

## 9.6 Commercial Features

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### 9.6.1 signage design

Signage is one of the most constantly changing aspects within the District. It is a means by which businesses, government and individuals are able to convey a message.

Signs are not a modern phenomenon, and early photographs of Main Street show signs on many of the stores. Most were painted by the local sign painter and were generally wood signs with plain or three dimensional lettering.

Trends in modern signage tend to be bigger, brighter and more obtrusive to get people's attention. Within a heritage conservation district, the heritage atmosphere itself attracts attention, and as such is a virtual sign.

In order to maintain the unique environment, it is important that commercial signage be more reflective of the traditional Unionville signage, and complement both the building and the streetscape. In this regard, the number of signs should be kept to a minimum and those signs that detract from heritage buildings should be removed or modified. Encouragement should be given for businesses to recreate older, individual and distinctive, traditional signs.

#### Guidelines

##### Sign By-law

1. All signage will be subject to the Special Sign District provisions detailed in Section 11 of the Town of Markham Sign By-law.

##### Sign Placement:

2. Signs should not block architectural features such as windows and ornamentation and should be attached such as to do the least amount of damage to the facade.

3. Buildings and business external identification signs should be limited to the traditional location above the storefront.

##### Sign Design:

4. Traditional materials such as wood, brass or bronze should be used.

5. Letter styles appropriate to the period of the structure will be encouraged. Historically - appropriate letter styles such as Roman, Calarendon, Egyptian and sans serif styles will be encouraged. Typeface or lettering should project the image of the particular business, reflect the building itself and harmonize with the style of the structure

6. Capital letters are generally more legible than lower case letters. The total message, including letter forms and designs, should generally not occupy more than two-thirds of the total sign area.

7. Fluorescent or very bright colours are not considered appropriate. The heritage palette of colours described in Section 9.4.7 are recommended. Uncomplicated colour schemes are also preferred.

## 9.6 Commercial Features

### 9.6.1 signage design, continued

8. Symbols are often more recognisable than lettering and good design often includes both.

#### **Sign Types**

9. The following signs are permitted in the District subject to the provisions of the Town of Markham's Sign By-law: canopy sign, ground sign, projecting sign, soffit sign, wall sign, directory sign and window sign.

10. The following signs are not permitted in the District: animated sign, billboard, internally illuminated sign, neon sign, portable sign, roof sign, sign painted directly onto a wall surface, strings of lights (except Statutory Holiday decorations) and temporary signs such as banners, spinners, pennants and streamers.

11. Inappropriate decorative signs such as broken pediment heads will be discouraged.

#### **Number of Signs:**

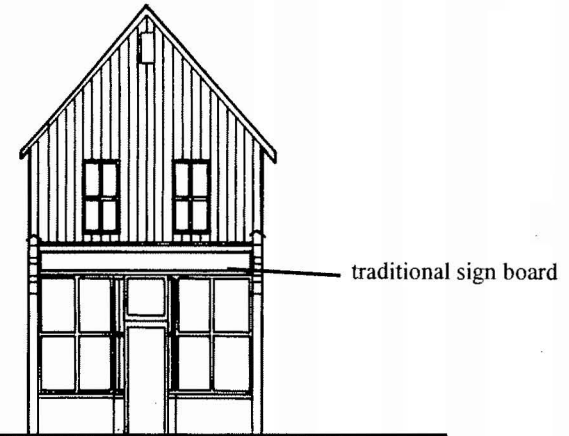
12. The number of signs permitted per premise is detailed in the Sign By-law (Special Sign Districts).

#### **Sign Illumination:**

13. Internally illuminated signs are not allowed in the District.

14. Sign illumination should be achieved using external means of illumination.

15. Owners of internally illuminated signs will be encouraged to replace them.



Too many signs located randomly over a facade can destroy visual harmony.  
Locate signs in traditional facia above the storefront.



On residential buildings that have been converted to commercial uses, care should be taken that the signage not detract from the original character of the building

## 9.6 Commercial Features

### 9.6.1 signage design, continued



Examples of Historic Unionville Signage

## 9.6 Commercial Features

### 9.6.1 signage design, continued

The following types of signs should be avoided in the District:

- Internally illuminated signs
- Neon signs
- Bubble Awning signs
- Signs painted on walls
- Round hood awning signs
- Plastic or Vinyl signs

The following are among the types of signs which are generally acceptable in the District (subject to compliance with the Town Sign By-law).

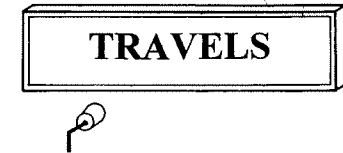
- Externally illuminated wooden signs (overhead or ground lights)
- Traditional retractable canvas awnings with signage at end of awnings;
- Triangular canvas awnings that closely resemble traditional awnings;



**Not Appropriate:** internally illuminated



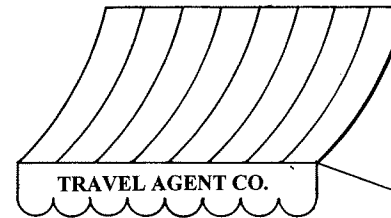
**Appropriate:** Externally illuminated (from above)



**Appropriate:** Externally illuminated (from below)



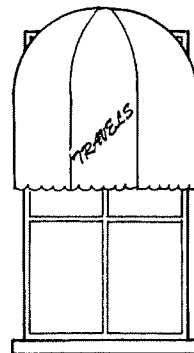
**Not Appropriate:** Vinyl Bubble Awning (illuminated and non-illuminated)



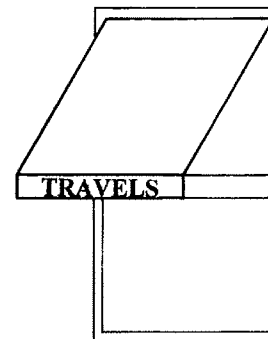
**Appropriate:** Retractable canvas awning



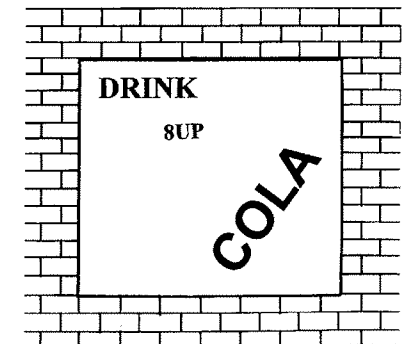
**Not Appropriate:** Neon Sign



**Not Appropriate:** Round window awning sign.



**Appropriate:** Triangular awning which resembles retractable awning with discrete signage



**Not Appropriate:** Signs painted on walls

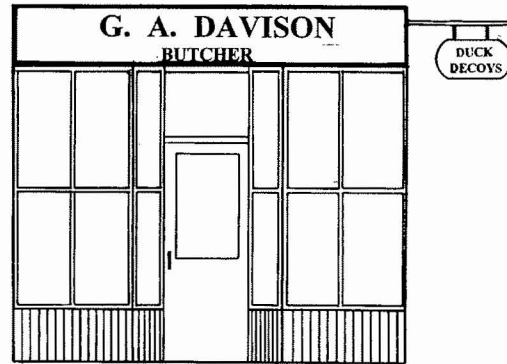
## 9.6 Commercial Features

### 9.6.2 storefront design

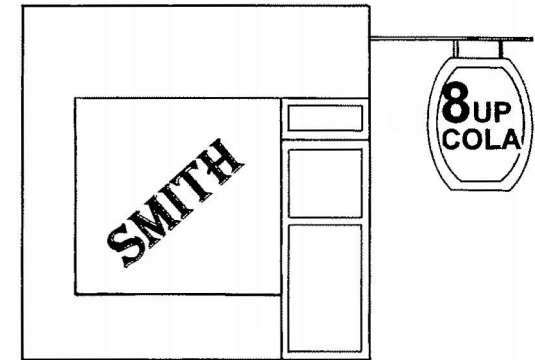
Storefronts, including the upper storey windows of the commercial buildings, are an integral part of the character of the streetscape. Historic storefronts generally consist of large divided glass windows on either side of a central, recessed entry. Upper facades traditionally present a more typical rectangular window form.

#### Guidelines

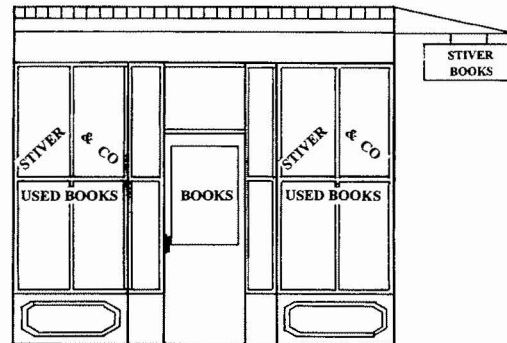
1. Physically sound historical storefronts, compatible with the District character should be maintained and restored rather than replaced.
2. Storefronts which do not harmonise with the heritage character of the area should be improved to be more compatible with the District.
3. Historic photographs should be used as the basis for storefront design and/or restoration in Unionville.



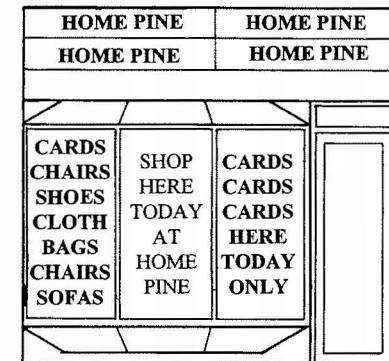
**Appropriate:** Traditional storefront and signage



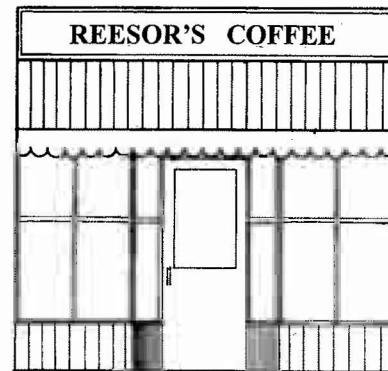
**Not Appropriate:** Non-traditional storefront and signage



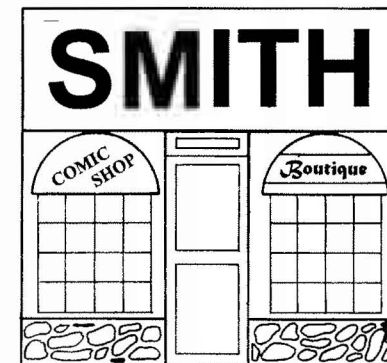
**Appropriate:** Traditional, subtle gold leaf window sign.



**Not Appropriate:** Excessive window signage



**Appropriate:** Traditional awning and signage



**Not Appropriate:** Excessive signage, inappropriate awnings and storefront decoration.

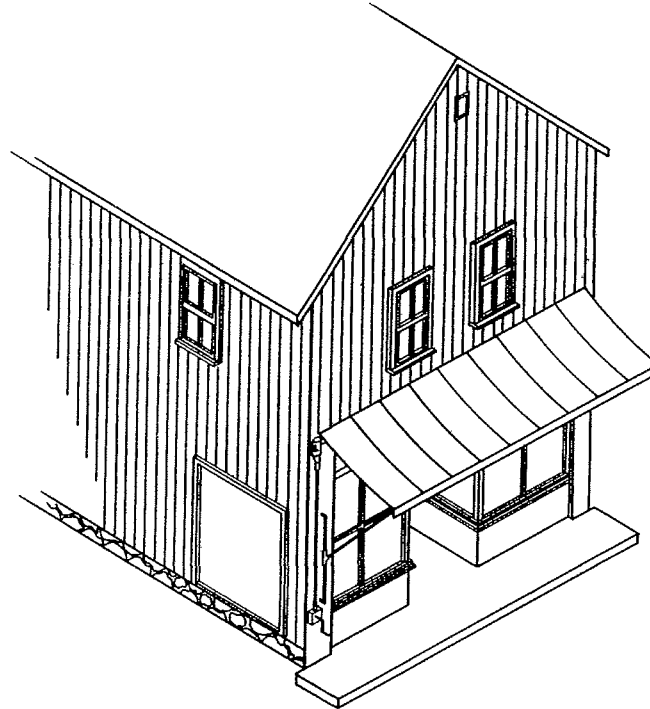
## 9.6 Commercial Features

### 9.6.3 awnings

On commercial buildings, traditional canvas awnings are only appropriate where the proportion and design of the buildings lend themselves to that kind of detail. In the example at right, the awning fits well over the storefront, is compatible with the building's proportions and design, and responds to the historical context of Unionville.

#### Guidelines

1. Where appropriate, traditional canvas awnings may be acceptable on commercial buildings.
2. On new buildings, awnings should complement the design as well as relate to the historical context surrounding it. The retractable, canvas awning commonly used in the heritage area, is most appropriate.
3. Modern awning designs such as semi-circular, bubble and cascade, of non traditional materials such as vinyl, are not considered appropriate in the District.



**Appropriate:** historic, retractable, canvas storefront awning

## 9.6 Commercial Features

### 9.6.4 commercial patios

Successful commercial patios can greatly contribute to the character of the street. Care should be taken, however, in their design to ensure that they complement and not detract from the street in terms of visual appearance and interaction with the surrounding environment.

Commercial patios which serve alcohol, are by law required to be separated from the street. A key way of integrating the patio into the street is through the use of traditional landscape features such as a wood picket fence to serve as its boundary. Similarly, furniture, awnings, umbrellas and landscape treatment should all be compatible with the character of the street and should comply with the spirit of the District Plan.

#### Guidelines

1. Commercial patios are required to comply with the Town of Markham Commercial Patio By-law.
2. All patios should reflect and enhance the existing Unionville streetscape. Features such as wood picket fences and furniture that is compatible with the Heritage District is encouraged.
3. Commercial rooftop patios are not appropriate for the District.



Commercial patio which fits into the Heritage District context with wood picket fence, subtle but effective signage and compatible furniture and landscaping.

## 9.7 Landscape Features

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### 9.7.1 heritage landscape treatment

The landscape treatment on private property visible from the street can do a great deal to help express the character of a heritage area. For example, large expanses of neatly mowed lawns are more expressive of a modern subdivision than an older village area. The landscape of the property should be in harmony with the historical period of the building. A historical landscape treatment can also be used in conjunction with newer buildings to complement the heritage environment.

Typical Landscape Treatment for Pre-confederation Homes (pre 1860's)

#### General Form

- generally in rural areas, highly stylized gardening efforts were not widespread. Most planting was very utilitarian with little effort towards elaborate gardens or displays
- hedgerows often lined the carriage lane and often a grove of deciduous or coniferous trees would be planted around the homestead as a windbreak
- Large expanses of open grass were not common during this period. There were no lawnmowers and small lawns in front of the home were cut with scythes
- design focus of the front yard was placed on simple geometrical placement of trees and shrubs
- alignment of fencing and walkways were laid out in a straight rectilinear manner
- plantings were typically arranged in straight lines. There was little bedding out or ornamental displays

- before the 1850's, there was an absence of any foundation planting, but after the 1850's owners began to cover their foundations usually with shrubs
- Andrew Jackson Downing's theoretical approach to rural landscape during this period influenced homeowners in both Canada and the U.S. Downing was a proponent of the picturesque in both building form and the associated landscaping. He advocated a "house with feeling" through the incorporation of trellis, climbing plants and small floral bedding out

#### Fences

- fencing was largely used for utilitarian and not aesthetic purposes
- often front yards or frontage would be enclosed
- wooden picket fencing was common in Markham

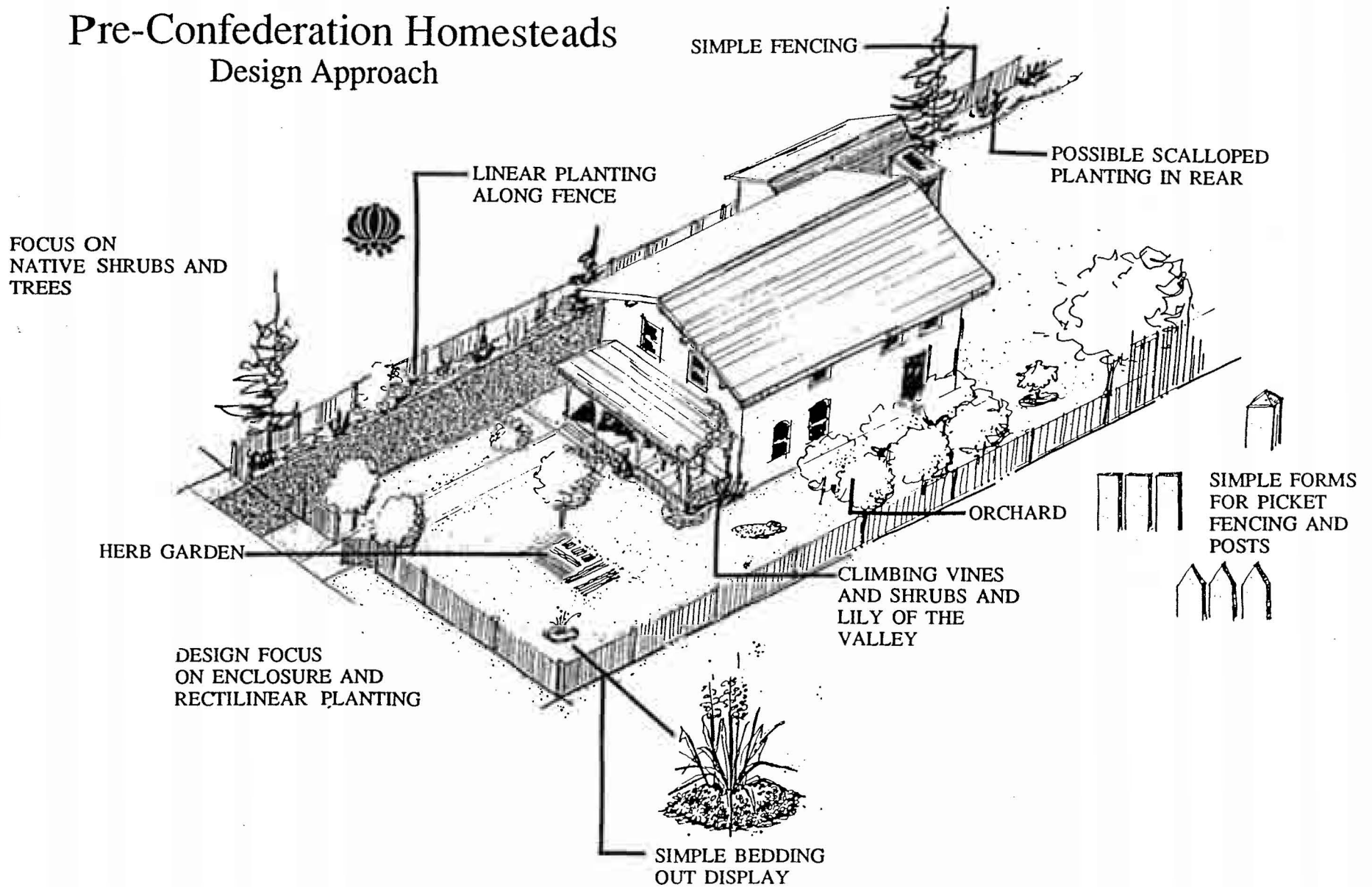
#### Ground Plantings

- plants commonly used in gardens were rhubarb, asparagus, strawberries and most common vegetables
- ground covers included ferns, lily of the valley, day lilies
- flower bed would have contained hollyhocks, peonies, sweet william and irises
- climbing shrubs and vines included clematis, roses and wisteria



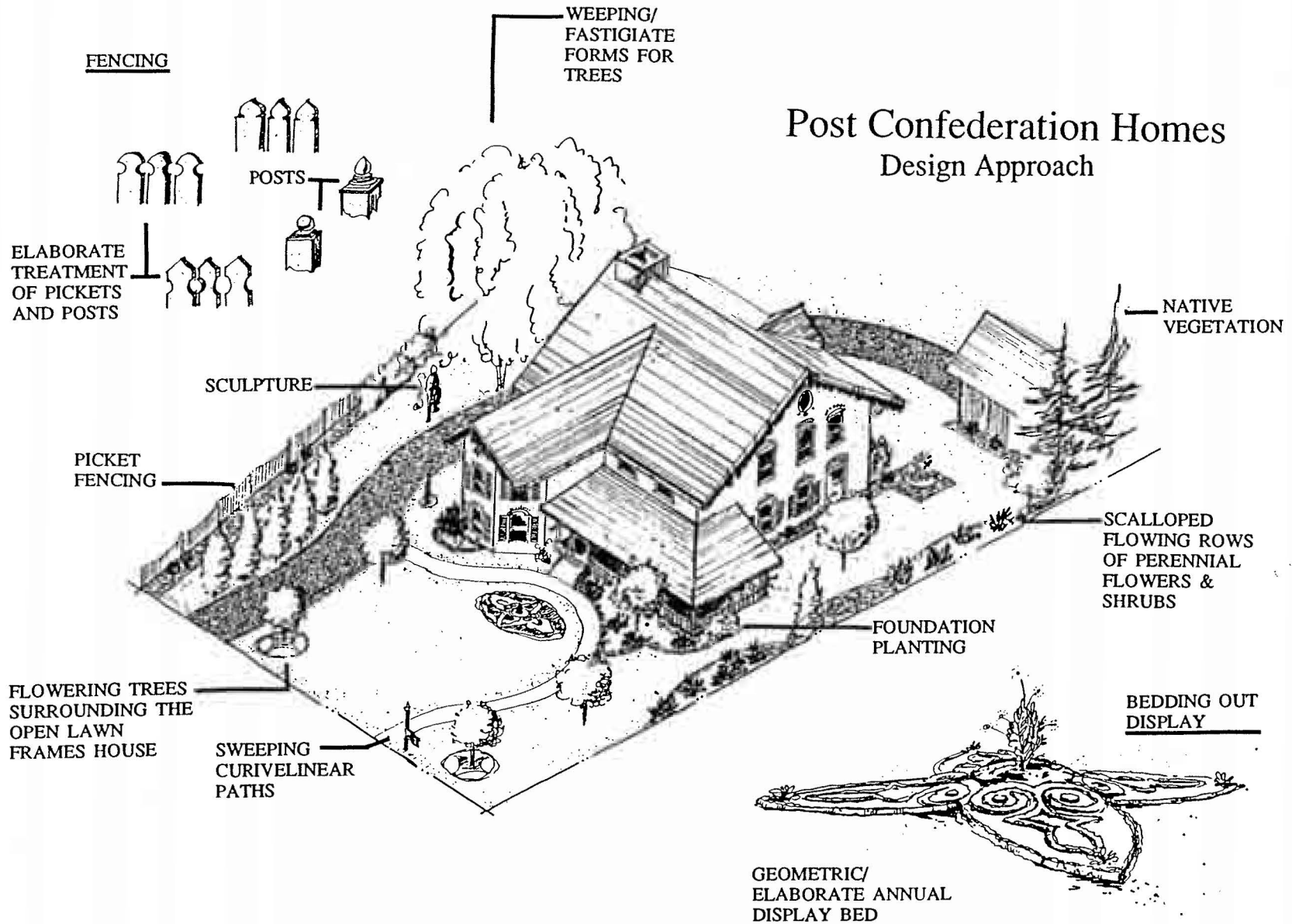
# 9.7 Landscape Features

## Pre-Confederation Homesteads Design Approach



Pre-Confederation Design Approach to Landscaping

# 9.7 Landscape Features



Post-Confederation Design Approach to Landscaping

## 9.7 Landscape Features

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### Trees and shrubs

- native trees were common as they were readily available to transplant
- conifers would typically include spruce, cedar and pine but one single species would be used and not a mixture (same holds true for deciduous)
- deciduous trees included native maples, basswoods, oak, elm, beech, ash and cherry
- fruit trees and small orchards were common and included individual or small groves of apple, pear or cherry
- shrubs such as raspberries, currants and quinces were common as they could be used for jam making. Other popular shrubs were roses and lilacs.

### Typical Landscape Treatment for Post Confederation Houses (1860-1900)

#### General Form

- landscape treatment in this period was concerned with the creation of open space lawn areas with broad sweeping vistas, flowing naturalistic curves and planting in drifts of colour versus straight lines
- larger lawns also become fashionable with the invention of the lawn mower
- the North American leading theorist with respect to land-



Georgian House and Landscape, 145 Main Street, c.1900



Italianate House and Landscape, 141 Main Street, c.1900

## 9.7 Landscape Features

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scaping the Victorian and 'suburban' home was Frank J. Scott. In his book, the "Art of Beautifying the Home Grounds" he suggests that plants, walls or hills should not obscure the view of the house. Rather, decorative planting was the art of picture making and picture framing. Therefore, landscaping became part of the visual composition associated with the house

- utility gardens and orchards moved to the rear yards
- expanded trade from places like China introduced many oriental plants, trees and shrubs
- weeping plants; plants with large, coarse leaves; and plants with exaggerated forms were also popular. These plants were often located along the edge of the fenced lot with some feature planting on the front lawn or the approach road
- foundation planting of flowering shrubs helped to hide higher foundations made necessary by the introduction of central heating and basement furnaces
- gardens of individual of lesser means did not feature fountains or ornate carpet bedding, but would have had simple round beds on either side of the front walk or in the centre of a side lawn.

### Fences

- if a fence was used, it was usually more elaborate in design
- wooden picket fencing was still common in Markham



Late Victorian House and Landscape, 111 Main Street, c.1910



Edwardian House and Landscape, 202 Main Street, c.1910

## 9.7 Landscape Features

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### Ground Plantings

- showy plants with bold leaves were popular such as cannas, castor bean, phlox, hens and chicken plants, zinnias and other showy plants
- vines and climbing shrubs at the front and sides of houses were common often utilizing a trellis

### Trees/ shrubs

- trees with new and interesting leaf patterns were popular including weeping forms such as lombardy poplars, weeping beech, mulberry, willow and birch
- other trees included horse chestnut, Japanese angelica trees, hornbeam
- shrubs included Japanese maples, barberries, smoke tree and Russian olive

### **Guidelines**

1. All property owners are encouraged to introduce a heritage landscape treatment to further enhance the character of the District.
2. Owners of heritage buildings should also review section 9.4.10.1



Traditional Unionville Picket Fence Features, Main Street Unionville, c. 1900



Traditional Unionville picket fence feature reintroduced, 143 Main Street, 1997

## 9.7 Landscape Features

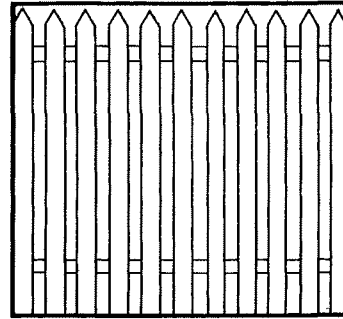
### 9.7.2.1 front yard fencing - appropriate

Front yard fences are traditional landscape features found in the District. Picket fences were used frequently in historical Unionville and while there are different varieties, only a few are common to the area. Low, cast iron fencing, was also found in Unionville, although considerably rarer.

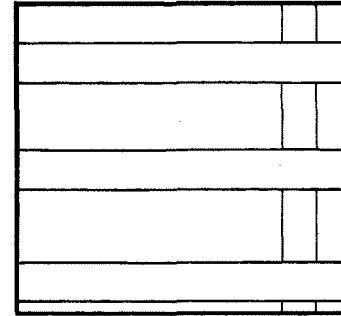
In all cases, it is encouraged that fencing be sensitive to the heritage character of the District.

#### Guidelines

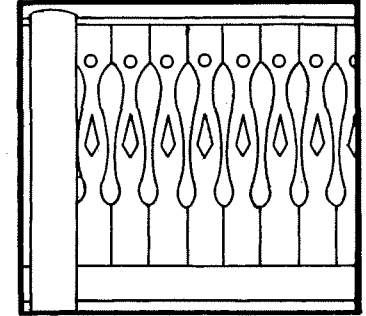
1. Traditional wood picket fences (3 ft. high) are encouraged as a front yard landscaping treatment in the District.
2. Low, cast iron fences (less than 2 ft.) are appropriate for landscape bed border treatment.
3. Where historic fences or hedges exist, they should be retained.



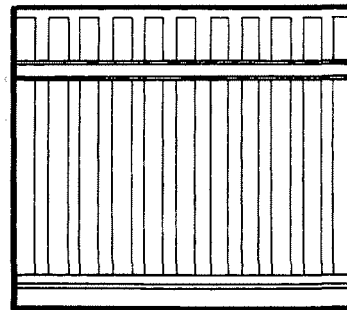
**Appropriate:** pointed picket



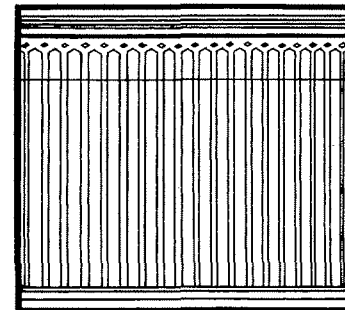
**Appropriate:** open horizontal



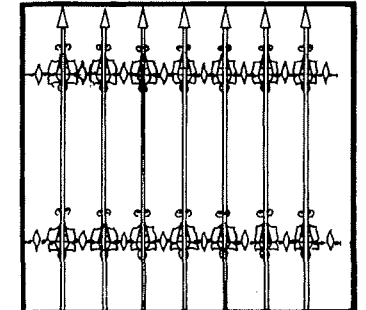
**Appropriate:** decorative picket, turn of the century



**Appropriate:** plain picket



**Appropriate:** sturdy decorative

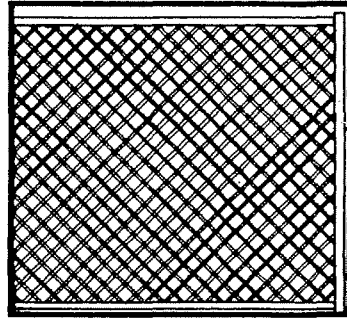


**Appropriate:** low, cast iron

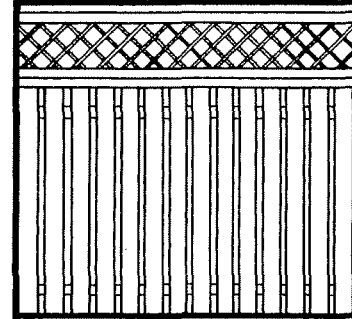
## 9.7 Landscape Features

### 9.7.2.2 front yard fencing - inappropriate

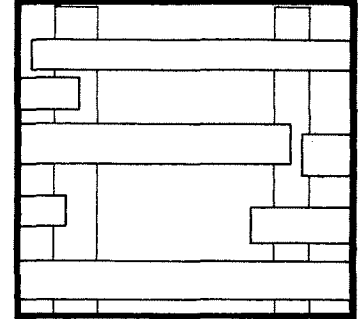
While traditional wood picket fencing is encouraged in the District, the examples of modern fencing at right are not compatible with the Heritage District context and should be avoided.



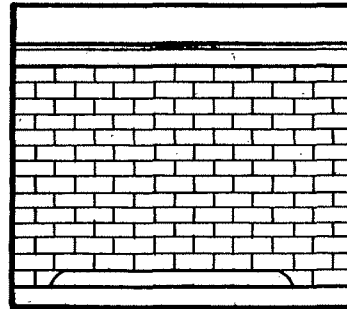
**Inappropriate:** chain link



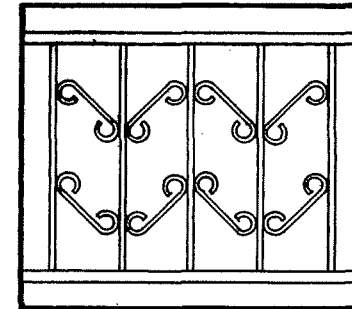
**Inappropriate:** pressure treated wood



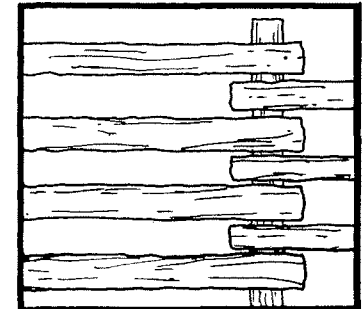
**Inappropriate:** abstract fence



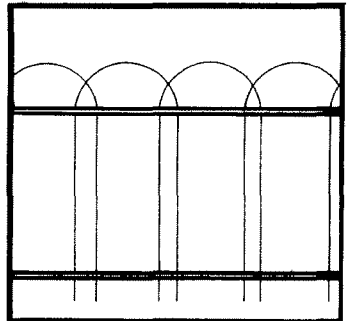
**Inappropriate:** brick or stone walls



**Inappropriate:** wrought iron



**Inappropriate:** cedar rail



**Inappropriate:** wire

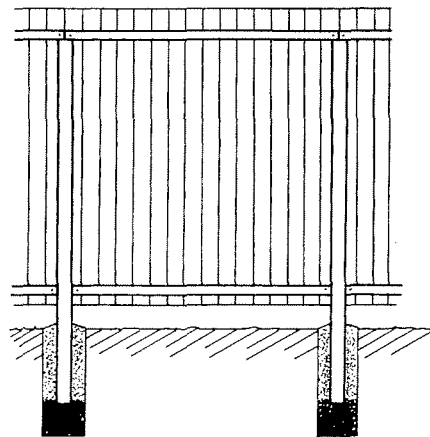
## 9.7 Landscape Features

### 9.7.3 backyard fences

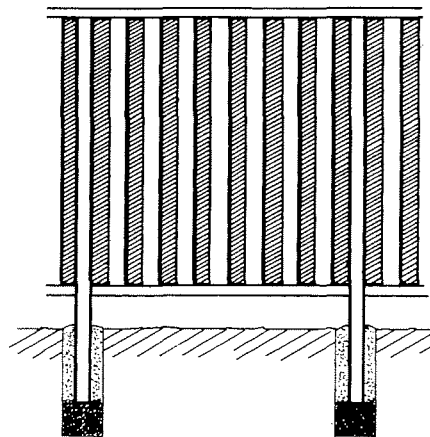
As a result of the historic lot plan of Unionville, it is often the case that rear yard fencing runs along the street, and is visible. In these cases in particular, special attention should be paid to ensuring that the fencing treatment is compatible with the Heritage District context. The general rule that simplicity is preferred should apply with regard to rear yard fencing in the District.

#### Guidelines

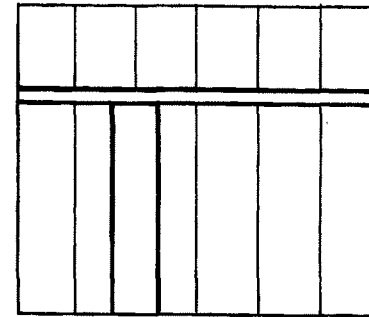
1. Wooden fences are preferred in the District. A straight board fence or a board on board fence are appropriate styles.
2. Where historic fences or hedges exist, they should be retained.



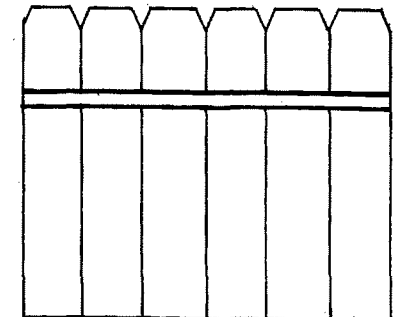
1.



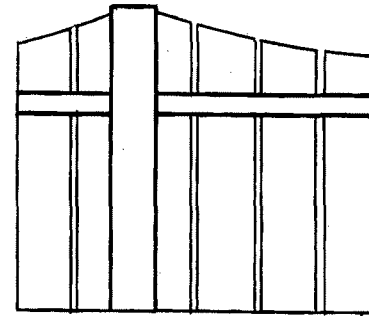
2.



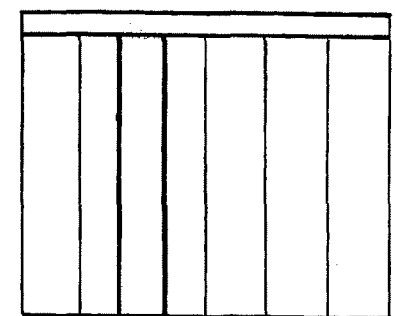
Clean straight fence top



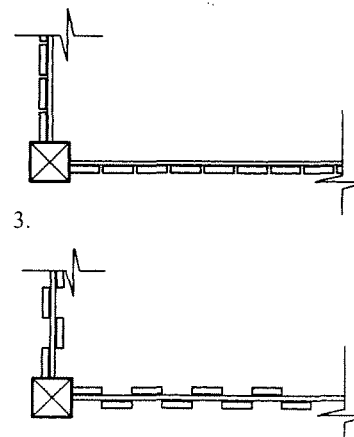
Dog-eared fence top



Beveled fence top (shallow curve only)



Fence top flush with stringer



4.

1. **Far left:** Straight board fence with regular placement of boards, showing ground connection.

2. **Second from left:** Board-on-board fence showing alternating placement of boards and ground connection.

3. **Top:** plan of straight board fence, corresponding to fence section at far left.

4. **Bottom:** plan of board on board fence corresponding to fence section second from left.



## 9.7 Landscape Features

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Main Street public landscape, looking north towards the Congregational Church and Queen's Hotel, c. 1900