



# Village of Roslyn Historic District Board

## GUIDELINES FOR HISTORIC LANDSCAPES



*The park and ponds are central features of Roslyn.*

### PURPOSE

These *Guidelines* were prepared to assist property owners with information when considering the alterations to their historic landscapes. They are not intended to replace consultation with qualified landscape architects, landscapers and the Historic District Board (HDB). The HDB will be happy to provide a preliminary consultation addressing design or materials issues to potential applicants free of charge.

These *Guidelines* were developed in conjunction with the Incorporated Village of Roslyn's Historic District Board (HDB). The HDB reviews Permit applications for proposed exterior alterations to properties within the Historic District. The applicant is responsible for complying with the provisions of the Zoning and Building Codes at the time of application. The applicant must obtain all necessary permits prior to proceeding with any work. For more information, or to obtain permit applications, please call the Building Department at (516) 621-1961.

Please review this information during the early stages of planning your project. Familiarity with this material can assist in moving a project quickly through the approval process, saving applicants both time and money. Additional *Guidelines* addressing other historic building topics are available at Village Hall and on its web site at [www.historicroslyn.org](http://www.historicroslyn.org).

### ROSLYN'S HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

The historic landscape of the Village of Roslyn has a unique character. Valley walls rise around the central park, featuring a pair of ponds, with the surrounding streets and yards framing the Village's architecture. Landscapes can add to or detract from historic buildings and their settings. Addressing landscape elements and their character in relation to historic residences and their secondary buildings can help maintain the area's traditional environment.

For each property, the relationships of landscape elements can be viewed in terms of the front, side and back yards around primary structures, as well as the locations of secondary structures within the landscape setting. Aspects of the landscape surrounding individual or groups of historic structures represent important associations of traditional organization and visual and physical relationships.

*The HDB encourages:*

- Keeping views of historic buildings open to street
- Front yard development with traditional, simple arrangements, similar to neighboring properties

*The HDB discourages:*

- Modern amenities in front and side yards in view from public roadways
- Dense foliage, fences or other screening blocking views to historic structures from the public way



*Garden structures can provide an accent in the landscape.*



*The steep slopes of Roslyn necessitate retaining walls.*

## VILLAGE LANDSCAPE

The landscape of neighboring properties along a streetscape is seen as a composition. Owners should be aware of the landscape treatment of their immediate neighbors, the grouping of properties on their block and street, and the overall cluster of houses in the area.

Individual properties should be considered in terms of the front, side and rear yards; how the landscape functions for everyday use; and how it affects the overall character of the property and streetscape. The preferred features of Village lots on a street include:

- Front yards that can include the street edge, street sidewalk, and entry walk, lawn, garden, one or more trees and possibly on-street parking
- Side yards that are often a narrow space that may include a driveway, lawn, plantings and storm water drainage systems
- Rear yards that are often more screened from the street frontage and may have space for a secondary structure such as a garage, shed, deck or arbor; a path to access a secondary door, a lawn or garden area; and shrubs or trees

The arrangement of the landscape elements of the yards is important both to the maintenance of the historic structures and to their character. Although the unique landscape of Roslyn with houses built into the surrounding slopes does not always allow the preferred arrangement to be implemented, property owners are encouraged to minimize the impact of modern amenities on the character of the overall historic landscape of the Village.

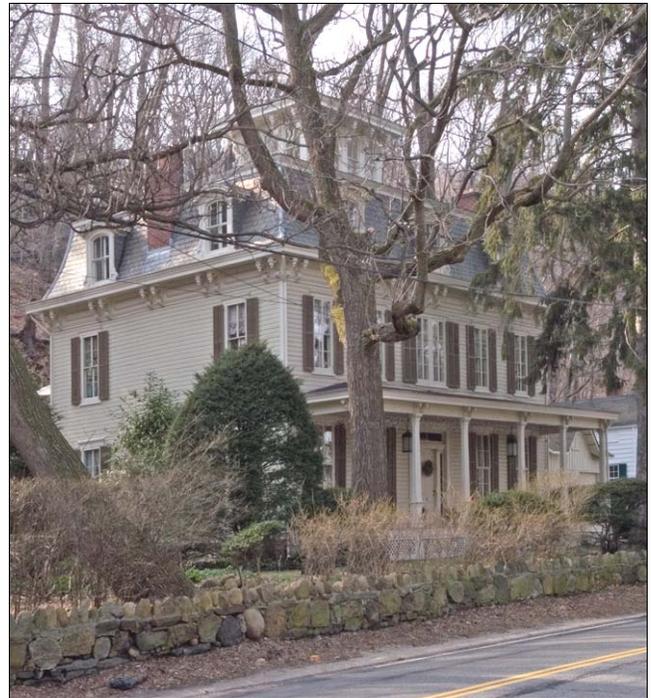
*The HDB encourages:*

- Locating and screening modern amenities, such as a paved terrace, garage, swimming pool or large wood deck to minimize visibility from the public roadway
- Developing a front yard landscape that is historically appropriate for the property

## LANDSCAPE FEATURES & ELEMENTS

The spaces defined by the primary residence and any secondary structures establish the landscape setting that can contribute to the overall historic character of the Village of Roslyn. The landscape elements and features may include:

- Plantings of trees, shrubs, gardens and placement in relation to structures
- Driveways and parking arrangements
- Pedestrian walkways and paving materials
- Fences
- Building numbers and mailboxes
- Lighting
- Positive drainage away from structures



*Dense trees and plantings can limit the visibility of a historic residence from the public roadway.*

## TREES, SHRUBS & GARDENS

Historically, plantings and vegetation around residences in the Village of Roslyn consisted of a few trees, shrubs and mixed gardens. The trees and shrubs surrounding the house provided shade and protection, while gardens provided food, herbs and flowers. Native plants were transplanted from nearby woodlands and traditional plants were carried from homelands. Showy, ornamental trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals became more common in the nineteenth century.



*Cobblestones are an appropriate traditional paving material. Cobblestone can also be used as an edging material to soften the borders of an asphalt drive.*



*Gravel is a historically appropriate paving material. Cobblestone or brick edging can provide a neat transition to adjacent surfaces and landscaping.*

## **DRIVEWAYS & PARKING ARRANGEMENTS**

Traditional driveways were often narrow, compacted gravel access routes. Although gravel remains an appropriate paving material, at many properties in the Village of Roslyn which are located on steep slopes, alternatives such as asphalt-paved driveways, brick or cobblestone may be easier to use and maintain.

If considering adding or altering a driveway, driveway widths should be kept as narrow as feasible. Parking areas should ideally be located to the rear or if space is limited, to the side of the house, positioned to minimize the view from the roadway. Expansive paved parking should not be placed in the front of an historic house or directly along the street frontage.

Generally gravel is more historically appropriate for driveways and parking areas than asphalt paving. For a neater appearance, gravel can be edged with a flat stone, cobblestone or brick. The use of gravel made from local stone can provide an appropriate texture and color. Crushed sharp gravel and stone with finer particles tends to yield a sharper surface and a more modern appearance.

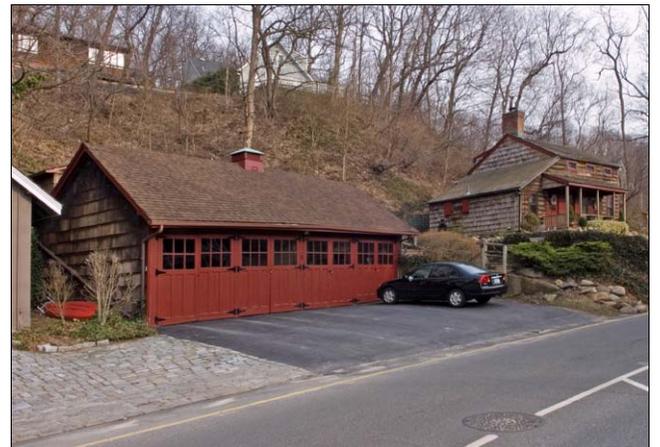
To minimize paving on a property, areas for occasional parking can be reinforced turf grass. A gravel mixture worked into the soil and overseeded with fescue grasses and white clover can support most vehicles. This area will look like turf but can be mown and used for infrequent parking without adding additional paving. This type of overflow paving area is economical and visually complements the surrounding lawn or gardens.

*HDB encourages:*

- Limited pavement area for drives and parking on historic properties
- Using gravel, cobblestones and brick for driveway and parking surfaces, or to soften edges of asphalt paving
- Installing a stone or brick apron at driveways
- Relatively narrow driveways – generally no more than ten feet in width
- Alternatives to expansive paving at parking areas

*HDB discourages:*

- Large paving areas in front yard
- Expanses of street frontage parking areas



*The uniquely sloped terrain of Roslyn can necessitate the placement of parking areas in front yards adjacent to roadways.*



*This flagstone walk forms a stable, all-weather walking surface and gives a traditional appearance to the landscape.*

## PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS

Traditional paving materials for pedestrian walkways in the Village of Roslyn's seventeenth to nineteenth century properties include stone, brick and gravel. Today, walks made of flagstone, compacted gravel, and brick laid in basket weave or running bond patterns are visible through the Village.

Besides being historically appropriate, stone, brick and gravel paving materials are somewhat permeable, allowing storm water to penetrate into the ground, unlike concrete or asphalt paving that increase run-off. Partially permeable, historic paving materials help to create a sense of place while often complimenting the historic building's architectural design and materials.

Paving materials often matched or complemented the materials of historic homes and secondary structures. For example, a house with a stone foundation might have stone or gravel walks. Similarly, houses with brick foundations might include a brick walkway. Property owners can also coordinate the materials of the walkways and driveways creating a more cohesive landscaping treatment.

Concrete walks may be the traditional material for some twentieth century buildings including Bungalow and Colonial Revival style houses. Historic concrete often included local stone aggregates and were naturally colored by local sand.

If concrete is the appropriate paving material, using a local aggregate with an exposed aggregate finish and local sands can help create a traditional feeling in the landscape. Non-historic and inappropriate paving materials with a contemporary appearance include interlocking precast pavers, concrete blocks, and white or brightly colored concrete.



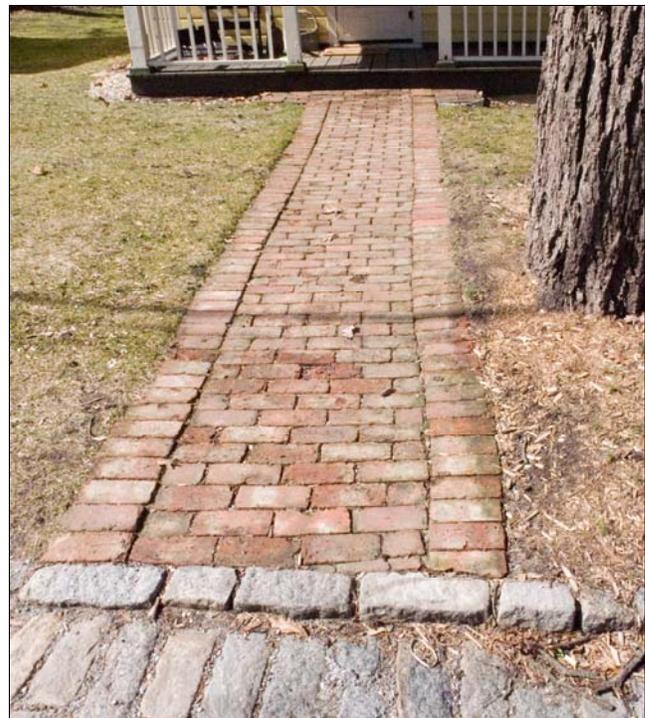
*This stepping stone walk is a good material for a secondary or infrequent route around an historic property.*

*The HDB encourages:*

- Using stone, brick, gravel, or other permeable type of unit paving material of historic appearance
- Regular maintenance and upkeep of pavement
- Using local sands and gravels to color concrete if concrete is historically appropriate

*The HDB discourages:*

- Using modern interlocking pavers, concrete blocks, white or brightly colored concrete, or asphalt paving



*This brick walk in a running bond pattern with a soldier course along the edge is a traditional paving material appropriate for use on an historic property.*



*The Village of Roslyn includes a collection of white fences lining its sidewalks. Although the fences are of a variety of styles, when viewed in combination they provide a unified appearance.*

## FENCES

Traditional materials for fences in the Village of Roslyn are generally wood and occasionally cast or wrought iron. The most prevalent wood fence enclosures include picket and post and rail fencing, although there are some unique wood fences that reflect the residence's architectural style. Traditional fencing types not only marked the boundaries of a specific space, but also allowed visual access to and from the historic structures located on a property from the roadway.

Cast or wrought iron fencing is rare in the Village of Roslyn. Iron fences enclose a space in a more transparent and decorative manner and are most appropriate for Victorian homes.



*Iron fencing, although relatively rare in the Village of Roslyn, is visually more transparent than most wood fences.*

Historically, it was common to use different types of fences and stone walls within the same property. Fences divided a property into different areas, with each fencing type dependant on the use of the enclosure.

Traditionally decorative fencing such as picket fencing enclosed areas immediately adjacent to the house, serving as an animal barrier. Picket fences were also common in surrounding and protecting garden spaces and were whitewashed or painted on a regular basis.

Although a new fence may be erected using traditional fencing materials, the overall appearance of the enclosure may not be appropriate. Solid and visually dense fences create privacy, but also block visual access to historic structures from the street, and are not in keeping with the historic character of the Village and its landscape. The delineation of space with traditional, open fencing can create a sense of separation and a degree of privacy without blocking views to the historic architecture.

Modern fencing options such as vinyl or other reflective materials tend to detract from the historic character of the landscape. Using historically common fencing materials in an appropriate manner promotes the overall character of a property and the area and is encouraged.

*The HDB encourages:*

- Use of traditional materials for fences, walls, gates and other boundary markers in an appropriate manner
- Maintaining building views open to the surrounding roadways
- Installing fence posts towards the interior of a property
- Regular maintenance and upkeep to fences

*The HDB discourages:*

- Blocking views to historic buildings and settings with dense fencing materials or plantings
- Using non-traditional fencing materials such as vinyl



*While it is constructed of a traditional material, this solid board fencing inappropriately blocks views of the historic building from the street.*

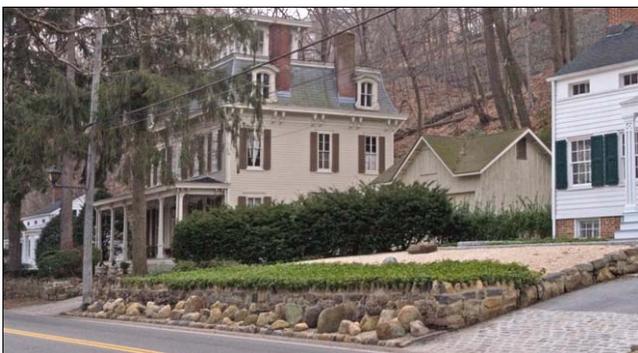


*Dry laid stone walls typically marked property lines between neighbors and are utilized as retaining walls in the sloped landscape. The open joints allow the moisture and storm water collected in the soil behind the wall to permeate through the wall, minimizing the potential for bulging and collapse of the wall from seasonal freezing and thawing.*

## LANDSCAPE WALLS

Traditional materials for boundary and retaining walls in the Village of Roslyn were local stone, often dry laid in historic fashion. Local stones are available in a variety of sizes, shapes, textures and colors, ranging from light to dark grays and different browns. Dry laid stone walls are found throughout the Village of Roslyn and represent an appropriate choice for any Village property.

By contrast, pre-cast “stone” blocks tend to be more uniform in appearance, of a single size, and are not appropriate within the Village. Large, modern stone or brick piers framing a driveway or entrance walkway are also not appropriate for a historic house.



*Retaining walls provided level landscapes on which houses were placed.*



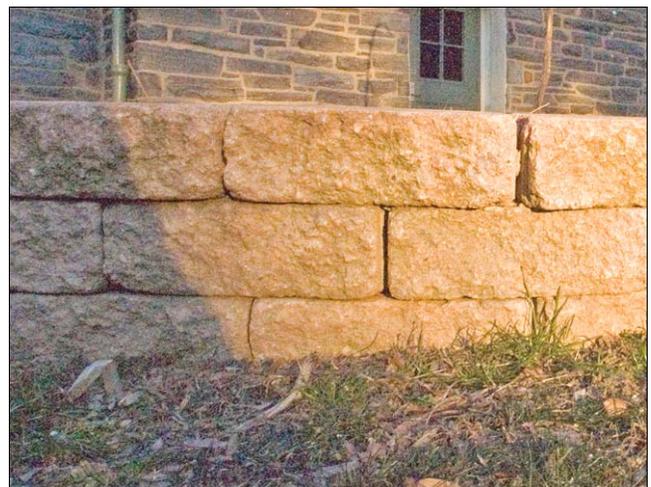
*Retaining walls can be topped by fencing to provide visual privacy and separation from a public way.*

*The HDB encourages:*

- Use of traditional local stones for landscape walls
- Maintaining building views open to the surrounding roadways
- Regular maintenance and upkeep of landscape walls

*The HDB discourages:*

- Blocking views to historic buildings and settings with tall landscape walls
- Using cast in place or pre-cast concrete blocks for walls or retaining walls
- Constructing large stone or brick piers at driveways or entry walkways



*Pre-cast “stone” blocks are inappropriate within the Village of Roslyn. They do not have the varied size, color and texture of local stone walls.*



*The gold numbers provide good visual contrast on the black painted metal sign.*

### **BUILDING NUMBERS & MAILBOXES**

Traditional styles of building numbers can enhance a historic property while more modern ones often detract from the historic character. Historically appropriate building numbers include individually mounted numbers or small, hand painted or carved or plaques with numbers of wood or metal. Large, plastic or modern materials are not appropriate for historic properties and should be avoided. Similarly, mailboxes should complement the historic style and character of a residence.

*The HDB encourages:*

- Traditionally styled small wood or metal building numbers
- Historically appropriate and complementary mailboxes

*The HDB discourages:*

- Installation of large, modern mailboxes on historic properties



*This mailbox and post were painted to complement the colors of this historic residence.*

### **LIGHTING**

Outdoor lighting is an amenity of modern life. For a historic house, outdoor lighting should highlight the architecture and be of a style appropriate for the historic building. A wide range of wall-mounted or free-standing, replica historic lighting is available to complement a variety of historic properties and their lighting needs.

Residential lighting should be installed to illuminate pathways and access routes, limiting the spillage onto adjacent properties and the public way. Generally lighting on one property should not extend onto the neighboring lots or into the night sky. To minimize light spillage, many lights are available that cast light downward where it is needed to illuminate walking surfaces. In addition, existing lights can often be fitted with hoods or shields to direct light downwards.

*The HDB encourages:*

- Unobtrusive lighting of historic properties that limits light spillage onto neighboring properties and into the night sky
- Traditional lighting fixtures that complement the architectural style

*The HDB discourages:*

- Obtrusive lighting of historic properties that illuminates neighboring properties
- Modern lighting fixtures on historic buildings



*This style of this light complements the characteristics of the Victorian residence and the solid top directs light downwards.*

## HISTORIC LANDSCAPE RECOMMENDATIONS

Shaping the landscape requires long and dedicated planning and effort. Property owners should consider historically appropriate options when selecting and locating plant materials, driveways, parking, walkways, fences, walls, lighting and other landscape features. To better understand the possibilities of a landscape, it might be appropriate to consider retaining the services of a professional landscape architect to discuss options.

*The HDB encourages:*

- Traditional, simple arrangements in front yards using local materials of historic appearance
- Front yard development similar to neighboring properties
- Maintaining views of historic buildings from the roadway
- Placing modern amenities generally out of public view in side or rear yards and screening them from view with traditional materials
- Stone, brick, gravel, or other permeable traditional unit paving material
- Local aggregate and sand if concrete paving is historically appropriate
- Traditional materials and styles for fences, walls, gates, boundary markers, and site furnishings
- Routine maintenance and upkeep of pavement, fences, walls, and boundary markers
- Limiting pavement area for parking areas and narrow driveways on historic properties
- Planting styles that complement architectural styles and historic building's character
- Planting native, traditional, and green leaved vegetation in the landscape
- Caring for and protecting historic trees to prolong their lifespan
- Placement of new trees and shrubs away from historic buildings so they will not crowd structures as they mature
- Using small, custom crafted signs and building numbers in traditional styles and materials
- Installing traditional lighting fixtures that complement the architectural style and limit light spillage onto neighboring properties and into the night sky
- Attention to positive drainage away from buildings by establishing a low point away from the building and controlling roof downspout drainage

## POSITIVE DRAINAGE AWAY FROM STRUCTURES

Positive drainage away from historic buildings is crucial to prolonging the life of its materials and structure. Over time ground levels often rise around historic structures bringing soil closer to building materials and creating drainage patterns that actually direct water towards buildings. Keeping moisture away from the foundation and materials of a building can reduce basement wall moisture and moisture-related deterioration of building sills and cladding.

Grading around historic buildings should be a minimum of six inches below wood elements to reduce the likelihood of moisture-related deterioration. After proper soil level is established adjacent to the building, soil or paving should be sloped away from the building with the lowest elevations where the water will drain away at a minimum of three feet away from the building's foundation. Please refer to *Guidelines for Exterior Maintenance* for additional information regarding perimeter drainage.

*The HDB encourages:*

- Maintaining positive drainage away from structures
- Adjusting grading to position low points at least three feet away from building foundations
- Adjusting grading around historic structures to place soil six inches below wood sills and siding
- Installing splash blocks or extending downspouts and rainwater conductors away from building foundation

*The HDB discourages:*

- Storm and surface water draining toward buildings
- Groundwater ponding adjacent to foundation
- Soil less than six inches below wood building members



This publication was initiated and overseen by the Incorporated Village of Roslyn and the Roslyn Landmarks Society. This project was made possible through a grant provided by the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA). However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the NYSCA nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the NYSCA.

Dominique M. Hawkins, AIA, of Preservation Design Partnership in Philadelphia, PA, prepared this publication.