

Town of Skaneateles

Open Space –Impermeable Surface INTERIM Guidelines

Date: March, 2011

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Minimum Open Space and Maximum Impermeable Surface are zoning requirements (see 148-56 Definitions for exact text) fulfilling important roles in the Town’s efforts to address storm-water run-off and to protect the water quality of the Town’s surface waters – especially Skaneateles Lake.

The Minimum Open Space requirement specifies the amount of land to be retained as undeveloped green land (lawn, shrubs, trees, plantings, gardens and other forms of vegetated area) and limits the total amount of development that might occur on a lot. It varies from 80% to 30% of lot area depending on the district and land use. The majority of the town is in the RR and RF districts where there is an 80% Minimum Open Space requirement. This means that on a typical residential lot that a maximum 20% of the lot may be developed or occupied by man-made improvements (house, garage, shed, walks and driveways).

However, a portion of that 20% developable space is further limited to be below the Maximum Impermeable Surface requirement (typically 10% of total lot area). This requires the Town and property-owner to distinguish between improvements that are considered permeable (allowing water to penetrate into the ground) and those improvements that are impermeable (designed to shed water to adjacent areas). The intensity and character of a lot’s development is shaped by how these improvements are defined and interpreted.

The following guidelines are intended to help explain how the Town will interpret, apply and enforce the Open Space and Impermeable Surface Requirements of the Zoning Code.

Permeable Paving systems for walks, paths and patios

Materials - can be comprised of any man-made or natural material that is cut, molded or otherwise shaped to meet the size and installation specifications below. Examples include washed gravel, clay brick, concrete pavers, slate, limestone, fiberglass, or plastic.

Maximum Size – the maximum size of an individual paving unit (paver) is **3 x 3 ft.** Pavers may be irregular in shape but in no case shall they exceed **9 sq. ft.** in area.

Installation method – pavers should be placed over a dry permeable granular base; all gaps between pavers are to be filled with sand or a comparable permeable granular material. Soil base, soil filler or any self-hardening filler (polymeric sand) is **not** recommended.

Minimum Gap Spacing – each paver shall have a surrounding gap that has a minimum uniform gap-width. This gap-width shall be based on whether the pavers are regularly or irregularly shaped.

- Regularly shaped pavers may be either rectangular (includes squares) or non-rectangular shapes (includes circles, hexagons, octagons, etc.). There shall be a 1 inch gap-width: for every 1 ft. of length on the **shortest** side of a rectangular shaped paver; **or** a 1 inch gap-width for every 1 ft. across the diameter of a non-rectangular paver. Fractional portions of paver length shall be rounded to the nearest foot.
- Irregularly shaped pavers might be natural or processed stones or other materials and may have a variety of uneven measurements. For these pavers, the Town Codes Enforcement Officer shall establish a minimum uniform gap that is based on the ratio 1” gap/ 1 ft. of paver length and based on a representative side length of all the pavers to be used within a specified paving area.
- Wood edging for purpose of decoration or to hold pavers in place will be considered permeable and shall also not require a spacing gap to the adjacent pavers.

<i>examples</i>	<i>NON-common pavers (Greater than 1’x1’)</i>	<i>Common “retail” pavers (Equal to OR Less than 1’x1’)</i>
	3 x 3 ft paver - 3” gap.	1’ x 1 ft. paver – minimum gap per installation instructions
	3 x 2 ft paver - 2” gap.	6” x 1 ft. paver - ” “
	2 x 2 ft paver - 2” gap	3” x 8” brick - ” “

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Walls

Walls will be subject to the Minimum Open Space and Maximum Impermeable Surface requirements depending on size, composition and purpose.

These guidelines **do not alter** when a wall is subject to approval for special permit or site plan review. (see also 148-30 D – determining steep slope location).

Retaining walls –Limited Exemption – Dry-laid retaining wall(s) cumulatively **less than 20 sq. ft.** in area and without walkable surfaces **will not** be subject to Minimum Open Space or Maximum Impermeable Surface requirements.

Retaining Walls – Open Space – Dry-laid retaining wall(s) cumulatively **greater than 20 sq. ft.** in area **will be** subject to calculation for Minimum Open Space, however – the first 20 sq. ft. shall not count.

Retaining Walls – Impermeable Surface – Any dry-laid retaining wall with a walkable top surface **will be** subject to calculation for Maximum Impermeable Surface and Minimum Open Space.

Seawalls - (see staff letter of 2/12/2008) Exempt from impermeable surface calculation but included in Open Space when used solely for erosion control and **without** a walkable surface

Landscaping walls – limited exemption– any dry-laid landscaping wall installed for decorative purposes and when less than 1 foot vertical height **will not** be subject to the Minimum Open Space requirement.

Mechanical and Other structures

Mechanical pads – are pad(s) installed flush to the ground surface to support mechanical equipment (such as: HVAC, A/C, generators) and when cumulatively equal to or less than 16 sq. ft. **will not** be subject to Minimum Open Space or Maximum Impermeable Surface requirements. More than 16 sq. ft. cumulatively on a lot shall be subject to Minimum Open Space or Maximum Impermeable Surface requirements – the first 16 sq. ft. shall not count.

Light -flag poles, signs & pedestals – these minor elements **will not** be subject to Minimum Open Space or Maximum Impermeable Surface requirements when they are individually **less than 4 sq. ft.** in surface area. More than 16 sq. ft. cumulatively on a lot shall be subject to Minimum Open Space or Maximum Impermeable Surface requirements – the first 16 sq. ft. shall not count. Decorative elements such as a trellis or pergola are exempt from these requirements.

Pools – only the water surface of a pool is considered part of the permeable area as defined in the code.

Driveways & parking lots – are defined as an impermeable surface regardless of surface treatment or covering. A driveway shall be considered a vehicular path leading to or from any building opening or door sized to accommodate a typical motor vehicle (car, truck, boat, trailer). The driveway shall be shown on any submitted plans and shall be calculated as part of impermeable surface coverage.