



WETHERSFIELD ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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6.12 Design Review

A. PURPOSE

1. A Design Review Advisory Committee has been created to help the Commission promote and encourage public and private actions to:
 - a. Encourage the highest quality standard of design and development;
 - b. Protect the value of all real property within the community;
 - c. Promote aesthetically pleasing development;
 - d. Promote the development of a harmonious character in newly developing or redeveloped areas;
 - e. Preserve the special character of existing neighborhoods; andthus, to promote and protect the public health, safety, convenience and welfare of the community.
2. The advice of the Committee is intended to encourage higher quality building and site design and result in development which is compatible with the character of the community.

B. APPLICABILITY

1. All applicants shall submit all of the items required by Appendix A of these regulations.
2. The Commission's staff shall, upon receipt of an application, refer application materials to the Committee for any site plan or special permit application involving:
 - a. New construction of a multi-family residential structure of four (4) or more units,
 - b. A special residential development,
 - c. New construction of a non-residential structure,
 - d. Any significant exterior building change or other site improvement which requires site plan or design review,
 - e. Signs as required by Section 6.3 of these regulations.

C. PROCEDURE

1. The Design Review Advisory Committee shall meet at regularly scheduled meetings to consider applications referred to it by the Planning and Zoning Commission.
2. Applicants are encouraged to submit preliminary or conceptual plans to the Committee for review and comment prior to a formal submission to the Commission. In such instance, the Committee shall submit a report, together with its recommendations and suggestions, to the applicant no later than twenty (20) days after receipt thereof.
3. The Design Review Advisory Committee shall submit its advisory recommendations to the Commission in writing at least five (5) days prior to a meeting by the Commission on the application.
4. The written report shall, to the extent feasible, include specific recommendations regarding plan modifications which the Committee finds desirable based on the standards and criteria outlined in these regulations and the Design Guidelines found in Appendix C.
5. The Commission shall not be required to delay its action on an application due to the failure of the Design Review Advisory Committee to act in a timely manner.
6. Reports from the Design Review Advisory Committee shall be advisory and not compulsory to the Commission, which has final approval authority for all applications.

D. GENERAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. The Committee will, over time, develop and maintain design guidelines to help applicants and owners understand design considerations in Wethersfield. Such guidelines shall be referred to the Commission for review and comment.
2. The Committee will consider the following general issues:
 - a. The basic design for the proposed uses, buildings, or development.
 - b. The relationship between the buildings and the land.
 - c. The relationship between uses and buildings/structures.
 - d. The overall physical appearance of the proposed development and its compatibility with surrounding neighborhood.
 - e. Relationship of width to height of new structures.
 - f. Colors, materials, location of lighting.
 - g. Design of signs.
 - h. Blending of street and mechanical hardware and miscellaneous appurtenances into the overall design.
 - i. Effect on the health, safety and general welfare of the community.
 - j. Impact on the historic significance of the site and the affected area.
 - k. Compatibility with the Plan of Conservation & Development of the Town.
 - l. Location and dimensions of public and private streets and common drives.
 - m. Location and dimensions of public and private pedestrian walkways, sidewalk malls and paths.
 - n. Types, styles and colors of building materials, exterior facades and facing, fenestration, and fire-retardant characteristics.
 - o. Special architectural features.
 - p. Conformity with these Regulations and other appropriate laws, codes, or ordinances.

APPENDIX C - DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following guidelines are intended to aid applicants in ensuring that their designs are in harmony with the purposes of the Design Review Advisory Committee and the Planning and Zoning Commission:

1. Relationship of Buildings to Site

- a) All site components shall be organized in a coordinated, functional and safe manner and be compatible with site features and nearby residential areas.
- b) A unified design theme for building massing, exterior treatments and signage shall be established.
- c) The site shall be planned to accomplish a desirable streetscape and to provide for adequate planting, safe vehicular and pedestrian movement, and parking areas.
- d) Parking areas shall be treated appropriately in relation to the building, the neighborhood, and the community.
- e) Without restricting the permissible limits of the applicable zoning district, the height and scale of each building shall be compatible with its site and existing (or anticipated) adjoining buildings.
- f) Newly installed utility services, and service revisions necessitated by exterior alterations, shall be underground.

2. Relationship of Buildings and Site to Adjoining Area

- a) Adjacent buildings of different architectural styles shall be made compatible by such means as screens, sight breaks and materials.
- b) Attractive landscape transition to adjoining properties shall be provided.
- c) Harmony in texture, lines and masses is required. Monotony shall be avoided.

3. Landscape and Site Treatment

- a) Where natural or existing topographic patterns contribute to beauty and utility of a development, they shall be preserved and developed. Modification to topography will be permitted where it contributes to good appearance.
- b) Grades of walks, parking spaces, terraces, and other paved areas shall provide an inviting and stable appearance for walking and, if seating is provided, for sitting.
- c) Landscape treatment shall be provided to enhance architectural features, strengthen vistas and important axes, and provide shade.
- d) Unity of design shall be achieved by repetition of certain plant varieties and other materials and by correlation with adjacent developments.
- e) Plant material shall be selected for interest in its structure, texture, and color and for its ultimate growth. Plants that are indigenous to the area and others that will be hardy, harmonious to the design, and of good appearance shall be used.
- f) In locations where plants will be susceptible to injury by pedestrian or motor traffic, they shall be protected by appropriate curbs, tree guards, or other devices.
- g) Parking areas and traffic ways shall be enhanced with landscaped spaces containing trees or tree groupings.
- h) Where building sites limit planting, the placement of trees in park-ways or paved areas is encouraged.
- i) Screening of service yards and other places that tend to be unsightly shall be accomplished by use of walls, fencing, planting, or combinations of these. Screening shall be equally effective in winter and summer.
- j) Pedestrian walkways shall provide safe and convenient connections within the site and between adjacent sites and shall be constructed of slate, brick, concrete or paving blocks but shall not be gravel, earth or loose stone.
- k) In areas where general planting will not prosper, other materials such as fences, walls, and paving of wood, brick, stone, gravel, and cobbles shall be used. Carefully selected plants shall be combined with such materials where possible.
- l) Exterior lighting, where used, shall enhance the building design and the adjoining landscape. Lighting standards and building fixtures shall be of a design and size compatible with the building and adjacent areas. Lighting shall be restrained in design and excessive brightness avoided.
- m) Existing trees at 4" or greater caliper shall be incorporated into the site plan.

- n) For every 5 parking spaces, minimum of 1-3" caliper tree must be planted -Norway; Crimson Maple; Pine Oak; Sycamore; and Black Locust.

4. Building Design

- a) Architectural style is not restricted. Evaluation of the appearance of a project shall be based on the quality of its design and relationship to surroundings.
- b) Buildings shall have good scale and be in harmonious conformance with permanent neighboring development.
- c) Structures have well-articulated facades to reduce the appearance of bulk.
- d) Rooflines shall be varied to provide architectural interest and be articulated with parapet walls, gables, towers or a mansard roof.
- e) Materials shall have good architectural character and shall be selected for harmony of the building with adjoining buildings.
- f) Materials, textures and color used on the exterior walls and roofs shall emphasize the use of materials associated with New England style architecture. Materials shall be selected for suitability to the type of buildings and the design in which they are used. Buildings shall have the same materials, or those that are architecturally harmonious, used for all building walls and other exterior building components wholly or partly visible from public ways.
- g) Materials shall be of durable quality.
- h) In any design in which the structural frame is exposed to view, the structural materials shall be compatible within themselves and harmonious with their surroundings.
- i) Building components such as windows, doors, eaves, and parapets, shall have good proportions and relationships to one another.
- j) Colors shall be harmonious and shall use only compatible accents.
- k) Mechanical equipment or other utility hardware on roof, ground, or buildings shall be screened from public view with materials harmonious with the building, or they shall be so located as not to be visible from any public ways.
- l) Exterior lighting shall be part of the architectural concept. Fixtures, standards, and all exposed accessories shall be harmonious with building design.
- m) Refuse and waste removal areas, service yards, storage yards, and exterior work areas shall be screened from view from public ways.
- n) Monotony of design in single or multiple building projects shall be avoided. Variation of detail, form, and siting shall be used to provide visual interest. In multiple building projects, variable siting or individual buildings may be used to prevent a monotonous appearance.
- o) Prototype structures (the first new structure in an area which has been designated for a particular character) shall reflect the desired character of the entire neighborhood.

5. Miscellaneous Structures and Street Hardware

- a) Miscellaneous structures and street hardware shall be designed to be part of the architectural concept of design and landscape. Materials shall be compatible with buildings, scale shall be good, colors shall be in harmony with buildings and surroundings, and proportions shall be attractive.
- b) Lighting in connection with miscellaneous structures and street hardware shall meet the standards applicable to site, landscape, buildings and signs.

6. Signs (12/7/2018)

- a) Every sign shall have good scale and proportion in its design and in its visual relationship to buildings and surroundings.
- b) Every sign shall be designed as an integral architectural element of the building and site to which it principally relates. The use of columns, pilasters, cornices etc... is encouraged in order to provide design interest.
- c) The design of detached signs shall consist of materials and colors that are coordinated with the building facade design and materials.
- d) Signs shall be constructed of high quality and durable materials appropriate to the setting.

- e) Sign lettering styles, sizes, and composition shall be of sufficient size to be legible and understandable for the environment in which it is located. In order to accomplish this, the United States Sign Council - Sign Legibility Index may be used as a guide to determine height requirements for letter sizes and graphics.
- f) The lighting of every sign shall be restrained and harmonious with the building and site to which it principally relates. When siting signs near or in residential areas, consideration of the effects of lighting and sign visibility in order to help protect the residential character of the area.
- g) The number of graphic elements on a sign should be held to the minimum needed to convey the sign's major message, and shall be composed in proportion to the area of the sign face, therefore, signs should only designate two of the following items: name, address, logo, type of business, or principal product. Signs should not contain extraneous information such as a service provided by the business, telephone numbers and hours of operation.
- h) Signs should not advertise brand names or symbols of products unless 50% or more of the floor space of the premises is directed to the sale or manufacturing of the product.
- i) Signs should not contain selling slogans or product descriptions.
- j) Wall signs for each business use in a multi-tenant building should be designed and organized to reflect a coordinated theme for the entire building and located in a space on the façade designated for signs. Accordingly, each wall sign should be in harmony and of a compatible type, height, materials, lettering, wall placement and illumination. As a means to encourage a coordinated theme applicant may apply for and receive approval for a master sign program exception to these regulations as specified in Section 6.3.Q. of these regulations.
- k) It is encouraged and recommended:
 1. Internally illuminated signs should either be constructed with an opaque background and translucent text and symbols, or with a colored background and lighter text.
 2. The use of individual raised letters and logos is encouraged to enhance readability.
 3. Signs with a three-dimensional textured surface that is extensively carved, routed and/or sandblasted.
 4. Simplified letter and/or logo copy.
 5. The use of native or natural materials in the sign structure and face including stone, wood and brick.

7. Maintenance - Planning and Design Factors

- a) Continued good appearance depends upon the extent and quality of maintenance. The choice of materials and their use, together with the types of finishes and other protective measures, must be conducive to easy maintenance and upkeep.
- b) Materials and finishes shall be selected for their durability and wear as well as for their beauty. Proper measures and devices shall be incorporated for protection against the elements, neglect, damage, and abuse.
- c) Provision for washing and cleaning of buildings and structures, and control of dirt and refuse, shall be included in the design. Configurations that tend to catch and accumulate debris, leaves, trash, dirt and rubbish shall be avoided.