



GUIDELINES FOR
INFILL
DEVELOPMENT

in Cobourg's
Heritage
Conservation
Districts



Guidelines for Infill Development

GUIDELINES FOR INFILL DEVELOPMENT

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1.0 INFILL DEVELOPMENT IN HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

1.1 Statement of Policy and Intent

The design of a new building is critical to preserving the character of a historic district. Character-defining elements of the residential Heritage Conservation Districts include a rich and diverse variety of building styles, consistent architectural form, the use of traditional building materials including brick, clapboard, and stucco, larger houses with deep setbacks on large properties, and the presence of trees, landscaping, gardens, porches and verandahs that assist in defining the transition between public and private space. Character-defining elements of the Commercial Core Heritage Conservation District include the presence of two to three storey commercial buildings and a variety of commercial uses including office space, retail, and accessory residential space. The Commercial Core features a higher density of buildings, many of which cover most of the area of the lot upon which they are situated. A new building in a historic district should contribute to that character by respecting the location, design, materials and other character-defining elements of the historic neighbourhood and neighbouring historic buildings, as well as respecting the character of the landscape and other important features of the street and district. A new building should be compatible with the existing environment without exactly duplicating existing buildings. A new building in a historic district must also conform to zoning and building codes.



This infill development relates well to the streetscape

Guidelines for Infill Development



Successful infill development can be found throughout Cobourg. Whether you are contemplating residential infill (top), institutional development (bottom) or commercial development, the Planning Department strongly recommends the use of an architect or designer with experience working in Cobourg and an understanding of Cobourg's Heritage Conservation District Guidelines. In addition, the Town's Urban Design Guidelines strongly complement the Town's Heritage policies and should be incorporated into new development proposals.

2.0 Design Principles to Achieve Compatibility

The key to the design of a new infill building that enhances the existing environment is its compatibility with neighbouring buildings. Compatibility is achieved through careful attention to the following design principles of building:

- Scale
- Proportion
- Rhythm
- Massing
- Height
- Materials

Compatibility is based on a thorough understanding of the design principles of existing buildings, as well as the principles used to design landscape features and secondary buildings on the site. Compatibility should also involve analysis of how these design principles are used in the neighbourhood and how they can be interpreted using today's materials and construction techniques.

Compatibility does not mean exactly duplicating the existing buildings or environment. A new building should be seen as a product of its own time. To reproduce a historic building, or to copy exactly a style from the past, creates a false sense of history. By relating to the existing buildings and the environment, but being of its own time, a new building shows a district's evolution just as the existing buildings show its past. Perhaps the best way to think about a compatible new building is that it should be a good neighbour, enhancing the character of the district and respecting the context of the neighbourhood, rather than being an exact clone.

Designing a new building that contributes to, rather than detracts from, the character of a historic district begins with an analysis of the character-defining features of the existing historic buildings, streets and landscapes. Typically, character-defining features include the design principles listed above (scale, proportion, rhythm, massing, height and materials), as well as the setback and orientation of a building, its colours, roof design and architectural details and ornamentation. In most historic districts the location and design landscape features, such as plants, trees, fences, sidewalks and driveways, and the design and location of secondary buildings, such as garages, also significantly contribute to the character of the district.

To achieve compatibility, the following design principles must be adhered to when developing new infill. Demonstrating conformity with these design principles, listed in a checklist in Appendix A, is a requirement of the heritage permit process for infill development in a Heritage Conservation District. Furthermore, staff pre-consultation is a requirement of the heritage permit approval process. Staff should be contacted when considering plans for infill development.

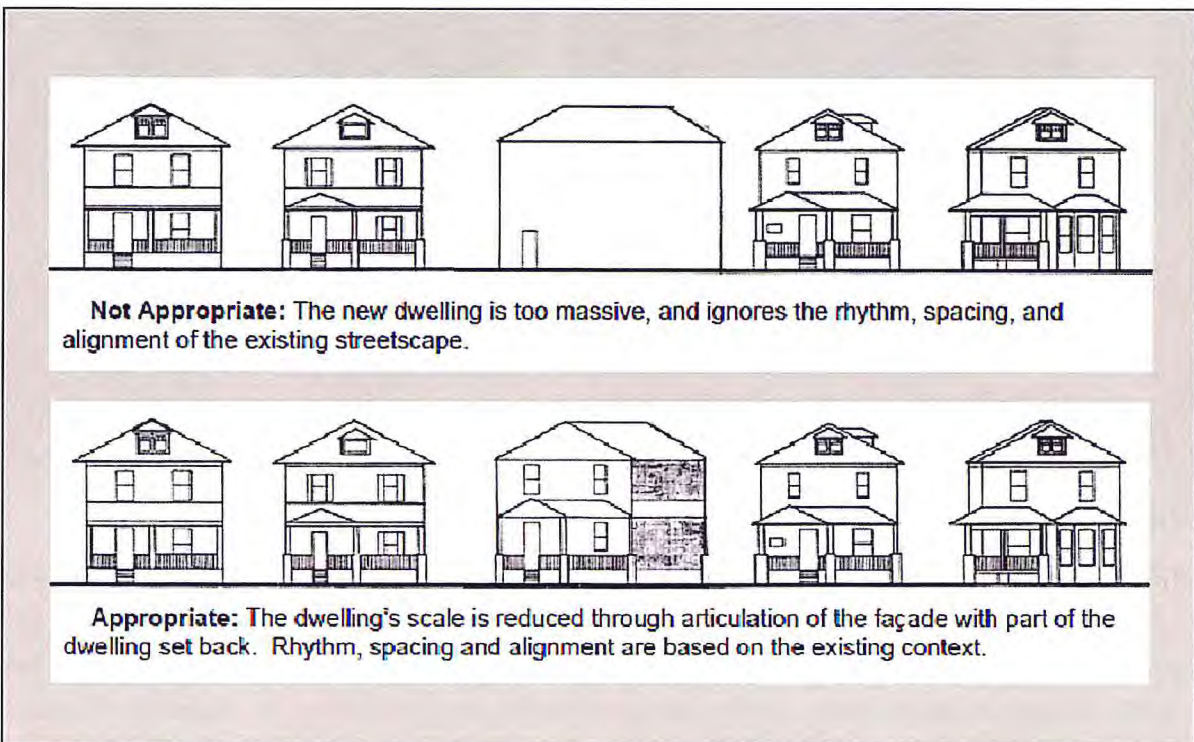
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2.1 Scale

Scale is the relative or apparent size of a building in relation to its neighbours or some common object such as an automobile. Scale is also the relative or apparent size of building elements, such as windows, doors, cornices and other features to each other and to the building. Most buildings are designed to be of human scale, that is, they are designed to relate to the size of an average human being. Typically, residential buildings are designed to have human scale. To give a building prominence or symbolic importance, it may be designed to be of monumental, or larger than human scale. Typically, monumental scale is associated with governmental and religious buildings.

Scale can be achieved in many ways. For example, windows, doors, cornices and other elements can be enlarged to impart a sense of monumentality or they can be human in scale. Facades can be heavily rusticated, contributing to a sense of monumentality, or of plain materials and treatments, making the building appear human in scale.

The scale of a new building should respect the prevailing scale of its neighbours. In some cases, a new building's use or symbolic importance may make it appropriate for its scale to differ from its neighbours.



2.2 Proportion

Proportion is the relationship of the dimensions of building elements, such as windows and doors, to each other and to the elevations. Often, proportions are expressed as mathematical ratios, particularly for buildings based on Greek, Roman and Renaissance architecture. For example, many historic buildings designed in the 19th and early 20th centuries use mathematical proportions to locate and size windows, doors, columns, cornices and other building elements.

The design of a new building should respect, but not necessarily exactly duplicate, the existing proportions of neighbouring buildings.



This 1857 home in Cobourg is an excellent example of how proportion adds to the aesthetic quality of a building and streetscape.

2.3 Rhythm

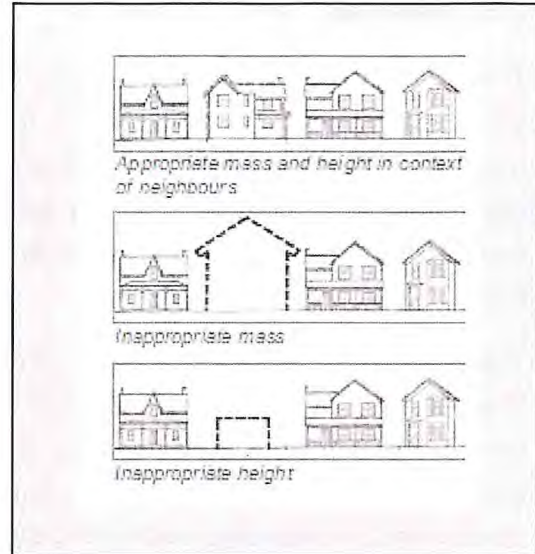
The spacing of repetitive facade elements, such as projecting bays, storefronts, windows, doors, masonry details and the like, give an elevation its rhythm. The space between free-standing buildings, the contiguousness of rowhouses and other party-wall buildings, and the height of roofs, cornices, towers and other roof projections establishes the rhythm of a street.

A new building should respect the rhythm of its neighbours as well as that of the street.

2.4 Massing

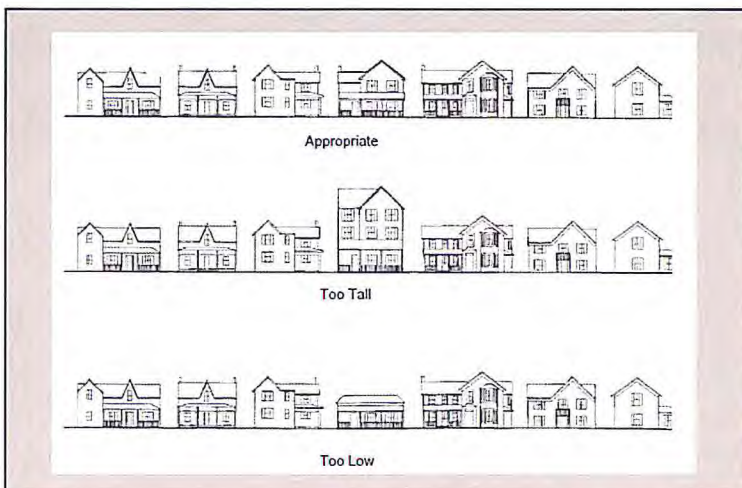
Massing is derived from the articulation of a building's facade through the use of dormers, towers and other roof projections, as well as facade projections such as bays, porches and steps. A building's massing significantly contributes to the character of a street, particularly in districts containing rowhouses or contiguous commercial buildings.

The massing of a new building should be compatible with the massing of existing buildings.



2.5 Height

The height of walls, cornices and roofs, as well as the height of bays, chimneys and towers, contributes to the character of existing buildings and districts. While a new building does not necessarily need to be exactly the same height as its neighbours to be compatible, it should be designed to respect existing building heights. For example, a new five story building in a block of two- and three-story buildings will usually detract from the character of a street. Similarly, a new one-story building in a block of four- or five-story buildings will be out of character. Typically, if a new building is more than one story higher or lower than existing buildings that are all the same height, it will be out of character. On the other hand, a new building built in a street of existing buildings of varied heights may be more than one story higher or lower than its immediate neighbours and still be compatible.

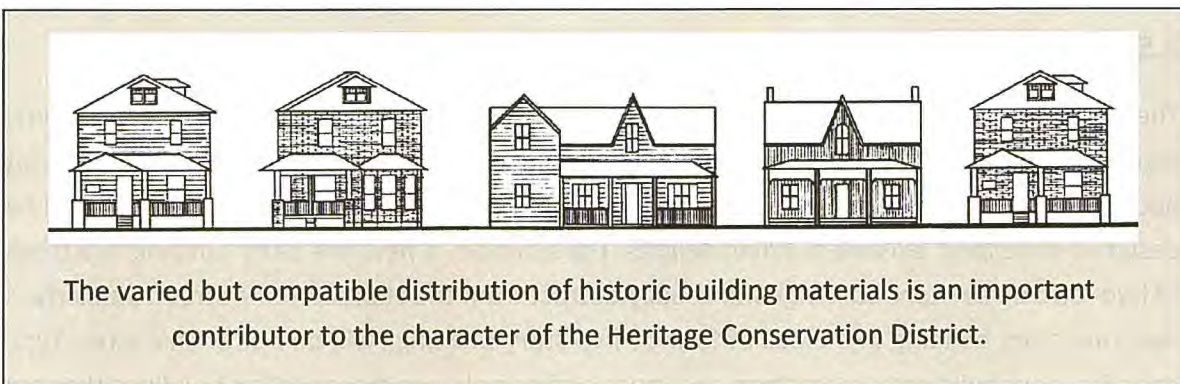


A new building built in a street of existing buildings with varied heights should not be significantly higher or lower than its neighbours.

2.6 Materials

The materials used for walls, windows, sloping roofs, details and other visible elements of historic buildings should be respected in the design of a new building. In some districts, where most or all of the buildings on a street use the same exterior materials, the new building should normally use those or similar materials. In streets where the existing buildings use diverse exterior materials, a range of exterior materials may be used by a compatible new building.

The size, texture, surface finish and other defining characteristics of exterior materials are as important as the type of material itself. For example, in a street of tooled granite facades, a new building constructed of smooth polished black marble would probably not be compatible even though both are built of stone. Similarly, a new building constructed of glazed brick in a street of historic buildings built of unglazed brick would probably not be compatible.



A new building should use the same or similar compatible materials as the existing buildings on the street. The size, texture, surface finish and other characteristics of exterior materials should be consistent with neighbouring buildings and compatible with the character-defining features of the heritage district.

3.0 Design Tools to Achieve Appropriate Infill

To achieve compatibility, the following design tools must be adhered to when developing new infill. Demonstrating conformity with these design elements, listed in a checklist in Appendix A, is a requirement of the heritage permit process for infill development in a Heritage Conservation District. Furthermore, staff pre-consultation is a requirement of the heritage permit approval process. Staff should be contacted when considering plans for infill development.

3.1 Colour

Colour should be selected from the Cobourg Heritage Paint Palette or colours adhering to the Cobourg Heritage Paint Colour Policy.

In most cases the predominant colours are subdued. The preferred colours are those within a traditional palette, appropriate for the building materials.



This newly constructed porch was painted with colours from the Cobourg Heritage Palette.

Guidelines for Infill Development

3.2 Materials

Traditional high quality building materials are encouraged.

Heritage buildings in the area are finished in traditional materials such as red and buff clay brick, stucco, wood clapboard and wood board and batten. The traditional building materials are encouraged for new development.



Roughcast stucco is a material used on some of Cobourg's heritage structures and this roughcast stucco should be used instead of modern application techniques which result in a smoothed and pebbled texture.

3.3 Compatibility

Additions or renovation to an existing building should be compatible with the architectural style, exterior colour and materials of the primary building.

The intention is to ensure some buildings that will inevitably change over time still maintain the cohesive visual character of the street.



This photo of Cobourg's Main Street shows a recent infill building in the foreground, with original 19th century buildings beyond.

Guidelines for Infill Development

3.4 Main Door

The main door should be clearly visible from the street.

The composition of wall elements should support the location and definition of the main front entrance. The main front entrance should face the street, with the door in a prominent position. The front door should be clearly visible and approachable from the street via a defined walkway from the sidewalk.



The main door on this heritage building serves as a focal point.

3.5 Garage Door

Garage doors must not dominate the front façade of the house.

Cobourg's Heritage Conservation Districts are not dominated by garage doors. This important visual indicator is of fundamental importance in maintaining the character of the area.



Cobourg's older neighbourhoods are not dominated by garage doors.

Guidelines for Infill Development

3.6 Public Face

The side of the building facing the street should feature a porch, prominent entrance or other architectural gesture that provides a “public face”.

Many houses, especially of older vintage, feature front porches. The porches come in different shapes and sizes throughout the area, but they always orient the house towards the street. The porches also soften the look of the front façade by providing a friendly foreground and contribute to neighbourly socializing. The most commonly used material is painted wood.

A front porch/entry feature should dominate the main front wall of the dwelling. A front porch/entry feature should be developed along at least 50% of the front wall of the dwelling.



This front porch dominates the main front wall, orienting the house towards the street.

3.7 Detached Garages

Detached garages are preferred. Where a detached garage is provided, it should be set back from the main front wall of the house.

Garage doors should be less conspicuous than the main entrance to the house. A house should have its front turned towards the street with the strongest impression of the street being one of houses and front doors, not garages. Where a detached garage is provided, it should be similar in materials and character to the house.



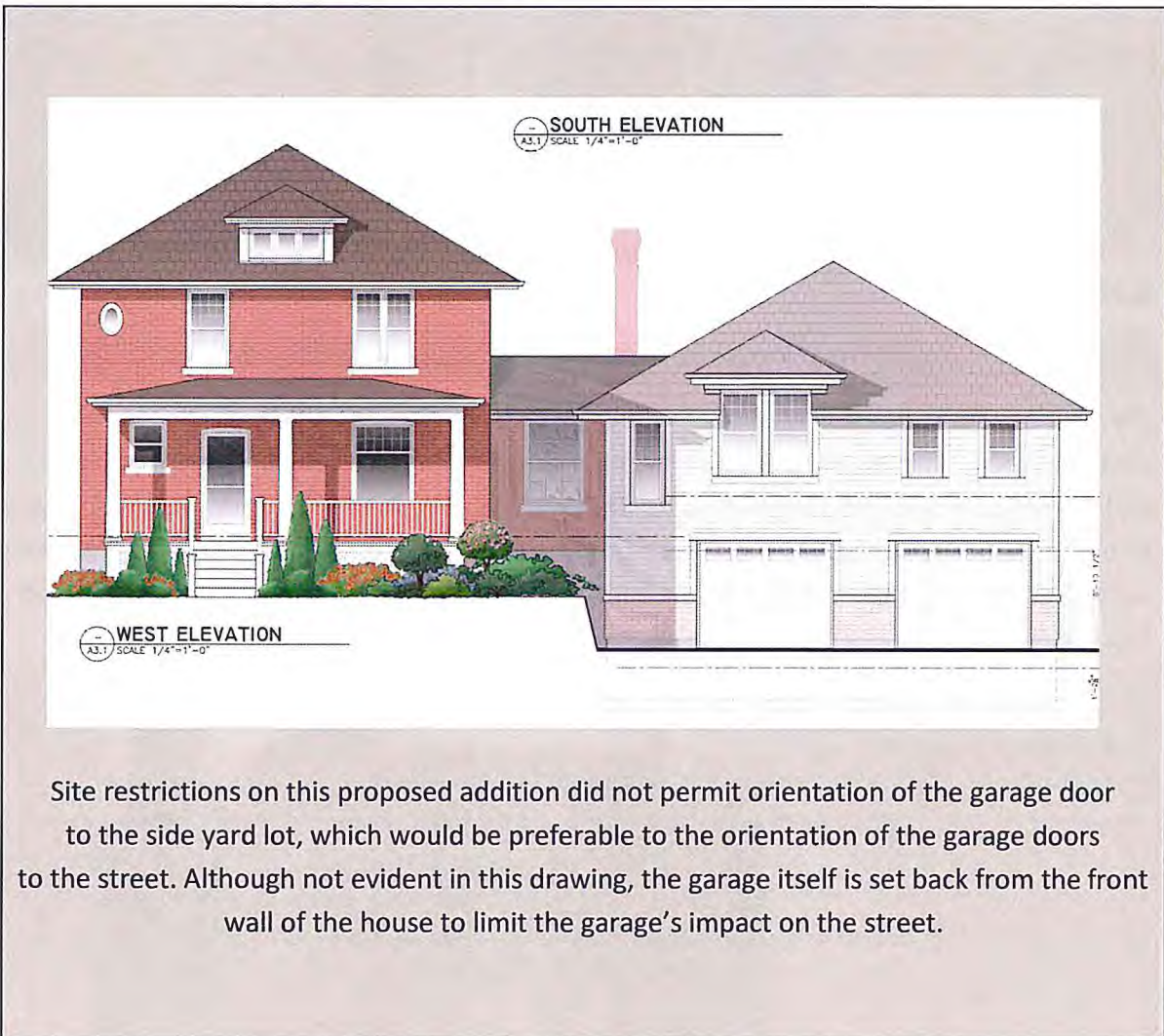
This detached garage shown on the left of this picture, made with the same materials and character as the main house, allows the focus to be on the house’s main entrance .

3.8 Attached Garages

Where an attached garage is provided, the garage door should not protrude beyond the main front wall of the house and should be integrated into the massing of the house.

Where an attached garage is proposed, it must be integrated into the massing and design of the house in a manner that does not dominate the entire front façade. Attached garages must not protrude beyond the main front wall of the house. Where possible, the massing of the house should include a second floor over the garage. The roofline of the garage must be designed to be compatible with the roofline of the house.

On lots with frontage of at least 18m (60 ft.), no more than 2 car widths near the frontal plane of the house may be permitted. For narrower lots between 12 and 18 m (42-60ft) - no more than 1 car garage within or near the front plane of the house may be permitted.



Site restrictions on this proposed addition did not permit orientation of the garage door to the side yard lot, which would be preferable to the orientation of the garage doors to the street. Although not evident in this drawing, the garage itself is set back from the front wall of the house to limit the garage's impact on the street.

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3.9 Windows

The front wall of the house should have windows of a traditional scale and proportion, with height generally greater than width.

Windows, especially ground floor windows, will help ensure “eyes on the street” and safe streets in the neighbourhood. Windows should be placed in a consistent and orderly fashion on each building face. A typical proportion of window area to front façade is between 35% and 50%.



The consistent window pattern gives a good sense of proportion to the building.

3.10 Roof Design

Roof design should be pitched with slopes between 30 - 60°.

The majority of the houses in Cobourg’s Heritage Conservation Districts have pitched roofs, an element that defines the scale of the whole building. New houses should have a pitched roof, and the design of the roof should be consistent with neighbouring properties. Common styles of pitched roofs include gabled and hipped roofs. The overhang, fascia, and soffit height and design should be complementary to the construction of the house and neighbouring properties.

The pitch of this roof is very common in Cobourg’s Heritage Conservation Districts.



3.11 Roof Materials

Roof materials and colour should be of a traditional palette.

Typical roof materials are cedar and asphalt shingles with painted wood trim. Roofs should be built with the same materials that are found in the neighbourhood, and should be compatible and complementary to the building materials used for construction of the house.



The black asphalt shingles on this new infill in a historic area compliment the surrounding buildings.

3.12 Dormer/Roof Windows

Dormer/roof windows are encouraged to punctuate pitched roofs. Windows within the dormer should occupy the majority of the dormer face.

Dormer windows are features found on residential buildings in Cobourg's Heritage Districts, providing visual articulation to the roof zone, equivalent in importance to windows in the main façade. Where there is not evidence of dormers in neighbouring homes, dormers are to be placed on the rear elevation.



This central dormer window provides a good sense of proportion and visual appeal to the roof of this historic home.

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3.13 Signage

Signage should be compatible with the character of the neighbourhood.

The signage on converted use buildings or home occupations ranges in size, location and material. Wooden boards in dark colours with light colours or gold lettering are typical. They are located either at eye level beside the front door or are positioned on front yards. Wall mounted signs should be no bigger than 0.2 sq. m (2 sq. ft.) and the free standing signs are maximum 0.7 sq. m (8 sq. ft.) in size to ensure the residential character of the neighbourhood is maintained. No mobile or back lit signs are permitted.



This wooden free-standing sign compliments the historic home behind while not detracting from the character of the streetscape.

3.14 Lot Size and Frontage

Lot size and frontages should vary, while still accommodating sufficient frontage for side yards.

Lot sizes and frontages vary tremendously within Cobourg's Heritage Conservation Districts. Ideally, lot width should be 12 m (40 ft.) and 21 m (70ft.).



The width of lots within Cobourg's Heritage Districts is varied.

3.15 Side Yard Setbacks

Accommodate a diversity of sideyard setbacks within a range complementary to the immediate neighbours.

Spaces between buildings afford glimpses of greenery in the backyards and make the streets feel more open. Even large or multi-family units rarely approach the property lines on more than one side, allowing for open spaces on the side as well as at the front and rear.

Future development or changes to existing buildings should preserve the openness of individual yards. Individual buildings should be surrounded by yard space on all sides. Front, side and rear yards are seen as the connecting fabric of the area.

Based on the typical existing condition it is recommended that the width of a building (including an attached garage) is no more than 60% of the width of the lot upon which it stands. Sideyard setbacks should be consistent with other sideyard setbacks in the neighbourhood



The green space between these two buildings provides an open and spacious feel to the streetscape.

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3.16 Mass and Height

Provide for a variety of building heights for houses from single storey to two and a half storeys. All new houses shall be compatible in height to their immediate neighbours.

The scale of the area's heritage buildings generally range from one storey cottages to moderately sized two storey houses. The scale of buildings in single lot infill must not overwhelm or overshadow adjacent buildings. The height and massing of new buildings should be compatible with adjacent buildings, neither too tall nor too small.



The massing and height of this recently constructed building complements the other buildings in this historic neighbourhood.

3.17 Same First Storey Height

Ensure that the first storey of infill construction lines up with neighbouring buildings.

It is important when building within a heritage district to maintain consistent storey heights with the neighbouring buildings. The top and bottom of the first storey should be aligned with the neighbouring buildings where there is an existing consistency. In this way new construction can be in keeping with the character of the street. When the heights of the storeys are not aligned infill construction will look out of place.



This new construction, although different from the surrounding context in style and overall height, maintains the same first storey height and aligns the porch overhang with neighbouring buildings.

3.18 Mature Trees

Protect mature trees and encourage planting new trees.

Many streets maintain a rather dense canopy even though they do not display street trees (trees planted within the municipal boulevard). This is due to the existence of mature trees in yards which contribute to the character of the area. The trees help to partially obstruct the view of distant buildings, and provide a green backdrop to long views. Healthy mature trees must be protected from removal.



Mature trees provide a shady backdrop to this historic home

3.19 Fencing

Maintain a consistent character on the street by ensuring height and opacity of front yard fencing consistent with those found throughout the neighbourhood.

The majority of fences are white picket or decorative wire and cast iron. Fences help distinguish the edge of the private realm, and identify the path to the front door. Important in establishing the height of the fence is a desire to ensure “eyes on the street” from front windows and porches by maintaining a sight line over the fence.



The white picket fence surrounding this property acts as a low boundary between the street and the building.

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3.20 Hedges

Hedges should be no more than 1.2m (4 ft.) high to define the edge of private property to maintain visibility to the street.

Many houses are distinguished by a hedge that defines the interface between the public and private realm. Hedges contribute to the distinct landscape quality of the neighbourhood. Similar to fences, it is important to maintain a sight line over the hedge to ensure “eyes on the street”.



This hedge provides a natural barrier between the yard and the street, while contributing to the landscape of the neighbourhood.

3.21 Paths

A pedestrian path should provide a route from the front door to the sidewalk.

Many of the front yard landscapes include a pedestrian path that connects the front door to the sidewalk. The path is an important element that contributes to the pedestrian friendly character of this neighbourhood.



This paved pathway draws the pedestrian from the sidewalk to the building.

Guidelines for Infill Development

3.22 Driveways

Driveways should not visually dominate the front yard.

The driveway usually constitutes less than one third of the lot-width. The front yard should have no more than a single width driveway. The intent is to maintain the open, landscape character of the neighbourhood. Driveway widths should be limited to 3 m (10 ft.) where they cross the public road right-of-way. Driveways may be widened to correspond to the size of the garage opening within 6 m (18 ft.) of the front face of the garage.



This home's single-width driveway allows the focus to remain on the building

3.23 Front Yard Surface

Most of the front yard should be soft surface, not hard and paved.

The intent is to maintain the green, garden-like landscape character of the neighbourhood. In order to achieve this intent, most of the front yard should be soft surface landscape, not paved driveway. Consideration should be given to permeable driveway solutions - gravel, paved tire tracks, or pavers allowing for green cover in between.



The expanse of lawn in front of this building helps to maintain the landscape character of the neighbourhood.

Guidelines for Infill Development

Appendix A

Guidelines for Infill Development

Appendix A - Checklist of Elements for Infill Development

(To be included with applicant's Heritage Permit Application)

- Infill development should respect the architecture of the neighbourhood and be compatible with the character-defining elements of the Heritage Conservation District in which it is situated.**

Design Principles to Achieve Compatibility

- Scale**

The scale of a new building should respect the prevailing scale of its neighbours. In some cases, a new building's use or symbolic importance may make it appropriate for its scale to differ from its neighbours.

- Proportion**

The design of a new building should respect, but not necessarily exactly duplicate, the existing proportions of neighbouring buildings.

- Rhythm**

A new building should respect the rhythm of its neighbours as well as that of the street.

- Massing**

The massing of a new building should be compatible with the massing of existing buildings.

- Height**

A new building built in a street of existing buildings with varied heights should not be significantly higher or lower than its neighbours.

- Materials**

A new building should use the same or similar compatible materials as the existing buildings on the street. The size, texture, surface finish and other characteristics of exterior materials should be consistent with neighbouring buildings and compatible with the character-defining features of the heritage district.

Design Tools to Achieve Appropriate Infill

Colour

Colour should be selected from the Cobourg Heritage Paint Palette or colours adhering to the Cobourg Heritage Paint Colour Policy.

Materials

Traditional high quality building materials should be selected.

Compatibility

Additions or renovation to an existing building should be compatible with the architectural style, exterior colour and materials of the primary building.

Main Door

The main door should be clearly visible from the street.

Garage Door

Garage doors must not dominate the front façade of the house.

Public Face

The side of the building facing the street should feature a porch, prominent entrance or other architectural gesture that provides a “public face”.

Detached Garages

Detached garages are preferred. Where a detached garage is provided, it should be set back from the main front wall of the house.

Attached Garages

Where an attached garage is provided, the garage door should not protrude beyond the main front wall of the house and should be integrated into the massing of the house.

Windows

The front wall of the house should have windows of a traditional scale and proportion, with height generally greater than width.

Roof Design

Roof design should be pitched with slopes between 30 - 60°.

Roof Materials

Roof materials and colour should be of a traditional palette.

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Dormer/Roof Windows

Dormer/roof windows are encouraged to punctuate pitched roofs. Windows within the dormer should occupy the majority of the dormer face.

Signage

Signage should be compatible with the character of the neighbourhood.

Lot Size and Frontage

Lot size and frontages should vary, while still accommodating sufficient frontage for side yards.

Side Yard Setbacks

Accommodate a diversity of sideyard setbacks within a range complementary to the immediate neighbours.

Mass and Height

Provide for a variety building heights for houses from single storey to two and a half storeys. All new houses shall be compatible in height to their immediate neighbours.

Same First Storey Height

The first storey of infill construction should line up with neighbouring buildings.

Mature Trees

Protect mature trees and encourage planting new trees.

Fencing

Maintain a consistent character on the street by ensuring height and opacity of front yard fencing consistent with those found throughout the neighbourhood.

Hedges

Hedges should be no more than 1.2m (4 ft.) high to define the edge of private property to maintain visibility to the street.

Paths

A pedestrian path should provide a route from the front door to the sidewalk.

Driveways

Driveways should not visually dominate the front yard.

Front Yard Surface

Most of the front yard should be soft surface, not hard and paved.

