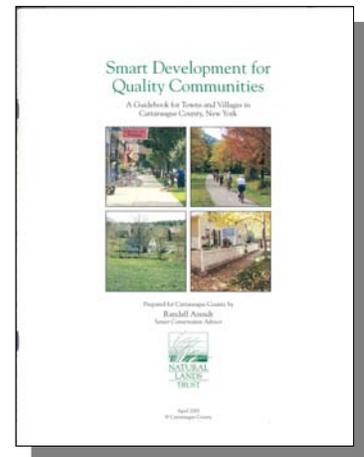




III. IMPROVING OUR WORKING LANDSCAPE

Typical development, working within existing zoning regulations, often does not result in an attractive, safe, and functional built environment. Zoning regulations address building uses, area, and density of development. Businesses requiring significant on-site parking or outdoor display space compete for visibility by using dominant signage, site lighting, and other means of attracting attention. Uncontrolled vehicle access to parking lots creates conflicts with pedestrians visiting local retail and commercial establishments. Increasingly, communities are recognizing that the general sameness in appearance of corporate chain commercial and retail buildings is destroying the local distinctive architectural character.

Design Guidelines are intended to enhance the community's zoning regulations. They are not a substitute for the zoning regulations, but rather complement the zoning regulations to address development character. Design guidelines establish a level of quality that sets a precedent for future development, serve to enhance the value of property, and protect the investment of landowners and developers. Randall Arendt was hired by Cattaraugus County in 2001 to conduct an eighteen-month program termed "Leadership Training and Visioning." The original idea for this program came out of a survey and numerous community meetings conducted by Cattaraugus County over a period of several years. Overall, the results of the meetings and survey suggested that the County protect its existing resources. Furthermore, additional development should be allowed and encouraged, while at the same time ensuring that the county's natural resources and rural atmosphere are protected. In addition, the survey and meeting participants stated that there needs to be better training opportunities and more direct technical assistance for village and town staff and officials engaged in land use planning activities. To that end, Randall Arendt M.R.T.P.I., a specialist in planning and conservation design for rural communities, in collaboration with The Natural Lands Trust of Pennsylvania and Cattaraugus County Department of Economic Development, Planning, and Tourism, prepared *Smart Development for Quality Communities Volume 2 – Design Guidelines for Towns and Villages in Cattaraugus County, New York*.⁶



The Guidebook for Towns and Villages in Cattaraugus County, New York presents progressive concepts and guidelines intended to promote rural growth, while protecting the County's natural and man-made resources. The Guidebook provides stakeholders (municipal officials, developers, landowners,



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entrepreneurs, etc.) with a good introduction to and overview of cutting-edge site and architectural design guidelines. Specifically, the Guidebook provides an introduction to design guidelines and offers examples of highway and village commercial design guidelines, and village and rural residential design guidelines. The Guidebook also offers three case studies from the County on such topics as Conservation Subdivision Design, storefront revitalizations, and village streetscape improvements.

This Guidebook is a second in a series of guidebooks that the County has published, the first being the Smart Development for Quality Communities, Volume 1 – A Guidebook for Cattaraugus County, New York Elements of a Countywide Vision, discussed earlier. Cattaraugus County was the recipient of the Governor’s Quality Community Award for Excellence at the 2002 Quality Communities – Quality Coasts Conference in Albany, New York.

It is recommended that all stakeholders review these two vision Guidebooks prior to referring to the following detailed section on specific site and architectural design guidelines.

The following section is intended to be a resource for County municipalities wishing to implement site and architectural design guidelines or standards. Sub-sections A – E have been formatted to allow municipalities to easily adapt and amend the guidelines, as necessary, into their existing zoning ordinance.

A. PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. What Design Guidelines Address

Design guidelines are introduced into the community as a measure to achieve a degree of consistency in development that results in a pedestrian-friendly, safe, and usually visually cohesive district. Often, the net result is a more vibrant commercial and retail district, especially in older villages and downtowns. At the same time, sensitive and original concepts are purposely sought by the guidelines. Design guidelines are often drafted by communities to ensure more attention to the design than is typical in current development. Various aspects address the character and quality of the built environment, such as where the building and parking lots are located on the property, the means of providing pedestrian access on-site that contributes to the community system, and the character of building design.

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2. How Design Guidelines Work

Design guidelines can be used by developers when preparing their development plans and applications, and subsequently submitting them to the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals for plan review and approval. Design guidelines also provide development principles which help both the local community and developers: the community benefits from a consistent, coherent, and functional commercial district; the developer benefits from a predictable and standard approval process.

The design guidelines presented in this study provide basic information, but do not attempt to address all the design issues relevant to proposed development. The guidelines do, however, provide a statement of principle or intent for site organization and layout, site design, and architectural design. The interpretation of the design guidelines should remain the responsibility of locally designated review boards.

B. LEVELS OF DESIGN REVIEW

The site organization review process uses site design principles outlined in the design guidelines manual to address issues relating to both building and parking location. Other issues addressed in this process include vehicle access and pedestrian circulation to and from the proposed building.

1. Site Design Review

The site design review process addresses issues generally relating to the aesthetics of the site and proposed development impacts on nearby properties, such as the impacts of commercial development abutting residential parcels. Generally, landscaping principles define this review process, but building signage is also addressed here.

Appropriate landscaping plays an important role in the visual character of site development. For instance, parking lots can be a visual blight if not appropriately shielded. However, landscaping with trees and shrubbery can help to reduce the visual impacts as buffers as well as enhance vehicle and pedestrian circulation. As a component of the site design review process, landscaping will be addressed to ensure that the appropriate guidelines are being achieved.



2. Public Places Review

The streetscape zone includes those areas that are publicly owned but have a direct relation to the building. For instance, public sidewalks can be used for the display of retail goods as a way to entice shoppers into the store or a restaurant may provide sidewalk dining opportunities. Both of these circumstances require special considerations for safe and efficient pedestrian circulation.

3. Architectural Design Review

As gas stations, supermarkets, and fast food franchises have become a part of our lives, we have managed to ignore their aesthetic liabilities. The architectural design review process uses the architectural details outlined in each community's design guidelines manual to ensure that new building construction or modifications are compatible with the surrounding buildings' patterns, styles, and textures.



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C. SITE ORGANIZATION AND DESIGN

The following guidelines are provided as a template for each municipality to review, amend, and adopt, as appropriate, to its individual circumstances for regulating development within designated commercial districts.

1. Building Placement

Buildings within the commercial districts shall be built five (5) feet from the backside of the sidewalk along major roadways. This will be accomplished by maintaining a maximum setback of five (5) feet from the right-of-way. Exceptions to the build-to line must be reviewed by the Planning Board and serve a public function. For example, a building may be set back from the line if an outdoor café, dining deck, benches, or bicycle racks are located in front. The purpose is to create an active space that is inviting to the pedestrian.

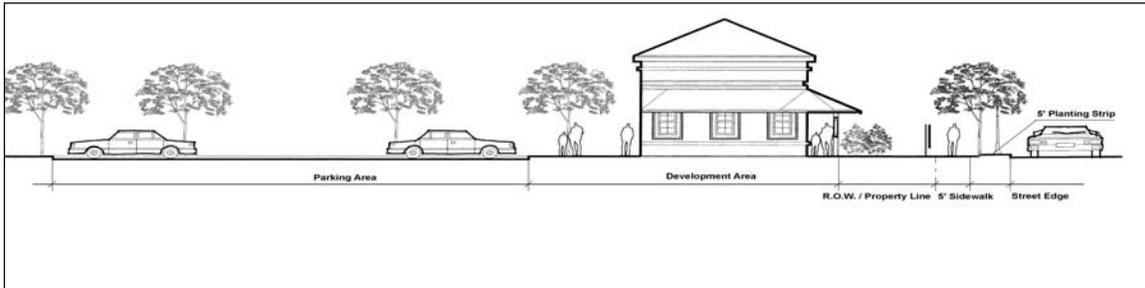


Figure III-1 Building Placement





2. Parking

Place parking lots at the rear of buildings. Shared access points, to reduce curb cuts, should be developed where appropriate.

Public Off Street Parking



PBiC

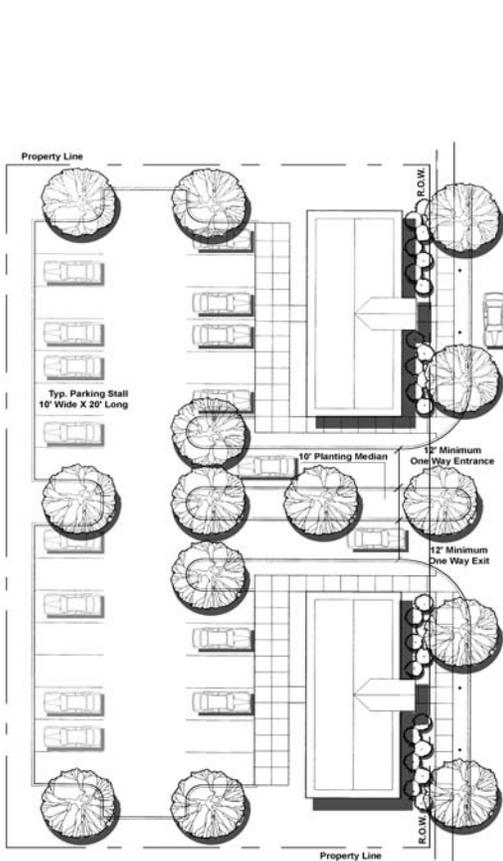


Figure III-2
Off-Street Parking with Shared Access

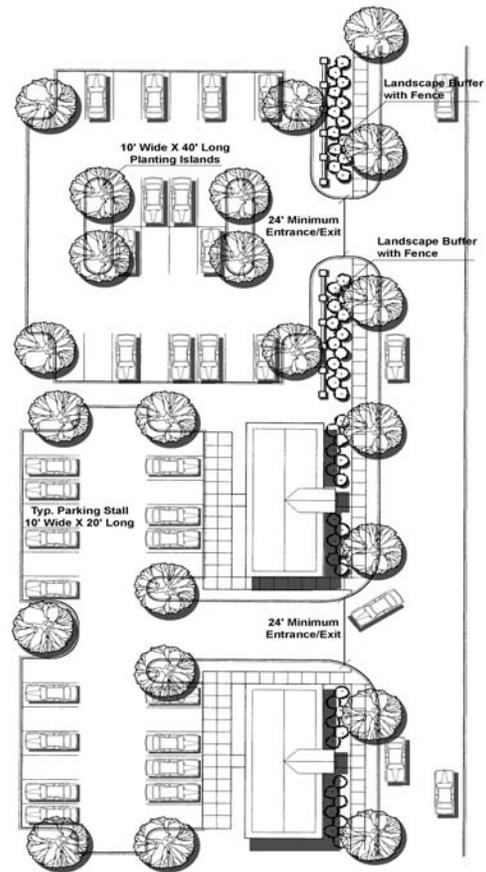


Figure III-3
Off-Street Parking with
Landscaping and Screening



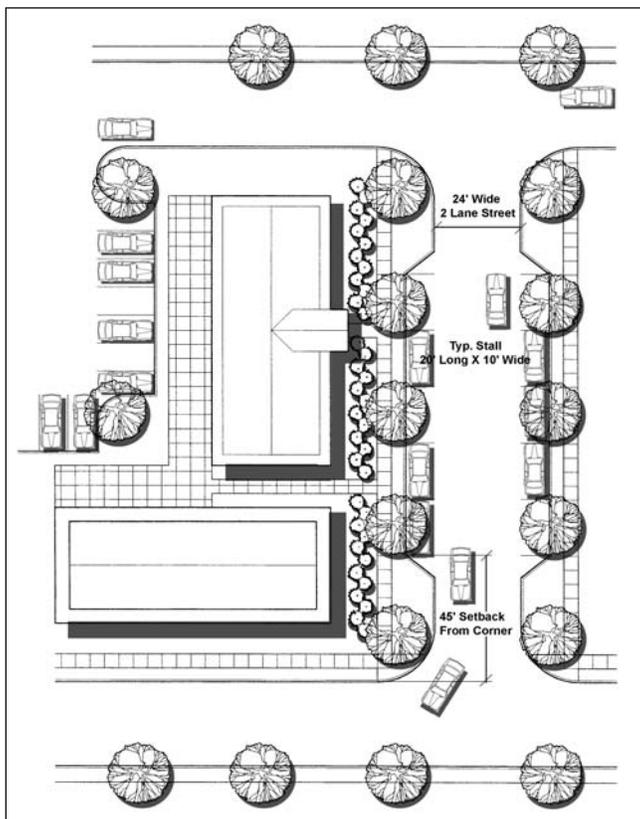
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Off-street parking should include landscaped buffers between the sidewalk and parking areas. This buffer should include trees and shrubbery. The use of a low landscaping fence is also encouraged, such as one of wrought iron. Planting medians shall be included within the interior of the parking lot to reduce visual impacts and clarify pedestrian and vehicle circulation. Parking stalls shall be consistent with current regulations.



Public On-Street Parking

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On street parking shall be permitted on designated streets. On-street parking should be defined at the end of each neighborhood block by “bulbing-out” the sidewalk area, in an effort to provide enhanced pedestrian crossings.

Figure III-4 On-Street Parking



3. Screens and Buffers

Create landscape buffers between residential and commercial/industrial areas to lessen adverse impacts such as noise, fumes, and privacy concerns. Landscape buffers can include a variety of techniques, such as buffer plantings of various heights and widths, berms, and planting and fences. When residential uses are adjacent to highway or commercial uses, they should be separated by a buffer edge. Generally, the buffer includes a variety of local plant species, including a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees.

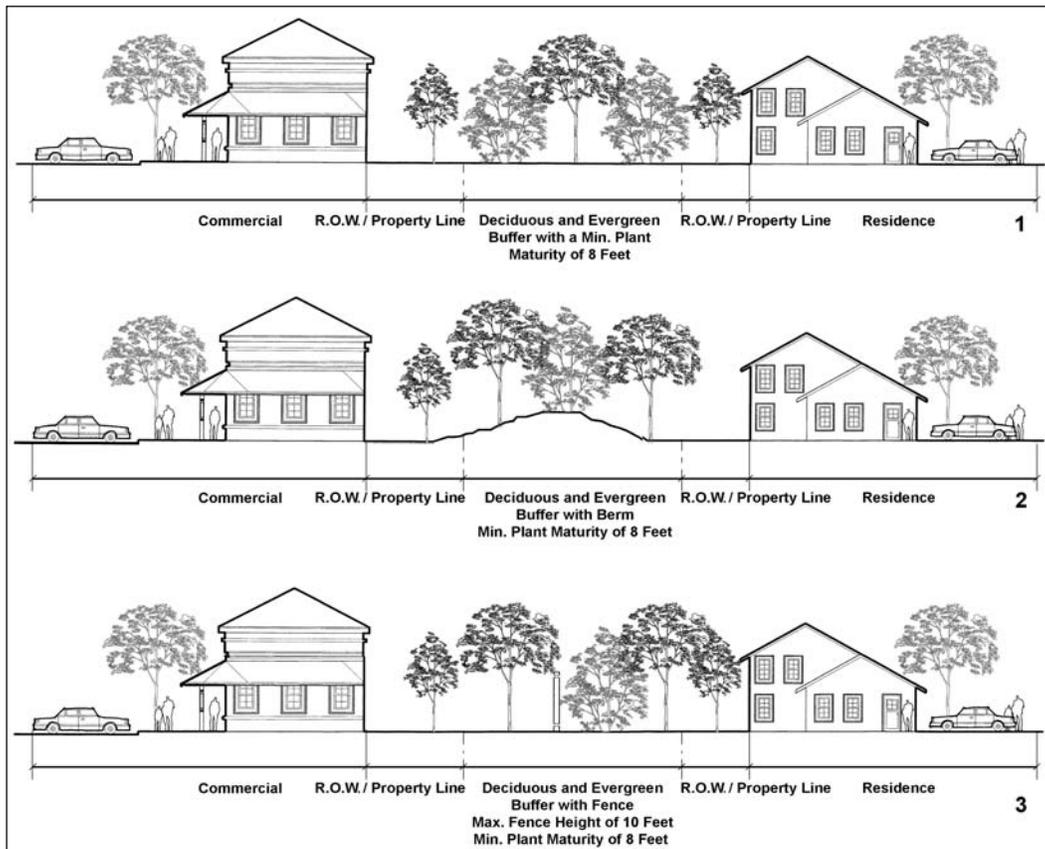
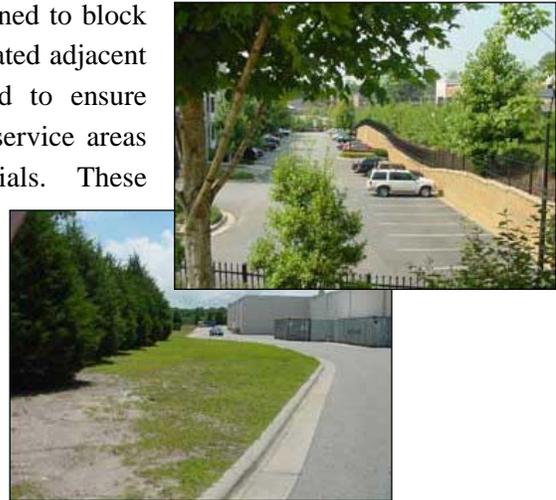


Figure III-4
Acceptable Screening and Buffering
Techniques



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Screening provides a vertical barrier and should be designed to block visual or noise impact. When unrelated activities are located adjacent to one another, buffers and screening should be used to ensure compatibility between adjacent uses. Parking lots and service areas should be adequately screened with landscaping materials. These landscaping materials may include vegetation and/or natural wood fencing. Additional screening treatments shall be required for commercial properties adjacent to residential and institutional parcels. Acceptable screening techniques include combinations of vegetated landscaping, landscaping walls, fencing (excluding chain link), and earth berming.



4. Street Signage

Include only one (1) sign identifying the tenant on the primary façade. Signage may be distinctive, but must be complementary to the overall architectural character of the façade. Signage may take one of four forms: façade-mounted, signage on awnings, perpendicular base façade-mounted, or signage incorporated onto windows. The total area of all signage on any façade should not exceed 10 percent of the total area of the façade. An additional tenant may be incorporated,



Figure III-6
Appropriate Signage Concepts



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but should be pedestrian-oriented and scaled appropriately. Freestanding sidewalk signage is also permitted, but shall be no larger than two feet by three feet. Pole-mounted signage should not be applied in the Commercial Districts.

5. Site Lighting

Arrange and install all exterior lights so that the direct or reflected illumination does not spill into any adjoining residential or agricultural district. Except in commercial districts where light standards may be required to be compatible with unique architectural styles, lighting standards should be of a directional type capable of shielding the light source from direct view from any residential or agricultural district or public right-of-way.

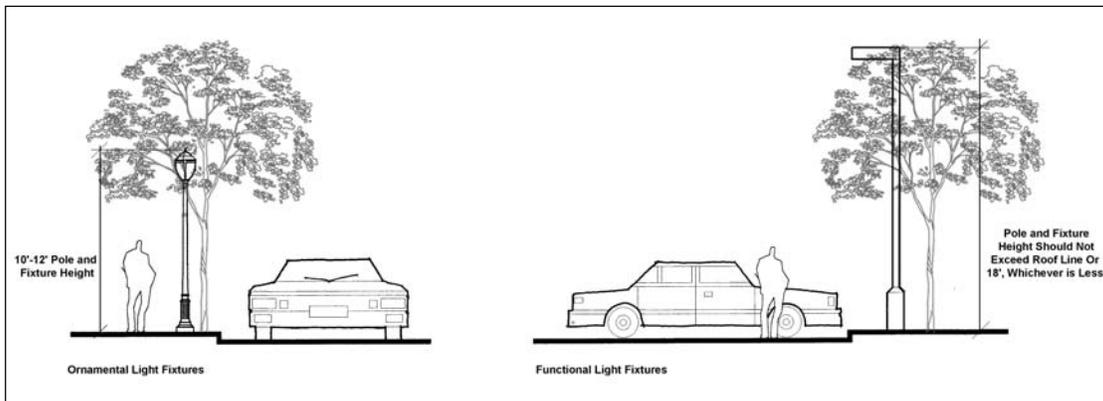


Figure III-7
Profile of Appropriate Lighting Designs

The lighting plan should be coordinated with the landscaping plan. Outlined standards call for trees to be installed in parking lot islands. Eventual tree growth can block light patterns and make a parking lot unsafe. Parking lot lights should be located between planting islands at the juncture of four (4) parking spaces.



6. Sidewalks

Provide pedestrian connections to and from residential districts. Convenient and safe pedestrian access to and from commercial and residential development is essential for the well-being of a community. . This may be accomplished by combining sidewalks, recreation trails, and interpretive trails.

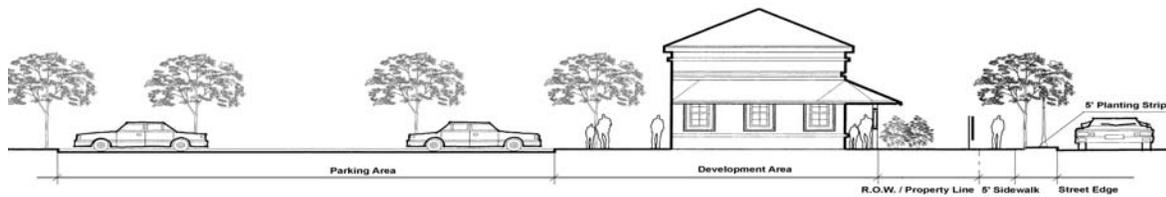


Figure III-8
Profile of Appropriate Sidewalk Separated from the Road by
a Vegetated Buffer



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Sidewalks within commercial districts shall be constructed of concrete and should be a minimum of ten (10) feet wide. Sidewalks connecting residential districts with commercial districts also shall be constructed of concrete and should be five (5) feet wide. A landscaping buffer shall be provided between the sidewalk and roadway and should be five (5) feet wide. The landscaping buffer should be planted with grass and include street trees, to provide enhanced pedestrian safety, a sense of enclosure, and shade.

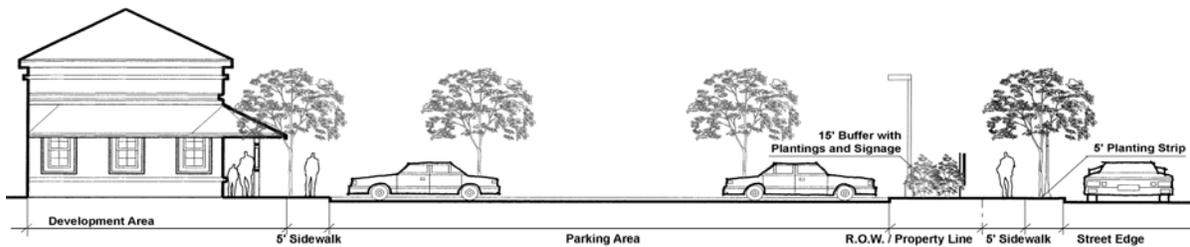
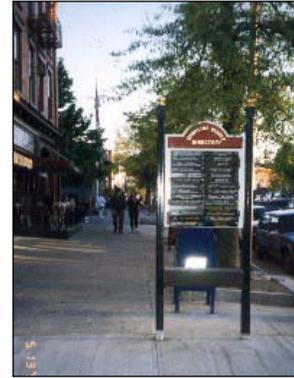


Figure III-9
Sidewalk Separated From the Road and Parking
Lot by a Vegetative Buffer

7. Public Plazas

Encourage public plaza space, and include landscaping and benches. Public plazas allow residents to meet informally and converse about local politics and happenings. Landscaping should include trees, perennials, annuals, and herbaceous shrubbery. If a public plaza is constructed, it should be constructed on the side of a building which receives the most sunlight. Benches should be placed under trees to provide shaded areas for people using the plaza.



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Sidewalk cafés can help create vitality and generate people along a street. Sidewalk cafés are strongly encouraged in the downtown commercial district. Site organization standards allow for buildings to be set further off the build-to line in an effort to encourage development of outdoor cafés. However, as the site organization standards state, the Planning Board must review any exception to the build-to line. The sidewalk cafés must be temporary structures and dismantled for the winter months. The structures must also be consistent with existing state building regulations for safety. Sidewalk cafés should not extend six (6) feet beyond the established build-to line.



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Figure III-10 Public Places



8. Sidewalk Retail

Include sidewalk retail in the downtown commercial district. Sidewalk retail can help generate people and attract shoppers into stores, providing opportunity for vibrant retail activity. Site organization standards allow for buildings to be set further off the build-to line in an effort to help stimulate a vibrant commercial and retail environment. However, as the site organization standards state, the Planning Board must review any exception to the build-to line. Sidewalk retail merchandise must be removed during closed business hours, and should not extend six (6) feet beyond the established build-to line.

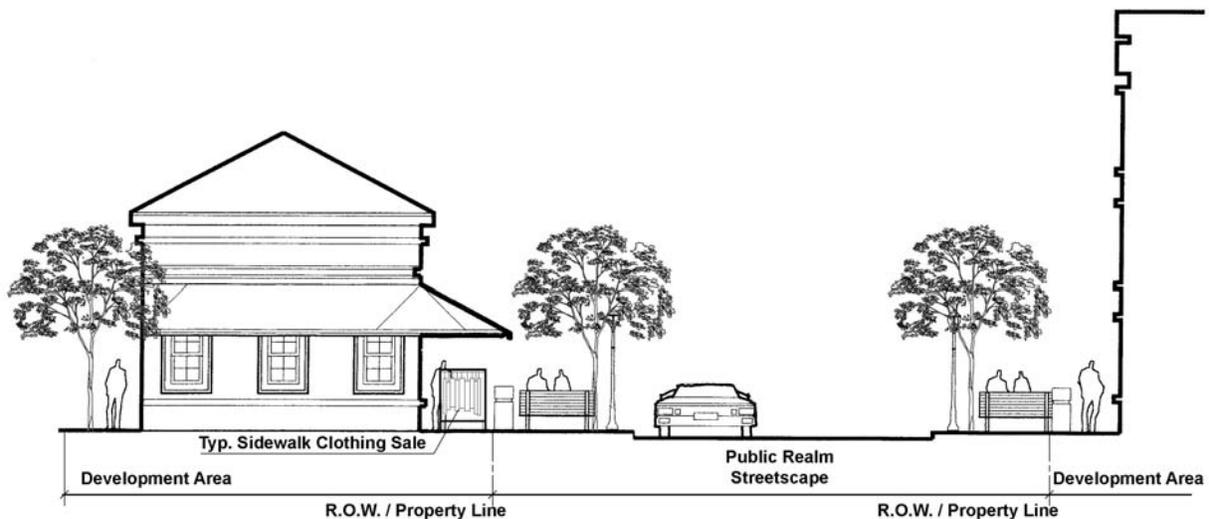


Figure III-11 Sidewalk Retail



D. TRAIL DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Bike/Hike trails

Pedestrian trails allows access to unique areas not accessible by motorized vehicles. Bike/hike trails are primarily intended to accommodate non-motorized activities and to provide pedestrian access to the neighborhoods, river, state park, and commercial areas. Pedestrian trails also link commercial and retail development to residential development, providing alternatives to the automobile.

Trails should be constructed of a durable surface allowing for multi-sport activities such as rollerblading and for wheelchair access. The trail should be a minimum of eight (8) feet in width and should include a five-foot vegetation clearance on either side of the trail.

Trails through wetland areas shall be constructed of natural wood materials on raised boardwalks a minimum of eight (8) feet wide and of natural wood materials.

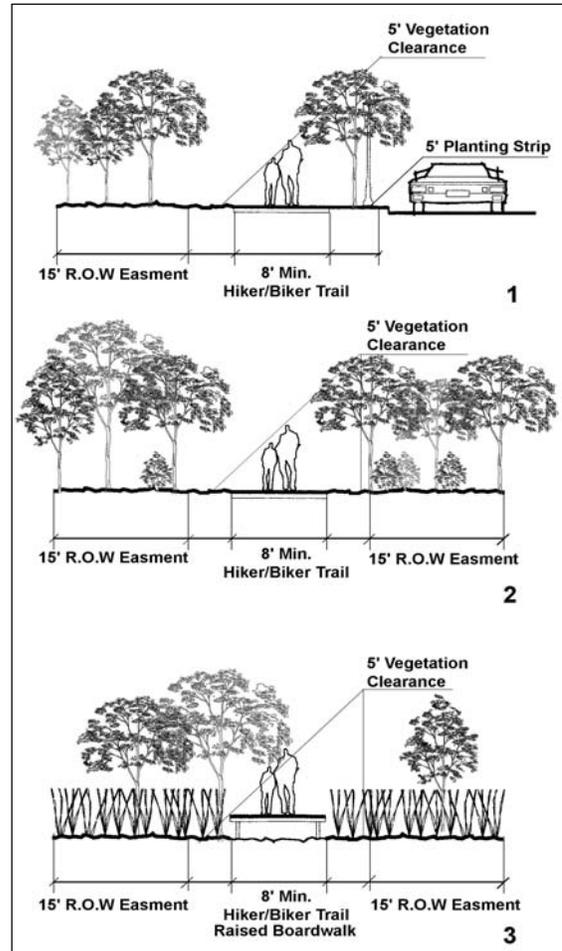


Figure III-12 Trail Types



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E. BUILDING DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Proportion

Design buildings to promote a pedestrian-friendly environment. Significant departures in mass and height among buildings can disrupt the pedestrian scale and overall context that is desired. Building proportions within a block should strive for a distinct rhythm, such as taller buildings anchoring a block and/or consistency in the number of levels among new buildings. Buildings should reflect a pedestrian-orientated scale and environment at the street level, although a distinct differentiation may be evident between upper levels and the first level. New development and modifications need to complement the desired outcome, which is to create a walkable environment defined by buildings. New building construction shall be a minimum of two stories and should not exceed four stories.

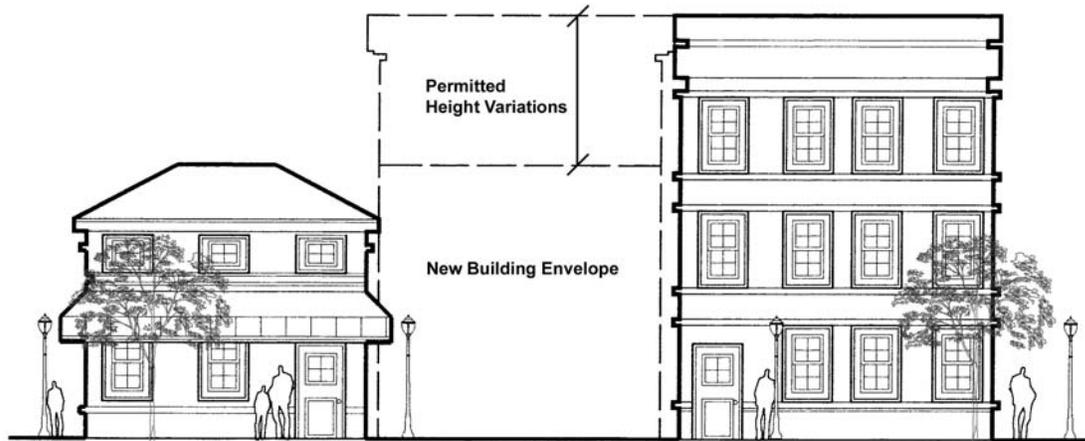


Figure III-13 Building Proportion

2. Roofs

Permit both pitched and flat roofs, but do not permit Gambrel or Mansard roof types. Flat roofs would incorporate a parapet along facades facing any public street, including architectural cornice detailing. Plain parapets will not be permitted. Pitched roofs should complement the overall style and scale of the building. Materials for pitched roofs should avoid having a reflective finish and incorporate a color that



complements the overall character of the building. Pitched roofs need to take measures to ensure that falling snow, ice, or rain do not create pedestrian hazards.

3. Fenestration

Design buildings with the appropriate amount of window area and door covering. The arrangement of building doors and windows helps to communicate the nature of a building. Building fenestration relates to the pattern, size, and orientation of windows and doors. Within the commercial district, the ground floor should provide the greatest amount of facade opening and articulation, making it inviting to pedestrian traffic. Building transparency is important at the street level, particularly for retail establishments. For upper levels, windows shall reflect the typical spacing found throughout the corridor. In the absence of surrounding buildings, the upper floors should use a decreasing percentage of facade opening to reinforce a “base,” “middle,” and “top” facade pattern. Encourage the use of depth to highlight facade openings such as windows. Windows should not be mounted flush to the exterior of the facade. The openings in the facade should be framed in a lintel or arch (and a sill at the bottom for windows) which is visible to the observer. Pairs of window shutters may be used, but must be used consistently and should appear to actually cover the entire window opening when closed.

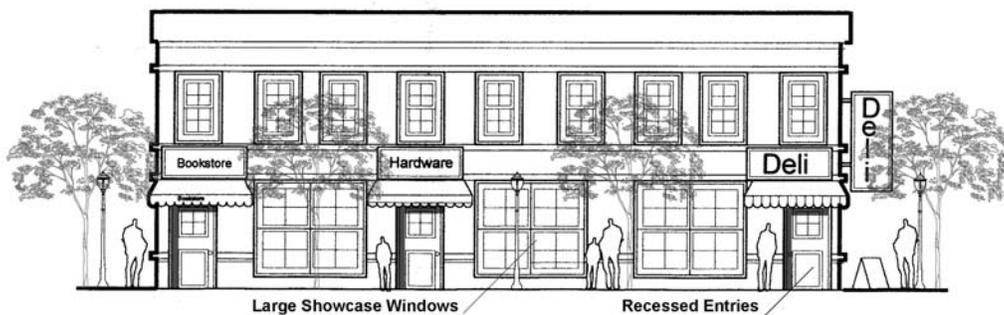


Figure III-14 Fenestration



4. Awnings and Canopies

Approve the use of awnings and canopies on facades that face public streets, although the use should not be required components of building design. If awnings and canopies are used, they should be made of canvas. Plastic, metal, and wood awnings are not permissible. Internal lighting or backlighting of awnings and canopies will not be permitted. Color schemes should be consistent with the colors outlined and with the overall building color palette. Retractable awnings are permitted.

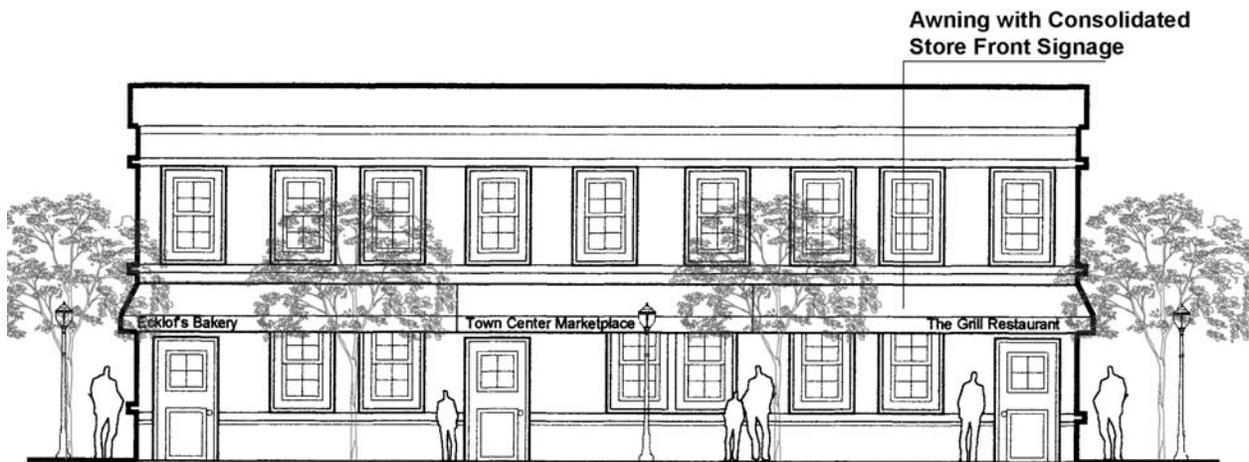


Figure III-15 Awnings and Canopies



5. Specialty Equipment

Screen rooftop mechanical equipment, satellite dishes, antennas, and other equipment from public view by the use of architecturally compatible materials, which are integral to the overall building design.

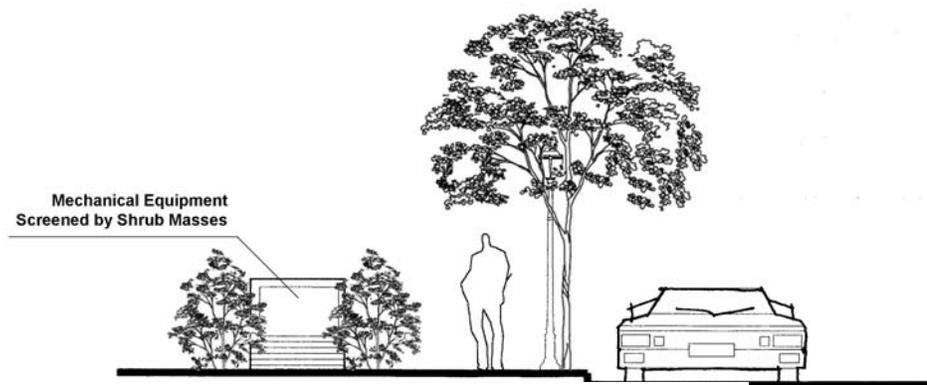


Figure III-16 Specialty Equipment

Locate wireless cellular telecommunications equipment on existing buildings within the district. The equipment should be screened and/or in a color which is consistent with the overall building color palette.



6. Materials and Colors

Keep the quality of exterior materials sufficiently durable to guarantee low maintenance, stability, and a reasonable life span. Facade materials must be durable, such as common red brick, special masonry units, natural stone, and wood. Other acceptable materials may include materials that are consistent with emerging technologies that simulate natural materials. Unacceptable facade materials include beige brick, plain (bare) masonry units, vinyl siding, and metal siding.

Acceptable trim includes finished grade painted or stained wood rather than bare, lumber grade wood. Windows should have anodized aluminum or wood frames and not bare aluminum frames. Building facades should include canvas awnings rather than plastic, internally lit awnings. Any paving must consist of brick, stone, or patterned concrete rather than asphalt.

Building colors should be compatible with the traditional building colors in the region and should be chosen from a paint distributor's historic color pattern. Fluorescent colors should not be used.

NATURAL MATERIALS
Wood
Stone
Stone Veneer
Red Common Brick
No Panelized Metal
Smooth or Patterned Block (Special Condition)
Materials That Reasonably Simulates Natural Material (Special Condition)