUILDING FINISH MATERIALS SHOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO TRADITIONAL NEW ENGLAND ARCHITECTURE AND MAY INCLUDE, BUT SHALL NOT BE LIMITED TO, BRICK OR HIGH-QUALITY.



ALL NEW HOUSING SHOULD BE STYLISTICALLY COMPATIBLE WITH THE SURROUNDING BUILDINGS. OXFORD HAS MANY FINE EXAMPLES OF SMALL TOWN NEW ENGLAND ARCHITECTURE. THESE ELEMENTS SHOULD BE EVOKED IN ORDER TO HELP THE NEW HOUSING BLEND SEAMLESSLY WITH THE OLD.



DISCOURAGE

- GARISH AND EXTRAVAGANT STYLIZED ELEMENTS AS WELL AS EXCESSIVE USE OF DECORATIVE FEATURES
- VINYL, UNFINISHED METAL OR FIBERGLASS AS A PRIMARY FINISHED SURFACE
- EXTREMELY BRIGHT COLORS THAT ARE NOT CONSISTENT WITH THE TOWN'S HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE
- COMBINING DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT ELEMENTS IN THE BUILDING DESIGN, I.E. CONTRASTING MATERIALS AND COLORS





ENCOURAGE



- DEVELOPMENTS THAT ARE LIMITED TO NO MORE THAN TWO (2) TO THREE (3) STORIES IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN A SENSE OF PROPORTION AND SCALE IN RELATION TO THE RURAL CHARACTER OF OXFORD'S EXISTING HOUSING IN THE HOUSING OPPORTUNITY OVERLAY ZONE
- DESIGNS THAT EMPLOY A VARIETY OF TECHNIQUES THROUGHOUT THE DEVELOPMENT THAT AVOID MONOTONOUS BUILDING FACADES AND PRODUCE A DISTINCT "SENSE OF PLACE"

OXFORD IS CHARACTERIZED BY SMALL SCALE SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING. EFFORT SHOULD BE TAKEN TO MINIMIZE THE PROFILE OF THE STRUCTURE AS SEEN FROM THE MAIN ROADS AND TO LESSEN THE IMPACTS ON THE TREE LINE.



DISCOURAGE

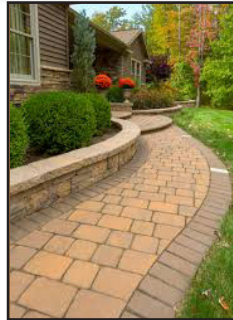
- LARGE-SCALE COMPLEXES WHICH DO NOT MATCH WELL TO THE MASSING, SCALE AND FORM OF EXISTING OXFORD BUILDINGS
- BOX-LIKE DESIGNS WHICH LACK BUILDING OFFSETS, PROJECTIONS, BALCONIES AND SETBACKS
- DESIGNS THAT EXCEED THE HEIGHT OF THE FOREST CANOPY OR OTHERWISE DOMINATE THE SKYLINE





ENCOURAGE

- CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN PARKING LOTS, CONNECTING STREETS AND BUILDINGS
- AMENITIES THAT INCREASE THE COMFORT OF PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT ALONG SIDEWALKS SUCH AS LIGHTING AND STREET TREES
- USABLE OPEN SPACES ADJOINING SIDEWALKS THAT CREATE ACTIVATED PEDESTRIAN AREAS FOR DINING, PLAYING, GARDENING, AND OTHER PASSIVE RECREATION USES
- IMPROVEMENTS TO ADJACENT CROSSWALKS, CURBING AND SIDEWALKS TO ACCOMMODATE INCREASED PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY ASSOCIATED WITH NEW DEVELOPMENTS
- OUTDOOR SPACE FOR SEATING THAT CREATES A PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE

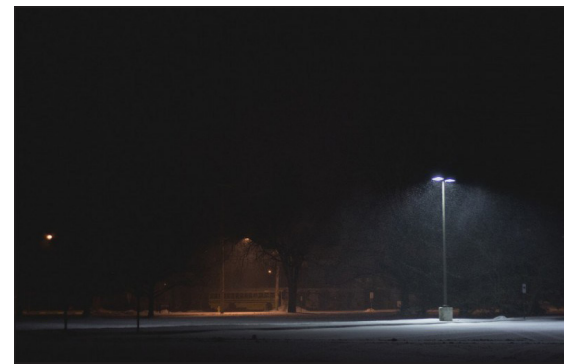


DEVELOPMENTS SHOULD BLEND SEAMLESSLY INTO THE FABRIC OF THE COMMUNITY, BEING AS UNOBTRUSIVE AS POSSIBLE. MOBILITY SHOULD PRIORITIZE PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS AND NEEDS FIRST, FOLLOWED BY CARS. EVERY EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO CREATE WALKING CONNECTIONS FROM THE SITE TO ADJACENT OPEN SPACES AND COMMUNITY AMENITIES.



DISCOURAGE

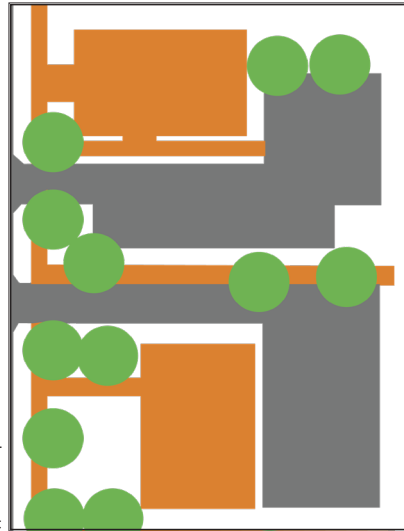
- PARTIAL OR DISCONNECTED SIDEWALKS; PATHWAYS THAT FAIL TO INTEGRATE INTO THE EXISTING STREET
- OVERLY NARROW SIDEWALKS AND PATHWAYS
- DEVELOPMENTS SHOULD SEEK TO MINIMIZE THE NUMBER OF CURB CUTS THEY EMPLOY SO AS TO INCREASE PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST SAFETY AS WELL AS CREATE A LESS CONFUSING ENVIRONMENT
- POORLY LIGHTED SIDEWALKS





ENCOURAGE

- PARKING AREAS LOCATED TO THE REAR AND/OR TO THE SIDE OF THE BUILDING
- PARKING LOTS PLACED BEHIND BUILDINGS TO ENCOURAGE THE ORIENTATION OF ENTRANCE WAYS, PORCHES AND WINDOWS TOWARD COMMON AREAS
- PARKING AISLES DESIGNED TO MINIMIZE CONFLICT WITH PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC AT SIDEWALKS
- PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS TO CONNECT OPEN SPACES, RESIDENTS' UNITS, PARKING AREAS, AND OTHER ON-SITE AMENITIES SUCH AS PLAYGROUNDS, LAUNDRY FACILITIES, MAIL BOXES, ETC.
- CLEARLY IDENTIFIABLE PEDESTRIAN ENTRYWAYS THAT ARE SEPARATE FROM VEHICULAR DRIVEWAYS



PARKING IS A NECESSITY IN ANY DEVELOPMENT, BUT IT SHOULD NOT BE THE DOMINANT FEATURE OF THE DEVELOPMENT. PARKING SHOULD BE AT MOST SEEN AS A SECONDARY CONSIDERATION WITH THE EMPHASIS ON PEDESTRIAN MOBILITY AND COMMON SPACE.



DISCOURAGE

- PARKING THAT IS A DOMINANT FEATURE OF THE PROPOSED SITE PLAN



- CURBS, MOTOR VEHICLE STOPS, OR SIMILAR DEVICES SHOULD PREVENT VEHICLES FROM OVERHANGING ON OR INTO PUBLIC RIGHTS-OF-WAY OR ADJACENT PROPERTY



- LIGHTING DESIGNED AND ARRANGED SUCH THAT LIGHT IS DIRECTED AWAY FROM PUBLIC ROADWAYS AND TOWARD OTHER ADJACENT PROPERTIES OR OTHERWISE IMPROPERLY SHIELDED FROM DIRECT GLARE OR HAZARDOUS INTERFERENCE





ENCOURAGE

- LANDSCAPING THAT COMPLEMENTS ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES AND, WHEN NECESSARY, SCREEN UNATTRACTIVE ASPECTS (E.G. HVAC SYSTEMS)
- MAXIMIZING VISUAL IMPACT BY USING MATURE TREES AND OTHER PLANT TYPES
- USE OF ARCHITECTURAL LANDSCAPE LIGHTING TO HEIGHTEN THE EFFECT OF STREET TREES AND OTHER SPECIAL LANDSCAPE FEATURES
- PROVIDING PLANTING, TREES AND SHRUBS TO SOFTEN HARD SURFACES OF PAVEMENT AND BUILDING FAÇADES
- PROVIDING SOME MEASURE OF LANDSCAPING IN PARKING AREAS TO HELP EASE THE TRANSITION BETWEEN PAVED SURFACE, COMMON SPACE AND PRIVATE LIVING SPACE



LANDSCAPING SHOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THE SMALL TOWN CHARACTER OF OXFORD. LARGE LANDSCAPING FEATURES THAT DO NOT ADD TO COMMON SPACE, SUCH AS LARGE PONDS, SHOULD BE AVOIDED. LANDSCAPING SHOULD ALWAYS REFLECT AND ENHANCE THE RURAL NATURE OF THE TOWN.



DISCOURAGE

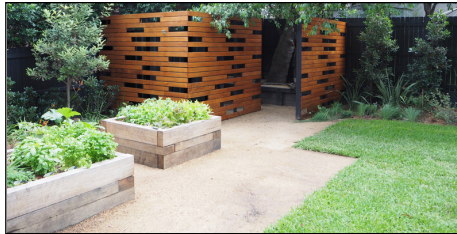
- IT IS NOT RECOMMENDED TO USE THE FRONT LAWN OR COMMON AREA FOR PARKING PURPOSES
- LANDSCAPING THAT CREATES UNUSABLE PUBLIC OPEN SPACE
- LANDSCAPING SHOULD NOT IMPEDE THE FLOW OF PEDESTRIANS NOR IMPACT THE USE OF DESIGNATED COMMON SPACE
- LANDSCAPING SHOULD NOT NEGATIVELY IMPACT THE FUNCTIONING OF STORMWATER ABATEMENT DESIGN ELEMENTS





ENCOURAGE

- UTILITY AREAS DESIGNED TO MINIMIZE THEIR IMPACT ON THE AESTHETIC OF THE DEVELOPMENT
- LANDSCAPING AND OTHER TREATMENTS THAT HIDE OR OTHERWISE DISGUISE UTILITY AREAS
- UTILITY AREAS ORIENTED AWAY FROM COMMON AREAS, PEDESTRIAN PATHS, AND CONNECTIONS FROM THE MAIN TOWN ROAD TO MINIMIZE VISUAL IMPACTS
- PLACEMENT OF INCOMING UTILITY LINES AND CONNECTIONS THAT HAVE A MINIMAL IMPACT ON THE AESTHETIC OF THE DEVELOPMENT
- WASTE CONTAINERS SCREENED FROM VIEW IN A MANNER COMPATIBLE WITH EXISTING ARCHITECTURE TO PROVIDE A COORDINATED DESIGN



UTILITY AREAS AND WASTE STORAGE AREAS, WHILE NECESSARY, CAN OFTEN DETRACT FROM THE COHERENCE OF COMMON SPACE. EVERY EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO MINIMIZE THEIR IMPACT.



DISCOURAGE

- PLACEMENT OF EQUIPMENT SUCH AS SATELLITE DISHES, HVAC, UTILITY METERS, CLOTHESLINES, PLAY EQUIPMENT, AND HOT TUBS IN AREAS VISIBLE FROM THE PUBLIC WAY
- WIRING THAT IS STAPLED TO THE SIDING AND/OR ALONG GUTTERS OR DOWNSPOUTS IS ALSO A SAFETY CONCERN.
- AVOID EXPOSED WIRING ACROSS BUILDING FACES OR HANGING ACROSS PROPERTY LINES TO ENSURE OCCUPANT AND NEIGHBORHOOD
- AVOID LOCATING WASTE CONTAINERS TOO CLOSE TO THE STREET OR RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS





ENCOURAGE

- WALL MOUNTED DECORATIVE LIGHTING FIXTURES SUCH AS WALL SCONCES TO ILLUMINATE BUILDING PIERS OR HIGHLIGHT BUILDING CORNICE ABOVE
- DECORATIVE OR HISTORIC LIGHT FIXTURE POLES TO ILLUMINATE PARKING LOTS AND PEDESTRIAN WAYS
- LIGHTING DESIGN THAT IS COORDINATED TO ILLUMINATE ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES, ENTRIES, SIDEWALKS, PARKING AREA, AND SIGNAGE
- FAÇADE LIGHTING AND ARCHITECTURAL LIGHTING THAT ARTICULATES BUILDING USES AND ENTRIES AND REINFORCES THE PUBLIC NATURE OF THE SIDEWALK AND BUILDING FRONTAGE
- LIGHTING ALONG STREET FRONTS THAT REINFORCES RATHER THAN COMPETES WITH THE CONTINUITY OF THE TOWN'S STREET LIGHTING



ONE OF THE BENEFITS OF LIVING IN A SMALL, RURAL COMMUNITY IS THE ABILITY TO ENJOY A NIGHT SKY FREE OF LIGHT POLLUTION. ANY NEW DEVELOPMENT SHOULD TAKE PAINS TO MINIMIZE LIGHTING THAT COULD CONTRIBUTE TO LIGHT POLLUTION.



DISCOURAGE

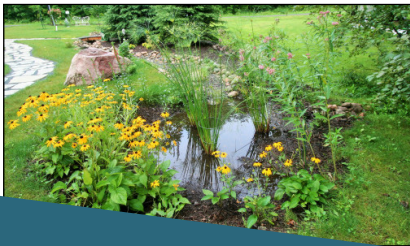
- NEON OR OTHER EDGE-GLOWING SOURCES, MERCURY VAPOR, LOW PRESSURE SODIUM, HIGH PRESSURE SODIUM, SEARCHLIGHTS, AND FLASHING OR CHANGING LIGHT SOURCES
- LIGHTING THAT IS NOT ORIENTED DOWNWARD OR OTHERWISE CONFORMING TO "DARK SKIES" STANDARDS
- UP LIGHTING SHOULD ONLY BE USED TO LIGHT A PRIMARY ENTRANCE WHEN THE LIGHT FIXTURE IS MOUNTED UNDER AN ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENT (E.G. ROOF, CORNICE, WALKWAY, ENTRYWAY OR OVERHANGING NON-TRANSLUCENT EAVES) SO THAT THE UP LIGHT IS CAPTURED.
- LIGHTING FIXTURES OF A SCALE INAPPROPRIATE TO PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY
- LIGHTING ALONG PEDESTRIAN AND ROADWAYS THAT COMPETES WITH THE CONTINUITY OF THE TOWN'S EXISTING STREET LIGHTING



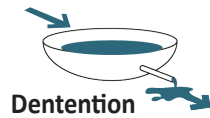
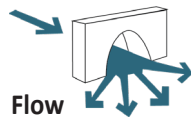


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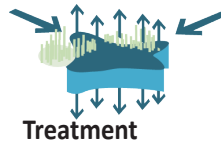
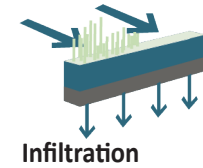
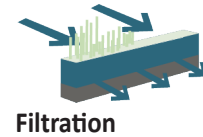
- LOW-IMPACT-DEVELOPMENT LANDSCAPING TO HELP MANAGE STORMWATER RUNOFF AND TREAT RAIN AS A RESOURCE RATHER THAN A WASTE PRODUCT.
- RAIN GARDENS SHOULD BE PLANTED TO ALLOW STORMWATER FROM IMPERVIOUS SURFACES (I.E. ROOFS, DRIVEWAYS, WALKWAYS, ETC.) TO DRAIN OFF THE EDGES AND SOAK INTO THE GROUND.
- PERMEABLE PAVERS, SUCH AS COBBLESTONES, SHOULD BE PLACED AROUND TREES TO ENSURE OPTIMAL WATER PENETRATION.



Mechanical



Biological



OXFORD'S WATERWAYS ARE A KEY NATURAL RESOURCE AND ARE TO BE PROTECTED. STORMWATER MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS NEED TO BE ADOPTED THAT WILL MINIMIZE THE IMPACTS OF RUNOFF FROM NEW ROADS, PARKING, AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE.



DISCOURAGE

- WHEREVER POSSIBLE, USE OF PAVEMENT SHOULD BE MINIMIZED TO ENCOURAGE THE FLOW OF RAINWATER INTO THE GROUND. DIRECTING RUNOFF INTO THE SEWER SYSTEM MAY LEAD TO SEWAGE SPILLS AND STREET FLOODING.
- FRONT YARD PAVEMENT MAY ALSO CREATE POOLS OF WATER, WHICH CAN PROMOTE MOSQUITO GROWTH AND POSE HEALTH HAZARDS TO THE ENTIRE NEIGHBORHOOD.

