



PROJECT DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR MINOR PROJECTS

Your land is important to you. You care about it and know it well. What you do with your land, how you treat it, preserve it, and develop it, can determine the short-term and long-term benefits it will provide to you, your community and the environment. Activities on your land may also affect others nearby. For example, an on-site sewage disposal system poorly sited and improperly installed can pollute a lake or nearby drinking water supplies. A well-placed home site that is designed to minimize earth disturbance and vegetative clearing and to take existing land features into consideration can:

- increase the value of the home to be built,
- prevent added construction costs from avoiding excessive earth moving and tree cutting, and prevent future problems such as failing septic systems, contamination of wells, flooded basements, etc.
- reduce heating and cooling bills,
- protect the natural resources and preserve the scenic quality of the area that makes it a nice place to be.

In order to approve a project, the Agency must conclude that the project will not cause "undue adverse impacts to the resources of the Adirondack Park."

This flyer contains examples of typical design guidelines and considerations that the Agency uses when reviewing a project proposal. Incorporating these guidelines in your proposal will help reduce adverse impacts. Unique features or habitats that are difficult to identify will be assessed by Agency review staff.

IMPORTANT: Plan ahead! The project review process can take several months. Delays caused by an incomplete application, complicated property history or difficult site conditions are possible. It is against the law to undertake a jurisdictional project before the required Agency permit is issued. Activities such as clearing a building location, grading a road or drilling a well may constitute "undertaking."

LAND FEATURES THAT MAY INDICATE GOOD DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

- *flat or gently sloping areas not in wetlands or floodplains,*
- *dry areas with deep loamy textured soils that are well-drained,*
- *vegetation that will screen the buildings from off site and provide shade and protection from the wind,*
- *easy access to the site via an existing road or a flat or gently sloping area that avoids wet areas where a road could be installed.*

LAND FEATURES TO AVOID

- *soggy soils, wetlands,*
 - *steep slopes,*
 - *bedrock at or near the surface,*
 - *surface water and drainage areas such as ravines, swales and other places where water runs at least part of the year,*
 - *flood plains - areas near lakes, ponds and rivers that flood.*
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SOME PROJECT DESIGN GUIDELINES

HOUSE AND ACCESSORY STRUCTURE LOCATION

- Avoid steep slopes (greater than 25%). Preferably locate on slopes less than 15%. A 15% slope is a 15 ft. rise in the land over a horizontal distance of 100 ft.
- Place structures to meet minimum shoreline and river setbacks. Distances vary from 50 ft. to 250 ft. depending on the land classification and waterbody. Shoreline setback restrictions apply to development near navigable lakes, ponds, streams and rivers designated by the New York State Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers System Act.
- Locate development some distance off of public roads so structures can be screened by existing vegetation and landforms or by trees to be planted.
- Maximize setbacks from sensitive resources such as wetlands, streams, steep slopes (greater than 25%), floodplain, special plant and animal habitats, scenic vistas and shoreline, so that there is an undisturbed buffer between the development site and the sensitive resource.
- Use existing features, such as vegetation, hedgerows and landforms, to screen development from roads, navigable waters and public trails, and avoid locating development in open fields. If existing vegetation is not available on the site, you may be required to plant trees to screen the development from travel corridors. On shorelines, the Agency also has vegetation cutting restrictions which are available upon request.
- In visually sensitive areas, consider building height and color (including roofs) to help structures blend with the surroundings. Reflective building materials should be avoided.

SEWAGE SYSTEM

All on-site sewage disposal systems must meet the minimum New York State Department of Health standards (Appendix 75-A) and comply with Agency guidelines. The Agency's "Project Guideline: Residential On-Site Wastewater Treatment" provides more detailed information on types of on-site sewage disposal systems and soils and is available upon request. Not all soils will adequately treat septic system waste water and, therefore, not all areas are suitable for on-site septic systems. Special systems designed by a licensed professional engineer may be the only way to overcome some, but not all, soil limitations.

- A minimum of four feet of depth of native soil and a minimum of 2 feet of depth to the seasonal high groundwater table is required in the absorption area (area in which wastewater from the septic tank is distributed for infiltration to the soil through pipe and gravel).
- A minimum of 100 feet is required between the absorption area and all water features, wetlands and household water wells. 200 feet is required where the soil percolation rate is between one and three minutes per inch.
- Size on-site sewage disposal systems according to the number of bedrooms and soil percolation rate. Provide a replacement area on the lot equal to the size of the original system. For example: a four-bedroom home may require an area of 50 by 100 feet or up to 100 by 100 feet depending on the type of soil.
- Avoid slopes greater than 15% for conventional absorption trench systems and greater than 8% for shallow absorption systems and absorption beds. Where the seasonal high groundwater table is located between 24 and 48 inches below natural grade, shallow absorption systems are required.
- "Raised" or "fill" septic systems, seepage pits (dry wells) and holding tanks are not acceptable for new construction except in certain limited cases where current standards cannot be met to correct failing systems or on vacant lots which were legally created before the Adirondack Park Agency came into existence.
- Greywater (sink and shower) disposal systems are required to meet the same standards and guidelines as are blackwater (toilet) systems but may require less area.

DRIVEWAY OR ACCESS ROAD

- Avoid locating driveways and roads on steep slopes (greater than 25%), preferably locate on slopes less than 15%; avoid greater than 4 feet cut and fills, avoid stream and wetland crossings.
- Final grade should not exceed 12% average grade over any 150 foot length, 15% over any length, and 3% within 50 feet of any intersection with public roads. Locate driveway/public road intersections where sight distances are safe.
- Install culverts with headwalls to maintain existing drainage patterns.
- Clearing and grading for driveways and roads must be done carefully to avoid soil erosion and visual impact problems.
- Utilities located in visually sensitive areas should be underground and follow roads and driveways whenever possible.

LOT LINES

- Drawing the boundary line between lots should be the last thing you do in designing any subdivision of land. First locate good building sites, each with appropriate septic areas and water supply. Then draw lot lines to accommodate the development areas.
- Lots must be big enough and shaped correctly to provide enough room for buildings, septic systems and other associated development and in accordance with all local, county and state government requirements.
- Lot lines should be drawn to include enough good land features so that the lots can be developed as desired. Do not survey lot lines until the permit is issued because lines may need to be changed during project review.

Contact the Adirondack Park Agency with any questions you may have regarding your proposal and the Agency's guidelines at:

ADIRONDACK PARK AGENCY
P.O. Box 99, 1133 NYS Route 86
Ray Brook, New York 12977
Tel: (518) 891-4050
www.apa.ny.gov