

VILLAGE OF BELLPORT HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

BELLPORT LANE HISTORIC DISTRICT GUIDELINES

**Bellport Historic Preservation Commission
Incorporated Village of Bellport
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Bellport, New York 11713
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1 BELLPORT LANE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Twenty thousand years ago the next-to-last advance of the continental ice sheet left behind a terminal moraine that can be traced as a string of hills and bluffs extending through Block Island, Montauk Point, the hills of central Long Island, across the Narrows, and on into New Jersey. The outwash plain from this moraine forms much of the southern half of Long Island, a very flat, smooth, sandy region sloping slowly into the Great South Bay. Howell's Point and Fireplace Neck are typical examples of this outwash region. It takes a mile or more from the shoreline for the land elevation to reach 20 feet above sea level. Bellport Lane, however, is built on one of the rare bluffs in this outwash region. For most of its length, the Lane is 20 or more feet above sea level, dipping down to the water only in its last few hundred feet. This very noticeable slope is replicated at the west end of Shore Road and at the south end of Brown's Lane. The topography of the Lane is important since it contributes strongly to the Lane's character and uniqueness.

Since it was built on this small bluff, the center of Bellport Village was located very close to the shoreline. It is an easy stroll from the center of the village to the bay. Bellport Lane is first and foremost a street for walking. It is four lanes wide, allowing ample room for the light traffic. On each side of the street are a grass verge, a line of trees, and a sidewalk. The walker is drawn along by the near prospect of the dock which closes the view at the end of the lane. Arriving at the dock the walker is exhilarated by the view of Great South Bay, stretching for miles in every direction.

Even more remarkable than the natural setting of the Lane is the man-made setting. Well over half the houses were built in the 40 years before the Civil War. Over half the remaining houses were built in the remaining years of the nineteenth century. They have been modified over time but in ways that bring them together. The architecture along the Lane offers a wonderful example of a theme and variations. The theme is that of a comfortable village home, the variations are those that occurred in home design over the course of a century. The whole piece is held together by coherence in size, shape, placement, decoration, and color.

One can not help but be struck by the degree to which residents of the Lane have over the years, consciously or not, evidently recognized and acted responsibly in the public interest in developing their properties. Bellport Lane is truly a remarkable urban assemblage that came about because property development was accompanied by a sense of civic responsibility, and an awareness of what architectural manners mean in specific terms.

Preservation Goals for the Bellport Lane Historic District:

It has been suggested that every village resident and every visitor who walks down the Lane has a feeling of proprietorship of the Lane, of the front yards, and of the front facades of the houses along the Lane. This feeling is justified for Bellport Lane plainly represents part of our historic heritage. The preservation goals of the Bellport Historic Preservation Commission for Bellport Lane are to maintain the sense that the Lane is part of our heritage by:

- Maintaining and enhancing the elements that contribute to the overall setting: the open front yards, the picket fences and low hedges along the streets that leave the houses visible along the street, the trees arching over the street, and the street opening out to an expansive view of the bay;
- Maintaining the architectural integrity of the historic properties, especially of the front facades and other components visible from the street.
- Allowing additions and other changes to rear facades and in appropriate ways to side facades to allow the historic properties to be adapted to changing needs and lifestyle.

2 ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES DEFINING THE BELLPORT LANE LOOK

The look is not a rigid, uniform style but a flexible combination of numerous traits common to virtually all houses on the Lane, from the very small #18 to large houses like #35, with exceptions being the last few on the west side toward the bay, and the last on the east.

Sidewalk: Crucial to the Lane are the public strips of lawn, sidewalks, and trees on each side, and that the sidewalks are mostly gravel, not concrete.

Placement: Uniform rather small setback from the sidewalk.

Orientation: The houses are oriented towards the Lane (i.e., with the main entrance and "facade" facing the Lane.).

Bordering elements on Lane: Most houses have picket fences. Some have only hedges, and some have both fences and hedges. The style of fences varies, as does height of the hedges.

Visibility: Until recently, on almost all properties, the bordering elements did not obscure the houses from view. Because the exceptions were few (e.g., #42), they were tolerable. However, with the new millennium, many hedges have been growing vigorously. If most houses were to have high-multilayered dense screens of plantings, the look of the Lane would be totally lost.

Lawn and plantings: No property without some trees or bushes; varies considerably.

Entrance path: Usually a gate in fence/hedge, mostly brick paths.

House lot relationship: Most houses have adequate space around them. With the exception of #43, none of the lots have a large amount of empty space on the Lane. A few lots crowd one of their neighbor's properties, although the houses themselves remain adequately separated. The small red house at the end of the Lane, because it is so low and narrow, is an unobtrusive exception (in other respects as well). For the most part, in other words, houses and their lots are balanced and relate to their neighbors without crowding them.

House shape: Invariably quadratic (i.e., not polygonal, curved, etc.). Some present simple, square fronts to the lane; others are more horizontal, sometimes a single main unit (e.g., #36), sometimes two stepped units (e.g., #31). Most houses comprise more than one unit, involving additions/expansions. These generally develop laterally, but sometimes also or exclusively in depth (e.g., #34, 32). Facade proportions vary from about 1:1 to about 2:1. No house is higher than wide.

House size: 2 to 2 1/2 stories, none greater than about 30 feet. No one story houses, except at the foot of the Lane. Width varies from about 20 to 55 feet including

porches. The main blocks are typically 4 to 6 window bays wide, one is three, and another is seven. There are some very small houses (e.g., #18), which conform to the Lane Look. There are no monster houses. We would estimate that the largest house would have a footprint of about 2500 sq ft, if that much (50x50), making the maximum house size 5000 sq ft plus attic story. However, even the largest houses, such as #35 and #39, are limited in visual scale because they are built up of blocks of limited scale, and develop to the rear of the lot, which does not intrude on the impression from the Lane. It also helps that the larger houses are on relatively large lots.

Additions: In general, every house on the lane comprises one or more additions, laterally or to the rear, or both (e.g., the Bell House). Sometimes the additions are as large as the original, or even larger. Some houses have very complex histories, e.g., the two at the corner of Hulse Street (#37, 39). Most houses have side extensions (kitchens etc) or screened porches or both. One has an attached garage (see "garages"). Another has a corner tower.

Garages: Except for the foot of the lane, all but one appear to be separate structures in the back. #36 is only a small extension.

Roofs: All houses have pitched roofs. Mostly they are simple saddle roofs. A few have hip roofs. Some roofs are complicated because of the additive character of the house (e.g., #37). Materials are composite, usually dark. Cedar shingle roofs are rare if at all present (although visually they certainly would not be objectionable).

Chimneys: All houses have one or two chimneys.

Eaves: All houses have overhanging eaves typically about 2 feet, generally with molded edges. This is a very typical feature, without which the look is not there. Gutters are discrete, and blend into eaves because of placement, size, and color. One house has complex brackets (#22).

House covering. There are few dark shingle houses (one recently converted, #42), but mostly houses are white clapboard. There are some painted shingle houses, and perhaps a few with asbestos siding. White is strongly predominant, and important to the look, although the few dark shingle houses do not disturb and in fact keep the Lane from rigidified uniformity.

Windows: The windows are double hung, mostly six over six, with frames generally molded. All have dark shutters, the vast majority green. There are no oversize or picture windows. A few bay windows appear as additions. The few houses that do not match demonstrate how important such details as windows are to the Bellport Lane Look, e.g. that they be at least half multi-paned.

Entrances: All houses have paneled wood traditional doors (some doors also have shutters). All have profiled surrounds. Most have small roofed porches. Generally, these porches have two freestanding supports, either square piers or columns, with mostly gabled roofs, some flat. A few houses have two or three bayed porches

that include the entrance. Entrances are usually placed toward the middle of the front, occasionally toward the corner.

In summary, we observed that a striking balance exists between uniformity and variation of the above traits and exceptions to them. All the traits are of some importance in their contribution to what is recognizably the Lane Look. Certain unusual houses add charming notes of diversity and difference (e.g., the Village Hall, or #54, the red house). However, too many such extreme exceptions would upset the balance, and dissolve the look and high visual quality and charm of the Lane.

In our opinion, some houses do not reinforce the Lane environment. The reasons why these houses are disruptive are revealing with respect to the protection that the Village needs to preserve its visual integrity. The main problem with one house is its size relative to its lot, regarding both footprint and height. In the other house, windows are the key problem. The absence of shutters and multipanes are the main detractors here, and show how important these details are to the Lane look.

That at present it is so "easy" to severely disrupt the look of the Lane is alarming, and demonstrates the importance of effective and enforceable guidelines. In today's climate if the Lane is to be maintained, and with it the sense of Bellport as a unique and wonderful place, a specific and detailed set of architectural guidelines is needed to manage property development. To this end, the Commission has prepared the Guidelines set forth below with the objective of preserving the architectural features that make The Bellport Lane Historic District what it is today.

3 GENERAL GUIDELINES

The following guidelines are provided as suggested and recommended elements of general design for assisting applicants.

Element	Recommended	Not Recommended
Sidewalk	Gravel	Concrete
Fences	Traditional white picket, 3 to 4 feet high, green or white baseboard.	Stockade, chain link or other fences; Stone or brick walls
Hedges	Limited height, below 6 feet	Hedges hiding house.
Lawn	Recommended	
Plantings	Recommended	Dense plantings that obscure the house.
Entrance Path	Wooden “Bellport” picket gate with wrought iron black hardware, Brick walk	
House Placement	Uniform with neighbors	Large Setback
House Orientation	Towards the Lane	Main entrance and façade facing away from Lane.
House Lot Relationship	Balance with neighbors	Crowding neighbors
House shape	Quadratic	Curved, Polygonal
House Size	First floor footprint less than 2500 sq. ft.	Out of scale with neighbors
House Additions	To the back, or perhaps the side; architecturally consistent style.	To the front or large additions to a side
Garages	Separate structures in the back	
Roof shapes	Pitched	Flat
Roof materials	Dark colored dimensional shingles. Cedar shingles	Light colored composite shingles

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Element	Recommended	Not Recommended
Chimneys	Brick	No chimney. Dark mortar.
Eaves	Overhangs of about two feet. Molded edges.	
Gutters	Discrete. Blend into eave.	
House Covering	White clapboard with about 8-inch exposure. Cedar shingles painted white. Unpainted cedar shingles. Modern materials that really look like wood clapboards or shingles. Traditional trim.	Paint other than white. Clapboard with too little exposure. Modern materials that look artificial.
Windows	Double Hung. Six over six or comparable. Traditional frames and trim.	Oversize windows. Picture windows. Oversize panes (no divided lights.)
Shutters	Wooden, operable shutters, painted green or another dark color.	Undersize or inoperable shutters. Windows without shutters. Fiberglass or vinyl shutters.
Entrance Doors	Paneled wood traditional doors.	
Entrances	Profiled surrounds. Perhaps a small porch with freestanding supports. Centered.	
Sculpture	None. Hitching posts or façade details if they are in character.	Statues, sculptures, or other works of art were almost never displayed in the front yards of the historic buildings of this historic district.
Exterior Lighting	Light fixtures appropriate to the residential character of the district.	Glare onto adjacent properties.