

Kingston Historic District Commission  
Kingston, New Hampshire

**DESIGN GUIDELINES  
FOR  
MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT  
(HD1)**

Adopted  
November, 2008

**KINGSTON HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
KINGSTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
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**I. INTRODUCTION**

The Kingston Historic District Commission was established by the Town in 1972. Under Article L of the Town by-laws, the purposes of the Commission include "to safeguard the heritage of the town as it is represented in structures of historical and architectural value located, or which may be located, in an Historic District."

In 1972 the Town also established the Main Street Historic District (the district of HD1). Section 50.20.2 of the Regulations states that the intent of the District is, "To preserve the scale and unique historic character of Kingston's town center while permitting new construction of a size, scale, and design that will be in harmony with the old. It is intended that commercial structures retain and enhance their commercial character, and that residential portions of the district retain their residential qualities."

Any proposal to perform work on the exterior of an existing building (other than routine maintenance) or construct a new building within the District requires an application to the Commission and an issuance by the Commission of a Certificate of Approval.

The purpose of these Design Guidelines is to help the Commission apply its Regulations to larger projects within the Main Street Historic District. As a guidance document, the Guidelines have been drafted as a set of recommendations for preferred practices, and not as a set of mandatory rules. (However, mandatory portions of the Commission's Regulations and the Town's zoning ordinance have also been incorporated into the Guidelines in certain places.) In this way, the Guidelines are intended to provide predictability by giving advance notice to property owners, developers, and other parties, while allowing for flexibility of application to each specific site and proposal. The Guidelines focus upon application to new buildings and significant additions, rather than upon small-scale changes to existing buildings. The Guidelines do not apply to any other historic district within the Town.

**II. Key Character-defining Elements of Main Street Historic District (HDI)**

Section 50.40.2 of the Regulations states that new construction shall be evaluated on the basis of its "compatibility with existing structures and overall affect on the historic character of the District". This section of the Guidelines defines the key character-defining elements of the Historic District, including both buildings and landscape elements, in order to clarify the meaning of "compatibility". The analysis is primarily based upon the Kingston Town wide Area Form, prepared for the New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources in 2002. This survey includes individual property forms from an earlier survey of the Town, conducted in 1979-1983.

The settlement of the Main Street Historic District area dates from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. The District is linear in shape, organized for most of its length around a central common that takes the form of a long, narrow open space within the center of Main Street. Known as "The Plains", this common, which is unusual in New Hampshire, derives from the laying out of Main Street at a width of 20 rods (330 feet) in 1700. Construction of houses, civic, and commercial buildings around the Plains was ongoing throughout the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and examples of all of these periods of building still exist today. The District comprises approximately 100 acres, and it includes approximately 150 individual buildings, mostly residential in design and use. In general, the District retains a high degree of integrity, both in its buildings and its landscape.

#### A. Houses

Most of the buildings within the District are houses, dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Architecturally the houses cover a wide range of architectural styles, including Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Second Empire, Queen Anne, Stick Style, Colonial Revival, and Bungalow. Only five of the roughly 60 houses fronting directly on Main Street were built after 1940. Houses are between one and three stories tall, built of wood with clapboard or shingle exterior siding, and with pitched roofs. The majority show an end gable turned toward the street. Additive elements such as porches, bays, and wings ensure that the larger houses remain compatible in scale with smaller ones. Houses are almost invariably located close to the street, with typical setbacks of 25 to 30 feet in depth. A number of residential lots also have barns and other outbuildings.

#### B. Civic and Commercial Buildings

The civic and commercial structures also cover the range of architectural styles found within the District. Four major structures from on the east side of the Plains: The Church on the Plains (Stick Style – 1879); the General Store (Greek Revival / Vernacular – 1845); The Nichols Memorial Library Building (Richardsonian Romanesque – 1897); and the Town Hall (Colonial Revival – 1929). All of these buildings have shallow setbacks from the street, like the adjacent houses. On the west side of the Plains is another 19<sup>th</sup> century structure with similar characteristics – the Masonic Building (Georgian Revival – 1893), and two more recent buildings whose design, marked by flat roofs and large window and door openings with square of horizontal proportions, are inconsistent with the rest of the District: Central Fire Station (1949) and a small strip mall (1950-1970).

North of the Plains are found the Bakie Elementary School (Colonial Revival – 1941 and onwards); the former Sanborn Seminary (High Victorian Gothic -1883); Colcord Hall (Colonial Revival – 1913); and the Swasey Gymnasium (Functionalist – 1959). These structures are more deeply set back from the street, at distances ranging from 75 to 100 feet or more.

Most of the civic and commercial structures have masonry exteriors, in contrast to the wood frame construction and exterior cladding of the houses. Exterior materials include red brick with light trim (Town Hall, Bakie elementary School, and Swasey Gymnasium); granite with red slate

roof (Nichols Memorial Library); and varying colors of stone (Sanborn Seminary). Wooden structures include the Church on the Plains, the General Store, and Colcord Hall.

Although larger than the houses in the District, the civic and commercial buildings generally maintain a compatible scale through use of massing elements – in many cases a projecting gable entrance bay. Walls are marked by patterns of window openings that maintain a consistent balance of solid to void. As in the houses, doors and windows are almost always vertical in proportion, although sometimes several vertical windows are grouped horizontally.

### C. Landscapes

The District shows a high degree of consistency in landscape treatment. Buildings are located on relatively large lots. Fences are relatively rare in the District; the lack of fences contributes to the open character of the landscape and the continuous blending of different lots. There is little or no formal landscaping. In general, grass lawns with large, mature trees extend directly to the street edge. There are no sidewalks or hard-edged curbs along the street.

## III. **Design Criteria for the District (HD1)**

Section 50.40.1 of the Regulations lists twelve design criteria for evaluating applications before the Commission. This section of the Guidelines clarifies and expands upon these criteria, drawing upon the analysis of character-defining elements, in order to identify design approaches that are more compatible and harmonious with the District's historic character. (Note that the criteria have been organized in a different order from that in the Regulations, in order to group them into three broad categories relating to site and landscape design, building massing, and building details and materials.) Reference is made in this section to photographs of existing buildings within the District that serve to illustrate the design criteria; however, these references should not be taken as a requirement that new construction must imitate historical examples.

### A. Site Layout and Landscape Design Criteria

These criteria will be applied to the way in which a building is placed on the site relative to the street, to internal paving parking and driveway areas, and to other buildings on adjacent sites within the District, as well as to the landscape design of the site.

#### 1. **Rhythm of Spacing of the Buildings on the Street**

The size of new or expanded buildings, and their location on the site relative to other structures and parking areas, should be compatible with the character of the District, with particular attention to nearby buildings.

- a. Projects with very large building footprints should be configured as one or more distinct building volumes, each compatible in size and location on the site with the prevailing rhythm of spacing of buildings within the District.
- b. Parking areas should be placed beside or behind buildings rather than between the building and the street.

- 2. Percent of Lot Coverage and Setback Relative to Adjacent Structures**  
New or expanded buildings should be set back from the street in a manner compatible with the character of the District, with particular attention to nearby buildings.

- a. Houses should be located close to the street, with a setback consistent with that of nearby buildings.
- b. Commercial and civic structures may be set back further from the street, at distances of 65 to 100 feet or more, depending on the nature of the use and the particular character of the site.
- c. Lot coverage should allow sufficient un-built area around new or expanded buildings.

- 3. Relationship of Landscape Elements, Built and Natural, to Existing and Adjacent Structures**

For sites that are previously undeveloped or are being redeveloped, the design of landscape elements (including plantings, paving, signs, and lighting) should be compatible with the character of the District.

- a. Open grass lawns with irregular placement of trees and other plantings are favored over formal landscape treatments.
- b. Fences, sidewalks and hard-edged curbs to paved areas are generally discouraged as inconsistent with the existing character of the District.

- 4. Exterior Signs**

The visual impact of signs shall be consistent with the historical and architectural qualities of the District as a whole, to promote the general visual attractiveness of the District, and to encourage signs with names of businesses, business owners or proprietors rather than trade marks and product names.

- a. Signs may be attached to buildings or mounted free-standing on permanent posts.
- b. No sign can project from a building surface more than three (3) feet. A parallel sign can project no more than ten (10) inches. Permanent window signs may not take up more than ten percent (10%) of the window area.
- c. Materials and lettering shall be consistent with and appropriate to the character of the District.
- d. Signs shall be externally illuminated only by steady, stationary and shielded light sources directed solely at the sign, without causing glare for motorists, pedestrians or neighboring premises. Animated, moving and trailer type portable electric temporary signs shall be prohibited.

## B. Building Massing Criteria

These criteria will be applied to the three-dimensional massing of the building (e.g., the size, shape, and relationship of its major exterior forms) and to how that massing is placed relative to the street and to other buildings on adjacent sites within the District.

### **1. Proportions of Facades (scale; massing of elements)**

- a. The frontal elevation of buildings as they face the street should generally be expressed as the more formal façade, although entrances may be on the side, particularly in houses, for functional reasons.
- b. The massing of buildings should generally be expressed as relatively simple rectangular volumes, expressive of the scale of use and construction.
- c. Larger houses and civic and commercial buildings may be made compatible in scale with the character of the District by expressing them as structures with projecting and recessed portions, or with one or more wings.
- d. The height of new construction or additions to existing buildings, calculated either in feet or number of stories, shall not be 10% or more over or under the average height of adjacent buildings (within a 250' radius of the center of the parcel).

### **2. Size and Rhythm of Projections**

The use of projecting elements such as entrance bays, porches, window bays and wings, is encouraged to ensure that large houses and civic and commercial buildings remain compatible in scale with the character of the District.

### **3. Rhythm of Solids to Voids Within the Façade**

- a. Door and window openings should be spaced within the elevation of exterior walls to maintain a consistent balance of solids to voids in a manner compatible with the existing character of the District.
- b. Large areas of unbroken wall, or walls that are entirely open or transparent, should be avoided.

### **4. Proportions of Openings Within the Façade**

- a. The proportions of exterior doors and windows should generally be vertical rather than horizontal or square.
- b. Windows should generally be subdivided with multiple panes. Large, unbroken picture windows and display windows are generally discouraged.

- c. Where horizontal windows are used, they may be expressed as a grouping of several vertical window elements.

**5. Relationship of Roof Configurations and Slopes to Existing and Adjacent Structures**

- a. Pitched roofs should be relatively steep in a manner consistent with existing buildings in the District.
- b. The end gable of the roof may be turned toward the street or the roof line may run parallel to the street.
- c. Flat roofs may be used, particularly on bays and additions, so long as the entirety of the architectural design (openings, detail and trim, materials, colors and textures) is compatible with the character of the District.

C. Building Details and Materials Criteria

These criteria will be applied to choices of exterior building materials, texture and colors, and to architectural details of the building exterior.

**1. Relationship of materials to existing and adjacent structures**

- a. New houses and additions to existing houses should generally have wooden exterior walls.
- b. New and expanded civic and commercial structures may have exterior walls of brick, stone or other durable materials, so long as the entirety of the architectural design (building massing, projections, openings, detail and trim, materials, colors and textures) is compatible with the character of the District.

**2. Relationship of texture to existing and adjacent structures**

- a. Wooden exterior walls should generally use clapboards or shingles, not flush vertical siding or other siding types with little or no texture.
- b. Masonry exterior walls should generally be laid in horizontal courses; the surface should be articulated where the wall meets the ground, at window and door openings, and at cornices and eaves.
- c. Pitched roofs should be shingled (wood, asphalt or slate).
- d. Low pitch and/or flat roofs may have textured roller roofing.

**3. Relationship of color of pre-finished or natural materials to existing and adjacent structures**

- a. Wooden exterior walls should be painted colors that are compatible with existing and adjacent structures or, in the case of renovated of

expanded existing buildings, colors that are known to be historically compatible with the specific architectural style of the building..

- b. Brick, masonry and other durable materials, including mortar, should use colors that are compatible with existing and adjacent structures in the District.

#### **4. Relationship of Architectural Details to Existing and Adjacent Structures**

The specific character of architectural details, particularly details drawn from historic styles, may vary depending on the nature of the project.

- a. In the case of a renovation or relatively minor addition to an existing historic building, the details may mimic those of the existing building.
- b. In the case of a major addition to an existing building, the new work should show a differentiation between the original building and the new construction, while being compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, to protect the integrity of the existing building and its environment. (See the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, referenced in V. A.)
- c. In the case of a new building, details should be intrinsic to the architectural design of the building, so long as the entirety of the design is compatible with the character of the District.

#### **IV. Elements of Design Review Submissions**

For the purposes of review of a large project by the Commission, the following elements of the project design should be clearly defined, through drawings and/or written outline specifications, to ensure that the final project complies with all of the commitments made by the developer during the review and permitting processes.

Site Plan, at a minimum scale of 1" = 60', showing the following:

- Dimensions of the building
- Depth of building setbacks from the street and side property lines
- Relationship of building to structures on adjacent lots
- Location and grading of septic field, storm water retention basin(s)
- Lawns and other planted areas
- Parking areas and driveways; paving type and color; curbs
- Trees, new and existing, showing species and caliper
- Exterior lighting fixtures
- Free-standing signs
- Walls, fences, and other structures and built site features
- Walkways and paths

Elevation drawings of all building facades visible from the street, at a minimum scale of 1/8" – 1', showing the following:

- Width and height of the building
- Exterior cladding of walls and roofs; materials and colors
- Windows and doors; material and color of frames, glazing
- Exterior and window signs
- When appropriate, supplemental photographs of existing conditions, site maps, and/or floor plans, cross sections, perspective views, and other drawings should be submitted.

## V. Reference Sources

### A. Organizations and Websites

National Park Service

[www.nps.gov/history/preservation.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/preservation.htm)

The Park Service publishes the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, available at [http://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/arch\\_stnds\\_8\\_2.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/arch_stnds_8_2.htm).

National Park Service North Atlantic Regional Office

15 State Street

Boston, MA 02109-3572

(617) 233-5001

National Trust for Historic Preservation

[www.nationaltrust.org](http://www.nationaltrust.org)

National Trust for Historic Preservation Northeast Office

7 Faneuil Hall Marketplace 4<sup>th</sup> Floor

Boston, MA 02109

(617) 523-0885

FAX (617) 523-1199

E-mail: [nero@nthp.org](mailto:nero@nthp.org)

New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources

N. H. Department of Cultural Resources

19 Pillsbury Street

Concord, N. H. 03301-3570

(603) 271-3483 or 271-3558

FAX (603) 271-3433

[www.nh.gov/nhdhr/hrstaff.html](http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/hrstaff.html)

### B. Books

*A Field Guide to American Houses*, by Virginia McAlester, Lee McAlester, Juan Rodriguez-Arnaiz, and Lauren Jarrett (illustrator), paperback (New York: Knopf, 1984).

*Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms: 1600-1945*, by John J. G. Blumenson, paperback (New York: Norton, 1980).

*New Hampshire Architecture: An Illustrated Guide*, by Bryant F. and Carolyn K. Tolles, paperback (University Press of New England, 1979).

**HDI DESIGN GUIDELINES**  
**APPENDIX A: PHOTOGRAPHS OF EXISTING BUILDINGS**



**Figure 1:** House with end gable (Greek Revival, early 19<sup>th</sup> century)

*Pitched roof expressed as triangular gable and pediment facing street; symmetrical entrance porches on both sides; and vertically proportioned window.*



**Figure 2:** House with side gables (Victorian, late 19<sup>th</sup> century)

*Pitched roof with gable running parallel to street; projecting entrance porch and bay windows; vertically proportioned windows.*



**Figure 3:** Sanborn Seminary (High Victorian Gothic, 1883)

*Dramatic, multi-colored stone exterior, with pitched roofs, projecting gabled central bay and entrance porch, and vertically proportioned windows.*



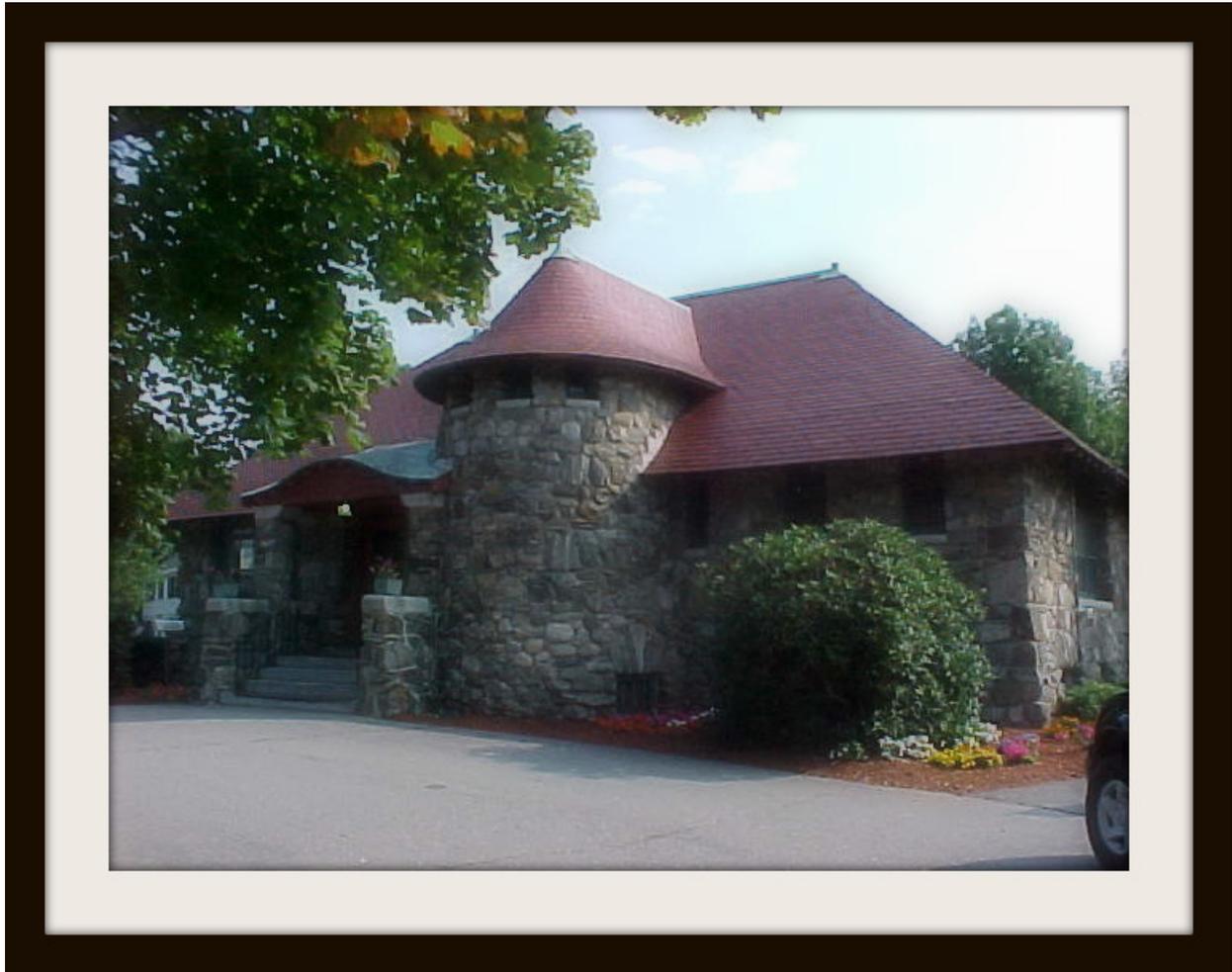
**Figure 4:** Masonic Building / Gideon Hall (Georgian Revival, 1893)

*Large wood structure, made compatible with scale and character of district by projecting gabled central bay, vertically proportioned windows and entrance porch.*



**Figure 5:** The Church on the Plains (Stick Style, 1879)

*Asymmetrical façade, with tower on left balanced by long sweep or end gable roof on right; consistent use of Victorian style ornament and details.*



**Figure 6:** Nichols Memorial Library Building (Richardsonian Romanesque, 1897)

*Stone walls and red tile roof; asymmetrical façade, with vertical and horizontal elements balancing each other; vertically proportioned windows grouped in horizontal bands.*



**Figure 7:** General Store (Greek Revival / Vernacular, 1845-71)

*Wood construction; original structure with end gable facing street; one-story addition with flat roof, made compatible with original structure by consistent use of wood clapboard siding and regular spacing of vertically proportioned windows.*



**Figure 8:** Shopping Strip Mall (1950-70)

*Flat roof, large glass display windows, make design generally incompatible with character of district.*



**Figure 9:** Bakie Elementary School (Colonial Revival, 1941 onwards)

*Original Central portion shows large-scale brick construction, made generally compatible with scale and character of district by projecting and recessed bays, gable at entrance, and vertically proportioned windows. Side wings, added later are less successful in achieving compatibility.*