

# **Design Guidelines**

For the

**Village of Cornwall on Hudson, N.Y.**

**Prepared by**

**The Cornwall on Hudson Master Plan Committee  
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## ***Why Set ‘Guidelines’?***

These ‘Design Guidelines’ are established with the sole aim of protecting from further loss the architectural, historic and scenic qualities of the Village as they now may exist, and to insure that future changes to structures within Cornwall on Hudson are reasonably appropriate to the specific neighborhood areas in which they are planned.

*The Mission Statement:* To protect and preserve the aesthetic, architectural and cultural character of the Village, while enhancing property values through improvements designed to increase the general attractiveness of Cornwall on Hudson to residents, visitors and business interests.

It’s believed that working to attain these goals will strengthen the economy of the Village, and add to the pleasure and welfare of the people of Cornwall on Hudson.

## ***Guidelines for the ‘Guidelines’ ....***

Cornwall on Hudson is made up of a diverse housing and commercial building inventory, structures which were built as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and other structures which have been far more recently erected. And in between each of these distant points in the broad timeline of Village life, are hundreds of structures of no special age or unambiguous representative style.

At the same time, it should be remembered that a real architectural legacy exists in our community, in works inspired by the designs promoted by leaders among Hudson Valley architects such as A. J. Downing, A. J. Davis, and Calvert Vaux.

Reference to many of these features, which could enhance the value of homes either being designed or modified, can be found in the following publications:

The Architecture of Country Homes

by A. J. Downing (1850)

Victorian Cottage Residences

by A. J. Downing (1842)

Villas and Cottages

by Calvert Vaux (1857)

The Cornwall on Hudson 'Design Guidelines' have the limited goal of maintaining a certain level of consistency within specific, local areas of the Village as to general size and design, and are solely devised to curb the construction of buildings that are excessively dissimilar to those surrounding it, which would change the existing character of an established neighborhood. The recent trend of tearing down existing houses and replacing them with larger houses or building large additions to existing houses resulting in structures that are excessively dissimilar to existing houses threatens the appearance and potentially impacts on the welfare and quality of life in Cornwall on Hudson.

In fact, these 'Guidelines' will materially assist property owners as well as architects, contractors and those leasing property in the approval process, and provide the Village Planning Board a road-map to follow in establishing an objective basis for decision-making.

## ***How the 'Guidelines' Work.....***

Your proposal should be presented to and reviewed by the Village Planning Board if you own or lease property in Cornwall on Hudson, and plan to:

- 1- Make any major changes to existing structures*
- 2- Demolish any existing structure, or*
- 3- Build a new structure*

Plans should be submitted to and reviewed by the Village Planning Board when:

- 1- The change is on the exterior of the structure and is visible from the contiguous Village street*
- 2- The change is not considered 'maintenance', i.e., when the amount of work to be done requires a Building Permit.*

## ***The Process....***

Determine, early on in your proposed project, if review for 'Design Guidelines' is necessary. Discuss your plans with the Village Enforcement Officer at the Building Department for this purpose. *All* new construction must comply with zoning regulations and building codes.

Obtain a Building Permit application and if a 'Design Guidelines' review is deemed necessary a public hearing will be scheduled. Perspective drawings and/or renderings may be required, and after public comment, the Village Planning Board shall act either to approve, approve with modifications, or disapprove a building application. No consideration of the 'Guidelines' would proceed if the applicant doesn't meet the basic requirements of the Village Zoning Codes.

If approved, the Village Building Inspector will verify that construction follows the approved plans.

## ***'Emergency' Exception....***

See the Enforcement Officer (and Village Code???) for exemption from required procedures which may be permitted for emergency repairs

In general, emergency repairs are allowed without review when a court or other agent or agency orders them to remedy a dangerous condition. However, if the existing condition which necessitated the emergency repair is not being replaced in kind, the Enforcement Officer should be notified, and plans for the final correction of the defect must be submitted to the Planning Board within (60) days of the emergency repair.

This exemption may not be used to circumvent the provisions of the 'Design Guidelines'.

## ***What We Mean.....***

For the purposes of clarity, the definitions of basic terms are spelled out here.

Structures—include, but are not limited to houses, stores, churches, schools, warehouses, barns, fences, outbuildings, pools, pumps, gravestones, light fixtures, outdoor signs, and outdoor advertising fixtures.

Maintenance—is defined as routine repair and upkeep brought about by normal wear and tear, except when such repair work changes that area of the exterior of a structure that is visible from the contiguous Village street.

***(Additional Definitions?)***

## ***An Alphabet of Guideline Notes.....***

### **A.**

**Air Conditioning** (Mechanical Equipment) at grade and visible from the street should be completely screened from public view by fences, walls or other architectural enclosure. No ductwork is to be exposed and use of deciduous plantings to screen such equipment is not recommended, though evergreen plantings may be acceptable.

**Accessory Buildings** are to be considered in the same manner as the main structures to which they belong.

**Antennas & Aerials** should be located on the part of structures furthest away from the street or in a location that is of minimal visibility to the public.

**Alterations** are subject to review.

**Architectural Ornaments** should be consistent with style and character of a structure, using materials that are compatible with the approved siding.

**Awnings** may be operable or fixed and fabric shed type is recommended.

### **B.**

**Banners** are acceptable if they are six (6) square feet or smaller and put out in the morning and taken in at the end of the day. Also acceptable are banners over six (6) feet square which are displayed for 30 (30) days or less. These should be securely attached to the building or some other structure, and may not be attached to any municipal fixture such as light poles or traffic signs without the express permission of the Village.

## C.

**Chimneys** of exposed concrete block are considered to be unacceptable.

**Columns/Posts** should match the style of the structure and no column height may exceed 20-times its width. Wood is recommended and other materials may be acceptable. It is recommended that applicants refer to The American Vignola, by William R. Ware (1977-W> W> Norton & Co.) for traditional columns.

## D.

**Decks** should not be constructed on the side of the building facing the street. Exposed concrete block or concrete piers are to be avoided . Crawl space should be covered by lattice, and all pressure-treated elements of construction should be stained or painted. To clarify the definition of 'deck', it is an attached or free-standing structure with a framed floor and railing but no solid roof. *A **patio** or **terrace** is a landscape surface, usually masonry, that sits at grade.*

**Demolition** plans must be submitted for review like any other changes to building exteriors.

**Dish** (Satellite) is subject to Antennas & Aerial Guidelines.

**Doors** should be of a size, shape and style that is appropriate to the building. It is strongly recommended that the principal door at the front entrance be clearly defined so that there's no confusion as to which it is, and where it is. (Storm and screen doors will be approved on a case-by-case basis.)

**Dormers** should be of a size, shape and style that is appropriate to the building, as should their architectural features and materials. Windows should be similar in style to the windows of the façade below, and louvers should be compatible with the siding used.

**Downspouts** or leaders should be the same material as the gutters. Copper should be natural and unpainted. If other materials are used, it is recommended that they be colored or painted to match the siding or adjoining exterior trim.

**Dumpsters** are to be completely screened and their enclosures shall be reviewed as Accessory Buildings.

***E.***

**Emergency Repairs** may be made under modified procedures (explained on Page 6).

***F.***

**Fences** should be appropriate to the principal structure. If that structure is documented as to date it was built, special attention should be given to fencing, so that where possible, it conforms to the types used in the Hudson Valley when the principal structure was built. Traditional flat wood pickets should be a maximum of 3 ½" wide with maximum spacing equal to one picket width. For wood fences with square baluster-type pickets or period ornamental iron, square or round metal balusters or pickets should be a maximum 5" on center. All front yard fences and/or those facing the street should be no higher than 48".

Corner yards would be affected on both facing streets. No chain link fences should be erected on the side of the structure facing the public street, though horizontal wooden rail or other type may be allowed. Stockade fences are permitted in rear yards only. All fencing is to be installed with finished side facing outward.

**Flags** for commercial promotion should be considered signs and thus subject to review. However, the tasteful display of a single national and/or state flag in front of a residence or commercial business will not be subject to review.

**Furniture** as in outdoor seating and planters should be commercial grade and consistent in style to the building in front of which they are placed. No indoor furniture should be placed out of doors in the public view.

## **G.**

**Garages** (See Accessory Buildings.) It is strongly recommended that garage doors facing the street be avoided.

**Garbage** should be screened from public view, except when put out for collection.

**Gates** as part of a fence should match that fence, while single gates *not* part of a fence should nonetheless comply with the guidelines for fences.

**Gutters** should be of the same material as the downspouts. In all cases they should be carefully placed to minimally affect the best character of the structure's appearance.

## **L.**

**Lattice** should be of wood, or material made to appear like wood, and follow traditional patterns and sizes. All lattice panels, except for trellises, should be framed by casings.

**Lighting** on all exterior areas of structures should be individual point lights and fixtures should be compatible in style with the building to which they are attached or installed in front of. Strip fluorescent fixtures are to be avoided, while flood and spotlights shall be full cut-off type directed at signage, the ground, or the owner/lessee's structure. Lighting levels should be set and remain below the maximums accepted by the Illumination Engineering Society.

## ***M.***

**Masonry** of brick and other materials should match the size, bond, color and texture range and overall character of the original. Mortar should match the original in joint size, shape and color, texture and composition.

**Meters** for all utilities should be located so as to be minimally visible from the public way.

## ***N.***

**New Construction** is covered in its own 'New Construction' Chapter.

## ***O.***

**Ornamental Iron & Steel Work** should match the style and character of the structure to which they are attached or installed in front of.

**Outbuildings** are to be considered in the same manner as the main structures to which they belong.

## ***P.***

**Painting** is important to the visual flow of a street and surrounding structures. There are a number of publications which are designed to give homeowners, lessees and business interests, good advice as to appropriate colors and combinations of colors. It is recommended that these publications be studied for their expertise.

**Porches** are to match the style of the structure to which they are attached. No exposed concrete block or concrete piers should be used. All pressure-treated elements of construction are to be stained or painted. To clarify the definition of porch, it is an attached structure, usually open or screened, that has a solid roof. The enclosure of existing open porches is strongly discouraged.

## **R.**

**Railings** are to be appropriate to the style of the structure to which they are attached, and details regarding dimensions such as height and spacing of openings can be found in the Village Code. It is recommended that the maximum height of railings not exceed the minimum height of railings as defined by the Building Code.

**Recycling** holding areas shall follow the guidelines for garbage enclosures. (see 'Garbage')

**Roofing** systems should be appropriate to the style of the structure in size, exposure, color and texture. Flashing should be visually compatible, low contrasting materials, and roofing materials such as slate or wood shingle should not be painted.

## **S.**

**Sheds** are to be considered in the same manner as the main structures to which they belong.

**Shutters** should match the height of the window exactly, and the width approximately.

**Sidewalks** are, at minimum, to be maintained using the present predominant materials. Any changes in surface materials may require review.

**Siding** that matches the original installation on the structure is recommended, though siding of man-made materials is acceptable. Trim and other ornamentation should be maintained in its original place, and not be removed or modified. It is strongly recommended that siding not be used to cover architectural ornamentation or trim.

**Signs** are covered in “signage” Chapter.

**Skylights** are discouraged on the principal façade of a structure. So-called ‘bubble’ skylights are to be avoided on the principal façade.

**Stairs** should be of materials, size, style and detail appropriate to the building. Pressure-treated wood is allowed for the steps and other components in contact with the earth but should be stained or painted. Repairs should match existing profiles. Additional guidelines may be found under ‘Masonry’ and ‘Railings’.

**Storefronts** should relate to the building as a whole, in terms of material, style and detailing. It is recommended that size, shape, spacing and alignment of the openings in the façade be maintained, and storefronts should not be altered so that they appear as residences and not as commercial buildings.

**Storm Windows** should be of a color to match window sash. Where at all possible, triple track combination storm/screen windows are to be avoided.

## ***T.***

**Telephones** for public use should be located so that they do not interrupt commercial building facades, significant views, or public passage.

**Trim** is here defined as window and door casings, fasciae, cornice and eave trim, corner boards, water table and all similar exterior non-siding components of a structure. Trim should be compatible with the siding materials used, and of the style, proportions and character consistent with the architectural style and ornamentation of the building.

## **W.**

**Walls** designed as landscape and retaining walls should be of stone, brick, or masonry finished with cement stucco. It is also recommended that copings be of stone or brick. Use of unfinished block and railroad ties is strongly discouraged. However, ornamental block may be permitted if it matches the style of the main structure to which such landscape and/or retaining walls belong.

**Windows** should be consistent with the style of the structure. Vinyl-clad wood windows are acceptable with snap-in muntins. Aluminum windows are to be considered on a case-by-case basis. Windows should include an exterior sill. Picture-framed casing is strongly discouraged.

**Wires** for all utility purposes should be organized and located so as to be minimally visible.

## ***Signs of the Times.....***

The way we drive, the places we shop, or eat, or even pray .... the very directions of our lives...are almost always determined by the signs around us. The character of the Village Center will almost certainly be rated on the image and quality of its signs.

And while the messages conveyed are often essential, the the competition for our attention sometimes leads to inappropriate design. Village codes contain basic rules about signage, and this segment of the 'Design Standards' addresses other aspects of the matter.

**Definitions:** Consult the Village Code

**Exemptions:** Consult the Village Code

### **Design Guidelines:**

In all cases, a complete graphic must accompany an application for a proposed sign. If uncommon materials are to be used, a sample should be presented at the time of application.

**Materials:** Wood and metal signs are recommended though plastic boards may be acceptable for certain purposes and places. However, backlit plastic signs are strongly discouraged as are neon signs, and will be considered only on a case-by-case basis.

**Lettering:** Painted, cut into wood or stamped metal letters are recommended. Applied cut vinyl letters will be considered in certain applications.

Edging should be compatible with the sign board.

Shape should be compatible with other signs on the building façade, though not necessarily the same shape. Photos of other signs must be submitted with the application.

Size should be compatible with other signs on the street.

Texts and Fonts should be compatible with the sign that's being applied for.

Lighting is covered under 'Lighting' in alphabetical order section.

## ***Dressing Up the Village....***

The way residents and visitors experience our Village is the responsibility of everyone who lives here. Are the streets clean? Sidewalks swept? Homes and businesses maintained and neat?

Attention to these matters can make the quality of life in Cornwall on Hudson better for all, and more attractive at the same time, just as Design Guidelines help to provide the underlying means to limit excessively dissimilar construction across the various neighborhoods of our community.

What is of particular interest here is the area between buildings and streets on both sides of an avenue, consisting mainly of trees, street lamps, sidewalks and any street furniture. These Guidelines address only those streetscape elements in the pedestrian space from the front lot line to the curb. If the front of the building is set back from the lot line, the front yard is the responsibility of the property owner. This examination is mainly focused on Cornwall on Hudson's Village Center.

### **The Village is Responsible for:**

*Sidewalk* - Concrete pavement from lot line to curb line.

*Benches* – Any benches should be in a pattern consistent with planters and trash cans.

*Street Trees and Tree Pits* – Efforts shall be made to plant trees at consistent intervals. Pits shall be of a dimension appropriate to the site of planting.

*Wooden Barrel Planters* – shall be placed and maintained through a comprehensive plan sponsored by the Village with financial support arranged by the Local Economic Development Corporation and the local business community.

*Steel Trash Cans* – These trash containers shall continue to be provided by the Village.

**Building Owners and Lessees** also have responsibilities. The Village has, over the years, issued guidelines and regulations covering what can and cannot be placed on Village sidewalks. Check with the Village Clerk for further details. In general, anything placed on the sidewalk must be adjacent to the structure's street façade. Items placed in this area must be submitted to the Village for review.

**Building Owner's Responsibilities:**

*Outdoor Seating and Planters* – must be commercial grade and in keeping with the character of the building they're placed in front of, as well as adjoining structures.

*Sandwich Sign Boards and Displays* – See Signage and check Village regulations.

**Summary:**

It's essential that any elements placed along the Village Center streetscape do not impede the path of pedestrians. Also, streetscape elements should be designed to enhance the character of the Village, and preserve its distinctive charm.

