

PROJECT APPLICATION FORM – 2014

Applicant: Town of Acton

Submission Date: November 2013

Applicant's Address:

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Purpose: (Please select all that apply)

- Open Space
- Community Housing
- Historic Preservation
- Recreation

Town Committee (if applicable): Town of Acton - Planning Department

Project Name: Historic District Study and Design Guidelines & Standards

Project Location/Address: West Acton, Acton Center and South Acton Historic Districts

Amount Requested: \$45,000.00

Project Summary: In the space below, provide a brief summary of the project.

This request is for funds to hire an expert consultant to conduct a detailed Study of Acton's three local Historic Districts, to tease out their unique features and characteristics, identify their special places within them, what to preserve and where to allow or encourage change, development, infill, and redevelopment consistent with the areas' historic resources. The study will build on the 20-year old historic district justification survey & documents. However, this study will drill deeper into the details. The consultant will evaluate the historic resources district by district, block by block, and lot by lot. With the findings from this study, the consultant will work with the community to create detailed, justifiable, and predictable design principles, guidelines and codes custom-tailored for each of the three historic districts, subareas and buildings within them as needed and appropriate, using state-of-the-art, widely accepted historic preservation principles and practices.

This foundation is necessary to further the purpose of the Historic Districts in Acton, which goes beyond simply maintaining the status quo in each district. The purpose statement of Acton's Local Historic District Bylaw speaks with equal emphasis about "*encouragement of new building designs compatible with the historically significant architecture existing in the Local Historic District*" as it does about "*preservation and protection of the distinctive characteristics and architecture of buildings and places significant in the history of the Town of Acton*".

Properly justified, documented, and articulated historic preservation principles and guidelines that focus on design, massing, placement, spacing, and layout of new buildings in the context of Acton's historic districts, and the special areas within them, do not exist. Currently, what passes as guidelines are generalities that can apply to any area with old buildings anywhere in New England – just change the name and title. This was better than nothing at the start as a temporary guidance document to bridge the time until something better and more precise could be developed. But, after more than 20 years of Acton's Local Historic Districts, this will no longer do. Having no specificity, the Historic District Commission (HDC) is left to extemporize every time an applicant is before them, causing frustration for applicants and eroding support for historic district protections. Better, more detailed design guidelines and codes will provide architects and developers a good sense for what to expect. The proposed tools will streamline the HDC's project review process, reducing the sometimes 2-year time period of sitting through

hearings. Proper design guidelines will foster a higher level of predictability for applicants, and a higher level of confidence for the members of the HDC. Proper design guidelines can result in project proposals that are at their core consistent with Acton's historic districts before plans even arrive at the hearing, regardless of floor area ratio, number of dwelling units or any other measurements for development intensity. Proper design guidelines let the HDC focus principally on architectural design details and materials. With proper design guidelines and zoning regulations, new development will no longer be viewed as a detriment to the Districts but can be leveraged to facilitate their long-term economic viability and physical survival.

Historic Districts with absent or vague standards can become victims of arbitrary and inconsistent determinations. In the absence of well documented guidelines and regulations the resulting uncertainty and insecurity appears to generate rejection of proposed new developments and re-developments in historic districts simply for fear that any change may be harmful. This practice misses the purpose of historic districting and historic preservation. Rather, it makes historic districts suspect for being just another NIMBY (not-in-my-back-yard) method for trying to prevent, divert, or stop development. Ultimately, such an approach weakens the credibility of historic districts and undermines their long-term viability as a historic preservation tool. If funded, this project will provide the foundation for a more credible and sustainable approach. The proposed guidelines and regulations will provide the HDC with the tools to issue within reasonably short time frames consistent, well-founded decisions that reinforce the historic uniqueness of each District.

With few exceptions, historic districts cannot survive in the long term as museums. Without renewal, rejuvenation and growth they are doomed to economic failure and dilapidation. This is especially true where historic districts include old commercial centers and/or where significant tourism dollars are absent from the local economy. The proposed study project will help foster the preservation of dynamic historic districts in Acton that live and breathe with the times while retaining the roots of their origin. With proper design guidelines and standards, the HDC will have the tools to appropriately preserve the Historic Districts as important historic resources for the Town without shutting them down to economic activity, renewal and rejuvenation.

This project is eligible for funding support from the Massachusetts Historical Commission's planning and survey grant program. Showing that local funding commitment is in place advances the chances of obtaining grant funding in a highly competitive program. The Planning Department is prepared to apply for a MHC grant after CPA funding is awarded. If CPA funding is awarded in 2014, the first subsequent MHC funding cycle begins in the winter of 2015 with awards expected in March 2015.

A Selectmen appointed steering committee should guide the study project. As an initial recommendation it should consist of at least one of the following:

An Historic District Commission representative

A Planning Board representative

An historic district owner of residential property

An historic district owner of commercial property

An historic district owner of a business in a

An Acton resident without any historic district connection, interest, or other involvement

Estimated Date for Commencement of Project: Spring 2015

Estimated Date for Completion of Project: Spring 2016

Consistency with Town of Acton Plans:

Acton 2020, adopted by Town Meeting in 2012 as a policy document, recommends:

Goal 1: Preserve and Enhance Town Character

Objective 1.2: Preserve and enhance key centers.

Strategy 1.2.3: Improve West Acton Village Center while preserving its historic character

Action Item 1.2.3.1: West Acton – Plan some growth

Consider designating West Acton Village (WAV) as a “key center” to which some growth is guided. This action step is a planning process focused on WAV that should consider the planning context provided by the *Key Centers Plan*.¹² Prepare a design study and development plan for the village to provide the basis for zoning changes and infrastructure investments.¹³

¹² Use this planning process to ensure we understand what makes West Acton currently a successful village so that efforts to enhance it don't threaten what contributes to its village identity and livability.

¹³ Based on this study:

- Delineate any areas that should receive development, infill, and redevelopment.
- Include water and air quality considerations when delineating areas to be redeveloped/subject to infill, and include low impact development and advanced stormwater management in design guidelines.
- Prepare WAV-specific design guidelines.
- Create a list of criteria to apply as incentives during special permit development review.
- Make necessary zoning changes and infrastructure improvements.

Action Item 1.2.3.2: Concentrate investments in West Acton

As recommended in the Key Centers Plan and the development plan for West Acton Village, concentrate Town investments such as sidewalks, landscape and streetscape improvements, traffic calming, and wastewater treatment facilities in and around the village.¹⁴

¹⁴ Sewer extension and package wastewater treatment plants are options to consider. This action step can begin in the medium term (after Kelley's Corner investments) but may not be completed until the long term.

Objective 1.4: Preserve historic buildings and landscapes

Strategy 1.4.1: Develop preservation priorities

Action Item 1.4.1.1: Identify historic features

Continue to define historic characteristics (buildings, views, landscapes, etc.) and work with relevant committees to actively preserve these.¹⁹

¹⁹ Incorporate appropriate recommendations from 2006 Freedom's Way Heritage Landscape Inventory and refer to Mass Historic Commission Survey Forms. Consider desirability of expanding current historic districts to include older historic homes and historically significant structures (as listed in the Cultural Resources List)

Strategy 1.4.2: Preserve historic features Preserve historically significant buildings, landscapes and other historic features.

Action Item 1.4.2.1: Coordinate Historic District review process

Coordinate Historic District Commission review with development of design guidelines and BoS special permit review of development in historic village centers. Consider giving HDC jurisdiction to review color choices.

CHAPTER P

LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT BYLAW

The Town of Acton hereby creates a Local Historic District, to be administered by an Historic District Commission as provided for under Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40C, as amended.

P1. Purpose

The purpose of this bylaw is to aid in the preservation and protection of the distinctive characteristics and architecture of buildings and places significant in the history of the Town of Acton, the maintenance and improvement of their settings and the encouragement of new building designs compatible with the historically significant architecture existing in the Local Historic District(s) when this Bylaw was first adopted in 1990. This Bylaw does not seek to establish an architectural museum, but instead to inform concerning the historical process of architectural growth and adaptation to heighten a sense of educated pride in our heritage.

P2. Definitions

The terms defined in this section shall be capitalized throughout this Bylaw. Where a defined term has not been capitalized, it is intended that the meaning of the term be the same as the meaning ascribed to it in this section unless another meaning is clearly intended by its context. As used in this Bylaw the following terms shall have the following meaning:

"Alteration" or "To Alter" *The act of the fact of rebuilding, reconstruction, restoration, replication, removal, demolition, and other similar activities.*

"Building" *A combination of materials forming a shelter for persons, animals or property.*

"Certificate" *A Certificate of Appropriateness, a Certificate of Non-Applicability, or a Certificate of Hardship as set forth in this Bylaw.*

"Commission" *The Historic District Commission as established in this Bylaw.*

"Construction" or "To Construct" *The act or the fact of building, erecting, installing, enlarging, moving and other similar activities.*

"Display Area"	<i>The total surface area of a SIGN, including all lettering, wording, designs, symbols, background and frame, but not including any support structure or bracing incidental to the SIGN. The DISPLAY AREA of an individual letter SIGN or irregular shaped SIGN shall be the area of the smallest rectangle into which the letters or shape will fit. Where SIGN faces are placed back to back and face in opposite directions, the DISPLAY AREA shall be defined as the area of one face of the SIGN.</i>
"District"	<i>The Local Historic District as established in this Bylaw consisting of one or more DISTRICT areas.</i>
"Exterior Architectural Feature"	<i>Such portion of the exterior of a BUILDING or STRUCTURE as is open to view from a public way or ways, including but not limited to architectural style and general arrangement and setting thereof, the kind and texture of exterior building materials, and the type and style of windows, doors, lights, signs and other appurtenant exterior fixtures.</i>
"Person Aggrieved":	<i>The applicant; an owner of adjoining property; an owner of property within the same DISTRICT area; or an owner of property within 100 feet of said DISTRICT area and any charitable corporation in which one of its purposes is the preservation of historic structures or districts.</i>
"Signs"	<i>Any symbol, design or device used to identify or advertise any place of business, product, activity or person.</i>
"Structure"	<i>A combination of materials other than a BUILDING, including but not limited to a SIGN, fence, wall, terrace, walk or driveway.</i>
"Substantially at Grade Level"	<i>Located at the existing or altered surface of the earth or pavement which does not/will not exceed one foot in height above the surface of the earth or pavement.</i>
"Temporary Structure or Building"	<i>A BUILDING not to be in existence for a period of more than two years. A STRUCTURE not to be in existence for a period of more than one year.</i>

P3. District

The DISTRICT shall consist of one or more DISTRICT areas as listed in Section 13 (Appendices) of this Bylaw.

P4. Commission

- 4.1.1** *The COMMISSION shall consist of seven (7) regular members appointed by the Board of Selectmen to staggered three (3) year terms, such that three members terms will expire in one year and two members terms will expire in the second and third year, and so forth.*
- 4.2** *The COMMISSION shall include among its regular or alternate members, if practical, an Acton property owner who resides in each of the three DISTRICT areas, one Acton resident chosen from two nominees put forward by the Board of Realtors covering Acton, one Acton resident chosen from two nominees put forward by the chapter of the American Institute of Architects covering Acton, and one Acton resident chosen from two nominees put forward by the Acton Historical Society. If within thirty days after submission of a written request for nominees to any of the organizations herein named insufficient nominations have been made, the Board of Selectmen may proceed to make appointments as it desires.*
- 4.3** *The Board of Selectmen may at its sole discretion, appoint up to a maximum of four (4) alternate members to the COMMISSION for three (3) year terms. The available alternate member(s) with the longest continuous length of service as an alternate may be substituted and vote on a one for one basis, in place of any regular member(s) who may be absent or has/have an actual or apparent conflict of interest, or in the case of a vacancy in the regular memberships.*
- 4.4** *Each member shall continue to serve in office after the expiration date of his or her term until a successor is duly appointed.*
- 4.5** *Meetings of the COMMISSION shall be held at the call of the Chairman, at the request of two members and in such other manner as the COMMISSION shall determine in its Rules and Regulations.*
- 4.6** *A quorum is necessary for the COMMISSION to conduct a meeting. At least four (4) members of the COMMISSION (or Alternate Members with voting rights as to a matter(s) under consideration) must be present.*

P5. Commission Powers and Duties

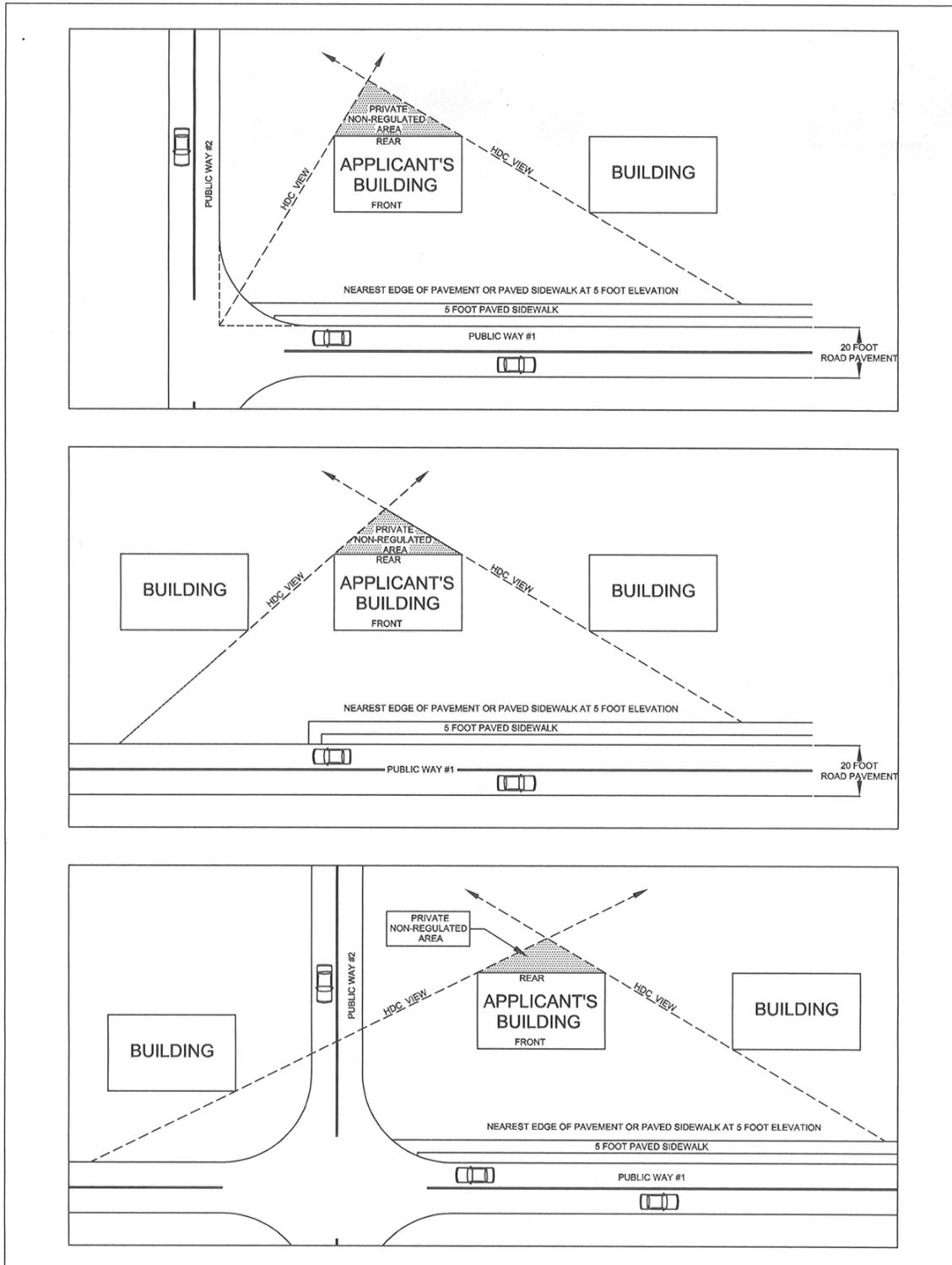
- 5.1** *The COMMISSION shall exercise its powers in administering and regulating the CONSTRUCTION and ALTERATION of any STRUCTURES or BUILDINGS within the DISTRICT as set forth under the procedures and criteria established in this Bylaw. In exercising its powers and duties hereunder, the COMMISSION shall pay due regard to the distinctive characteristics of each BUILDING, STRUCTURE and DISTRICT area.*
- 5.2** *The COMMISSION, after public hearing, may by vote of two thirds (2/3rds) of its regular members (not to include alternate members) from time to time adopt, and from time to time amend, reasonable Rules and Regulations not inconsistent with the provisions of this Bylaw or M.G.L. Chapter 40C, setting forth such forms and procedures as it deems desirable and necessary for the regulation of its affairs and the conduct of its business, including requirements for the contents and form of applications for CERTIFICATES, fees, hearing procedures and other matters. The COMMISSION shall file a copy of any such Rules and Regulations with the office of the Town Clerk.*
- 5.3** *The COMMISSION, after a public hearing duly posted and advertised at least 14 days in advance in a conspicuous place in Town Hall and in a newspaper of general circulation in Acton, may adopt and from time to time amend guidelines which set forth the designs for certain EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES which will meet the requirements of the DISTRICT. No such design guidelines shall limit the right of an applicant for a CERTIFICATE to present other designs to the COMMISSION for approval.*
- 5.4** *The COMMISSION shall at the beginning of each fiscal year hold an organizational meeting and elect a Chairman, a Vice Chairman and Secretary, and file notice of such election with the office of the Town Clerk.*
- 5.5** *The COMMISSION shall keep a permanent public record of its resolutions, transactions, decisions and determinations and of the vote of each member participating therein.*
- 5.6** *The COMMISSION shall undertake educational efforts to explain to the public and property owners the merits and functions of a DISTRICT.*

P6. Alterations and Construction Prohibited Without Certificate

6.1 No BUILDING or STRUCTURE, or any part thereof, which is within a DISTRICT shall be CONSTRUCTED or ALTERED in any way which affects the EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES visible to the unaided eye from any point at a five (5) foot elevation above the surface of the public way, on which the underlying lot or property has frontage, that is no closer to the BUILDING or STRUCTURE than the closest edge of pavement, or paved sidewalk if any unless the COMMISSION shall have first issued a CERTIFICATE with respect to such CONSTRUCTION or ALTERATION, except as this Bylaw otherwise provides

6.1.1 The following conceptual drawings are included to illustrate the review jurisdiction limitation set forth in paragraph 6.1 above: The viewing areas shown would be similarly applied to all buildings or structures on a property.

P6. Alterations and Construction Prohibited Without Certificate continued



P6. Alterations and Construction Prohibited Without Certificate continued

- 6.2** *Where a lot containing such BUILDING or STRUCTURE has frontage on more than one public way, the COMMISSION shall limit its review powers established under this BYLAW to the public way from which the view of the BUILDING or STRUCTURE is, in the opinion of the COMMISSION, most relevant to the integrity of the DISTRICT. The COMMISSION may, with due notice to the owners of those properties affected, make advance determinations of and provide the Town Clerk a list of its determinations as to which public way views are generally most relevant to the integrity of the various existing BUILDINGS in each DISTRICT. In the event it is proposed to rely upon a different view than the relevant and previously listed view when considering any particular application or complaint as to any BUILDING, the burden is upon the COMMISSION, as part of its decision, to adequately document in writing the reasons therefore.*
- 6.3** *No building permit for CONSTRUCTION of a BUILDING or STRUCTURE or for ALTERATION of an EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE within a DISTRICT and no demolition permit for demolition or removal of a BUILDING or STRUCTURE within a DISTRICT shall be issued by the Town or any department thereof until a CERTIFICATE as required under this Bylaw has been issued by the COMMISSION.*

P7. Procedures for Review of Applications

- 7.1** *Any person who desires to obtain a CERTIFICATE from the COMMISSION shall file with the Town Clerk and the COMMISSION an application for a CERTIFICATE of Appropriateness, or non-Applicability or of Hardship as the case may be. The application shall be accompanied by such plans, elevations, specifications, material and other information, including in the case of demolition or removal a statement of the proposed condition and appearance of the property thereafter, as may be reasonably deemed necessary by the COMMISSION to enable it to make a determination on the application. The date of the filing of an application shall be the date on which a copy of such application is received by the office of the Town Clerk.*

P7. Procedures for Review of Applications continued

- 7.2** *The COMMISSION may appoint one or more of its members to initially and privately screen applications for CERTIFICATES to informally determine whether any application includes and/or is submitted with sufficient information upon which the COMMISSION may reasonably take its required actions. Within fourteen (14) days following the first filing of an application for a CERTIFICATE with the Town Clerk, the COMMISSION or its appointee/s may determine without need for a public hearing, that insufficient information has been provided, in which case the application may be once returned to the submitting party, with written advice as to what was considered to be lacking, and the applicant will then thereafter be required to re-file the application before any further COMMISSION action is required. Any second filing of essentially the same application must be formally acted upon by the COMMISSION as is otherwise provided in this Bylaw.*
- 7.3** *The COMMISSION shall determine within fourteen (14) days of the filing of an application for a CERTIFICATE whether said application involves any EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES which are within the jurisdiction of the COMMISSION.*
- 7.4** *If the COMMISSION determines that an application for a CERTIFICATE does not involve any EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES, or involves an EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE which is not subject to review by the COMMISSION under the provisions of this Bylaw, the COMMISSION shall forthwith issue a CERTIFICATE of Non-Applicability.*
- 7.5** *If the COMMISSION determines that such an application involves any EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE subject to review under this Bylaw, it shall hold a public hearing on the application, except as may otherwise be provided in this Bylaw. The COMMISSION shall hold such a public hearing within forty-five (45) days from the date of the filing of the application. At least fourteen (14) days before said public hearing, public notice shall be given by posting in a conspicuous place in Town Hall and in a newspaper of general circulation in Acton. Such notice shall identify the time, place and purpose of the public hearing. Concurrently, a copy of said public notice shall be mailed to the applicant, to the owners of all adjoining properties and of other properties deemed by the COMMISSION to be materially affected thereby, all as they appear on the most recent applicable tax list, to the Planning Board, to any person filing a written request for notice of hearings, such request to be renewed yearly in December, and to such other persons as the COMMISSION shall deem entitled to notice.*

P7. Procedures for Review of Applications continued

7.5.1 *A public hearing on an application for a CERTIFICATE need not be held if such hearing is waived in writing by all persons entitled to notice thereof. In addition, a public hearing on an application for a CERTIFICATE may be waived by the COMMISSION if the COMMISSION determines that the EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE involved, or its category, is so insubstantial in its effect on the DISTRICT that it may be reviewed by the COMMISSION without a public hearing. If the COMMISSION dispenses with a public hearing on an application for a CERTIFICATE, notice of such application shall be given to the owners of all adjoining property and of other property deemed by the COMMISSION to be materially affected thereby as above provided, and ten (10) days shall elapse after the mailing of such notice before the COMMISSION may act upon such application.*

7.6 *The COMMISSION shall grant a CERTIFICATE, or issue a written decision, within sixty (60) days from the date the pertinent application was filed (or re-filed in the event the application was once returned for lack of information), unless the applicant consents in writing to a specific enlargement of time by which such an issuance may occur. In the absence of any such enlargement of time, should an issuance not be forthcoming within the prescribed time, the applicant is entitled as of right to a CERTIFICATE of Hardship.*

7.6.1 *If the CONSTRUCTION or ALTERATION for which an application for a CERTIFICATE of Appropriateness has been filed shall be determined to be inappropriate and therefore disapproved, or in the event of an application for a CERTIFICATE of Hardship, the COMMISSION shall determine whether, owing to conditions especially affecting the BUILDING or STRUCTURE involved, but not affecting the DISTRICT generally, failure to approve an application will involve a substantial hardship, financial or otherwise, to the applicant and whether such application may be approved without substantial detriment to the public welfare and without substantial derogation from the intent and purposes of this Bylaw. If the Commission determines that owing to such conditions failure to approve an application will involve substantial hardship to the applicant and approval thereof may be made without such substantial detriment or derogation, the COMMISSION shall issue a CERTIFICATE of Hardship.*

P7. Procedures for Review of Applications continued

- 7.7** *By the concurring vote of at least four members who were present throughout any relevant public hearing and the COMMISSION'S discussion leading up to its finding, the COMMISSION must adopt a specific written findings setting forth the basis on which it was initially determined that the application in question involved an EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE subject to approval by the COMMISSION and may then:*
- A. Grant an appropriate CERTIFICATE for the work to be performed, to remain effective regardless of any subsequent change in the ownership of the property; or*
 - B. Grant an appropriate CERTIFICATE for the work to be performed, to remain effective regardless of any subsequent change in the ownership of the property, with conditions and limitations requiring architectural or plan modifications as to those matters not excluded under Section P9 of this Bylaw which are within the COMMISSION'S review jurisdiction; or*
 - C. Deny the application with a written statement of the basis for the denial, at which time it may provide written recommendations for changes not excluded from the jurisdiction of the COMMISSION by Section P9 of this Bylaw which, in a subsequent application, might be acceptable to the COMMISSION; or*
 - D. Deny the application with a fact specific written statement of the basis for the denial without further recommendations, if essentially the same application has previously been the subject of a prior denial accompanied by written recommendations pursuant to sub-paragraph 7.7C above.*
- 7.8** *Should the COMMISSION, during the course of reviewing an application, find that it does not have review jurisdiction under this Bylaw it shall make an appropriate finding of Non-Applicability.*
- 7.9** *Each CERTIFICATE or written decision upon an application by the COMMISSION shall be dated and signed by the Chairperson or such other person as the COMMISSION may designate and shall be deemed issued upon filing with the Town Clerk.*
- 7.10** *Each CERTIFICATE or written decision upon an application by the COMMISSION shall be promptly served on the applicant by the Town Clerk who shall promptly forward a copy thereof to the applicant at the address shown on the application, by first class mail, postage prepaid, and a copy shall be further provided to the Building Commissioner, Planning Board and Board of Selectmen.*

P7. Procedures for Review of Applications continued

7.11 *Nothing contained in this bylaw shall be deemed to preclude any person contemplating construction or alteration of a BUILDING or STRUCTURE within a DISTRICT from consulting informally with the COMMISSION before submitting any application referred to in this bylaw on any matter which might possibly be within the scope of the Bylaw. Nothing contained in this bylaw shall be deemed to preclude the COMMISSION from offering informal advice to a potential applicant prior to receiving an application. However, any such preliminary advice offered by the COMMISSION shall not be deemed to set a precedent nor in any way limit the COMMISSION in the exercise of its functions under this bylaw.*

P8. Criteria for Determinations

- 8.1** *In deliberating on applications for CERTIFICATES, the COMMISSION shall consider, among other things, the historic and architectural value and significance of the site, BUILDING or STRUCTURE; the general design, proportions, detailing, mass, arrangement, texture, and material of the EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES involved; and the relation of such EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES to similar features of BUILDINGS and STRUCTURES in the surrounding area.*
- 8.2** *In the case of new CONSTRUCTION or additions to existing BUILDINGS or STRUCTURES, the COMMISSION shall consider the appropriateness of the scale, shape and proportion of the BUILDINGS or STRUCTURE both in relation to the land area upon which the BUILDING or STRUCTURE is situated and in relation to BUILDINGS and STRUCTURES in the vicinity. The COMMISSION may in appropriate cases impose dimensional and setback requirements in addition to those required by applicable statute or bylaw, however, such requirements shall not further limit the maximum floor area ratio and height of a BUILDING as defined and permitted in the Acton Zoning Bylaw.*
- 8.3** *When ruling on applications for CERTIFICATES on solar energy systems as defined in Section 1A of Chapter 40A, the COMMISSION shall consider the policy of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to encourage the use of solar energy systems and to protect solar access.*
- 8.4** *The COMMISSION shall not consider interior arrangements or architectural features not subject to public view.*
- 8.5** *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 DISTRICT.*

P8. Criteria for Determinations continued

8.6 *The COMMISSION may impose requirements on the screening and location of above ground features of septage systems. Such requirements shall not conflict with requirements of the Acton Board of Health.*

P9. Exclusions

9.1 *The COMMISSION'S review jurisdiction shall not include the following:*

9.1.1 *Temporary BUILDINGS, STRUCTURES, seasonal decorations or SIGNS subject, however, to conditions pertaining to the duration of existence and use, location, lighting, removal and similar matters as the COMMISSION may reasonably specify.*

9.1.2 *Terraces, walks, patios, driveways, sidewalks and similar STRUCTURES, provided that any such STRUCTURE is SUBSTANTIALLY AT GRADE LEVEL.*

9.1.3 *The number of the residents' personally owned or leased and regularly used motor vehicles which may be routinely parked within the boundaries of a residential property. However, in those circumstances and not withstanding the provisions of Section 9.1.2, the COMMISSION shall retain limited review jurisdiction in regard to measures that would minimize the visual impact, as viewed from the public way, of any expansion of, or portions of, driveways or other STRUCTURES SUBSTANTIALLY AT GRADE LEVEL which are intended as parking spaces for more than four (4) motor vehicles.*

9.1.4 *Storm windows and doors, screen windows and doors, and window air conditioners.*

9.1.5 *The color of paint applied to the exterior surfaces of BUILDINGS or STRUCTURES.*

9.1.6 *The color of materials used on roofs.*

9.1.7 *Signs of not more than two (2) square feet in DISPLAY AREA in connection with use of a residence for a customary home occupation or for professional purposes, provided only one such sign is displayed in connection with each residence and if illuminated is illuminated only indirectly; and one sign in connection with the nonresidential use of each BUILDING or STRUCTURE which is not more than six (6) square feet in DISPLAY AREA, consists of letters painted on wood without symbol or trademark and if illuminated is illuminated indirectly.*

P9. Exclusions continued

- 9.1.8** *The reconstruction, substantially similar in exterior design, of a BUILDING, STRUCTURE or EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE damaged or destroyed by fire, storm, or other disaster, provided such reconstruction is begun within one year thereafter and carried forward with due diligence.*
- 9.1.9** *The point of access served by handicapped access ramps designed solely for the purpose of facilitating ingress or egress of a physically handicapped person, as defined in M.G.L. c.22 s13A.*
- 9.1.10** *Non-traditional material(s), providing that the difference between such material(s) and traditional material(s) cannot, upon review by the COMMISSION, be reasonably discerned by the unaided eye from the viewpoint(s) upon which the COMMISSION's power of review is based.*
- 9.2** *Nothing in this Bylaw shall be construed to prevent the following;*
- 9.2.1** ***Ordinary maintenance, repair or replacement of any EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE within a DISTRICT which does not Involve a change in design, material or the outward appearance thereof.***
- 9.2.2** *Landscaping with plants, trees or shrubs.*
- 9.2.3** *The meeting of requirements certified by a duly authorized public officer to be necessary for public safety because of an unsafe, unhealthful or dangerous condition.*
- 9.2.4** *Any CONSTRUCTION or ALTERATION under a permit duly issued prior to the effective date of this Bylaw.*
- 9.3** *Upon request the COMMISSION shall issue a CERTIFICATE of Non-Applicability with respect to CONSTRUCTION or ALTERATION in any category not subject to review by the COMMISSION in accordance with the above provisions.*

P10. Categorical Approval

- 10.1** *The COMMISSION may determine from time to time after a public hearing, duly advertised and posted at least fourteen (14) days in advance in a conspicuous place in Town Hall and in a newspaper of general circulation in Acton, that certain categories of EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES, STRUCTURES or BUILDINGS under certain conditions may be CONSTRUCTED or ALTERED without review by the COMMISSION without causing substantial derogation from the intent and purpose of this Bylaw.*

P11. Enforcement and Penalties

- 11.1** No Building Permit shall be issued for the CONSTRUCTION or ALTERATION of any BUILDING or STRUCTURE wholly or partially in a DISTRICT unless a CERTIFICATE has first been issued by the COMMISSION when such a CERTIFICATE is required by this Bylaw.
- 11.2** No ALTERATION or CONSTRUCTION of any BUILDING or STRUCTURE wholly or partially in a DISTRICT for which a CERTIFICATE is required by this Bylaw shall deviate from the terms and conditions of such a CERTIFICATE.
- 11.3** The Building Commissioner of the Town of Acton shall enforce this Bylaw upon a determination by the COMMISSION that a violation exists, and subject to the approval of the Board of Selectmen, may institute proceedings in Superior Court pursuant to M.G.L. c.40C § 13 for injunctive or other relief and/or imposition of fines.
- 11.4** The COMMISSION, upon a written complaint challenging some enforcement action by the Building Commissioner, received by the Town Clerk within five (5) days following such decision, by a PERSON AGGRIEVED, or other citizen of or property owner in the Town of Acton, shall hold a timely public hearing to determine whether or not the Building Commissioner's action should be upheld, in whole or in part.
- 11.5** Whoever violates any of the provisions of this Bylaw shall be punishable by a fine of not less than \$10.00 nor more than \$500.00 for each offense under the provisions of M.G.L. c.40C § 13, or alternatively under #E45 of the Town of Acton Bylaws. Each day during any portion of which such violation continues to exist shall constitute a separate offense.

P12. Appeals

- 12.1** An appeal of a determination of the COMMISSION, except as to the propriety of a decision to invoke the provisions of M.G.L. c. 40C § 13 (institution of an action in Superior Court) by the Building Commissioner, may be taken by a PERSON AGGRIEVED by filing a written request with the Town Clerk, acting as an agent of the COMMISSION, within twenty (20) days of the issuance of a CERTIFICATE or a disapproval. In the event of such an appeal, the Acton Town Manager, or his delegate, shall make a timely request to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council that it promptly designate an arbitrator(s) with competence and experience in such matters to hear such an appeal. If such a person(s) is/are so designated he/she/they must hear the appeal in a timely manner and issue a written decision within forty-five (45) days of the request as specified in M.G.L. c. 40C § 12. The arbitration decision shall be binding on the parties, unless a Complaint seeking a further appeal is filed in Superior Court within twenty (20) days from the filing of the arbitration decision with the Town Clerk, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 40C § 12A.

P.13. Validity and Separability

13.1 *The provisions of this Bylaw shall be deemed to be separable. If any of its provisions, sections, subsections, sentences or clauses shall be held to be invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Bylaw shall continue to be in full force and effect.*

P14. Appendices**Appendix 1: South Acton District**

The South Acton District shall be a DISTRICT area under this Bylaw. The location and boundaries of the South Acton District are defined and shown on the Local Historic District Map of the Town of Acton, Sheet 1 - 1990 which is a part of this bylaw. Sheet 1 is based on the 1989 Town Atlas. The delineation of the DISTRICT area boundaries is based on the parcel boundaries then in existence and shown therein, except as otherwise apparent on Sheet 1.

Appendix 2: Acton Centre District

The Acton Centre District shall be a DISTRICT area under this Bylaw. The location and boundaries of the Acton Centre District are defined and shown on the Local Historic District Map of the Town of Acton, Sheet 2 - 1990 which is a part of this bylaw. Sheet 2 is based on the 1989 Town Atlas. The delineation of the DISTRICT area boundaries is based on the parcel boundaries then in existence and shown therein, except as otherwise apparent on Sheet 2.

Appendix 3: West Acton District

The West Acton District shall be a DISTRICT area under this Bylaw. The location and boundaries of the West Acton District are defined and shown on the Local Historic District Map of the Town of Acton, Sheet 3 - 1990 which is a part of this Bylaw. Sheet 3 is based on the 1989 Town Atlas. The delineation of the DISTRICT area boundaries is based on the parcel boundaries then in existence and shown therein, except as otherwise apparent on Sheet 3.

ACTON HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION:

RULES AND REGULATIONS

1. GENERAL RULES; JURISDICTION

The Acton Historic District Commission shall be governed by the Acton Local Historic District Bylaw, Chapter P of the Acton Town Bylaws, and by Chapter 40C of the General Laws of Massachusetts, as amended. The Town's jurisdiction in regard to the Local Historic District Bylaw shall be delineated on the official Local Historic District Map of the Town of Acton, on file in the town Engineering Department and at the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds.

2. MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION

Regular Meetings of the Commission generally will be held on the **Second** and **Fourth** Tuesdays of each month at 7:30 p.m. in Town Hall. Notice of the date, time, and location of all meetings shall be posted in the Town Hall at least 48 hours prior to their scheduled time. A quorum of four members is required for the Commission to conduct any business and to vote on applications for certificates.

Special Meetings of the Commission may be held at the call of the Chairperson or at the request of two members. Notice of Special Meetings shall be posted as above.

Cancellation of Meetings. If there is no Commission business to conduct, the Chairperson may dispense with a meeting by giving notice to all members and alternate members, and posting a notice of the cancellation in Town Hall at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled time.

3. COMMISSION REVIEW OF CHANGES TO PROPERTIES IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS

3.1 Changes not requiring Commission approval

Only a few types of exterior changes to properties may be undertaken without applying for a certificate from the Commission:

- exterior painting
- flags and flagpoles
- planting or removal of trees, shrubs, and other plants, with the exception of any plantings required by the Commission for screening purposes
- movable garden furniture, objects and ornaments, such as bird and bathouses, bird feeders, rocks in rock gardens
- temporary play equipment (not set in cement or attached to a building)
- temporary signs, etc., including political and real estate signs

For any proposed changes not on this list or set forth in the list of exclusions at Par. 9.1 of Chapter P. Acton Town Bylaws, an application for Certificate must be filed before work can begin. (See attached General Information about Exterior Work in a Local Historic District.) Before undertaking any work of which there is any doubt as to Commission jurisdiction, the owner or applicant should contact the Commission via email at hdc@acton-ma.gov or by contacting the Town Clerk and requesting that the Commission be contacted.

3.2 Procedures regarding changes which require Commission approval

Most changes in the exterior appearance of a building or site located within a Local Historic District shall require Commission approval, in the form of a Certificate issued by the Commission before the work begins. In order to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness, a property owner must submit an Application for Certificate. In some cases, after examining an application or request, the Commission will determine that the proposed work falls into a category which is excluded from its jurisdiction, and will issue a Certificate of Non-applicability. In general, a Certificate of Non-applicability is required only for work that is both out of the Commission's jurisdiction and which requires additional approval(s) from other town boards and departments.

ACTON HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION: RULES AND REGULATIONS, cont.

3.2.1 Preliminary procedures

The Commission shall determine within 14 days of the filing of a written application or the receipt of a request for a Certificate of Non-Applicability whether the work proposed involves any architectural or site features which are within its jurisdiction.

3.2.2 Certificate of Non-applicability.

If the Commission determines that the proposed work does not involve any features which are subject to its review under the terms of the Local Historic District Bylaw, it shall issue a Certificate of Non-Applicability. The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary are hereby designated to determine individually, without a vote of or consultation with any other members, the Commission's jurisdiction in regard to any applications for Certificates or to any requests for Certificates of Non-applicability. If the designated member of the Commission who has undertaken to review a request or application for determination of the Commission's jurisdiction finds that the work proposed in such an application or request qualifies for a Certificate of Non-applicability under the Acton Local Historic District Bylaw, he or she may issue such a certificate without the approval of a majority of the Commission, and without the Chairperson's signature. At the next regular meeting of the Commission, the Chairperson or other designee will provide copies of any Certificates of Non-applicability issued since the last meeting. Notwithstanding a finding of jurisdiction by the designated member of the Commission who has undertaken to review a request or application for determination of the Commission's jurisdiction, the full Commission may issue a Certificate of Non-applicability.

3.2.3 Categorical approval

The Commission shall exclude from its review all categories listed in the Acton Local Historic District Bylaw, Section 9 (Exclusions). In addition to those exclusions, upon the receipt of an application and the issuance of a Certificate of Non-applicability, the following categories of work may be undertaken without review by the Commission:

- shingle-covered roof ridge vents in re-roofing projects, if low in profile and extended all the way to the gable ends;
- Drip edges, finished to blend with architectural trim; alternatively, a starter course of cedar shingles.

3.2.4 Filing an application

Anyone seeking a certificate from the Commission for changes to a Historic District property shall file an application for certificate with the Commission and the Town Clerk. The application shall be accompanied by such plans, elevations, specifications, material and other information as may be deemed necessary by the Commission. (See **Instructions and Information for filing an application for a Certificate for work in a Local Historic District.** [Attached].)

An application fee, payable to the Town of Acton and collected by the Town Clerk, is required for all complete applications except those for work which the Commission determines is not within its jurisdiction, and for those submitted by municipal or non-profit applicants. The fee covers the costs of processing the application, and does not guarantee that a Certificate will be issued.

The Commission may appoint one or more of its members to initially screen applications to informally determine whether any application includes and/or is submitted with sufficient information upon which the Commission may conduct its review. Within 14 days following the first filing of an application, the Commission or its appointee/s may determine that insufficient information has been provided, in which case the application may be once returned to the applicant, with written advice as to what was considered to be lacking. The applicant will then be required to re-file the application before any further Commission action is required. Any second filing of essentially the same application must be formally acted upon by the Commission.

ACTON HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION: RULES AND REGULATIONS, cont.

3.2.5 The Certificate of Appropriateness: waiver of public hearing.

If the Commission determines that an application requires Commission review, the Commission will obtain a certified list of abutters. The Commission may determine that the exterior feature involved, or its category, is so insubstantial in its effect on the District that it may be reviewed without a public hearing. In such a case the Commission shall then send a Notice of Waiver of Public Hearing to the abutters, the Planning Board, the Building Commissioner, and anyone else deemed by the Commission to be materially affected by the application of its intent to dispense with a public hearing on the application.

No Certificate shall be issued on the application for 10 days after the mailing of the Notice of Waiver of Public Hearing. Between Commission meetings, the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson or Secretary may determine whether an application may be reviewed without a public hearing. At the next regular meeting of the Commission, the officers shall report on all applications for which such determination was made. Notwithstanding a decision by a designated member of the Commission to hold a public hearing on an application, the full Commission may decide to review an application without a public hearing.

3.2.6 Applications requiring public hearing.

If the Commission determines that an application requires a public hearing under the provisions of Ch. P, the Acton Local Historic District Bylaw, it shall hold such a hearing within 45 days of the date of the filing of the application. As above, the Commission will obtain a certified list of abutters. At least 14 days before the hearing, the Commission shall give public notice of the time, place, and purpose of the hearing by posting a notice in Town Hall and in a newspaper of general circulation in Acton. The cost of the public hearing notice shall be charged to the applicant. Concurrently, the Commission shall mail a copy of the public notice to the applicant and to the owners of all adjoining properties and of all other properties deemed by the Commission to be materially affected thereby. The commission shall distribute copies of the public notice to the Acton Building and Engineering Departments, Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, Historical Commission, Town Clerk, and Town Manager, as well as to any person filing a written request for notice of hearings, such request to be renewed yearly in December.

3.2.7 Review and hearing procedures

The Commission will consider applications in the order of their receipt. An applicant may appear in person or by agent at the Commission meeting. Review of an application will generally be conducted according to the following procedure:

1. The Chairperson shall give a preliminary statement concerning the application,
2. The applicant or representative shall present the application,
3. Commission members may discuss the application, followed by comments by anyone else with an interest in the proposal,
4. Commission members may ask clarifying questions after each speaker,
5. The Chairperson shall summarize the information, giving all parties a chance to make additional comments,
6. The Commission shall deliberate the application,
7. After adequate discussion, or by the end of the time allotted to the application on the meeting agenda, the Commission shall either vote on the application, postpone further consideration until the next meeting, or request the application's withdrawal and/or revision.

ACTON HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION: RULES AND REGULATIONS, cont.

3.2.7 Site visits; additional information.

The Commission may view the premises and obtain additional information concerning any application before arriving at a decision. If the Commission holds a public hearing on an application, it will disclose any such additional information on which it may rely at the hearing, and give the parties an opportunity to comment on that information.

3.2.8 Review criteria.

In reviewing applications for Certificates, the Commission shall take into account the historic and architectural significance of the building or structure. The Commission shall not consider interior arrangements, nor architectural features not subject to view from the public way, nor make any recommendation or requirement except for the purpose of preventing developments incongruous to the historic aspects or architectural characteristics of the surroundings and the District.

(See also Sections 8, 9, and 10 of the Local Historic District Bylaw, Criteria for Historic District Commission Decisions, and the Instructions and information for Filing an Application for a Certificate.)

3.2.9 Commission decisions.

In all its decisions on applications the Commission shall state its reasons for the decision, supported by appropriate Findings of Fact. A decision on an application may be accompanied by conditions and/or recommendations. In the case of a disapproval of an application, the Commission may include recommendations for changes in the proposal which, if made and filed in a subsequent application, would make the application acceptable to the Commission.

If the Commission finds that some aspects of the proposed changes described in an application are incompatible with the character of the property or the district, it will suggest ways in which the application may be amended so that approval may be granted. Such discussion among Commission members and the applicant, if present, shall focus on arriving at a solution satisfying all concerned while still abiding by the terms and spirit of the Local Historic District Bylaw.

Within 60 days after the filing of an application for a Certificate, or within such further time as the applicant may allow in writing, the Commission shall issue a Certificate or a disapproval. The Commission shall send a copy of its Certificate or disapproval to the applicant and to the Building Commissioner, and shall file a copy of all Certificates and disapprovals with the Town Clerk. If the Commission should fail to issue a Certificate or disapproval within 60 days of the filing of an application, or within such further time as the applicant may allow in writing, the Commission shall thereupon issue a Certificate of Hardship Due to Failure to Act.

3.2.10 Conditions applicable to Par. 9.1.1 of Ch. P, Acton Town Bylaws

The COMMISSION specifies the following conditions pertaining to the duration of existence, use, location, lighting and removal of TEMPORARY BUILDINGS OR STRUCTURES, as those terms are defined in Ch. P, Acton Town Bylaws.

1. No such TEMPORARY BUILDING OR STRUCTURE shall be located within any DISTRICT on Town-owned land, including but not limited to the Town Common, for more than a six-hour period during any twenty-four-hour period without prior permission from the Board of Selectmen or other custodian of the Town property pursuant to M.G.L. c. 40, s. 3 or s. 9, as applicable.
2. No "Portable on Demand" or other such storage-type unit shall be located on any property within any DISTRICT and visible from a public way for longer than sixty days during any twelve month period.
3. No TEMPORARY BUILDING OR STRUCTURE on any property within any DISTRICT may be externally lighted or illuminated in a manner visible from a public way between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

ACTON HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION: RULES AND REGULATIONS, cont.

3.2.11 Regulations regarding violations in progress

If the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson or Secretary of the Commission becomes aware of planned or incomplete construction or other work in violation of Ch. P Acton Town Bylaws, or these Rules and Regulations, then acting through one or more of these officers the Commission shall promptly notify the Building Commissioner or other appropriate Town official(s). If incomplete violative work requires Town permits, such as from the Building Department or the Health Department, the Commission expects work to be stopped by the appropriate Town officials(s). If the incomplete violating work does not require a Town permit, the Commission will issue a notice to the violator that it intends to apply the enforcement remedies set forth in Ch. P, Acton Town Bylaws and these Rules and Regulations. A violator may apply for a Certificate from the Commission after violating work has begun, but neither the Commission nor the Town are deprived of any rights or remedies thereby, and the Commission is not obligated to approve any work or design that is not historically appropriate or fails to comply with Ch. P, Acton Town Bylaws and these Rules and Regulations.

3.2.12 Conditions applicable to certain signs

The Commission has determined that neon and other electric SIGNS mounted behind windows of a BUILDING or STRUCTURE and non-electric SIGNS affixed to the back of such windows fall within the definition of "EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE" as set forth in Paragraph 2 of Cha. P, Town of Acton Bylaws, to the extent such signs are open to view from a public way. No such SIGN shall be placed, created affixed or used from the effective date of this paragraph. 3.2.12.

3.2.13 Conditions applicable to satellite dishes

The Commission has determined that satellite dishes for receiving television, radio or other electronic transmissions or signals are incompatible with the historic appearance of the DISTRICT if such satellite dishes are visible from the public way and are thus disfavored in the DISTRICT. Satellite dishes that are visible from a public way will only be approved by the COMMISSION in extraordinary circumstances and where there is no other feasible alternative for receiving such signals.

3.2.14 Measures pertaining to limited review jurisdiction regarding minimizing the visual impact of driveways or other STRUCTURES SUBSTANTIALLY AT GRADE LEVEL per Ch. P. par 9.1.3, Acton Town Bylaws

No driveway, parking area, parking lot or other STRUCTURE SUBSTANTIALLY AT GRADE LEVEL intended as residential parking for more than four motor vehicles shall be constructed or expanded if visible from a public way unless its visual impact is minimized by vegetation or other measure consistent with the character of the DISTRICT to the satisfaction of the COMMISSION.

4. TERMS OF CERTIFICATES

After approving an application, the Commission shall issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work proposed in the application. A Certificate is valid for work commenced within a period of one year from the date on which it is stamped by the Town Clerk, and shall remain in effect until such work is completed. If by the end of one year the authorized work has not been commenced and prosecuted with due diligence, or if such work is suspended in significant part for a period of one year after the time the work is begun, the Certificate shall expire. However, the applicant may request an extension or renewal of the Certificate, and at its discretion the Commission may grant, in writing, an extension or renewal of the Certificate for a period not to exceed one year.

If a property changes ownership during the time the Certificate of Appropriateness is in force, a new owner who wishes to continue the authorized work must apply to the Commission for a transfer of the Certificate to his or her own name.

ACTON HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION: RULES AND REGULATIONS, cont.

The Commission may specify as a condition to any Certificate it issues that the applicant or his/her successor notify the Commission of the completion of work so that the Commission may ensure compliance with the terms of the Certificate.

5. THE CERTIFICATE OF HARDSHIP

In the case of either a disapproval or in the event of an application for a Certificate of Hardship, the Commission shall determine whether, owing to conditions affecting the building or structure, but not affecting the District, failure to approve an application will involve a substantial hardship, financial or otherwise, to the applicant. It shall also determine whether the application may be approved without substantial detriment to the public welfare and without substantial derogation from the intent and purpose of Ch. P., the Local Historic District Bylaw. If it finds that both these conditions are met, the Commission shall, on a concurring vote of four members, issue a Certificate of Hardship.

6. APPEAL AND AGGRIEVEMENT PROCEDURES

A person aggrieved by a determination of the Commission may, within twenty days of the issuance of a Certificate or disapproval, file a written request with the Commission for a review by a person or persons of competence and experience in such matters, acting as arbitrator and designated by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. The arbitrator's finding shall be filed with the Town Clerk within 45 days of the request, and shall be binding on the applicant and the Commission unless a further appeal is sought in Superior Court as provided in Chapter 40C, Section 12A. Such further appeal must be filed within 20 days after the finding of the arbitrator has been filed with the office of the Town Clerk.

7. ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES

The Commission shall determine whether a particular activity is in violation of the terms of the Acton Local Historic District Bylaw. Upon a written complaint of any Acton resident or property owner, or upon its own initiative, the Commission shall institute any appropriate action or proceedings in the name of the Town of Acton to prevent, correct, restrain, or abate violation of the Bylaw. If, in response to a written request to enforce the Bylaw the Commission declines to act, it shall so notify, in writing, the party requesting such enforcement within 21 days of receipt of such request.

The penalty for violation of the Local Historic District Bylaw is \$25 per offense. Each day during any portion of which such violation continues to exist constitutes a separate offense. If an owner, owner's agent, or lessee continues to violate the provisions of the Acton Local Historic District Bylaw, Chapter 40C of the Massachusetts General Laws, these Rules and Regulations, or the decisions of the Commission, the Commission shall have recourse to the enforcement provisions of Section 13 of Chapter 40C of the Massachusetts General Laws.

8. AMENDMENTS

The Rules and Regulations of the Historic District Commission may be amended after public hearing by an affirmative vote of not less than four members of the Commission, provided that such amendment shall first have been presented in writing at a meeting preceding that at which the vote is taken. The Commission shall file a copy of any such amendments with the office of the Town Clerk.



ACTON HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
DESIGN GUIDELINES

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ACTON HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION DESIGN GUIDELINES

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this set of guidelines is to offer the property owner assistance in preserving both the essential features of their individual properties and the character of the historic district in which they are located. It is not the intent of this document however, to dictate a universal standard for appropriateness, nor are these guidelines intended to regulate the



use of a property. While each of Acton's three districts possess characteristics unique to their context, as each property within them has its own individual personality, there are shared attributes that can be identified which give the district its cohesive sense of place in time. The Historic District Commission in defining these guidelines, acknowledges that there may be, on occasion, circumstances that override these guidelines and will therefore consider each proposed alteration on both its own merits as well as for its impact on the larger context of the district. Similarly, the Commission acknowledges that there are institutional structures within the districts which by virtue of their scale and public significance may necessarily depart from some aspects of these guidelines and will therefore be accorded greater consideration.

In 1990 the town voted to establish historic districts at Town Meeting under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40.C for the purpose of preserving for future generations the fragile historic character still remaining in South Acton, West Acton and Acton Center. Rapid development in recent decades had threatened the integrity of the historic fabric in these districts and hence the Historic District Commission was established to regulate construction and alterations within these districts. The Commission recognizes the need for a set of design guidelines not only to assist property owners within the districts, but also to create a consistent set of standards which would guide future commission members.

For over twenty years the reference standard that has guided preservation within this country is the Secretary of Interior's, *Standards for Rehabilitation*. This document has proven effective in practice and forms the foundation upon which the design criteria adopted by the Acton HDC stands. A copy of our design criteria which summarizes these standards is attached.

In the following sections we review the most common structures and

altered architectural features and have provided guidance which supports the purpose of the Acton Historic District bylaw and the objectives of the Commission which enforces it. Prospective applicants who adhere to these guidelines greatly enhance the likelihood of gaining approval in the form of a Certificate of Appropriateness. Please refer to the application form, instruction, and bylaws of the Acton Historic District Commission for further information and documentation requirements for the application.

NEW STRUCTURES

NEW CONSTRUCTION



The density of development within the three Historic Districts does not allow much opportunity for new construction, but where feasible it must be considered with particular sensitivity 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 and location will be dictated in part by the Town of Acton's Zoning Bylaw which should be referenced carefully before proceeding with design. On occasion, the Historic District Commission may impose setback and height requirements which may be more restrictive than that found in the Zoning Bylaw if the context of the abutting structures suggests that the appropriate response may differ from the broader mandate. Specifically, the front yard setback of neighboring structures should be maintained to preserve the "street wall" that is already in existence. Setting a structure back too far can be as destructive to the streetscape as one set too close. Side yard setbacks are not as critical to maintain, therefore the Zoning Bylaw will typically prevail.

The scale of the structure should be appropriate to neighboring structures, which with notable exceptions are largely one and two story single family residences. Several factors contribute to scale: the height of the structure; the size of window and door openings; the presence of decorative trim or other architectural elements such as porches, bays, etc.; and the size of the buildings 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 or 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 to 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 structure (ie: windows, doors, siding, roofs, etc.).

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 collectively create. New construction should reflect the era of its birth, as the older structures do theirs, while maintaining a sensitivity to the scale, proportioning, and materials of these “respected elders”. Indeed, false reproductions of architectural styles not common to our era or location diminishes the value of authentic examples within the districts. A survey of the districts reveals that successive generations of Actonians developed our community with a variety of styles, from Colonial to Victorian and Colonial Revival, each contemporary to its time and, yet all remarkably compatible. Not until the second half of the 20th century did this evolutionary discourse begin to break down into a discordant dialogue. The appropriate response to this, however, is not the reproduction of the past but instead a sensitive approach to new construction which adheres to the principles of the past without mimicking the architectural styles that belong to it.

ADDITIONS

When approaching the addition to an existing structure within the district, the size of the addition relative to the original is a significant factor in determining the appropriate design.

An addition notably smaller than the original structure should be designed, in most cases, to continue the existing use of materials, trim, windows, roofing etc. (Please refer to the remainder of the guidelines for more specific information). The addition in this instance should be set-back from the front plane of the original, either to the side or to the rear if possible. In no case should this addition be taller than the original and typically should be lower in height, leaving the original massing of the structure apparent. While it would be appropriate to simplify the architectural details found in the original, its proportioning and character should be maintained in the addition’s design.

Larger additions, especially those that are significantly larger than the original structure require greater creativity in their design. It would be

most appropriate to setback a large addition from the main facade to preserve the massing of the original building. The materials and architectural expression of the addition should not overwhelm or diminish the original by reproducing it, and the massing of large additions should be articulated into forms of compatible scale and size to the original. As much as possible, the bulk of the addition should be screened from public view by utilizing landscaping and setbacks to the rear of the property. The materials, architectural detailing, proportioning and scale of openings should harmonize with but not necessarily match the original, establishing a clear delineation between “old” and “new” portions of the structure.

There will be occasions when additions are planned for existing structures which are themselves incongruous with the districts either because of the presence of an inappropriate style or material. In this case the Commission would encourage the prospective applicant to consider alteration of the original structure to make it more compatible with the district while adding to its size. The presence of an incompatible structure should not be construed as a license to increase its incompatibility, but rather as an opportunity to improve it.

OUTBUILDINGS



Because many of the original homes in the districts also functioned as working farms they had outbuildings associated with them; barns, carriage houses, garages and storage sheds were constructed to accommodate livestock and related equipment. Many of these early structures still exist and offer guidance in the design of their modern counterparts. Except for very large lots, the most appropriate location for a free standing outbuilding is well to the rear of the original structure, screened as much as possible from the public way. The scale of the structure, other than a barn, should be kept significantly smaller than the principal structure on the site and simpler with regard to massing and detail. The style, form, and use of materials can be the same as the original structure on the site, but it is equally appropriate and not uncommon for an outbuilding to take on a more rustic, utilitarian appearance. This is especially true with regard to the siding and trim, which may be more humble and understated than that found on the main structure. More contemporary structures, such as prefabricated storage sheds, pool equipment sheds and above ground pools are all within the jurisdiction of the Commission and will be considered in the same manner as all other outbuildings. In any case, the owner should refer to the section for new construction and other relevant sections that may apply.

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

DORMERS/SKYLIGHTS



With a few exceptions such as some Queen Anne and early 20th century bungalows scattered throughout Acton, dormers are not a common feature of the prevalent historic architectural styles found within the districts. When added to an existing structure therefore, dormers should, if possible, be kept on the rear portion of the roof. If placed in a visible location on a new or existing structure, dormers should be scaled appropriately to the house with a either a gabled, hipped or shed roof configuration whichever is most suitable for its size and architectural style. Multiple small dormers are generally preferred to large single ones. Windows used in dormers should conform to the guidelines for windows and if possible match the size and configuration of existing ones. Windows in dormers appear most pleasing when aligned vertically with existing windows on the wall below. Roofing and siding materials, as well as the trim details, should also match that of the existing structure.

Skylights by their very nature are not appropriate to historic structure, as they were not used until relatively recently except on large scaled institutional structures. Therefore, if used, they should be restricted only to those portions of the roof not visible from the public way. In a visible location, care should be taken in placement and scale, with preference given to flat low profile units with dark painted frames which blend with the roof color.

DOORS



Original doors should be maintained when possible but if replaced should be made of wood rather than metal. This is consistent with overall preference for natural materials. Wood doors should be constructed in a manner consistent with their traditional manufacture: assembled of stiles and rails, with an infill of wood panels and/or glass lites. In most pre 20th century structures large sections of glass should be further divided with muntins into lites to maintain a scale consistent with the windows on the structure. Flush doors (without stiles and rails) are conspicuously modern and should be avoided. If the addition of a storm or screen door is desired, a commercially available wood unit is preferred. Door hardware should be selected to compliment the door design and be appropriate to the period of the building. Stainless steel hardware or modern pulls detract from the harmonious appearance of the door and should be avoided if possible. Storm and screen doors are excluded from the Commission's jurisdiction, however, the owner should consider a

design which divides them into multiple panels not unlike the doors behind them.

DEMOLITION

Demolition of any structure or portion thereof within the historic districts requires the approval of the Historic District Commission, except when ordered by the Building Commissioner or other safety officer for reasons of public health and safety. Demolition is generally discouraged unless the structure is so deteriorated that rehabilitation is not practical or the structure is of no historic value to the district. In the former instance the Commission may require that a new structure replicating the original be built in the place of the demolished structure if its value is significant to the district.

In general renovation and/or replacement in kind is preferred to the demolition of all or a portion of a historic structure. Likewise, decorative architectural elements on the structure such as trim, brackets bays and porch columns should not be removed without Commission approval. Preference will be given to replacement in kind.

If a historic structure's location interferes with the owner's plans for the property, relocation to an appropriate site will be considered and is preferred to demolition.

GUTTERS

Gutters constructed of wood, seamless painted aluminum or other metal will be approved if their scale, contour, and detail are found to be compatible with the style of the building. Attachments should be concealed, therefore, visible hanging straps or brackets should not be used. Installation should not involve the removal of any historic detailing such as cornice moldings, brackets, etc. Gutters are inappropriate if constructed of short sections, visible brackets, heavy connectors and prominent end caps, all of which are incongruous with the appearance of the historic precedent.

LIGHTING

Acton's historic districts harken to a rural small town past where exterior lighting was all but nonexistent. While it is a modern reality and a necessity for traffic safety and security reasons, its use should be severely limited. When used, exterior lighting should be kept at low levels, discreetly designed to harmonize with the structure or landscaping and shielded to prevent glare or overspill of the light off the property. Illumination of building facades or large areas with flood lights is considered inappropriate. Fluorescent and sodium vapor fixtures give a harsh and unnatural light and are, therefore, incompatible with the dis-

tricts. The style and materials of light fixtures when visible from the public way should be appropriate to the historic character of the district. Otherwise, consideration should be given to concealing the lighting source with landscaping elements such as shrubbery. Illumination of signage is strictly regulated by the town's sign bylaw which should be referenced for additional information.

MASONRY



Masonry is found on a number commercial and institutional structures throughout the districts as well as on foundation walls or chimneys of the more numerous residential structures. The most typical masonry used in the districts is brick, while stone is more likely to be found on exposed foundation walls or in lintels and sills of brick structures. Concrete masonry units and glazed or extruded brick are not characteristic of the historic districts in Acton and should be avoided. The brick of preference is molded, consistently red in color, and is not blended or painted. Mortar should be raked and gray or red in coloration.

When repointing or rebuilding an existing chimney the owner should reuse the existing brick if possible or find a closely matching replacement. The chimney should be rebuilt to its original height and any corbeling or other decorative feature should be retained. Chimney caps are discouraged because they were not common historically, but if desired should be made of stone. (See the section on roofing for guidance on selecting the appropriate material for step flashing with the roof.)

If utilizing brick as a cladding material in new construction particular attention should be paid to its detailing to avoid the appearance of a thin non-loading bearing veneer. Wall openings should be kept narrow relative to their height and returns as deep as possible. Use of molded brick watertables, arches and stone lintels or other decorative elements further enhance masonry's natural attributes.

MODERN EQUIPMENT

Modern equipment such as satellite dishes, antennae, mechanical equipment, etc. are inherently inconsistent with the historic character of the districts and therefore should be screened or located so as not to be visible from the public way. While window air conditioning units are not within the Commission's jurisdiction permanently installed ground wall or roof top mechanical equipment are and therefore, should be located where otherwise not visible from the public way. Planting, fences or

rooftop enclosures are all appropriate screening devices that could be used when it is not possible to find such a location.

PAINT

Paint and stain colors are not within the jurisdiction of Acton's Historic District Commission. Paint however, may be specified by the Commission as a surface treatment to a feature or structure which would be otherwise inappropriate without a finish.

PORCHES



Porches can enhance a structure by humanizing its scale and by creating an open and welcoming gesture to the public. Many older structures in Acton have existing porches which should be maintained and, if necessary, repaired "in kind." Typically porches are located at the principal entry or offset to the ell (ie a farmer's porch) The porch should be integrated into the architecture of the house, remaining sensitive to its important architectural features. Porches should be supported by well proportioned wood columns or posts, typically square in section, or turned if appropriate to the style of the structure, and dressed with trim at the base and top. The spacing between posts and columns requires particular attention, generally never more than 1-1/2 times the height of the column. The columns should support and be connected together by a continuous beam trimmed with painted wood in a design compatible to the fascia of the main structure. The porch roof design and materials should mirror that of the main structure; shed, hipped and occasionally gabled roofs being the most common in the districts.

In the case of an historic structure, if a railing is required it should match any that may exist. In general, railings should run column to column on the same centerline and be comprised of a painted wood top and bottom rail with square, round or turned painted wood balusters set between as required by code. The same design should be continued onto any abutting stair, and a newel post with decorative wood cap should be located at every corner or termination that does not otherwise occur at a column. If an opening exists between the porch and grade it should be filled with masonry, painted wood siding, or lattice set within a painted wood frame panelized to mirror the column spacing of the porch above. Decking for the porch should in most cases be wood, and stairs should have treads to match with closed risers. In some instances stone steps with wrought iron rails are appropriate, but cast concrete steps are discouraged.

Porches on the street side of structures within the district should not be

enclosed with screening or glass, as to do so dramatically alters their light and delicate appearance. Seasonal installation of screen panels set behind the porch column and rails may be considered if no other option is available that is beyond the view of the public way.

ROOFS



While most roofs were originally constructed of wood shingles or slate the vast majority have since been replaced with asphalt shingles. Because of the expense of the original materials this will continue to be an allowable practice, but especially where existing slate roofs are present every effort should be made to preserve and repair the existing rather than considering replacement. Existing roof trim (ie. cornice trim, fascias and rakeboards) should be maintained or replaced in kind. Painted aluminum drip edges are permitted but cedar starter courses are preferred. Roof ventilation with a continuous low profile ridge vent extended fully to the ends of the roof are recommended over box ventilators. Similarly, continuous painted soffit vents are preferred to a series of individual vents. Copper, lead, or painted aluminum flashing are preferred over those with a bright or mill finish.

In new construction roofs should harmonize with the older roofs in the district in both slope and material. Asphalt shingles are common, and while not discouraged, should be dark and uniform in color. Flat roofs are rare in the districts, and hence discouraged on residential structures. They are a modern feature more common to commercial or institutional structures found in West Acton Village for instance. The most appropriate residential roof designs are gabled, hipped or in some later instances mansarded or gambreled. The roof slope should be kept uniform on all portions of the structure; the height and orientation of the roof should reflect the hierarchy of the structure covered, ie. ells should have a lower roof than the main body of the house. Examination of historic properties within the districts reveals that residences from the 18th and early 19th centuries featured gabled roofs typically oriented with the ridge running parallel with the street that it fronts. Mid and later 19th century building designs more commonly featured gabled roofs with the gable end presented to the street, and wings or ells with gabled roofs oriented ninety degrees to the main portion.

SHUTTERS AND AWNINGS

Although little more than an embellishment to windows today rather than a functional device existing shutters, never-the-less, should be maintained or replaced in kind. Many older structures were not furnished originally with shutters and new ones should not be installed in their absence, unless appropriate to the period of the building. When new or replacement shutters are required, wood louvered, or if appropriate, paneled shutters installed on shutter hinges with retaining "dogs"



lag bolted to the exterior wall are preferred. The size of the shutter should be equal to the height of the window opening and one half its width, with the blades sloping up and outward from the bottom. Shutters of synthetic materials, or those attached flat against the wall, are not

acceptable. Awnings can be an enhancement to a commercial storefront if designed in manner consistent with the style of the architecture. Historically, awnings were constructed of fabric, bracketed from the wall of the structure with a shed profile, and frequently retractable. All of those attributes would be considered appropriate in a contemporary design. Radiused and domed awnings are discouraged, as are awnings made of metal or any coated fabrics with a glossy sheen. The size and placement of the awning should be carefully considered so as to not obscure important architectural features or overwhelm the scale of the structure.

SIDING

With few exceptions the predominant material for siding in all three districts is painted wood clapboard. Notable exceptions are the brick firestations in South and West Acton villages, the brick commercial



structures in West Acton village, and the stucco firestation and brick library in Acton Center. (Please refer to the section for masonry for guidelines pertaining to its usage)

Accordingly, the commission strongly urges the use of natural siding materials which, in the case of most residential structures, is wood clapboards. Other acceptable wood siding alternatives that would be appropriate dependent on the context would be wood shingles, board and batten, shiplap or tongue and groove siding. Properly maintained wood siding

will provide excellent service in this climate for many decades. Synthetic siding, such as vinyl or aluminum, is strongly discouraged due to its incongruous detailing and appearance. The only instance in which its use is likely to be considered is in the case of an addition to a structure presently clad in the material.

TRIM



Painted wood trim is found on nearly all historic structures within the districts and its continued use is strongly encouraged. Synthetic materials are discouraged. Exterior trim, eg: corner boards, door & window casing, fascia & soffit trim, rake boards, porch columns, etc. provide essential architectural detail that both scales the exterior and identifies its style. Property owners considering rehabilitation or renovation should preserve existing trim if possible, and replace it in kind if necessary. In the case of additions and new construction, careful attention should be placed on neighboring historic structures in the vicinity to determine the appropriate application and proportioning of trim. In these instances greater latitude in determining the amount and type of trim will be considered, allowing for simplification or accommodation to commercially available stock. The installation of architectural elements that confuse or falsify the date of a building should be avoided.

WINDOWS



Recent improvements in building technology have yielded products that are significantly more energy efficient than those originally installed in Acton's buildings during the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Consequently, many owners will be tempted to consider replacement. Windows are one of the the most important architectural features on the exterior of a structure, critical in establishing the scale and rhythm of the facade. Therefore, wherever possible, the following guidelines should be observed: Wood windows are preferred over vinyl or aluminum. Retrofitting the original window sashes with weatherstripping and/or insulated glass is encouraged. If not possible, replacement sashes and hardware within the original frames is preferred. If total replacement is necessary, owners should maintain the original window size, location, material, trim and type of window. The most common window type within the districts are doublehung units with true divided lites, and are therefore, preferred to the more modern awning or casement types. The number of lites within a window should be consistent with the original units if present. Typically they are 6/6 or 2/2, rarely numbering less than two per sash in older structures. Applied muntins on the exterior surface of the glass are acceptable, but not inside or within the insulating unit unless truly divided or accompanied with an applied exterior muntin. In new construction or additions the size, proportion, type and rhythm of windows should conform to those nearby in the district and appropriate to the style of construction. Greater license can be taken with windows located on walls not visible from the public way. Storm windows are excluded form the jurisdiction of the Historic District Commission.

SITE FEATURES

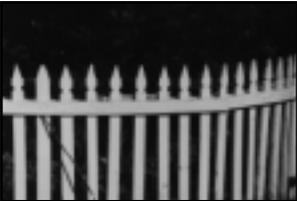
DECKS, TERRACES, AND LANDSCAPING



Acton’s Historic District Bylaw limits the jurisdiction of the Commission to site features such as fences, walls, gazebos, decks, raised terraces, permanent play structures and septic vent pipes. Therefore, the Commission has no policy regarding plantings and structures located at grade level such as walkways, although on occasion the use of plantings for the purpose of screening parking, lighting or other structures may be prescribed. (The Commission would recommend that landscaping to the street side of the property be kept consistent with Acton’s rural New England heritage which is generally understated and low in height. Tall hedges and shrubs should be kept to the rear of the lot and not allowed to overgrow the structure or interrupt the public vista along the street.)

Decks and raised terraces are typically concealed from public view as they should be. Decks are a modern contrivance that can be difficult to integrate into the existing structure. If visible from the public way, decks on historic structures should be constructed of wood with painted railings, posts and balusters consistent with the style of the structure and/or to match original features of similar type if present. Elevated decks should be furnished with a lattice skirt or other architectural device to visually anchor them to the ground and to integrate them as much as possible with the existing structure. Raised terraces should have stone or stone clad retaining walls constructed in a manner consistent with the section on Fences and Walls. Concrete and treated wood timbers are generally not appropriate materials for a visible retaining wall.

FENCES AND WALLS



Due in part to larger lots and typically generous setbacks from the street, fences and walls are not a common feature in Acton. Where they do occur however, they tend to be located along side and rear lotlines. Variations of low wood picket style fences or drystack stone walls are most common, the later more typically found at the periphery of the districts. If installing a fence, consideration should be given to the material and style of those in the immediate area. Owners should align their fence with those on abutting properties or match the setback and height of those nearby.

Tall wood privacy fences such as stockade fences should be restricted to

the rear of the property, never closer to the street than the front of the house, otherwise they obscure the architecture of the residence and detract from the streetscape. Fences constructed of chainlink, metal wire, plastic or other synthetic materials should be avoided in any location where the fence would be visible from the public way as they are incompatible with the character of the districts.



Stone walls should be constructed of dry stacked native stones small enough to be lifted by an individual, and to a height of no more than three feet in most cases. The use of mortar and cut stone is generally not appropriate to the rustic character of the stone walls typically found in the districts. (An exception would be a stone retaining wall requiring greater height and/or deeply raked mortar joints)

Owners should refer both to existing wood fences and stone walls in the district, and the architectural style of their own property when considering the style of fence and degree of ornamentation that would be appropriate. Particular attention should be paid to wall terminations, gates, and openings that are created as they represent important opportunities to break the rhythm of the fence or wall by introducing ornamentation. Please refer to the Town's Zoning Bylaw for additional regulations regarding the height and location of fences and walls.

PARKING

The need for parking is a modern necessity and in the case of commercial and institutional structures, may have to take the form of parking areas with the capacity to hold a great number of automobiles. If not designed in a sensitive manner, however, parking areas can have a deleterious impact on their surroundings. Large expanses of paving and their attendant number of automobiles are inconsistent with the character of a historic district. The Commission, therefore, strongly encourages the placement of parking areas behind rather than in front of structures. An example is found at Town Hall. If circumstances will not allow such a placement, landscaping such as plantings and/or fencing should be employed for the purpose of screening the cars and pavement from public view as much as possible. Due to small front yard setbacks, on-street parking will continue to exist in the commercial portion of West Acton Village; but is discouraged elsewhere, especially within the Town Center where it would detract considerably from the character of the town's most precious physical asset, a "green" town common.

Residential driveways and their use to park automobiles for their residents and guests is not within the jurisdiction of the Historic District Commission. Owner's should reference the town's Zoning Bylaw for further design criteria regarding parking areas and driveways.

PLAY STRUCTURES

The Commission has jurisdiction over permanent play structures. If possible, permanent play structures should be kept to the rear of the property and screened by existing structures and/or landscaping. The scale of the structure should not overwhelm the site, and natural materials such as wood are preferred. Muted earthtones are recommended for painted structures and awnings.

SEPTIC SYSTEMS

While health and safety regulations take precedent with regard to septic systems, the HDC does review the placement and design of vent pipes and other associated above ground structures. The Commission may request screening for walled or mounded systems which significantly disturb the existing terrain visible from the public way. Septic vent pipes should be placed in a remote location as far as possible from the public way and screened with vegetation, or other device. Dark-colored, short “stove pipe” type vents are preferred to the white PVC gooseneck type.

SIGNAGE

Property owners proposing a sign of any type should consult Section 7 of the Acton Zoning Bylaw which details the requirements that must be met to obtain a sign permit. Signs within the historic districts also



require approval from the Historic District Commission, who may in certain instances either grant a special exception to town requirements or apply additional restrictions. As a rule however, signs must be constructed of wood, kept small and simple in their design and not internally illuminated. Wall mounted or post mounted signs will be considered if appropriately sited and/or placed with regard to the building’s exterior. Neon or aggressive colors and/or logos detract from the historic character of the district and are, therefore, regarded as inappropriate. External lighting should be concealed from view if possible with planting or similar devices, and carefully controlled to illuminate only the surface of the sign with minimal brightness and glare. Signs whose design, method of support, and typeface style are based in historic precedent are preferred.

ACTON CENTRE HISTORIC DISTRICT



SOUTH ACTON HISTORIC DISTRICT



WEST ACTON HISTORIC DISTRICT



CRITERIA FOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION DECISIONS

In making a determination for a Certificate of Appropriateness, the Acton Historic District Commission will use the following general standards as a basis for its decisions:

1. The historic character of a property, and its contribution to the character of the district as a whole, shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features that distinguish a property diminishes its integrity, and shall be avoided. Distinctive details, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
2. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time and place. Changes that give a false sense of historical development shall not be undertaken.
3. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
4. When possible, deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Replacement of missing or unsalvageable features shall be substantiated by documentary, pictorial, or physical evidence.
5. New construction, additions, alterations, and installation of modern functional items such as electrical fixtures, antennae, etc., shall not destroy or detract from historic materials and features that characterize the property. The new work should be differentiated from the old, but shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, style, materials, and architectural details of the historic property. All such work shall be undertaken in such a way that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.
6. Chemical or physical treatments that cause damage to, or entail removal of, historic materials shall not be used.

**Estimates from Historical/Archeological Consulting Agencies
9/10/2013**

Consultant	Rough Estimate	Notes / Comments
Archaelolgoical and Historical Services	\$25,000	estimate is for minimum amount, cost goes up depending on how many public meetings
Community Opportunities Group	\$30,000	suggests additional funds for preparation and dissemination of informational brochures to property owners etc.
VHB/Vanasse Hagen Brustlin	\$30,000	