

# Urban Design Guidelines for Neighbourhoods and Streets

## Rural Villages



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## Image Credit

**Glossary:** See the urban design guideline page on Ottawa.ca for definition of terminologies (search “urban design guidelines glossary”).

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# INTRODUCTION

This section outlines:

- The objectives of this guideline document
- The applicable Official Plan and By-law directions
- Key issues related to different context
- Responsibilities related to sustainable design

# INTRODUCTION

## Definitions

Rural Village is a land use designation shown on Schedule B9 of the Official Plan. There are 26 Villages located throughout the City's Rural Transect. The majority of development within the Rural Transect occurs within Villages in order to reduce conflicts with other uses such as agriculture, mineral extraction, industries and areas of natural significance.

## Use and Application

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide design guidance to assess, promote and achieve suitable development in Villages. These guidelines shall be applied at the development review stage for proposed Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw amendments, Subdivisions and Site Plan Control applications.

The guidelines shall be applied in conjunction with City policies approved by Council including, but not limited to, Secondary Plans, Village Plans, Community Design Plans (CDPs), Neighbourhood Plans and other design guidelines. In the event of conflict between these guidelines, the more detailed City approved policy such as contained within the CDP shall take precedence. Village community visioning exercises may also provide useful background information to further inform the application of these guidelines.

The applicant should demonstrate how the proposal considers the guidelines. The guidelines are not prescriptive; they are flexible to accommodate exceptions and may not all apply equally in all cases.

## Objectives

- To promote development that acknowledges the unique traditions, culture, history and familiar character that defines Villages.
- To promote development that reinforces the quality and diversity of heritage buildings.
- To promote development that strengthens Village cores as the focus of where people live, work, play and gather.
- To maintain and promote relatively low-density and small-scale development.
- To promote development that enhances the existing links between Villages and nature, water, clean air and the countryside.
- To strengthen and support rural economy.

## Official Plan and By-Law Direction

The Official Plan supports the development of a healthy, active and creative city-one that promotes a sense of identity, rich in heritage, inclusiveness and a vibrant economic development. To achieve this principle, the City shall maintain a distinct countryside and ensure its rural landscapes. Rural development shall be focused in villages, agricultural lands. Environmental features shall be preserved during new construction. The Official Plan supports continued development of Villages that provides residents with better access to community services and maintains the open space character of rural areas as well as reinforce neighbourhood and place identity through urban design and architecture.

## Context and Issues

Villages face unique planning and development challenges, specific to their community pressures, needs and values. These guidelines provide direction in addressing common design challenges faced by rural communities.

Rural villages have varying infrastructure capabilities and networks. The variation between villages makes them unique but may also pose a challenge when applying these guidelines. The extent of infrastructure networks, quality of natural resources and pace of development will direct how, when and where growth occurs in villages. The application of these guidelines may have different practical results for each community; however, the guidelines represent sound planning principles and should be used to achieve best practices in design.

## Sustainable Design

One of the objectives of the Official Plan is to build a city that is energy conscious, mitigates emissions and is more resilient to the impacts of climate change. All development should consider opportunities to reduce resource consumption during construction and provide buildings that conserve energy, reduce peak demand and provide resilience to power disruptions throughout their lifecycle. All buildings should consider using efficient mechanical and electrical systems as well as incorporating renewable energy generation features. The design of buildings should prevent thermal bridging and providing appropriate wall thickness and window to wall ratios to insulate the building.

The City of Ottawa encourages proponents of any development to explore and apply best sustainable practices for the full life cycle of the site and buildings. The City encourages the use of sustainable design standards, such as the Canadian Green Building Council (CaGBC) Zero Carbon Building Standards, rating system and the International WELL Building Institute WELL Building Standard in the planning, design, construction and operation stages of a development.

New development in the rural village carries the responsibility to achieve these objectives. The design guidelines included in this document support sustainable design by promoting a more compact, inclusive, transit-supportive, pedestrian-friendly, and attractive community, in addition to a building of higher energy efficiency and greater climate resilience.



# 1.0 COMMUNITY LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Within rural village, development should be context sensitive and maintain the characteristics of the community. The Official Plan directs that rural villages should evolve into 15-minute neighbourhoods and the development within the villages should facilitate the use of active transportation for short trips. The community layout and design focus on arranging streets, public spaces and buildings in a way that fosters social interaction, enhances accessibility and maintains a strong connection to the natural surroundings.

The following guidelines provide design guidance as it relates to Community layout and design offers direction on:

- Land use
- Street connectivity

### 1.1 Land Use

- 1 Ensure new development respects the natural topography of land, and integrates existing landforms such as hills, terraces, cliffs, valleys, rocky outcrops and watercourses. Avoid altering natural terrain to accommodate development.
- 2 Develop a mix of housing designs along neighbourhood blocks to avoid a mass produced or “cookie cutter” appearance. Varied housing styles, colours and materials create a visually interesting streetscape and village atmosphere.
- 3 Focus multi-unit residential housing in village cores to create an active pedestrian environment where residents can support a mix of uses and activities. Historic buildings in the village core should not be demolished in favor of developing multi-unit residential housing. Vacant lots or underutilized buildings may offer good opportunities for residential infill or residential conversion.



Figure 1: The design of the home takes advantage of an existing natural change in grade. (Fallowfield)



Figure 2: Two houses avoid a “cookie cutter” look by having varied designs. The designs also integrate well with the homes along the block.



Figure 3: A heritage building provides multi-unit housing in the village core. (Richmond)

# 1 COMMUNITY LAYOUT AND DESIGN

## Land Use

- 4 Establish a variety of lot sizes in residential developments. Creating a mix of lot sizes promotes a range in dwelling types and, in turn, creates housing options for residents. Explore innovative servicing methods where lot sizes may be restricted by servicing capabilities.
- 5 Concentrate a mix of uses – commercial, residential, recreational and institutional – within the village core. Locating uses within walking distance of each other strengthens community interaction and viability. The development of “big-box” stores on the periphery of the village or just outside the village boundaries is prohibited.



Figure 4: Business and services are in close proximity to residential uses in the village core. (Metcalf)



Diagram 1: Variety in lot sizes in residential development to promote mixed use development.

## 1.2 Street Connectivity

- 1 Ensure prominent buildings, open spaces, public art and/or other attractive features are developed at highly visible locations. Highly visible locations could be but not limited to corner sites, sites that terminate roadways and sites that frame community gathering places. Height, massing, architectural elements and landscaping should be used to create visual interest.
- 2 Avoid the development of looping, suburban-style roadway patterns. New roadway patterns should be direct and reflect the traditional development pattern that exists in the village core. Patterns should also provide pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular connections to adjacent and future development, pathways and trails.



Figure 5: Carp Memorial Hall at a Mainstreet intersection creates a distinct vista. (Carp)



Figure 6: A fire station is a prominent civic building on a visible corner. (Richmond)



Figure 7: Centrally located community facilities can function as community gathering places and allow users who live nearby to walk. (Osgoode)

# 1 COMMUNITY LAYOUT AND DESIGN

## Street Connectivity

- 3 If a direct connection is not possible, develop roadways that terminate onto adjacent open space and/or agricultural land to create attractive, natural view corridors. Ensure turnarounds provide sufficient space for maintenance vehicles.
- 4 Provide direct pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and connections between adjacent uses within villages to ensure safe and convenient pedestrian movement.



Figure 8: Pedestrian sidewalk is connected directly from Mainstreet to side street. (Manotick).



Figure 9.: Sidewalk along a village Mainstreet allow pedestrian to travel safely. (Manotick)



## 2.0 BUILT FORM

The Official Plan states that, the built form in Rural Village, where development is permitted, shall be Low-Rise or Mid-Rise as identified by applicable Secondary Plan. These guidelines for built form emphasize the importance of designing buildings that respects the village's history, natural environment and context of the community in terms of:

- Building height and scale
- Heritage and Architecture
- Building Orientation

# 2 BUILT FORM

## Building Height and Scale

### 2.1 Building Height and Scale

- 1 Ensure new buildings are compatible with adjacent buildings in terms of common scale, massing and height to complement the existing context. New building, including gas stations, should respond to the village context.
- 2 In rare cases where new development is significantly taller than adjacent development, create proper transitions to maintain coherence of built form. Maintain a lower building profile along the street and set back the upper storeys, away from the street.



Figure 10: The gas station responds to village context with the architectural design that complements village character.



Figure 11: New development provides proper transition and maintains the built form character of the village. (Manotick)

## 2.2 Heritage and Architecture

- 1 Identify conserve, and revitalize community, landmarks, focal points and vistas to support village identity and “sense of place”.
- 2 Adapt old buildings, such as churches and schools that are no longer in use, for new uses to preserve village history, landscape and identity. Historic buildings and sites, no longer in use, should be rehabilitated to serve new purposes.
- 3 Ensure alterations, additions and renovations made to historical buildings complement the scale and character of the original.



Figure 12: New addition to an existing building that considers adjacent building height and scale. It also incorporates village character by using similar color palate.



Figure 13: A former church currently operates as Ottawa Public Library branch. (Munster)



Figure 14: Preserving important views and iconic cultural landscapes contributes to a unique community identity. (Manotick)

## 2 BUILT FORM

## Heritage and Architecture

- 4 Consider using a historic palate with complimentary colours for new buildings when developed in older areas and village cores. Historic colours can be rich, neutral tones inspired by the original colours found on old village homes and historical buildings.
- 5 New development should refer to and take architectural cues from existing historic buildings in the village, in order to be sensitively integrated into the existing context.



Figure 15: Mixed use building in Carp with historic palate and complimenting colours and materials. (Carp)



Figure 16: This has a place of prominence. Watsons Mill is a landmark and a historic site in Manotick currently operates as museum.



Figure 17: Architectural features and presence of railway track shows history of the place. (Cumberland)

## 2.3 Building Orientation

- 1 Avoid blank facades along public rights-of-way. New development should follow the existing architectural pattern and rhythm established by adjacent development. Visually divide large facades into smaller sections using a human-scale, windows, bays and articulation to reduce the perception of massing.
- 2 Orient buildings to frame the street. Primary façades should be parallel to the street and entries should be clearly visible and connect to the public sidewalk.
- 3 Unless the village core is historically characterized by a wide variety of setbacks, align new building façades to create a visually continuous streetscape.



Figure 18: Building facing the street with various setback, porch, windows and doors to create visual interest and more eyes on street.



Figure 19: The continuous building frames the street and has direct connection to sidewalk.

## 2 BUILT FORM

## Building Orientation

- 4 Ensure buildings on corner sites have façades that address both streets to define the public space. Front and side building elevations at these locations should incorporate enhanced design, features, architecture and public realm.
- 5 Set back garages from principal buildings and/or locate parking to the side or rear of principal buildings. Proper orientation of parking mitigates its impact on the public street.
- 6 Enhance gathering places by including design elements such as play areas, landscaping, street furniture, public art and/or other attractive features that reflect community character. Gathering places have activities and/or services that promote safe community interaction, exchange and congregation.



Figure 20: A historic building on a corner site helps define the public space by having reduced setback, windows on both streets to create visual interest. (Manotick)



Figure 21: Building with parking on the rear side. This mitigates the impact of visual disturbance in the public street.



Figure 22: Public art in Osgoode Township Museum reflecting community character. The museum provides public outdoor area with attractive features.



## 3.0 PEDESTRIAN REALM

Rural village often present unique opportunities due to their lower density, varied topography, and rural landscape. The Official Plan calls for the evolution of villages into 15-minute neighbourhoods. New development in the rural villages should improve and enhance the pedestrian realm to support the objectives of the Official Plan and create pedestrian spaces that reflect and respect local traditions, culture, and conserve the natural heritage features. The Pedestrian Realm Design guideline focus on the following key areas:

- Pedestrian connectivity
- Streetscape
- Traffic calming
- Natural features

# 3 PEDESTRIAN REALM

## Pedestrian Connectivity

### 3.1 Pedestrian Connectivity

- 1 Design wide and well-connected sidewalks on both sides of mainstreets, village cores and areas with high pedestrian traffic (for example, near schools, commercial area etc) to promote walkability. Sidewalks on both sides of the street facilitate safe, easy and convenient pedestrian travel to community amenities. Retain and plant trees alongside sidewalks for shade and resilience. Sidewalks should be wide enough to accommodate maintenance vehicles and snow storage.
- 2 Provide a contrasting boulevard of accent pavers where space permits to visually unify the character of the Village Mainstreet.



Figure 23: Sidewalk along both side of a Mainstreet facilitates pedestrian movement and encourage unplanned exchanges among residents. (Manotick)



Figure 24: Sidewalks in a village core contrast the roadway and help define the pedestrian area. (Cumberland)

## 3.2 Streetscape

- 1 Encourage the use of awnings, seasonal plantings and/or signage in storefront design along mainstreets to add visual interest to streetscape. Attachments made to hydro poles shall follow the requirements of affected utility providers.
- 2 Identify opportunities to site, stage or install public art in key locations within the community. Art selection should be done in collaboration with the community.
- 3 Develop lively frontages along mainstreets to support pedestrian activity and enhance ground floor street transparency. Lively, active frontages may be characterised by a human-scale, reduced building setbacks, visible entries, wide sidewalks, highly transparent facades, patios and varied decorative paving. Clearance requirements for at-grade and overhead utility distribution equipment shall be respected.



Figure 25: Use of awnings in the commercial building facing the street. This adds element to the pedestrian realm.



Figure 26: Seasonal hanging baskets and interest to streetscape.



Figure 27: A centralized park has a gazebo, bench that adds interest and invites people in.

# 3 PEDESTRIAN REALM

## Streetscape

- 4 Provide consistent, human-scaled, decorative street lighting along village main streets to create a distinct character, to animate the area and to minimize glare.
- 5 Define community entry points such as major entryway. Entry point features should reflect village character and may include elements such as landscaping, lighting, public art and signage.
- 6 Provide signage made of high-quality, durable materials that complement the architectural surroundings in major intersection and transit stops. Sign illumination should be task-oriented and avoid glare/light spillover toward adjacent land uses.



Figure 28: Consistent street lighting along key streets creates a community identity



Figure 29: A community entryway feature made of stone.



Figure 30: Sign uses high-quality material such as wood showcases its artistic craftsmanship. (Manotick)

## 3.3 Traffic Calming

1 Unless the village core is historically characterized by a variety of street tree plantings, plant deciduous trees in a consistent pattern along both sides of the street in areas with pedestrian traffic. Street trees define the street edge and protect and shade pedestrians. Ensure that tree planting is coordinated with the installation of utility distribution poles.

- 2 Incorporate street additions that have been shown to effectively calm traffic such as curb and median extensions, pedestrian refuges and raised crosswalks in village cores and along main streets.
- 3 Create a safer and more walkable village atmosphere by separating pedestrian from moving vehicles with on-street parking, curbside boulevard street furniture and street trees.



Figure 31: A variety of elements such as on-street parking, boulevards, contrasting paving, bollards, lighting and street trees and signs can be used to identify a pedestrian environment and calm traffic. (Cumberland)



Figure 32: Curb extensions and change of materials at the street intersection in village cores and along main streets support traffic calming.

# 3 PEDESTRIAN REALM

## Traffic Calming

- 4 Consider planting hardy salt tolerant trees within a curbside boulevard or bulb outs that define parking bays to provide vertical separation between pedestrians and vehicles and to visually narrow the Right of Way and maximize traffic calming.
- 5 Ensure the pedestrian and cycling network is continuous and connects to the village core and village destinations. Protect connections that can be filled-in over time as development and redevelopment permits, and ensure existing connections are not closed or disconnected.
- 6 For small commercial lots in the village core, seek reduced parking requirements to facilitate redevelopment. Additionally, look for opportunities to share parking with adjacent land uses.
- 7 Where possible, allocate the utilities together to minimize visual impact. When determining locations for large utility equipment and cluster sites, utility providers are encouraged to consider innovative methods of containing utility services on, or within streetscape features such as gateways, lamp posts and transit shelters.



Figure 33: Trees define the street edge and add shade and biodiversity to the area. (Richmond)



Figure 34: Defined pedestrian crossings provided in the Mainstreet for pedestrian safety. (Manotick)

## 3.4 Natural Features

- 1 Connect and integrate natural areas such as lakes, rivers and wetlands, and stormwater management ponds into the pedestrian and cycling network. Where possible, include opportunities for passive recreation such as hiking trails and seating areas.
- 2 Design and develop trails and pathways to match the aesthetic and function of their surrounding space.
- 3 Retain healthy mature trees, hedgerows and historic forests and incorporate them into development, park space and community designs.



Figure 35: The trail above is not groomed and very naturalized; it matches the aesthetic and function of its forest surrounding. (Greenbelt)



Figure 36: Mature hedgerow is retained and incorporated well into the development. (Manotick)



Figure 37: A stormwater management pond is integrated with pedestrian network. (Manotick)



**IMAGE CREDIT**

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