



LANDSCAPING & SITE IMPROVEMENT GUIDELINES

General Principals

Landscaping, while not architecture or physical building elements, makes an important contribution to the overall appearance of the entire property, what we frequently call “curb appeal”. Landscaping can enhance the building and compliment important architectural details. There are styles of landscape planting as much as there are styles of architecture. Mature trees and plantings add value to the property. If properly located, they can provide shade and protection from sun, which helps in keeping houses cooler in the summer months. This can be an energy savings as well.

Shrubs and perennials can ‘soften’ the strong lines of any type of architecture. They can draw attention to and compliment beautiful, unique architectural details and also provide an attractive pathway to the main building entrance. There are many varieties of plant material that add seasonal color to any property on any site orientation. For today’s gardens there are so many options from which to choose, and selections can reflect the unique personality of each homeowner. However, incorporating even one traditional element to your home will increase your landscape's authenticity, while adding beauty to your surroundings.

Other site improvements such as fences, patios, walkways, exterior lighting, and outdoor furniture, can reveal and point to important architectural features such as an intricate solid wood entrance door, divided lite windows with interesting muntin patterns, intricate wood trim, and special masonry. These features should enhance the building’s historic architecture and be compatible with any adjacent historic buildings and streetscapes.

As with buildings, sites and site features are to be recognized as products of their time. Any changes that have no historical references or which attempt to seek an earlier appearance are to be discouraged.

It is understood that landscaping and site features are more given to changes which have taken place through the course of time but may represent another style or character are still evidence of historical development and may have historical significance in their own right. These changes are to be recognized and respected.

LANDSCAPE/SITE FEATURES

RECOMMENDED:

- Identifying, retaining and maintaining historic landscape features such as gardens, shrubs and perennial plant materials, mature trees and archeological features that have historically linked buildings to their neighborhood/environment.
- Identifying, retaining and maintaining historic fencing, walkways, retaining walls, exterior lights, signs, benches, outbuildings and building setbacks that reflect the property’s history and development and link it to their environment or neighborhood.
- Investigate and document the existing condition of stone/masonry walls, retaining walls and brick or stone walkways before proceeding with any repair/replacement work.
- In mortared walls, note any existing weep holes and other drainage features to allow moisture to safely drain away from the structure during rain storms. Make sure these are free and clear of dirt, silt and other blockages.
- Install a perforated pipe in a bed of gravel behind the existing retaining walls. The gravel allows the water to percolate easily towards the bottom of the wall where it then enters the holes in the perforated pipe and flows down to the end of the wall. At this point, the pipe can be left open so the water flows out onto the ground, or it can be connected to another drainage feature, if necessary.



- Research any available old photographs, newspapers, drawings, & tax records for the past appearance of the property & a history of any changes. Evaluate any changes in light of the past appearance of the property. The public library is a good source for maps, site plans, and photographs.
- Using new plant materials, fencing, walkways, street lights, signs, benches and other outdoor furnishings that complement the character of the house and the neighborhood in scale, size material, texture and color.
- Placing yard ornaments and trendy decorative art objects toward the rear yard area.
- Any parking should be designed and located in a way that does not detract from the historic character of a property or neighborhood.
- Screen any needed parking spaces with materials that are compatible with the character of the neighborhood, such as shrubs, brick, and wrought iron.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

- Introducing new plant materials, signs, lighting, benches and outdoor furniture, paving materials, walks, and fencing that are out of scale with the house, and not compatible with the character of the house or inappropriate to the surrounding neighborhood.
- Removing a historic stone wall or retaining wall before evaluating its historical significance and determining if it can be repaired in whole or part, rather than replaced.
- Placing trendy yard ornaments and decorative objects prominently in the front yard landscape
- Making more major changes to the appearance of a property by removing old trees, fencing, walkways & other hardscape, and outbuildings such as garages, before researching and evaluating their importance in the property's history and development.
- Leaving trees, shrubs and other plant materials in close to the building that may be causing deterioration of the historic materials.
- Removing structures that may contribute to the appearance and historic character of a historic property or district to provide additional parking spaces.

FENCES

Traditionally, if a yard did have a fence, it was probably a wood picket fence or wrought iron. They provided both a visual and physical separation of the property from the street and the property from an adjacent property.

Fencing is also an extension of the house. Materials and design patterns should take cues from the existing house, and the historic materials and designs in the area. They do not have to be identical materials, but they should be compatible. Fencing should be appropriate to the period of the house or the district. In addition, neighborhoods and districts may have height and setback regulations and design guidelines that must be followed.

RECOMMENDED:

- Priority is to repair any existing historic fencing.
- Regular maintenance – checking for broken boards or pickets,
- Consider adding or maintaining hedges and trees before erecting a fence. This could save the homeowner money since fencing – especially wrought iron fencing – can be very costly.
- With new fencing, choose a simple design.



- In the front yard where appropriate, use fencing that is no taller than 36 inches. It should be low in height and offer optimum views to the yard and house beyond.
- In the rear and side yards only, fencing may be taller and denser to offer more privacy.
- If installing a privacy fence in the back yard, put the fence framing to the inside, facing your backyard. Finish both faces of a wood privacy fence.
- District or city regulations may determine maximum fence heights. When possible, 60 inches is the preferred maximum height.
- Many exterior finish products are available. Use an opaque stain or paint in a color that is compatible with the building color.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

- Installing chain link, diagonal or unpainted fencing.
- Leaving any wood or metal fence unpainted or unprotected from the weather.
- Removing any existing fencing before evaluating its importance in the property's history and development, and before determining if it can be repaired rather than replaced.

PATIOS, DECKS & PORCHES

Restoring or adding porches and patios are important ways to make an old home work for contemporary lifestyles. They offer an extension of the house to the outside, and create areas for entertaining and experiencing outdoor plantings, gardens and the neighborhood. Front porches especially were a way of socializing with neighbors as well as providing eyes on the street – an early 'block watch'. They can also be a feature that adds to the architectural appeal of any home.

RECOMMENDED:

- Use brick pavers, stone or other masonry material for patios
- Provide edging for the patio:
 - Metal edging
 - Setting brick on end to create a soldier course of brick to help hold the pavers in place.
- Create patios in the rear of the property unless designed around or within semi-private garden area.
- Before undertaking any porch repairs, access the condition of the porch.
- As with any type of work on historic properties, the hierarchy should be: Maintain, Repair, and then Replace.
- Repair or restore original porch details: railing, columns, trim, cornice, roof and roofing material
- If replacing a porch, try to maintain the original footprint and roof shape and slope.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

- Decks are seldom appropriate for historic homes – more appropriate to contemporary suburban settings.
- Creating outdoor patios in the front yard, unless designed around a walkway & garden
- Removing an existing porch before determining if it can be repaired in whole or part, rather than replaced.



For more information on garden designs for historic homes click on this link:

<http://www.oldhousejournal.com>

For information on planting boxwoods in historic gardens click on this link:

<https://www.ncptt.nps.gov/blog/planting-boxwood-hedges-in-historic-gardens/>

For information on tree replacement in historic landscapes click on this link:

<https://www.ncptt.nps.gov/blog/tree-replacement/>

For more information on iron fence repair click on this link:

<https://www.ncptt.nps.gov/blog/iron-fence-repair-video-2007-03/>

For more information on shrubs for every old house (magazine/1695) click on this link:

<http://www.oldhousejournal.com>

For more information on plants and curb appeal click on this link:

<http://www.oldhousejournal.com/creating-colorful-curb-appeal/magazine/1687>

For more information on repairing stone walls click on this link:

<http://www.oldhousejournal.com/how-to-repair-a-stone-wall/magazine/1642>

For more information on repairing stone walkways click on this link:

<http://www.oldhousejournal.com/how-to-restore-a-stone-walkway/magazine/1624>

For more information on wooden picket fences for old houses click on this link:

http://www.oldhousejournal.com/primer_on_pickets/magazine/1449

For more information on trees in old house landscapes click on this link:

http://www.oldhousejournal.com/arboreal_americans/magazine/1304

For more information on Ohio ornamental trees click on this link:

http://info.gardenquides.com/about_6372675_ohio-ornamental-trees.html

For more information on heirloom annuals in Victorian gardens click on this link:

http://www.oldhousejournal.com/all_the_hues_that_fit/magazine/1300

For more information on a variety of landscaping topics click on this link:

http://www.oldhousejournal.com/outside_the_old_house/magazine/feature_category/15

For more information on preserving historic porches, a variety of topics can be found at this link:

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/45-wooden-porches.htm>

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Architectural Guidelines:

[https://www.columbus.gov/uploadedFiles/Columbus/Departments/Development/Planning_Division/Document_Library/Library_Documents/PDFs/hrc%20\(2010\).pdf](https://www.columbus.gov/uploadedFiles/Columbus/Departments/Development/Planning_Division/Document_Library/Library_Documents/PDFs/hrc%20(2010).pdf)