

**GUIDELINES  
for CHANGES within  
MEDFIELD LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS**



Prepared by the  
Medfield Historic District Commission

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The Historic District Commission (“Commission”) is pleased to present *Design Guidelines for Medfield Local Historic Districts*. Medfield’s four Local Historic Districts, John Metcalf, Hospital Farm, Clark-Kingsbury and Town Center, are areas recognized for their architectural and historic significance.

### **DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR MEDFIELD LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

These guidelines are intended to explain the application of the Bylaw and to assist property owners in the Medfield Local Historic Districts as they repair or plan to make changes to their properties.

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF HISTORIC DISTRICTS?**

1. To preserve and protect the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant to the Commonwealth and to Medfield.
2. To maintain and improve the settings of those buildings and places.
3. To assure that new construction is compatible with existing buildings in the district.
4. To maintain the integrity not only of individual structures but also of entire streetscapes.

Historic districts do not prevent changes from occurring, nor do they prevent new construction. The intent is to make changes and additions harmonious, and prevent the intrusion of incongruous elements that might distract from the aesthetic and historic values of the district. The purpose of any local historic district is not to halt growth, but to allow for thoughtful consideration of change.

### **HOW WERE THE MEDFIELD LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS ESTABLISHED AND HOW ARE THEY ADMINISTERED?**

The Medfield Local Historic Districts, including their specific boundaries, were approved by vote at Town Meeting (a two-thirds vote is required for creating a local historic district). Local Historic Districts are administered by the Commission whose authority is established through a Town Bylaw and the State’s enabling legislation of Chapter 40C, the Historic Districts Act. Commissioners are appointed by the Selectmen. The Commission holds regular monthly meetings.

### **WHAT KIND OF REPAIRS OR CHANGES ARE REVIEWED IN A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT?**

Any change to the exterior of a building that is visible from a public way, park, or body of water is subject to review by the Commission. These changes include, but are not limited to, windows, doors, roof lines, building materials, new construction, additions and fences. This work needs one of three certificates to be signed by the chair of the Commission before a building permit can be issued and work may be performed.

### **WHAT KIND OF REPAIRS OR CHANGES ARE EXCLUDED FROM COMMISSION REVIEW?**

Medfield’s Town Bylaws are specifically designed to exempt the following from review.

- (1) Temporary structures of signs, subject, however, to such conditions as to duration of use, location, lighting, removal and similar matters as the Commission may reasonably specify.
- (2) Terraces or landscaping that does not substantially change the grade level (Exception: fencing visible from the street).
- (3) Storm doors, storm windows, screens and window air conditioners.
- (4) Color or type of paint or roofing.
- (5) Signs used for residential occupation or professional purposes which are not more than one square foot in area, provided that (a) only one such sign is displayed for each building or structure, (b) the sign consists of letters painted on wood without a symbol or trademark, and (c) if illuminated, is illuminated only indirectly.
- (6) Signs used in connection with nonresidential purposes provided that all signs will confirm with the existing Bylaws.
- (7) Reconstruction of a building, structure or exterior architecture feature which has been damaged or destroyed by fire, storm or other disaster, provided that the exterior design is substantially similar to the original.

Even though the preceding statements are listed as exemptions the Commission recommends that it be consulted in an advisory capacity to aid property owners in choosing cost effective and the most aesthetically pleasing materials to suit their needs for their Historic property. The Commission would like to be considered and given the opportunity to make recommendations.

#### **HOW DOES THE REVIEW PROCESS WORK?**

When considering repair or planning to make any changes to property within an Historic District, you should call the Medfield Town Hall (telephone (508) 359-8505). A Commission member will contact you to explain the procedure and identify the type of certificate which applies to your project. These certificates are:

1. Certificate of Appropriateness - issued for approved alterations and new construction.
2. Certificate of non-Applicability - issued for work that is an exact duplication of existing features
3. Certificate of Hardship - issued to permit work that the Commission would find inappropriate except that the Commission has determined that failure to approve such work would cause a substantial hardship, financial or otherwise and that the work would not represent a significant detriment to the district, based on

conditions especially affecting the building or structure, but not affecting the district generally. The Commission grants Certificates of Hardship only after holding a Public Hearing.

You will then be asked to fill in and submit an Application, using a simple application form available at the Town Hall ( and available by mail). Applications must include a brief written description of the repair or planned change, an application fee, two sets of photographs and three sets of plans (when required). After reviewing your application, the Commission will decide if a Public Hearing is required.

If a hearing is required, three weeks is required to allow time to notify abutters. After the hearing is held, the Commission must make a decision within 60 days.

If a hearing is not required, the Commission will notify you within 30 days.

## SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

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### EXTERIOR WALLS

Wood Siding: *clapboards, shingles, board and batten, etc.*

- Retain and repair original or later important material whenever possible.
- Siding may be replaced or repaired in the existing material and using similar [or the same] design treatment. Siding on an addition should be the same as on the existing structure. Changes of material or design are subject to review.
- Although the Commission does not have jurisdiction over color or type of paint, the Commission recommends investing in quality paint and proper preparation.
- Aluminum or vinyl siding will not be approved. Artificial siding literally covers up the distinctive surfaces and features of older buildings; it may hide and thus perpetuate rot and insect damage; it is neither maintenance-free nor easy to repair; it confers no special insulation value or fire protection; and it may cost a good deal more than some repairs and a fresh coat of paint. Wood siding is an integral part of old buildings and their architectural character. It is easy to maintain, less susceptible to the weather than vinyl, which can shatter in cold weather and fall off in the heat, and more resistant to dents than aluminum. If an old building has been resided in vinyl, aluminum or asphalt shingles, it may be well worthwhile to remove the new siding and restore the original material underneath.

Stucco

- Walls should be repaired with a mixture that replicates the original as closely as possible

Masonry: *including foundations and chimneys*

- Wherever possible, original masonry and mortar should be retained.
- Original mortar should be duplicated in composition, color, texture, joint size, joint profile and method of application.
- When masonry is cleaned, only the gentlest methods should be used. Sandblasting is not permitted since it may change the visual quality of the masonry and accelerate deterioration. In addition, although not subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission, sandblasting has a detrimental impact to the environment. Test patches should always be carried out well in advance of cleaning (including, if possible, exposure to all seasons).
- Because the application of waterproofing or water repellent coatings can accelerate the deterioration of masonry, they should be used only to solve a specific small-scale problem.

- Painting masonry surfaces will be considered only when there is documentary evidence that this treatment was used at some point in the history of the property.

## ROOFS

- Retain the original roof line and configuration.
- Although the commission has no jurisdiction over the color and type of roofing, the Commission encourage owners to retain the original roof covering whenever possible. If the property has a slate roof, conserve the roof slates. Slate is a near-permanent roofing material, and deterioration is generally caused by rusted roofing nails.
- Whenever possible, replace deteriorated roof covering with material that matches the old in composition, color, size, shape, texture and installation detail.
- Preserve the architectural features that give the roof its distinctive character, such as cornices, chimneys, gutters, iron filigree, cupolas, dormers and brackets.
- **New dormers** will be permitted if they are well related to the forms, proportions, size and arrangement of existing windows, and constructed in matching materials and colors.
- **Skylights** with flat profiles may be installed on the rear of the property.
- **Utility equipment**, such as television antennae, satellite dish, air conditioners (other than window air conditioners of which the Commission has no jurisdiction), solar collectors and other mechanical units should be restricted to the rear of the property or to portions of the roof that are not visible from a public way.
- **Gutters** may be made of wood or painted aluminum, and the Commission will allow the installation of new aluminum gutters in place of wood. Although aluminum gutters have the advantage of low maintenance and a permanent finish, they are not without drawbacks. They are vulnerable to denting and bending, and they may look awkward against the original trim of an old building. Wood gutters do require regular painting, oiling and sealing, but they will endure in good condition if properly maintained. If the switch is made from wood to aluminum, particular care should be taken to avoid damaging or removing significant building details.
- **Downspouts** should be inconspicuously located and should be painted to match the material to which they are attached, whether the trim or the body of the structure.

## WINDOWS

- Windows are subject to certification by the Commission; the extent of the review depends on the nature of the work proposed. The features and details of the window, the shape and size of the opening and the placement of the windows on a facade all require attention. For repairs and replacement, approval is routine when the new work duplicates the existing windows in scale, design, and material. However, windows with snap-in or removable muntins not supporting glass will not be approved. Alterations, changes in location and installation and removal of windows require a fuller review.
- Retain original and later important door and window openings where they exist. Do not enlarge or reduce door and window openings for the purpose of fitting stock windows sash or doors, or air conditioners.
- Whenever possible, retain and repair original or later important window elements such as sash, lintels, sills, architraves, glass, shutters and other decorative elements and hardware. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
- Although the Commission does not have jurisdiction over storm windows or color or type of paint, if aluminum storm windows are installed the Commission recommends selecting a baked finish that matches as closely as possible the color of the existing trim or investigating weather-stripping or interior acrylic panels.
- The principle of “repair, don’t replace” holds especially true for windows, frames and trim. Whether they are plain or simple or unusual in design and rich in detail, windows play an important part in shaping the appearance of a building exterior. When windows become deteriorated, repairs should be attempted before complete and costly replacement. Consider wood restorative products where there is rot. Maintenance problems may be rectified and energy efficiency improved. When replacing a window becomes unavoidable, consider whether the window has particular significance because of its features or location. If so, the original should be duplicated as closely as possible. There may be more leeway in dealing with less significant windows, but even these should be in keeping with the period and overall character of the building. Styles that are too antiquated will seem just as jarring as those that are too modern. Multiple glazing may be a problem and require a double sash for effect.
- Period window styles are related to evolving techniques of building and manufacturing. Casement windows dominated buildings before the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Double-hung windows were used throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but casement windows again became popular around the 1920’s. Sliding windows appeared after 1945. Meanwhile, the size and number of

panes, or “lights” also changed. In 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings, since large sheets of glass were not made, small panes in various arrangements including 12-over-12, nine-over-six and six-over-six arrangements were used. The two-over-two pattern of larger panes became prevalent by 1850, but in the 1880’s it gave way to the one-over one window. Later on, multipaned windows were used again for decorative purposes. Today, windows can be obtained in a great variety of stock sizes and styles.

- There can be much variation in the placement of windows across a facade, but careful observation may reveal a rhythm that should be preserved. Changes in the pattern of a front facade are perhaps best avoided; those elsewhere should be contemplated with caution. Along with the arrangement of windows, the size of window openings is an important feature. When new windows are installed as part of an addition or other major renovation, similar considerations apply. The windows should be consistent with one another in size, style and detail; they should be appropriate to the overall design of the new construction; and they should ideally be in harmony with windows of the existing building, although they need not be identical.
- Stained glass or decorative windows shall be retained.
- Awnings are appropriate for particular house styles. They should be canvas, not metal or plastic.
- Shutters may be installed if they are consistent with period of a building and correctly proportioned to the dimension of the window. They shall be made of wood and shall be working shutters, hung to drain when closed and on appropriate hardware. They may not be screwed or nailed to the wall.

#### **DOORS/ ENTRANCES/PORCHES**

- Doors like windows, are an important design element of any style, and integral to identifying the period and history of the building. Original and later important door openings should be retained.
- Existing doors and door elements should be retained, including but not limited to transoms and sidelights.
- The replacement of original elements or features with copies appropriate to the style and age of house is encouraged.
- Although the Commission does not have jurisdiction over storm doors or color or type, if aluminum storm doors are installed the Commission recommends selecting a baked enamel finish that matches as closely as possible the color of the existing trim or have a paintable surface; Unpainted aluminum should be avoided.

- Efforts shall be made to replicate existing hardware.
- Metal doors are not allowed in visible locations.
- Entrance porticoes and porches shall be maintained wherever possible.
- Enclosing porches and steps so as to destroy their intended appearance is discouraged.
- Retain and repair porches and steps that are original or have later important features, including such items as railings, balusters, columns, posts, brackets, roofs, ornamental ironwork and other important decorative items. If new pieces are needed, they should be match as closely as possible the style, shape, scale and materials of the old. Avoid replacing wood posts and railings with metal ones or wood porch decks with concrete.
- Fire escapes are very conspicuous features and, as a rule, should only be placed on the rear of the building, or where they are at least visible from a public way. If installation on the street or side facade cannot be avoided, fire escapes should be designed and constructed with the same attention demanded by other major alterations and repairs, and are subject to the review and approval of the Commission.

#### **ADDITIONS & NEW CONSTRUCTION**

- Additions & New Construction should not disrupt the essential form and integrity of the property and should be compatible in size, scale, material and character of the property and its environment. Where possible, additions should be confined to the rear of the existing structure.
- It is required to hold a pre-application workshop or meeting with the Commission. The purpose is to describe the building's proposed use, and discuss the project design at a conceptual level, review the relevant planning and zoning requirements and define project submission requirements. The Applicant may display proposed drawings at this time.
- It is not the intent of these guidelines to limit new construction to faithful copies of earlier buildings. Approval is not contingent on replication of specific styles. New designs may also evoke, without copying, the architecture of the property or District to which they are being added.
- New additions, alterations or total construction should be done in a way that if they were to be removed in the future, the basic form and integrity of the historic property would remain intact.

- New construction should be compatible and harmonious with the abutting buildings, the context of the District and the existing streetscape. The Applicant must pay careful attention to building height, bulk, vertical, horizontal, or non directional emphasis, scale, façade proportions, window relationships and patterns, elements such as materials, textures, window sizes, types, location, detail, size, shape and proportions of entrances, porches and projections, roof and dormer forms, orientation, site coverage and spacing between buildings.
- The applicant for a new construction project or addition is required to document the proposed work in submission materials. The requirements for such include:
  - Written specifications, including measurements
  - Photographs of the site and its surroundings, including side streets
  - A complete set plans and elevations drawn to an appropriate scale
- At the discretion of the Commission, and as set forth in the pre-application workshop, the following may also be required for submission:
  - Proposed façade elevations, superimposed to a scale on a photograph of the streetscape.
  - Materials samples and/or an on site pre-construction mock-up.
  - A scale model showing the proposed building in context, together with all proposed lighting fixtures, signage, and landscaping.
  - A rendering showing the site as it is proposed to be illuminated at night.
  - Documentation of compatibility of proposed nighttime illumination with the remainder of the District, other adjoining residential areas and nearby park space.

#### **PENTHOUSES AND OTHER ROOFTOP ADDITIONS**

- The objective of preserving the integrity of the original or later important roof shape shall provide the basic criteria for judging whether a penthouse can be added to a roof. The overall height of the building, the prominence of the existing roof form, and the visibility of the proposed addition from a public way shall govern whether a proposed penthouse will be approved.
- Minimizing or eliminating the visual impact of the penthouse is the general objective, and the following guidelines shall be followed:
  - A location should be selected where the penthouse is not visible from a public way or adjacent buildings; setbacks should be used.
  - The overall height or other dimensions will be restricted in such a way so that the new penthouse addition cannot be seen from a public way.
  - The exterior treatment should relate to the materials and texture of the building or to other materials integral to the period and character of the building.

- Openings in a penthouse should relate to the building or to other materials integral to the period and character of the building.
- Openings in a penthouse should relate to the building in proportion, type and size of those below, wherever visually apparent.

## SIGNS

The Commission does not have jurisdiction over the following:

- (1) Temporary structures of signs, subject, however, to such conditions as to duration of use, location, lighting, removal and similar matters as the Commission may reasonably specify.
- (2) Signs used for residential occupation or professional purposes which are not more than one square foot in area, provided that (a) only one such sign is displayed for each building or structure; (b) the sign consists of letters painted on wood without a symbol or trademark; and (c) if illuminated, is illuminated only indirectly.
- (3) Signs used in connection with nonresidential purposes provided that all signs will conform with the existing Bylaws.

For all other cases the following apply:

- Signage must meet the regulations of the Medfield Sign Bylaw.
- Signs, marquees and awnings integral to the building ornamentation or architectural detailing shall be retained and repaired where necessary.
- New signs, marquees and awnings should not detract from the essential form of the building nor obscure its architectural features.
- New signs, marquees and awnings should be of a size, material and shape consistent with the building and its current use, and should also be consistent with other signs along the street. Although not under the jurisdiction of the Commission, it is recommended that color also be consistent.
- Signs, marquees and awnings applied to the face of a building should be attached in such a way that they can be removed at a later date without damaging the materials to which they are fastened.
- All signs added to a building within the District should be part of a single signage system, or reflect a design concept appropriate to the specific features of the original architecture.

- Lighting of signs will be evaluated for the specific use intended, but generally, illumination of a sign should not dominate the illumination of the building or structure. The use of illuminated signs, back-lit, internally lit or neon is not allowed.
- Display of construction date is encouraged when the date and historic name of a building can be documented. Property owners who wish to obtain a pre-approved sign showing that information should apply to the Medfield Historic Commission, PO Box 315, Medfield, MA 02052.

## **LIGHTING**

- Light fixtures subject to review by the Commission include those located on the building exterior, on a porch or deck, on pathways and paved areas and elsewhere around a property where they may be visible from a public way.
- Light fixtures should be appropriate in design and scale to the character of the building and its setting, and fine adaptations of period fixtures are readily available.
- The intensity and distribution of lighting will also be taken into account, particularly as it affects neighboring properties.

## **LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PAVING**

The Commission does not have jurisdiction over terraces or landscaping that does not substantially change the grade level (exception would be fencing that would be visible from the street). For all other cases, the following apply:

- The general intent of this section is to preserve the existing or later essential landscape features that enhance the property.
- It is recognized that often the environment surrounding the property has a character, scale and street pattern quite different from that existing when the building was constructed. Thus, changes must frequently be made to accommodate the new condition, and the landscape treatment can be seen as a transitional feature between the structure and its newer surroundings.
- The existing landforms of the site should not be altered unless shown to be necessary for maintenance of the structure or site. Additional landforms will only be considered if they will not obscure the exterior of the structure.
- The original layout and materials of the walks, steps and paved areas should be maintained if significant grade changes constitute an important feature of the structure or site. Consideration will be given to alterations if it can be shown

that improved site structure is necessary and that the alteration will accomplish this without altering the integrity of the structure.

- Driveways and parking areas may be installed or relocated subject to review of their relationship to the site, the existing buildings and streetscape. Repairs may be undertaken using materials that match the existing ones. Bituminous concrete (blacktop) paving will be approved where appropriate.
- Fencing and boundary walls should be compatible with a property in material, proportions and style. They are an important aspect of the setting for a property and of the streetscape. Wood and wrought iron fences and stone walls are appropriate. Chain link or wire fencing will not be approved. Bear in mind that fencing may be subject to height and setback requirements imposed by zoning regulations.
- Landscaping is generally exempt from review and certification of the Commission, especially if it represents normal maintenance and does not alter siting of an existing building. A major landscaping plan that has significant impact on the overall appearance of the site will be subject to review, as will the landscape design for new construction.

#### **REMOVAL OF LATER ADDITIONS AND ALTERATIONS**

- Each property will be separately studied to determine if later additions and alterations can, or should be removed. It is not possible to provide a single general guideline.
- Factors that will be considered include:
  1. Compatibility with the original property's integrity in scale, materials and character
  2. Historic association with the property
  3. Quality of the design and execution of the addition.

#### **DEMOLITION**

- Demolition of part or all of a structure is considered to be an alteration to the exterior and is subject to the review of the Commission.
- Outside historic districts, demolition is subject to the Demolition Delay By-law.

#### **AMENDMENTS TO THE GUIDELINES**

The Commission reserves the right to amend these guidelines at any time and from time to time as it deems appropriate, by a majority vote of a legally constituted quorum of the Commission.

**SEVERABILITY**

If any section of the guidelines is deemed to be invalid, illegal or unconstitutional, that section shall be severed from the text, and the remaining sections of these guidelines shall continue to be in full force and effect.