Design Guidelines for Rural Villages

Purpose and Application

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide design guidance to assess, promote and achieve appropriate 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 Council-approved City policies such as, but not limited to, Secondary Plans, Village Plans, Community Design Plans (CDPs), Neighbourhood Plans and other design guidelines. If a conflict in application arises, where there is more precise or village-specific information as part of an approved City policy, for example, as contained within a CDP, the more detailed information will take precedence over the guidelines. Village community visioning exercises may also provide useful background information to further inform the application of these guidelines. Proponents should be able to demonstrate how their proposal considers the guidelines. The guidelines are not prescriptive; they are flexible to accommodate exceptions and may not all apply equally in all cases.

Official Plan Direction

The Official Plan supports the development of a creative City, rich in heritage and unique in identity. To achieve this Principle, the City shall maintain a distinct countryside and ensure its rural landscapes, Villages and heritage are valued by all. Rural development shall be focused in Villages, and agricultural lands and environmental features shall be preserved. Supporting the continued development of Villages provides residents with better access to community services, and maintains the open space character of rural areas.

For Villages, the Official Plan encourages the development of various land uses and emphasizes the importance of preserving their traditional functions for the continued vitality of rural areas.

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

Context and Issues

Villages have their own planning and development issues, specific to their community pressures, needs and values. These guidelines, although general, 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.

Design Guidelines

The design guidelines for Villages are organized into the following sections:

Community Layout and Design

Guideline 1:
Define community entry points such as major entranceways. Entry point features should reflect village character and may include elements such as landscaping, lighting, public art and signage.

Guideline 2:
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.

Guideline 3:
Avoid the development of looping, circuitous, 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 multiple pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular connections to adjacent and future development.

Guideline 4:
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.

Guideline 5:
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.

Guideline 6:
Develop of 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.

Guideline 7:
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 discouraged.

Guideline 8:
Focus multi-unit residential housing in, or very close to, 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 favour of developing multi-unit residential housing. Vacant lots or underutilized buildings may offer good opportunities for residential infill or residential conversion.

Guideline 9:
Provide direct pedestrian connections between adjacent uses within villages to ensure safe and convenient pedestrian movement.

Guideline 10:
Ensure prominent buildings, open spaces, public art and/or other attractive features are developed at highly visible locations. Highly visible locations are 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.

Guideline 11:
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.

Figure 1: A community entry feature is made of grey stone, which references a historic local landmark, the Mill, and creates a sense of arrival (Manotick).

Figure 2: A cenotaph connects a community to its past and may also serve as a way to define a village entry point (Vars).

Figure 3: The design of a home takes advantage of an existing, natural change in grade (Kars).

Figure 4: An aerial view shows a modified grid pattern of roads with vistas that terminate onto Port Fitzroy (Fitzroy Harbour).

Figure 5: Two semi-detached houses avoid a "cookie cutter" look by having varied designs. The designs also integrate well with the detached homes along the block (Ottawa).

Figure 6: The design of a dwelling successfully balances a familiar village architectural form while still using modern materials (North Gower).

Figure 7: Businesses and services are in close proximity to residential uses in the village core (Manotick).

Figure 10: Sidewalks along a village mainstreet allow pedestrians and young cyclists to travel safely (North Gower).

Figure 8: Centrally located community facilities can function as community gathering places and allow users who live nearby to walk (Osgoode).

Figure 11: Sidewalks along both sides of a mainstreet facilitates pedestrian movement and encourages unplanned exchanges among residents (Richmond).

Figure 9: A heritage building provides multi-unit housing in the village core. Having a range of residential densities close to amenities and services provides choice and convenience for village residents (Richmond).

Figure 12: A fire station is a prominent civic building on a visible corner (Richmond).

Heritage and Architecture

Guideline 12:
Identify, preserve and/ or revitalize community landmarks, focal points and vistas to support village identity and a 'sense of place'.

Guideline 13:
Preserve and enhance historic resources such as heritage buildings and structures.

Guideline 14:
Refer to historic buildings in the village for architectural cues, as redevelopment occurs. Acknowledging the historic context of the village facilitates the integration of new development among existing buildings.

Guideline 15:
Adapt old buildings 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.

Guideline 16:
Adapt closed schools and churches for new purposes such as specialty schools, libraries, day cares, community centres, youth centres and recreational centres. Closed schools and churches that are structurally appropriate, safe and have the capacity for modification may be good candidates for adaptive reuse.

Guideline 17:
Ensure alterations, additions and renovations made to historical buildings complement the scale and character of the original.

Guideline 18:
Consider using a historic palate with complimentary colours for new buildings 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.

Figure 13: Carp Memorial Hall at a mainstreet intersection creates a distinct vista (Carp).

Figure 14: Preserving important views and iconic cultural landscapes, such as a historic bridge, contributes to a unique community identity (Galetta).

Figure 15: Although not the case with all historic resources to be preserved, the house has been designated by the Ontario Heritage Act and dates back to the mid-1800s (Munster).

Figure 16: A historic church has a place of prominence, located at the end of a main thoroughfare (Burritt's Rapids).

Figure 17: The dwelling has a distinctive roofline, front porch and masonry. Historic buildings can inspire new designs that complement the form, massing and materials of past architectural styles (Cumberland).

Figure 18: Architectural features such as a door transom, lintels, window muntins, quoins and materials show the character and history of this former town hall, from in 1876 (North Gower).

Figure 22: A former church built in 1886 currently operates as a public library (Munster).

Figure 19: A civic building, over 100 years old, is a former Town Hall and now operates as a municipal office (Metcalfe).

Figure 23: A commercial addition uses the same materials, colours and trims to complement original building (Carp).

Figure 20: A historic building in the village core operates as a pub and eatery (Carp).

Figure 24: An innovative residential connection bridges an old building with a new building using complimentary colours and durable materials (Manotick).

Figure 21: Former schools offer redevelopment opportunities that reduce sprawl, reduce land acquisition and construction costs, revitalize villages and create valuable community resources (Sarsfield).

Built Form

Guideline 19:
Reduce the environmental footprint of buildings by meeting or exceeding environmental and energy efficiency rating standards*, incorporating renewable or alternative energy systems, maximizing indoor water efficiency, retaining stormwater on site, reducing the use of potable water for irrigation, and reducing resource consumption.

Guideline 20:
Ensure new buildings are compatible with adjacent development by using a common scale, massing and height to complement the existing context. New buildings, including gas stations, should respond to the village context.

Guideline 21:
In rare cases where new development is significantly taller than adjacent development, create transitions using built form. Maintain a lower building profile along the street and set back the upper storeys, away from the existing buildings.

Guideline 22:
Avoid developing buildings with blank facades along public rights-of-way. New buildings 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.

Guideline 23:
Orient buildings to frame the street. Primary façades should parallel the street and entries should be clearly visible and connect to the public sidewalk.

Guideline 24:
Unless the village core is historically characterized by a wide variety of setbacks, align new building facades to create a visually continuous streetscape.

Guideline 25:
Ensure buildings on corner sites have facades that address both streets to define the public space. Front and side building elevations at these locations should incorporate enhanced design, features and architecture.

Guideline 26:
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.

Guideline 27:
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 25: Photovoltaic solar panels, on-site rainwater collection and natural ventilation are just some of the sustainable features incorporated in Minto's eco-home (Manotick).
*Examples of green building and energy rating standards include LEED Canada for Homes, Energy Star or R2000 construction.

Figure 26: Installation of a geothermal ground loop system shows the pipes that, with the aid of an indoor pump, will move heat into or out of the earth to heat or cool a home (installation for a home near Munster).

Figure 27: A new home (left) uses a similar roof pitch, massing, height and colour to achieve compatibility with the neighbouring stone heritage building (Fallowfield).

Figure 28: A wrap-around porch on a heritage building visually divides the front façade (North Gower).

Figure 29: A historic church is visually divided into three segments, which reduces its perceived mass (near Vars).

Figure 30: A residential building is oriented along a mainstreet and provides a direct pedestrian connection to the sidewalk. A comfortable setback is also featured (Richmond).

Figure 31: A historic building on a corner site helps define the public space by having reduced setbacks, windows, doors and various trims on both streets to create visual interest (Manotick).

Figure 32: Laneway (left) provides access to rear parking for housing along the mainstreet in a village core (Metcalfe).

Figure 33: A centralized park has a gazebo, bench, bridge and themed lighting that adds interest and invites people in (Metcalfe).

Streetscape

Guideline 28:
Develop lively frontages along mainstreets to support pedestrian activity. 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.

Guideline 29:
Where possible, cluster 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.

Guideline 30:
Develop generous sidewalks on both sides of the streets for mainstreets, village cores and areas with high pedestrian traffic (for example, near schools) to promote walkability. Sidewalks on both sides of the street facilitate safe, easy and convenient pedestrian travel to community amenities. Sidewalks should be wide enough to accommodate maintenance vehicles and snow storage.

Guideline 31:
Develop crosswalks along mainstreets to have contrasting paving or impressed concrete to make them visually different from the street.

Guideline 32:
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.

Guideline 33:
Ensure signage is made of high-quality, durable materials that complement the architectural surroundings. Sign illumination should be task-oriented and avoid glare/light spillover toward adjacent land uses.

Guideline 34:
Provide consistent, human-scaled, decorative street lighting along village mainstreets to create a distinct character, to animate the area and to minimize glare.

Guideline 35:
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. Consider planting trees behind sidewalks, away from the road edge, to increase the tree's chance of survival. Ensure that tree planting is coordinated with the installation of utility distribution poles.

Guideline 36:
In consultation with the community, incorporate traffic calming measures such as curb and median extensions, pedestrian refuges and raised crosswalks in village cores and along main streets.

Guideline 37:
Consider providing on-street parking along mainstreets and/or in the village core to calm traffic, lower vehicle speeds and create a more walkable village atmosphere.

Guideline 38:
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.

Guideline 39:
Plant landscaped buffers for parking lots that are adjacent to, or visible from, public rights-of-way.

Figure 34: Human-scale architecture, wide sidewalks and a mix of land uses help create an active streetscape (Ottawa).

Figure 35: Crosswalks and sidewalks in a village core contrast the roadway and help define the pedestrian area (Vars).

Figure 36: Seasonal hanging baskets add interest to the streetscape (Kars).

Figure 37: Awnings and a planter enhance a residential building façade (Constance Bay).

Figure 38: Storefront signage uses durable materials and is mounted within the façade's architectural signage band (Manotick).

Figure 39: A monument, ground mounted sign uses high-quality materials such as stone and wood, and showcases its artistic craftsmanship (Ashton).

Open Space

Guideline 40:
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.

Guideline 41:
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.

Guideline 42:
Design trails and pathways to match the aesthetic and function of their surrounding space.

Guideline 43:
Retain healthy mature trees, hedgerows and historic forests and incorporate them into development, park space and community designs.

Figure 40: Consistent street lighting and banners along key streets creates a community identity (Cumberland).

Figure 43: Trees define the street edge and add shade and biodiversity to the area (Richmond).

Figure 41: Consistent street lighting creates a distinct streetscape and seasonal banners communicate a village message (Manotick).

Figure 44: A variety of elements such as on-street parking, boulevards, contrasting paving, bollards, lighting and street trees can be used to identify a pedestrian environment and calm traffic (Brockville).

Figure 42: Trees define one side of a road, provide visual interest and enclose a park space (North Gower).

Figure 45: On-street parking creates a sense of enclosure for pedestrians and may off-set site parking requirements (Manotick).

Figure 48: The pathway is manicured and well maintained, which supports its function as a direct connection and mailbox access (Fallowfield).

Figure 46: A wastewater treatment lagoon, close to a village downtown, has been converted into a conservation area and bird sanctuary (Richmond).

Figure 49: A neighbourhood park incorporates existing trees, which enhances it considerably, provides shade and divides fields (Kars).

Figure 47: The trail above is not groomed and very naturalized; it matches the aesthetic and function of its forest surroundings. This trail makes use of open spaces and provides recreational opportunities in a rural area (Greenbelt).

Figure 50: A healthy village tree stand is preserved (Manotick).

Definition

Villages are people-oriented communities in rural areas that can support a mix of land uses. They are relatively low in density and small in scale and may have an eclectic mix of built form, scale and architecture. Villages vary in size, and range from being small clusters of houses, to communities with active village cores. Village residents often feel a strong sense of community and a strong connection to the natural environment. There are 26 Villages identified in the Official Plan:

1. Ashton
2. Burritt's Rapids
3. Carlsbad Springs
4. Carp
5. Constance Bay
6. Cumberland
7. Dunrobin
8. Fallowfield
9. Fitzroy Harbour
10. Galetta
11. Greely
12. Kars
13. Kenmore
14. Kinburn
15. Manotick
16. Marionville
17. Metcalfe
18. Munster
19. Navan
20. North Gower
21. Notre-Dame-des-Champs
22. Osgoode
23. Richmond
24. Sarsfield
25. Vars
26. Vernon

Glossary

Adaptive reuse: the rehabilitation of buildings for new purposes

Awning: a canvas covering that provides shelter and is attached to an exterior wall, over a window or door

Biodiversity: the abundance of different plant and/or animal species found in an environment

Bollard: a strong, vertical post

Character: a unique, identifiable physical form associated with buildings and/or villages

Compatible / Compatibility: when the density, form, bulk, height, setbacks, and/or materials of buildings are similar relative able to co-exist with to their surroundings. 'Compatible' does not mean 'the same as.'

Eclectic: design elements from multiple sources, styles, dates and influences

Entry point: a main point of entrance into a community and a good location for a feature

Façade: the principal face of a building (also referred to as the front wall)

Frame: structures aligned to enclose or define a space

Heritage: buildings, structures, sites, landscapes, areas and environments of historic, architectural, contextual, cultural and/or natural interest, which are or should be conserved for the benefit of the community and posterity

Human scale: a size of a building or space that a human perceives as not dominating or overpowering

Identity: unique tangible or intangible traits that make a village definable or recognizable, and that distinguishes it from others

Infrastructure: physical structures (facilities and corridors) that form the foundation for development. Infrastructure includes: sewage and water systems, septage treatment systems, waster management systems, electrical power generation and transmission, communications /telecommunications, transit and transportation corridors and facilities, and oil and gas pipelines and associated features

Landform: a natural landscape feature such as mounds, hills, cliffs, caves, valleys, beaches, marshes, lagoons, lakes

Landmark: elements that create distinct visual orientation points, and provide a sense of location

Lintel: a structural or decorative horizontal element over a door or window

Low-density development: having a low concentration of housing units, typically single and semi-detached dwellings, in a specific area

Massing: the perception a building's external shape or form

Modified Grid: a network of roads in a grid pattern, modified to incorporate curves to address topography and/or existing development constraints

Monotonous: tediously repetitive, boring or lacking variation

Muntin: a strip of medal or wood separating windowpanes

Natural areas: physically tangible elements of the environment including wetlands, forests, ravines, rivers, valleys and associated wildlife habitats

Passive recreation: recreational activities that take advantage of the existing, natural environment such as hiking, horseback riding, cross country skiing, bird watching, etc.

Prominent building: a conspicuous building in a place of importance or high visibility

Quoin: a dressed stone that forms the external corner of a building

Revitalize: to restore new life or energy to an area

Rhythm: a visual repetitiveness of architectural elements to establish a pattern

Scale: the size of a building or an architectural feature in relation to its surroundings and to the size of a person

Sense of Place: a component of 'village identity,' is an individual's perception or response to the built and/or natural environment

Setback: the required distance from a road, property line, or another structure, within which no building can be located

Sidewalk: unobstructed concrete or paved area for pedestrian travel in the public right-of-way

Streetscape: the overall character and appearance of a street formed by buildings and landscape features that frame the public street. Includes building façades, street trees, plants, lighting, street furniture, paving, etc.

Traffic calming: physical measures designed to slow traffic and improve the pedestrian environment

Transom: a glassed opening installed over a door or window

Utilities: a public body or private corporation, together with their associated physical infrastructure, that provides services to the public, such as hydro, natural gas, communications / telecommunication, cable and sewer and water

Village core: the historic settlement of a village, the heart, social centre and the focus of economic activity. An important area to highlight or intensify at key intersections and gateways.

Visual harmony: elements of design that visually unify or make compatible

Vista: refers to what can be seen from a particular location, such as a significant building and/or landscape feature

Walkability: the extent to which the environment supports an ease of walking