



# DESIGN GUIDELINES & STANDARDS for the Preservation of COBLESKILL'S HISTORIC DISTRICT



Changes to any building or structure, including demolition, within Cobleskill's Historic District must be reviewed by Cobleskill's Historic District Review Commission (HDRC) and issued a [Certificate of Appropriateness](#) before any work can begin and before a building or demolition permit is issued. For further information on specific topics and detailed guidance for changes and alterations, use the links below:

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## Authority

The HDRC operates as the Village's official heritage preservation review board under the Certified Local Government program of the National Park Service, administered by the New York State Historic Preservation Office within the New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Village benefits from the pass-through funds available to Certified Local Governments. Village laws and regulations ([Chapter 90 Historic Districts and Landmarks](#)) and [the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties](#) are the basis for these guidelines and the HDRC's design review decisions.

## Purpose

The purpose of these design guidelines and standards is to:

- Enhance the prospect of preserving the significant architectural and cultural assets of the Cobleskill Historic District for the betterment of the Village and well-being of its residents;
- Clarify the Secretary of Interior's Standards as to their specific application to properties found within the Historic District;

- Provide a clear basis for decisions by the Village of Cobleskill's Historic District Review Commission (HDRC) in issuing Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) for proposed alterations, renovations, rehabilitations and reconstructions to the buildings comprising the Historic District; and
- Assist the HDRC in providing guidance to property owners in the Historic District as they plan improvements and/or alterations to their properties.

Applications for the required [COA](#) are available online or from the Cobleskill Department of Planning, Environment, and Codes, Suite 5 of the Cobleskill Village Hall, 378 Mineral Springs Road.

## ***The Preservation Ethic***

Preserving Cobleskill's historic properties depends upon timely maintenance and the watchword is *repair* NOT *replacement*. The good news is that repair is normally affordable and results in long-term savings. Also, repairing historic building materials, rather than replacing them, avoids losing original surface textures and historic character.

When planning alterations to a building the following steps will help ensure that Cobleskill's precious historic resources are preserved for the enjoyment of future generations:

1. **Repair.** Obtain bids from qualified contractors to undertake the repair work you are not undertaking, or do not have the skill to undertake yourself.
2. **Replacement with like materials.** If repair of deteriorated materials is impossible (after obtaining complete information about that option) get an estimate for materials and labor to replace irreparable building parts.
3. **Replacement with alternative materials.** If either of the above steps won't work, gather samples of various alternative materials and get estimates for the materials and labor to undertake your proposed change.

**Please note!** If you propose to replace rather than to repair parts of your building, you should be prepared to show that you have looked into the costs of the first two steps when you go before the HDRC. In most cases, routine maintenance, such as repair of a broken spindle in a porch railing, does not require a COA. *When in doubt, see the Village Code Enforcement Officer.*

## ***Cost Versus Value***

Too often people assume that preservation is too costly. This may be the result of confusing *preservation* with *restoration*, which is not required, but is encouraged when feasible. The long-term value of a building will be higher if time and money have been invested in maintaining the original architectural features and materials of a building rather than replacing with cheaper and less durable components. Researching all the alternatives, such as salvaging specific elements or replacing only what is actually broken is time well spent and can avoid inappropriate alterations that lessen the value of a historic building.

## ***Financial Incentives***

Beyond the personal pride of completing a beautiful improvement or contributing to the revitalization of your neighborhood, Federal Income tax credits are also available for qualifying income-producing historic properties (commercial and residential rental) within the National Register Historic District. For specific information about this program, contact: New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, 518-237-8643, online at:

<http://nysparks.state.ny.us/shpo/investment/income.htm>.

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## **Architectural Context**

The *Architectural Context* shall provide the visual framework for the HDRC's case-by-case aesthetic judgment. There are two aspects to understanding architectural context:

- All proposed alterations, additions, and/or new construction must be aesthetically sensitive to the existing historic character and design of a building and *those within the immediate vicinity*. For example, new construction may be required to include a front porch on a street where most of the neighboring dwellings have front porches. Alterations and new construction must not overshadow, distract from, or in any way diminish the visual enjoyment of established historic features.
- The buildings and properties surrounding the building being reviewed provide the best clues as to what aesthetic characteristics should be incorporated into any proposal for altering an existing building or new construction.

To adequately understand the historic character of any given property, the person responsible for planned changes (property owner, contractor or design professional) must understand the building typologies, patterns of development, and materials found in the Cobleskill Historic District, and work within their established framework. The Village of Cobleskill Historic District Update Survey completed in August of 2003 provides this information and is available at the Cobleskill Public Library, and the Code Compliance Office in the Village Hall, and online in at:

<http://www.schohariecountyny.gov/CountyWebSite/DocumentIndexing/430417801060/708.pdf>.

## **Painting & Staining**

Repainting historic buildings is almost always preferable to residing as being the most appropriate finish for historic wood clad buildings. Transparent stain was not widely used until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in general should not be substituted for paint; however, more recent historic homes that were originally stained may be restained. A long-lasting paint job can be achieved, provided the following precautions are taken:

- thorough wall preparation is the key to a lasting paint job, which may call for complete stripping of old paint before priming and repainting
- heat guns should be used with utmost care to remove paint to avoid fire hazards and used only when other methods of paint removal give unacceptable results

- new finish products must be adequately tested and proven not to have harmful effects on historic building materials (recently introduced paint-on vinyl products have not met this test)
- proposed new paint colors should be in keeping with the historic style of the dwelling and, in general, be selected from historic color palettes provided by well-known paint manufacturers
- when restoration of a building is the goal, a paint analysis by a qualified consultant should be done.

### Lead Paint

Lead paint should never be removed by sanding or scraping; large-scale exterior paint removal, paint should be tested for lead content and a qualified contractor engaged to undertake this work, including legal disposal (federal and state advisories and regulations must be consulted before undertaking lead paint removal).

Strippers that lift off accumulated paint from trim is the preferred methods, with disposal by proper methods. See [National Park Service Preservation Brief 37](#).

## Siding

Residing shall not result in the loss of historic character or historic materials and all improvements must present a finished appearance similar to the original building materials or appropriate to the building's original style and historic period. These materials are generally of three types: wood, stone, or brick. The Cobleskill Historic District is distinguished by many buildings with decorative shingling that is important to maintain. Thus re-siding a building with any of the materials classified as not appropriate, such as polished metal, glass, vinyl and metal/aluminum siding, shall not be allowed except when findings are made by the HDRC that there exists extraordinary conditions, such as:

- deterioration of the original wood cladding is so extensive as to make its replacement economically unreasonable
- when portions of a building are extremely difficult to repaint and maintain, e.g. properties where there is a space of three feet or less between buildings, and are minimally visible from public rights-of-way.

### Other siding materials

- Asbestos shingle siding. Removal of asbestos shingles is not considered imperative to preservation efforts in the district and if the siding is in good shape, it may be preferable to repair rather than remove them. New, non-toxic, products are available for replacement of damaged asbestos shingles. Complete removal of asbestos shingles (because of plans to restore a historic building for example) is allowable, in which case plans for assessing and treating any original cladding beneath them must be presented, as well as for disposal of the materials in accordance with state law.
- Cementitious clapboard. Products that simulate wood clapboard (e.g. Hardiplank, Hardiboard) may be appropriate. Such residing material should replicate the smooth painted surfaces of authentic wood clapboard, not introduce an artificial wood grain to the visual appearance of a building, match the reveal of the original clapboards, and incorporate corner boards where appropriate.

- New Products. As other materials and products are developed, the HDRC shall evaluate their appropriateness on the basis of how well they replicate the original appearance of the historic siding.

### Why not Vinyl Siding?

Vinyl siding has several inherent drawbacks:

- Any added siding covers up original building materials, and often architectural details, and thus lessen the building's historic character.
- Vinyl is a PCB-based product that if burned releases toxins into the atmosphere, creating a danger for firefighters and neighbors.
- Vinyl is too often used to simply cover up maintenance issues that if left untreated can lead to structural damage that shortens the life of a building.
- Vinyl cracks if hit—large hail has been known to puncture vinyl.
- Generally, vinyl cannot be maintained, only replaced.
- Vinyl fades and will begin to need regular repainting after 15-20 years.
- It comes in a limited range of colors, often incompatible with the original architectural style of the building, and therefore can lead to a bland and colorless streetscape.
- Vinyl siding is not a cost effective way of achieving energy savings. It provides very little energy conservation since it must be installed to allow for expansion.

See the National Park Service's [Preservation Brief #8](#).

## Windows & Doors

### WINDOWS

#### Window Replacement

As with all original historic building fabric, repair is always preferable to replacement—particularly when it applies to windows and doors. See the National Park Service's [Preservation Brief #9](#). Improved energy efficiency can be obtained in a historically sensitive manner with the installation of either exterior or interior storm windows (see [Resources](#) section). When storm windows are added to the exterior, they should be painted to match the frame and/or trim of the window). When replacing windows is unavoidable (as when they are missing from a vacant property) the replacement window shall:

- match the original size and type of window,
- replicate exactly the original number and sizes of lights (panes), and
- sit on the original sill.

In addition, the following guidelines apply:

- False muntins sandwiched between the glazing of thermal windows do not provide the shadow lines that are an authentic detail of historic buildings and therefore should be avoided. Where thermal pane windows are desired, true or simulated divided lights should be used, whichever type best replicates what was original to the building.
- “Snap-in grills” are not durable and should be avoided.
- Synthetic materials that precisely replicate the pattern and finished appearance of historic windows are allowed, provided they are able to accept and hold paint.

- Wood windows with permanent finish or cladding are acceptable, where the color of the cladding is in keeping with the style of the building. Generally this means they should be clad in a dark color, which makes the windows visually recede thereby accenting the fenestration and architecture of the building.
- Metal frame windows are usually the most appropriate for commercial and industrial buildings.
- Where safety regulations require windows to be larger (for emergency exits), casement windows that replicate other types of windows such as double-hung, may be acceptable.
- Tinted and or reflective glass is not permitted.

The presence of lead paint is not cause for replacement of windows

### Windows in an addition

When changes involve the addition of a room:

- the size and proportion of new windows should take their dimension and design cues from those on the historic building, though they need not exactly replicate those on the historic building;
- on small additions, new windows shall respond to the rhythm established on the historic building, and generally align with the lintels of the original windows.



**DON'T** greatly increase or decrease the proportion or orientation of windows to wall area (left & center).

**DO** match the proportion of windows to wall area of surrounding historic properties (right).

### Windows in new buildings

The fenestration (the arrangement of windows) of new buildings is an aspect where there is a fair amount of design flexibility. However,

- window types must be consistent with the architectural style chosen for the building;
- the proportion of windows to wall, particularly on the front facade, shall be roughly comparable to that of buildings in the immediate vicinity;
- there shall be windows on the street facade of all residential buildings and commercial storefronts;
- where Colonial-style multi-paned windows are appropriate, false muntins sandwiched between the glazing of thermal windows are discouraged; “snap-in grills” should also be avoided as they are not durable; and
- reflective material or tinting of windows is not allowed.

### Skylights

Skylights are often desirable for bringing needed light into dark interior spaces, the uses of which can be enhanced by increased illumination, however, they must be carefully located so as not to diminish the historic character of a building:

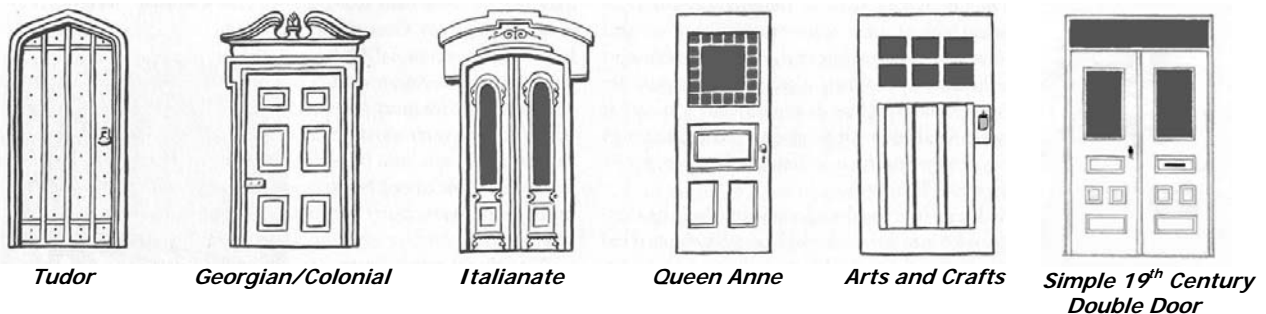
- skylights may be on flat roofs provided they are installed so as not to be visible from public rights-of-way
- they are limited to the sides of roofs not subject to public views

## DOORS

### Door Replacement

A substantial number of the 19<sup>th</sup> century historic buildings in the Cobleskill Historic District still have their original doors along with transoms above and/or sidelights. Like windows, every effort shall be made to retain original doors and their surrounds through maintenance and repair. When replacement of a door is determined to be necessary and/or the original door is missing, the following standards shall apply:

- the original size of the door opening is to be maintained;
- the style, size, and type of the door should match the original;
- if the original door has been previously replaced, the new door should complement the architectural style of the building;
- transoms and sidelights should not be painted, boarded up nor bricked in.

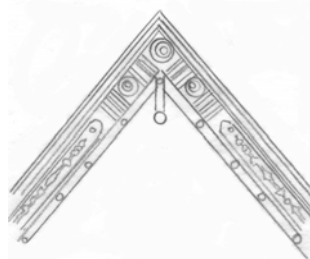


## Decorative Elements

The Cobleskill Historic District has a great number of homes built during the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that are distinguished by outstanding architectural ornamentation, which deserves special protection. Maintenance of these elements is critical and where they are found to be original to a building their removal will not be allowed. Conversely, decorative elements that are not original and do not match the architectural style of a building are discouraged.

### Eaveboards

Many of the Gothic Revival-, Second Empire- and Queen Anne-styled houses in the historic district have eaveboards (also termed bargeboards and vergeboards) decorated with moldings, incising (piercing), scroll-sawn ends, and applied ornamentation.



Decorative eaveboard.



Decorative eaveboard with DGEVS.



### Decorative Gable End Vent Screens

A 2003 inventory update of the historic district identified 43 buildings with ornamentation in their gable ends, termed “decorative gable end vent screens” (DGEVS). Some were very elaborate and others fairly simple, but all greatly enhanced the architectural expression of the houses on which they exist and shall be maintained. DGEVS often complement and carry out the design of a decorative eave board.

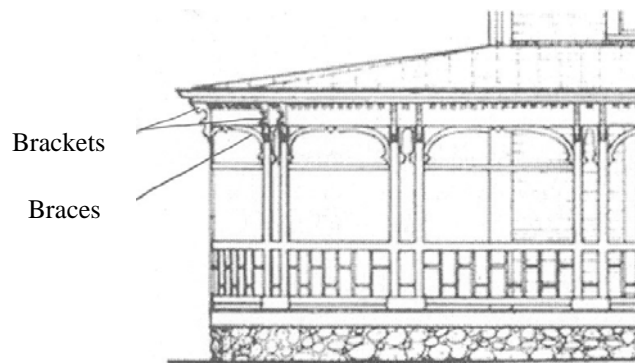
Those buildings of the same era and style as those identified with this type of ornamentation may originally have had DGEVS, in which case their restoration is highly encouraged.

### Exposed Rafter Ends

Exposed rafter ends are both a functional and a decorative device that distinguishes a variety of architectural styles. They not only serve to support wide overhanging eaves, they are often embellished with scroll sawn ends. Because of this, enclosing them shall not be allowed.

### Brackets and Braces

The 19<sup>th</sup> century Italianate Style is virtually defined by the presence of ornate brackets—often paired—at the eaveline of roofs. Braces are similar in appearance to brackets, though generally they are oriented parallel to building walls and perpendicular to brackets (most often on porches). Removing or covering either of these elements would negatively impact the historic character of a building, therefore they shall be maintained.

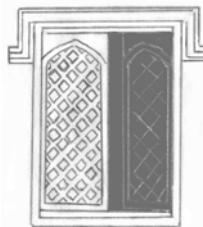


### Window and Door Trim

Label molds, cornices, bracketed hoods and incised decoration are all types of architectural ornamentation on display in the historic district and shall be maintained.



Hood Mold



Label Mold



Window Hood.

### Balustrades & Balconettes

In addition to the balustrades that support porch railings, other balustrades may add architectural interest to a building. They may be found atop porticos and porte cocheres. Balconettes are often more decorative than functional and be constructed of wrought iron as well as wood. All



are integral to many styles of buildings, carrying out decorative themes and articulating facades. As such they should be carefully maintained and never removed.



### Shutters and Blinds

Hinged window and door coverings, shutters (solid) and blinds (louvered) are frequently added to houses to dress up their exteriors, but are not appropriate for all architectural styles. The Colonial Revival-style house gains the most authenticity with the addition of shutters or blinds, though they are often appropriate for Queen Anne houses as well.

Entablatures and Cornices: Whether of pressed metal, terra cotta, brick, or wood, cornices are important, architecturally defining features of a building. Thus they should be retained to preserve the original style of a building and regularly maintained to avoid safety issues. Where these features are missing or severe deterioration requires their removal, there are several options:

- Replacement in kind (many types are still being produced and most styles used in Cobleskill are commercially available).
- Architectural replication with an acceptable new, lighter, and more durable material such as fiberglass, Fypon or Azek, and resin casts. This option is acceptable due to the fact that their appearance cannot be distinguished from historic materials since they are typically located significantly above ground level, which precludes close inspection. The newer lighter materials also have an improved safety aspect.

Replacement of missing cornices, whether with in kind or replacement materials, should be based on photographic evidence of the historic appearance of the building. Also, see the National Park Service's [Preservation Brief # 16](#) about replacement with substitute materials.

## **Porches & Decks**

Porches are important architectural features integral to a dwelling's design. A porch provides scale and balance to the overall mass of a structure and balances the other elements of the building. They are frequently the only architectural embellishment on simpler, worker houses usually incorporating some decorative features such as brackets and braces and sometimes becoming quite elaborate with spindled friezes, small gable features, balustrades and intricate skirting.

**Porch railings:** Replacement railings are required to be substantially taller than those original to historic buildings due to changing safety standards and building regulations, which negatively affect the proportions. Therefore:

- always repair rather than rebuild railings, if possible
- when a railing must be rebuilt, avoid off-the-shelf balustrades, which are sized to today's building standards
- use alternative designs so that the original porch railing proportions may be retained while meeting current building code requirements
- replace with like materials; vinyl components generally are not acceptable



**DON'T** simply replace original railings with taller off-the-shelf balustrades and higher railings, which destroys original proportions.



**DO** repair rather than replace railings to maintain their original Architectural proportions.



**DO** use alternative means of meeting code requirements when restoring railings, such as using cables or pipe above traditionally scaled railings.

**Porch roof supports:** Like railings, replacing columns (round), pillars (square), or posts (round, square, battered, or turned) can drastically affect the historic look of a building. Therefore:

- always repair rather than replace a porch roof's structural supports, if possible
- if replacement is determined to be necessary, make sure that style, size and material match the original
- when restoring porch supports, be guided by the style of the original house: columns for Federal, Greek Revival, and Colonial style buildings, pillars for Gothic Revival and Italianate style houses, and turned posts or columns for Queen Anne style houses.



*Doric Column*



*Ionic Column*



*Corinthian Column*



*Turned Post*



*Chamfered Pillar*

**Other porch ornamentation:** The addition of architectural ornamentation is discouraged other than restoration of missing elements based on careful documentation.

- Scroll sawn brackets, spindled braces, and other “gingerbread” elements are not appropriate to Arts and Crafts Style houses.
- Avoid off-the-shelf Queen Anne-style spindled brackets; these are seldom sized correctly for historic houses.

(See [Decorative Elements](#) section.)

Enclosing Porches: Enclosing porches to create additional indoor space is not appropriate, as additional wall space negatively impacts the overall architectural composition of a historic house and eliminates the important “eyes on the street” function of porches. However some modification to create 3-season porches may be allowed where:

- the transparency of the front porch is maintained with large areas of screening or glazing
- important architectural features of porches—columns, railing, balustrade, spindled frieze, brackets and braces—are retained and the enclosing material is interior to these elements such that they remain visible from the street.

### Decks

Decks are modern amenities that were introduced in the 1970s and are inherently inappropriate in the Cobleskill Historic District. However, they may be accommodated when:

- located at the rear of buildings and sufficiently recessed from the plane of the side walls;
- the size and shape are proportionally smaller than the house to which it belongs: having a footprint no greater than two-thirds that of the house; and
- the structural support for decks are independent of the building to which it belongs and avoids damage to historic materials (otherwise it is considered an addition).

If a deck is viewable from the public right-of-way, its railing design will be subject to review with the aim of ensuring its visual compatibility with the building to which it is attached. Screening may be required.

## **Roofs**

Roofs are the dominating visual element for most buildings and are a defining feature of nearly all historical styles. Thus to preserve the historic character of a building, the original shape of its roof should not be altered.

### Reroofing

When reroofing there are two main approaches:

- reroofing with a product that matches what is currently in place (a standard triple-tab type in a solid color that does not draw attention is usually most appropriate for reroofing an asphalt shingle roof).
- determining what was originally on the house and using that as a guide for replication (historic photographs are invaluable for guiding restoration efforts)

Upgrading the roofing with textured, multi-colored shingles is often detrimental to the original character of the house. Asphalt shingles that attempt to replicate slate are only appropriate if the house once had a slate roof that has been previously replaced. In this case, some of the newer asphalt shingles come in slate colors and can be trimmed and shaped to replicate patterns once found on a roof.

Slate roofs are high-end architectural features that add greatly to the historic character of a building. Unfortunately they are lost too often due to lack of maintenance and thus replacement rather than repair. A well-maintained slate roof can last up to 100 years. Property owners are urged to obtain estimates and/or bids for repair of their slate roofs and to compare them to the

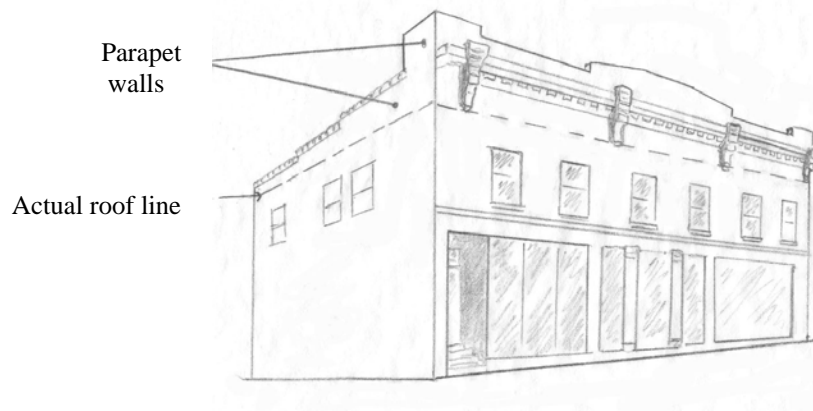
cost of total replacement with other types of roofing before making application to the HDRC for replacement. (See <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief29.htm>.)

A number of buildings in the Cobleskill Historic District have standing seam metal roofs. They were often early replacement roofs and as such lend a historic quality to the district. They are long lasting and were often painted, which extends their life. If new metal roofs are proposed, they should replicate the old style—in the widths between seams and color (gray or silver is most appropriate), otherwise they tend to appear very commercial and contemporary and therefore unacceptable.

Wood shingle roofs are rare in the Cobleskill Historic District (only 6 were recorded in 2003). Even with documented proof that they were once used, their restoration may not be desirable from a safety standpoint (increased fire hazard). Therefore replacement of wood shingles with asphalt shingles in appropriate colors (dark brown, dark grey or black) is allowable.

Parapet walls: Like cornices, deteriorating parapet walls pose safety problems when not adequately maintained. At the same time, they are an architectural feature that is important to be preserved. Parapet walls, are most often found on brick commercial and industrial buildings.

- Simply tearing parapets down to the roofline is not permitted;
- Deteriorating parapets shall be rebuilt with a material that matches the original whenever possible, or with a substitute material that closely replicates the original.



### Dormers

Original dormers should never be removed nor their windows boarded up. (See [Additions](#) section for guidelines on dormer additions.)

Skylights (see [Windows & Doors](#) section.)

## Accessibility

Accessibility ramps are legally mandated improvements for commercial and institutional properties and are increasingly needed for private dwellings. Despite this, proposals for these improvements are subject to as much oversight by the HDRC as other non-mandated improvements. When carefully designed and located, accessibility ramps need not detract from the historic buildings to which they are appended. Ramps shall:

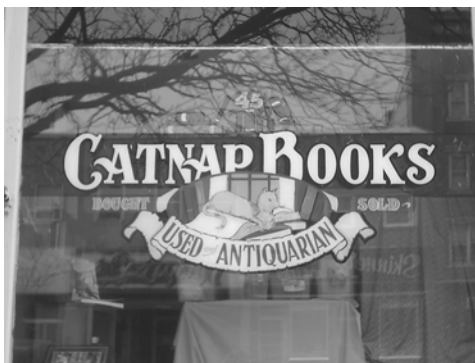
- be located along side facades with entrances on the front whenever feasible
- use railing elements that replicate design details on other portions of the building

- be screened either with an appropriate fence or evergreen plantings if they would otherwise introduce a strong diagonal line across the front façade of a building;
- be installed in a manner that does not damage or removed historic building materials, and so they can be removed when no longer needed
- have a completely accessible route leading to it with a smooth and firm surface, no bumps more than 1/4-inch high, and be free from overhead and projecting obstructions.

## Signs & Awnings

**Commercial Signs:** Signs are governed by [§160-10](#) of the Village of Cobleskill Code; the following guidelines are in addition to the standards and requirements found therein. Signs in the Cobleskill Historic District:

- shall be designed to fit the proportions and architectural character of the building/property on which they are displayed;
- may not obscure or cover up architectural features and ornamentation on a historic building;
- may be limited in size below what is generally allowed by the sign regulations
- shall be attached to a building in a manner so as not to damage or destroy historic building materials;
- shall be of natural materials or found to be acceptable alternatives that have the appearance of painted wood signs;
- may not be of the plastic-faced cabinet type
- shall be directly lit from separate fixtures focused on the sign and shielded to avoid glare and light spillage;
- shall not incorporate flashing or moving elements or electronic reader boards
- should be located within established sign-band area between the first and second floors of commercial buildings, where available; and
- should consider the use of individual letters and logos, as opposed to flat painted signs that cover up large areas of wall;
- painted window signs are encouraged, especially when they eliminate other signs that cover up architectural features;
- care should be taken that signs mounted on walls do not damage historic buildings.



Sign painted on window interior.



Ground-mounted sign.

### Private/Residential Signs

Signs on private homes and within residential districts:

- shall be attached so as not to damage or destroy historic building materials;
- shall be lit only with minimal lighting, shielded as to prevent light spillage and glare.



## Awnings

On commercial buildings, awnings can be a pleasant substitution or variation for standard signs, and bring desirable human scale to the streetscape. Commercial awnings:

- shall be of a size and type that complement the architecture of the building to which they are attached;
- must be opaque and of a woven material (either natural or man-made);
- shall not be internally lit;
- shall have the traditional angled shape;
- should be retractable;
- may incorporate the name and/or services offered by an enterprise on the awning skirt; and
- awnings on private houses should be in a style that reflects the architectural style of the building as a whole.



**DO** choose awnings that match the shape of windows and style of architecture



**DO** use traditionally shaped awnings.

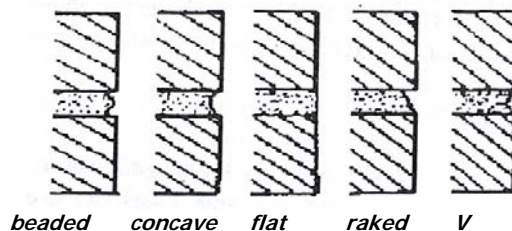


**DON'T** add modern "waterfall" shaped awnings to historic buildings, especially when backlit.

## Masonry

The size, color, and finish of bricks, as well as mortar color and raking, are key elements of a brick building's design. Periodic tuckpointing, and selective brick replacement is required to maintain brick buildings in good repair and, when undertaking such work, the materials shall match the original to the extent possible. Special attention should be paid to matching the original mortared joint: its composition (proportion of lime to Portland Cement), size of mortar joint, color, and profile.

### ***MORTAR PROFILES***



Other things to keep in mind when dealing with brick buildings:

- Sandblasting is not allowed as it is damaging to bricks and can shorten the life of a building.

- Painting or paring of unpainted brick buildings is not allowed, unless the building was originally painted.
- Some buildings constructed with “common brick” were intended to be painted, due to the soft outer surface of the original bricks. In these cases, the paint shall not be removed, unless required (such as where lead paint is being removed) and the building is to be repainted.
- Painting over original painted finish is recommended, after a thorough preparation of the wall surface, in a uniform manner with natural, brick-toned colors.
- Cleaning of brick buildings should use the gentlest method available. See the National Park Service’s [Preservation Brief #1](#) regarding cleaning masonry.
- Graffiti removal is considered required maintenance and shall be done by the gentlest means possible, and follow the above general guidelines. See the National Park Service’s [Preservation Brief #38](#).

### Chimneys

Most buildings in the district have brick chimneys, which were historically ornamented and treated as an architectural feature. Thus chimneys should never be removed but maintained, tuckpointed, and rebuilt if necessary.

The addition of chimney cap should not detract from the ornamental style of the brick or stone chimney. A black finish rather than stainless steel is preferred to assure that it is the least visually intrusive.

## **Energy Efficiency**

Provisions of the New York State Codes (Energy Conservation Code 101.4.2.3 and Residential Code, “Historic Buildings” N 1101.2.5.3) provide great flexibility in the design of repairs, renovations, and alterations to contributing buildings and structures within designated historic districts. Owners, design professionals, and contractors are encouraged to retain or implement historically appropriate construction features that complement the historic and architectural value of the property and surroundings as allowed by these Codes. For example, window replacements should be carefully evaluated taking into consideration the potentially significant negative visual impact on the architecture, costs of alternative actions, the often over-stated energy savings, time limits on product guarantees, and true payback period. The Village Code Enforcement Office is a valuable resource for additional information on this and many other subjects.

### Insulating

Insulating historic buildings should normally be done on the interior, in which case HDRC review is not required. However, plans to blow in insulation from the exterior must ensure that historic building materials are not damaged or compromised. The recommended procedure is to remove clapboards to allow access to the wall cavity and replace and restore them when completed.

### Thermal Pane Windows

(See [Windows](#) section.)



### Solar Panels

Solar panels may become increasingly desirable in the years ahead and will probably need to be accommodated in Cobleskill's Historic District, despite the fact they are a highly visible modern utility with the potential for significant visual intrusion. In some cases the required solar orientation for solar panels makes it difficult to adapt them to historic buildings. In general, however:

- ground mounted solar panels, shall be located and screened from public views;
- solar cells that have the appearance of shingles may be allowed for side-facing roofs;
- solar panels may be located on rear-facing roofs so long as they are not highly visible from public rights-of-way;
- large industrial buildings, where the efficiency and economics of solar power are evident, may be allowed to incorporate visible roof-top solar panels, so long as they do not unduly distract from the surrounding historic buildings;
- within residential areas, if it is found that solar panels cannot be installed in a manner that is visually unobtrusive, they may be disallowed.

## Additions

Whether it is a new room, another story, a dormer or new bay window, the general principle for additions is that the integrity of the historic building must be preserved. When determining what comprises the historic building, it includes not only the original building but also any previous additions that are deemed historically important by virtue of their age and aesthetic contribution.

The following are key provisos for all additions:

- Additions shall not destroy historic features and materials, either directly through removal, or indirectly through visually obscuring or diminishing the original building.
- An addition to the principal or front facade of a historic building is to be avoided.
- Additions to secondary facades that have unobstructed public views should also be avoided, e.g. buildings on corners where a side faces a street.
- Where additions are required to improve safety or provide for needed additional functions, the damage to historic materials is to be minimized and the addition constructed so it could be removed in the future without further damage to the building.
- The style of a building addition should take its aesthetic clues from the building to which it is being attached, yet should avoid exact replication so that there is no confusion in the average viewer's mind as to which part of a building is historic and which is an addition.
- A sensitive addition, may introduce new materials in a traditional form or new, complementary forms constructed with traditional materials. In either approach, it is important to have some visual linkages and repetition of features between the old and new parts of the building.

See the National Park Service's **Preservation Brief #14**.

### Materials

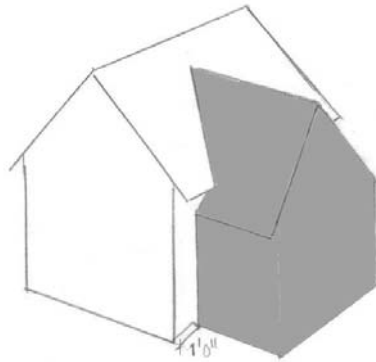
Materials for building additions:

- should match the original cladding of a historic building whenever possible to avoid drawing undue attention;
- may be modern/man-made when findings are made that they closely simulate traditional materials or complement those original to the historic building;
- may not have large areas of glazing, polished metal, or vinyl products.

### Setbacks for Building Extensions

In order to distinguish clearly between historic and later portions of a building:

- additions and extensions are to be offset or recessed from the wall planes of the original building a minimum of one foot (1').



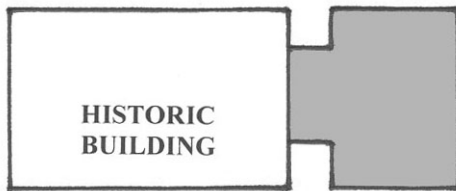
**DO** offset an addition from the front facade a minimum of 1 foot.

### Building Mass

The mass of a building is determined by a building's, height, bulk, and shape.

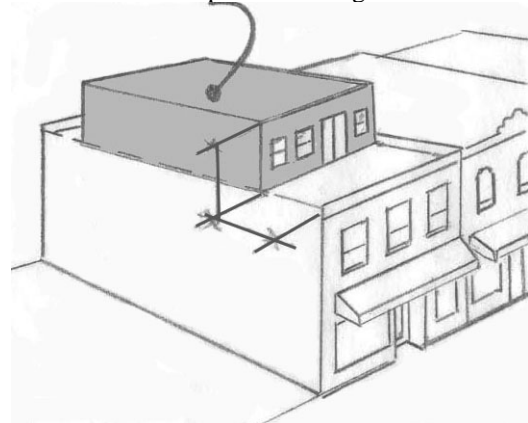
- In general, the mass of an addition will be smaller than the mass of the original building.
- The HDRC may allow a larger addition if it determines this is required to make reuse of a property economically feasible, and the new construction will be connected to the historic building by means of a small connector or hyphen and set back from the facades of both buildings in order to give them visual separation.
- If, for some reason, the height of an addition must be taller than the original building, the separation between them must be greater and the addition set significantly farther back from any street right-of-way.

PLAN VIEW:



**DO** attach new additions to historic buildings with hyphens to minimize damage to them.

**DO** set back any new story addition from the front facade a distance equal to the height of the addition.



### Additional Stories

While zoning in the district may allow buildings up to a certain height, which conceivably would allow additional upper stories, certain buildings do not lend themselves to such additions.

Specifically:

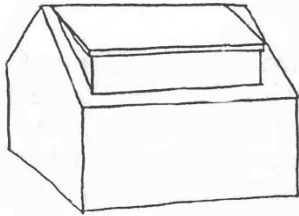
- the historic character of Federal and Greek Revival buildings, with their gable roofs, and small two-story Second Empire style buildings, would be effectively destroyed by the addition of stories, and will not be permitted;

- flat-roofed buildings may be allowed to have stories added where the height and mass of the original historic building remains readable for pedestrians at the street level and the addition unobtrusive;
- applicants may be required to present additional drawings that provide sufficient visual analysis of views of a building from various pedestrian and vehicular vantage points to determine the location and height of any additional stories.

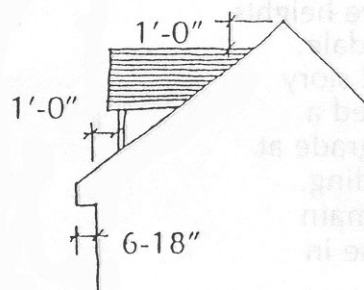
### Dormers

In general new dormers should be added to non-public views of a building. Where they are proposed for front and sides exposed to public view, they may be acceptable when:

- dormers were typically used with the historic style of the building;
- all portions are placed below the original ridgeline of the house and above the original eave line so as to create a pent and preserve the original size and shape of the roof;
- they do not alter the perception of the original massing of the house;
- the size and proportion of windows in dormers is complementary to the rest of the windows located on the same building facade.

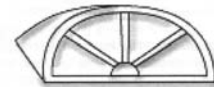
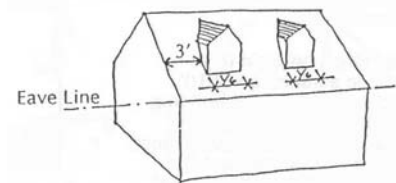


**DON'T** add outsized dormers in such a way that increases the perceptible mass of a building.



**DO** locate added dormers below the ridgeline and above the eave of the original roof.

**DO** match the style of the dormer to that of the historic house



### Garage Additions

Adding attached garages to existing houses is extremely difficult to manage without negatively damaging the building's architectural and historic integrity.

- Wherever feasible, new garages should be detached and sited in the traditional manner at the rear of a property.
- Attached garages shall incorporate a hyphen or small connector (breezeway) between it and the house.
- Garages attached to 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings should not face the same street as the front facade.



Post World War II houses frequently incorporated a breezeway between the garage and the dwelling, as illustrated above.

(See [Garages, Barns & Carriage Houses](#) section.)

## **New Buildings & Infill Construction**

New infill construction in the Cobleskill Historic District is welcome, especially where it maintains the historic population density that supports downtown businesses, expands housing choices, makes use of existing infrastructure, and helps limit sprawl. The goal for new construction is to introduce architectural variety without creating visual disharmony. Green building techniques and products are encouraged provided their outward appearance is consistent with the goals of these guidelines. Proposed new construction must also be consistent with all other Village regulations.

### Styles

Styles of buildings evolve over time and reflect the era in which they were built. Cobleskill's Historic District contains buildings from a variety of eras in an interesting mix of styles that is a positive attribute of the district. Up-to-date architectural styles can be added to the mix when a new building:

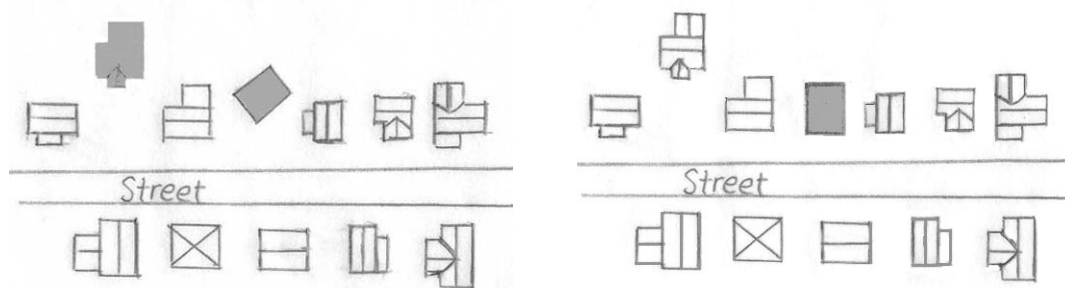
- is sensitive to the established rhythms of the streetscape;
- is executed with materials that match and/or complement those used on the neighboring historic buildings;
- is designed in recognition of and response to the architectural context of the area in which it is being constructed.

### Setbacks & Alignments

Streetscapes throughout Cobleskill's Historic District are generally cohesive and contribute strongly to the historic character of the area. New infill buildings should adhere to the prevailing front yard setbacks of the surrounding area and:

- be within 10% of the existing front yard setbacks of buildings on either side of it;
- where the setbacks on adjoining properties are dissimilar, information about the existing front yard setbacks of all other buildings on the same block and facing block should be submitted and the predominating setback dimension followed;

The HDRC will provide comment on and support for any a variance request required to attain the preferred setback, providing all other design aspects of the application are also acceptable.

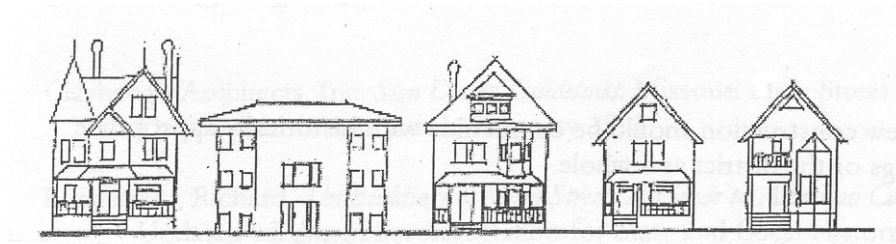


**DON'T** set infill construction farther back on lot nor rotate the orientation of the front and side facades differently than neighboring houses

**DO** match the orientation and setback of the majority of adjacent houses

### Building Mass

The mass of any new building shall match the mass of immediately adjoining buildings and those in the surrounding area. In certain transition areas there may be great diversity in the mass of nearby buildings, posing a significant design challenge. In such cases, the HDRC will need to consider a larger surrounding area to determine the architectural context against which the proposed building should be judged.



**Don't** construct an infill with a building mass that interrupts the rhythm of a streetscape, like the building second from left.

### Building Height

While Village zoning may allow buildings up to a certain height, a new building shall not be substantially different in height than the adjoining and surrounding buildings.



**DON'T** construct a building with a height much lower or taller than the surrounding buildings.

On Main Street where larger, imposing buildings were historically located, particularly on corners, new infill buildings may be taller than other immediately adjoining building(s) if the HDRC makes a specific finding that the proposed building will not aesthetically overshadow or diminish the historic quality of the surrounding area.

### Materials

The main way new, infill, buildings can blend into a historic district is through use of materials that:

- match the cladding of neighboring historic buildings, the most prevalent being wood clapboard, brick, and stone;
- if modern/man-made, they closely simulate traditional materials or complement those original to the neighboring historic building;
- do not have large expanses of glass (curtainwall construction), polished metal, or vinyl products.

## **Garages, Barns & Carriage Houses**

There are a number of historic secondary/accessory structures in the Cobleskill Historic District that are worthy of special attention—they include carriage barns and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century garages. Any proposed changes to those visible from public rights-of-way will be governed by the same guidelines applied to primary structures and:

- shall retain key architectural features, such as windows in the doors, when altered to accommodate additional or larger vehicles; and
- may be adapted to new uses such as potting sheds, guest cottages, home offices, or other suitable alternative activities that encourage their retention.

New secondary buildings, such as garages and sheds, are also of concern. While modern residential building design nearly always provides for attached garages, the prevailing development pattern in Cobleskill's Historic District is with detached garages set well behind the primary structure. Therefore:

- detached garages shall be set back on the lot in a manner that matches the historic development pattern of the neighborhood;
- detached garages shall repeat some of the architectural features of the principal building;
- sheds shall be placed in rear yards so as not to obscure views of a primary building's front and side facades or views to architecturally significant accessory buildings.

As with any new construction, the proposed building must be consistent with all other Village regulations.

# Lighting

Exterior lighting fixtures can have a major impact on the character of Cobleskill's Historic District and should be in keeping with the Village's small town/rural character. In both commercial and residential areas of the Cobleskill Historic District lighting shall:

- be minimized to the greatest extent possible to preserve the ability of residents and visitors to enjoy the night sky
- have fixtures of a design and scale that matches the architectural style of the building to which they are attached;
- highlight and not obscure architectural features.
- have their light source shielded so as to eliminate light spillage onto neighboring properties and avoid glare;
- be located on side or rear facades, if it primarily for security and/or motion detection; be attached in a manner that does not damage historic building materials.

## Utilities & Other Essentials

### Antennas

Modern communications systems have introduced a range of new appurtenances being added to buildings and/or sites to receive transmissions and as such are deemed to be indispensable.

Careful location and treatment can mitigate any negative visual impacts on the historic district.

The HDRC requires that:

- ground mounted satellite dishes shall be located behind the front facade of a building and screened from view by fencing and/or evergreen shrubs;
- small building-mounted satellite antennas should be mounted on the sides or rear of buildings, never on a side facing a public street and shall be done in a manner so as not to damage historic building materials; and
- other technology be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

### Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Units

Permanent HVAC units shall be placed in a rear yard whenever feasible. If they are placed within view of public rights-of-way, they must be screened with evergreen shrubs or solid fencing.

### Meters

Like any other utility, meters for water, gas and electricity should never be installed on the front facade of a building. Traditionally they have not been, but have been placed on a side wall, near the front facade where they are readily accessible for reading. Although meters mounted on the sides of buildings are usually visible, this location is an appropriate compromise.

### Security Features

Highly visible security bars and barricades on commercial buildings are strongly discouraged. When security features are proposed for a building, whether commercial or residential, two criteria must be met:

- They shall not obscure architectural features of the building, nor block storefront windows on commercial buildings
- Their attachment/installation shall not damage historic building fabric.



### Trash Bins & Sheds

Trash bins, sheds, and any small structures for containing or serving other functional purposes need to be carefully designed so as to minimize any negative visual impact. Such functions:

- should be stored or located in rear or side yards out of view from public rights-of-way whenever feasible; and
- shall be designed to be as inconspicuous as possible, when they must be located in front of a building, and finished to match the color of the building to which they belong.

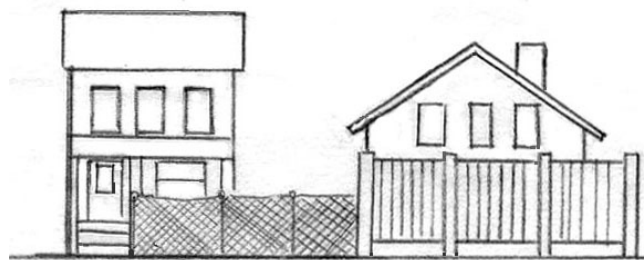
## **Landscaping & Site Modifications**

The landscape surrounding a historic building is often as important to the preservation of historic buildings as regular maintenance. For example, overgrown trees and shrubs located too close to a building do not allow the building to dry out, creating the conditions for mold and consequent deterioration. Tree roots can also cause damage to foundations. Conversely the architectural style of a building can be greatly enhanced when the immediate yard areas are designed to frame architectural features and carry out the style of the house. Landscape elements can also provide important visual screening of non-historic elements. However, in general the residential areas of the Cobleskill Historic District have open lawns with naturalistic plantings appropriate to its rural ambiance, and thus fences and excessively ornamented and manicured landscapes are discouraged.

### Fences

In only limited situations are fences appropriate to Cobleskill's Historic District. If selected with sensitivity so that they complement the architectural style of the house and the historic character of the area, they add value to both the property and neighborhood. Fences along the street and/or sidewalk or anywhere forward of the front facade of a building are of greatest concern and:

- shall not exceed 40 inches in height, measured from grade;
- chainlink fencing shall be allowed only in rear yard areas and should be screened with plantings from public view from public right(s)-of-way.
- privacy fencing—wood stockade, wood plank privacy, shall be limited to side and rear yards and extend no further toward a main public street than the front facade of the primary building
- vinyl fences (picket or any other style) should not be located in areas highly visible from public rights-of-way;
- simple cast and wrought iron fences are acceptable when placed in traditional locations, such as along a front sidewalk;
- highly ornamented iron fences shall be in the style of the historic structure, and preferably a restoration of a type documented by historic photographs.



DON'T introduce chainlink fencing (left) or high privacy fencing (right) in front yards.

### Plantings & Hardscaping

Throughout the Cobleskill Historic District plantings shall:

- frame views to and from historic buildings;
- be placed so as to avoid obscuring views of architectural ornamentation and features;
- be planted well away from historic buildings to prevent deterioration of buildings through lack of light and air (especially evergreens);
- be used to screen non-contributing buildings that detract from the historic character of the district.

Hardscaping: The small town character and rural surrounds of the historic district suggest that simple hardscaping treatments are most appropriate. Improvements such as patios, fountains, retaining walls, and other permanent, durable materials shall:

- use paving materials that match or complement the color and texture of materials used in the building to which they are related.
- not employ concrete blocks or railroad ties
- not unduly interfere with views toward or distract from a historic building

Regrading: Any regrading shall be done in such a manner so as to protect against drainage patterns that could damage foundations of historic buildings.

Lighting (See [Lighting](#) section.)

### Curbcuts

Additional curbcuts are discouraged.

### Swimming Pools

Large above-ground swimming pools that remain in place year-round can have a negative visual impact on a historic property and the Cobleskill Historic District in general if not carefully sited. They may not be placed in a front yard or in a corner side yard (between the building and a public street or right-of-way).

In-ground swimming pools are less of a concern for the integrity of historic properties, however, any required fencing for such pools structure shall comply with the guidelines for placement, height, and type of fencing established herein. (See [Fences](#) section.)

### Play Equipment

Play equipment has grown in size and visual impact over the last few decades and can become a major visual intrusion into a historic district. Careful placement of such structures can mitigate the negative affects of them. In general, play equipment shall:

- be located in side and rear yards only, and behind the front facade of the primary building;
- not be sited so as not to interfere with views to a contributing secondary building (such as a carriage house) from a main public street.

# Glossary

**ADAPTIVE REUSE** – changing the use of a building to one other than its original, in such a way to retain its Architectural distinctiveness.

**ADDITION** – an addition includes any extension or increase in floor area, number of stories, or height of an existing building or structure.

**ALLEY** – a public thoroughfare not over 20 feet wide which affords only a secondary means of access to abutting property.

**ALTERATION** – any construction or renovation to an existing building or structure other than repair or addition; the reconfiguration of any space, the addition or elimination of any door or window, the reconfiguration or extension of any system, or the installation of any equipment. (See also remodeling.)

**HDRC** – The Historic District Review Commission for the Village of Cobleskill.

**ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT** – the physical and aesthetic attributes of buildings and landscapes in the area surrounding a property or building.

**BALUSTRADE** – a series of balusters.

**BALUSTER** – a short post or pillar in a series supporting a rail or coping and thus forming a barrier.

**BARGEBOARDS** – (See EAVEBOARDS)

**BRACES** – supports similar to brackets, but aligned parallel to the edge of a roof.

**BRACKETS** – Projecting supports along the ceiling line commonly used for covered entryways.

**BRICK BONDING** – the orientation of bricks in a wall; types of bonding include common, Flemish, English Tudor.

**CHAMFER** – an angled edge of a square column where the 90-degree corners have been removed.

**CONTRIBUTING STATUS** – All properties within the Cobleskill Historic District have been categorized as either *contributing* or *non-contributing* in the 2003 inventory update of the district. In addition a building's categorization may be amended by updates thereto or by a finding of the HDRC that a building has reached 50 years of age or and has architectural merit and/or historical significance.

**DECK** – a flat, floored and roofless area, generally constructed of wood, that may or may not be attached to a dwelling unit.

**DEMOLITION** – the act of pulling down, destroying, removing, or razing a building, or commencing the work of total or substantial destruction; removal of 25% or more of the front or side facades, with each facade calculated separately.

**DGEVS** – “Decorative Gable End Vent Screen,” architectural decoration at the peak of the gable end of a building, usually coupled with decorative eaveboards; originally incorporated to visually screen a small window or vent in the peak, but later used solely for decorative purposes.

**DWELLING UNIT** – or “DU” – One or more rooms with provisions for living, cooking, sanitary and sleeping facilities arranged for the use of one family. (See Cobleskill Zoning Code for more exact limitations of this term.)

**EAVE LINE** – the (usually) horizontal line created by the lowest edge of a roof.

**EAVEBOARDS** – (also called bargeboards and vergeboards) projecting boards, plain or decorated, that conceal rafters and horizontal roof timbers on the gable end of a roof.

**EAVES** – the underpart of a roof at the point it overhangs a wall.

**FENESTRATION** – the arrangement of windows in a building.

**FRIEZE** – the decorative band running under a roof cornice.

**HARDSCAPING** – landscape improvements with durable materials such as paving and retaining walls.

**HISTORIC CONTEXT** – a unit created for planning purposes that groups information about historic properties based on a shared theme, specific time period and geographical area.

**HISTORIC PROPERTY** – a district, site, building, structure or object significant in American history, architecture, engineering, archeology or culture at the national, state, or local level.

**LIKE MATERIALS** – materials that closely match those that are in place on a building, including their quality (for example red wood elements may not be replaced with pine wood or other lesser grade woods, but may be replaced with cedar).

**INTEGRITY** – the authenticity of a property's historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property's historic or prehistoric period.

**INVENTORY** – a list of historic properties determined to meet specified criteria of significance.

**PORCH** – the covered entrance to a building, and can be a type of large outdoor room supported by columns, posts or pillars, with or without railings or kneewalls. A three-season porch glazed for protection from the elements is a sunporch. (See definition of Portico.)

**PORTE COCHERE** – literally a “port for a coach”—a porch-like extension from a building large enough for wheeled vehicles to pass through intended to provide cover for persons exiting the vehicle and entering the building.

**PORTICO** – a small covered entry that is supported by columns and pedimented like a Greek temple front.

**PRESERVATION** – the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property's form as it has evolved over time. Preservation includes protection and stabilization.

**PUBLIC WAY** – any sidewalk, roadway, right-of-way, or public easement traversed by pedestrians and passengers.

**RAILING** – a barrier consisting of a top rail supported by balusters, piers, pillars, or columns.

**RECONSTRUCTION** – re-creation of vanished or non-surviving portions of a property for interpretive purposes.

**REHABILITATION** – the alteration of or additions to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character.

**REMODELING** – an alteration that obscures or removes Architectural features and style original to the building and which may involve radical changes to the building's footprint, massing, roof profile. It is not appropriate to historic buildings with any integrity or merit, but may be a way of bringing non-contributing buildings into greater harmony with the overall historic character of a group of buildings.

**RENOVATION** – the removal and replacement or the covering of existing materials, elements, equipment and/or fixtures using new materials, elements, equipment and/or fixtures that serve the same purpose without reconfiguring the space.

**REPAIR** – the patching or restoration of any part of an existing building—its materials, elements, equipment and/or fixtures—for the purpose of maintaining such materials, elements, equipment and or fixtures in good or sound condition.

**REPOINT** – to restore and/or repair the mortar joints in a masonry wall (see tuckpoint).

**RESTORATION** – selective alteration of a property to accurately depict the form, features and character of a property at a particular period of time in its history, which may involve removing the physical evidence of other, later, time periods.

**RIDGE LINE** – the horizontal line formed by the junction of two sloping surfaces of a roof, usually the highest portion of the roof.

**SCREENING** – any device that hides visually unattractive features of a property from public view such as evergreen plantings, solid fencing.

**SHUTTERS** – solid, sometimes paneled, hinged coverings for windows and doors, originally constructed of wood. (See Window Blinds.)

**SIMULATED DIVIDED LIGHT WINDOWS** – thermal-pane windows with traditionally sized muntins adhered to the exterior and interior sides of the glass to give the appearance of true divided lights.

**SOFFIT** – the underside of any architectural element, e.g. the underside of an arch which is also called an intrados.

**TUCKPOINT** – to finish the mortar joints between bricks or stones with a narrow seam of putty or fine lime mortar.

**VERGEBOARD** – (See EAVEBOARD).

**WINDOW BLINDS** – Louvered and hinged coverings for windows and doors, originally constructed of wood. (See Shutters.)

# Resources

For those who desire more detailed information about preservation practices, the National Park Service has detailed preservation information online at:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm>

Some of the briefs most relevant to Cobleskill's Historic District include:

- *Preservation Brief #3 – Conserving Energy in Historic Buildings*
- *Preservation Brief #8 – Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings*
- *Preservation Brief #9 – The Repair of Historic Windows*
- *Preservation Brief #10 – Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork*
- *Preservation Brief #11 – Storefront Restoration*
- *Preservation Brief #14 – New Exterior Additions to Historic Building: Preservation Concerns*
- *Preservation Brief #16 – The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors*
- *Preservation Brief #29 – Slate Roofs*
- *Preservation Brief #37 – Lead Paint Removal*

Other helpful general resources include:

- *Old House Journal* online: <http://www.oldhousejournal.com/>
- *Old House Journal Yearbooks 1976-present*. Old House Journal
- *Renovating Old Houses* by George Nash
- *Victorian Exterior Decoration: How to Paint Your Nineteenth Century House Historically* by Roger W. Moss and Gail Caskey Winkler.
- *Clem Labine's Traditional Building – The Professional's Source for Historical Products* (a periodical).

**The following resources are provided as beginning points for research into various materials and products and in no way imply endorsement or guarantees by the HDRC or Village of Cobleskill.**

## Materials

Architectural Salvage:

<http://www.architecturalantiques.com/>

<http://www.architiques.net/>

Replacements of damaged asbestos shingles:

<http://www.gaf.com/Content/GAF/RES1/ROOF/weatherside.asp>

## Slate Roof Repair

Basic information on how to repair a slate roof:

<http://www.inspect-ny.com/roof/SlateRoofsATJ11.htm>

## Energy Conservation

Sources for Storm Windows

<http://www.invisiblestorms.com/>

<http://www.stormwindows.com/>

## Lightning Rods

<http://www.alrci.com/>

# Colors

Any change to the color of a building exterior, including its trim, does not require a Certificate of Appropriateness. However, paint colors can have a dramatic impact on the attractiveness of a historic district as a whole as well as on an individual building.

When deciding on exterior colors, owners are encouraged to understand which are most appropriate for the style of their building. (See below.) Another consideration, especially important in a historic district, is how the colors will harmonize with neighboring properties. When deciding to change exterior colors there are three approaches to selecting paint colors for historic buildings:

## *Scientific*

This method involves determining what the paint colors were at a certain period of time in a particular building's history. This is done with microscopic and ultra-violet examinations of paint layers from samples removed from the building and then matching them to commercially available paints. This way of choosing colors generally involves hiring a specialist and is usually limited to highly significant historic buildings and house museums.

## *Historical*

This approach is simpler than the scientific but still requires an understanding of the style of the building. There are many books that illustrate what colors of paints were available in the period a certain style was constructed, and these should be consulted. The historical approach allows for both individual preference and creative expression and promotes visual harmony within the historic district.

## *Boutique*

San Francisco's "Painted Ladies" (Victorian-era houses) are an excellent example of the Boutique approach to painting, where more vibrant and greater numbers of colors are used to express the personality of the owner. This approach requires even greater care in the selection of colors to avoid disappointment and/or disrupting the visual harmony of a neighborhood. In addition this approach may involve higher costs and increased maintenance, because different colors fade at different rates.

# Colors & Architectural Styles



The Greek Revival Style first appeared in the 1830s and was popular into the 1850s. These buildings have bold cornices, corner pilasters, and moldings around entrances. The typical color used for the main walls was white, though cream and off-whites are historically appropriate.



The Gothic Revival Style was developed in the 1840s and this style continued to be popular into the late 1800s. It has lots of pointed elements and ornate decoration on eaves and porches. Andrew Jackson Downing, who popularized this style, recommended shades of grey, “drab,” or fawn colors. Thus light earth tones are encouraged for the main walls with trim in a contrasting color to accentuate its fanciful architectural details.



Cobleskill has a number of distinctive Second Empire Style homes, identifiable by their mansard roofs, often with dormers. By the time this style became popular, in the 1860s and 70s, deeper and richer hues were possible, while the architectural details continued to be highlighted with contrasting colors. Brick was also frequently used for this style.



Italianate buildings, which date to approximately the same period as Second Empire, are also appropriately painted in deeper and contrasting hues that accentuate architectural detail such as brackets and window trim.



Queen Anne–Style houses typically have complex facades with an abundance of architectural details painted in multiple colors—from pastel to deep, intense hues. Some were also constructed of brick (often a common brick intended to be painted).



Transitional architecture, like the house pictured above, right, which exhibits elements of both Gothic Revival and Queen Anne styles, may take their color cues from either category. In this case the deep red color is a nod to the Queen Anne style, which the variety of porches and ornamentation underscores. The house pictured above, left, has a multi-colored paint job in the spirit of a “San Francisco Painted Lady.”



Early 20th century revival styles are most attractive when traditional colors are used. White or light cream is appropriate for a Colonial Revival house while classic tan- or cream-colored stucco will enhance the wood timber, brick usually found on Tudor Revival style houses. Arts and Crafts dwellings, such as the one above left, and Bungalows, typically were painted in earth tones. Brighter colors are fine for an American Four Square style, above right.

Ultimately the choice of color is personal and the HDRC gives great latitude to individual in this selection; we offer this information as an educational aid because people often ask for guidance. A good resource for learning more about paint colors appropriate for many of Cobleskill’s historic buildings is the book: Victorian Exterior Decoration—How To Paint Your Nineteenth-Century American House Historically by Roger Moss and Gail Caskey Winkler. (See [Resources](#) section.)