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HDC guidelines regarding energy conservation and production

“The first houses built on Nantucket included practical energy-saving measures that grew naturally from a windswept landscape largely unprotected from the elements. Among these were: facing houses to the south, using trees and other natural features as windbreaks, and clustering them to create additional wind protection. Typically, a compact building mass was built around a central chimney which provided a core heat source. Multiple flues allowed each room a fireplace.

“Many of these traditional building practices are as applicable today as they were 300 years ago. New buildings should take advantage of siting considerations for maximum sun orientation and wind shelter. Deciduous trees planted south of the building (at least 10 feet from the foundation), and evergreens planted to the north-northwest, are effective. Other traditional, energy-efficient architectural elements should be considered. Cupolas, transoms and scuttles allow ventilation. Shutters, porches and awnings provide shade. Vestibules protect entryways from the wind. Sun rooms and greenhouses may provide additional solar gain.

“Retrofitting measures with the highest potential for saving energy will not impair the visual character of a historic structure. Passive measures, including the evaluation of how and when a building is used, should be determined before active measures are taken. Thermostat and light control, ventilation and properly serviced mechanical equipment are primary considerations. Attic insulation and reduction of heat loss through the roof should be addressed first, for maximum impact and conservation.

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“Solar panel applications should not be considered until initial conservation efforts as described above are implemented. It is inappropriate to apply a large array of solar panels as they often produce far less energy than a well-insulated wall, roof or storm window might. The Commission has additional materials which address energy conservation as it applies to historic preservation in its office.”

Building with Nantucket in Mind, pp. 77-78