

XXXVI. COMMERCIAL ARCHITECTURE (Added March 2007)

I. STATUTORY AUTHORIZATION

- A. RSA Title LXIV, Chapters 674:16, Grant of Power
- B. 674:21, Innovative Land Use Controls

II. PURPOSES AND APPLICABILITY

A. General Purposes

1. To preserve and enhance the rural, small town character of Newton through architectural design that replicates in scale and character the best examples of traditional neighborhood design from the historic towns and villages of New England and to create and clearly delineate public and private spaces to enhance the quality of life and aesthetic quality of both the residents of the development and the town as a whole;
2. To promote traditional village building and site development patterns with an interconnected pattern of streets, alleys, and lanes, which provides for safe and efficient vehicular travel at a scale consistent with the small, rural village setting, and which provides for the connection of those streets to existing and future developments;
3. To protect environmental resources and to preserve scenic vistas, agricultural areas, and unique natural features of the landscape;
4. To provide for pedestrian and bicycle travel throughout the development through the creation of sidewalks, paths, and bicycle paths;
5. To promote the use of neighborhood greens, pocket parks, landscaped streets, and access to greenspace to provide space for recreation and social activity, and to provide visual enjoyment;
6. To provide a mix of housing styles, types, and sizes, to accommodate households of all ages, sizes, and incomes;
7. To provide buildings for civic assembly and neighborhood activities that promote the development of social networks and community and provide a visual focal point for the village subdivision; and
8. To promote the management of growth and the implementation of innovative land use controls consistent with RSA 674 in order to protect environmental resources, control sprawl, reduce traffic congestion, and enhance the sense of community of new developments and redeveloped areas.

B. Applicability.

1. The standards in this section are applicable within the Commercial District(s), whose location and boundaries have been selected to be consistent with policies in the Master Plan.
2. The standards in this section are also applicable to any proposed change of use or expansion of use for commercial properties outside of the Commercial District(s).

III. COMMERCIAL DESIGN STANDARDS

A. Architectural Design Standards

1. General. The following architectural design standards shall apply to all structures.

2. Buildings.

- a) Scale and Style. Buildings shall generally relate in scale and design features to the surrounding buildings, showing respect for the local context, except however, where existing development does not represent a consistent architectural style or does not incorporate a building design that reflects the rural character and



Figure 1. Scale and Style

architecture of New England towns, buildings should instead be designed to improve the overall streetscape, relying on the design standards set forth in this ordinance.

- b) As a general rule, buildings shall reflect a continuity of treatment obtained by maintaining the building scale or by subtly graduation changes, by maintaining small front setbacks, by continuous use of front porches on residential buildings, by maintaining cornice lines in buildings of the same height, by extending horizontal lines of fenestration, and by echoing architectural styles, details, design themes, building materials, and colors used in surrounding buildings where such buildings represent the rural character and architecture of New England towns.



Figure 2. Corner Lots

- c) **Corner Lots.** Buildings on corner lots shall be considered significant structures, given that they have at least two front facades visibly exposed to the street. If deemed appropriate by the planning board in its design review, such buildings may be designed with additional height and architectural embellishments, such as corner towers, steeples, or other features to emphasize their location and serve as a visual focal point for the area.
- d) **Walls and Planes.** Buildings shall avoid long, monotonous uninterrupted walls or roof planes. Offsets including projections, recesses, and changes in floor level shall be used in order to add architectural interest and variety, and to relieve the visual effect of a simple, long wall. Similarly, roof-line offsets shall be provided, in order to provide architectural interest and variety to the massing of a building and to relieve the effect of a single, long roof. Flat roofs should be avoided in favor of pitched roofs.
- e) Buildings with more than one façade facing a public street or internal open space shall be required to provide multiple front façade treatments.
- f) The architectural treatment of the front façade shall be continued, in its major features, around all visibly exposed sides of a building. All sides of a building shall be architecturally designed to be consistent with regard to style, materials, colors, and details. Bland wall or service area treatment of side and or rear elevations visible from the public viewshed is discouraged.
- g) **Base Course and Cornice.** All visibly exposed sides of a building shall have an articulated base course and cornice. The base course shall align with either the



Figure 4. Cornice and Base

kickplate or sill level of the first story. The cornice shall terminate or cap the top of a building wall, may project horizontally from the vertical building wall plane, and may be ornamented with moldings, brackets, and other details. The middle section of a building may be horizontally divided at the floor, lintel, or sill levels with belt or string course.

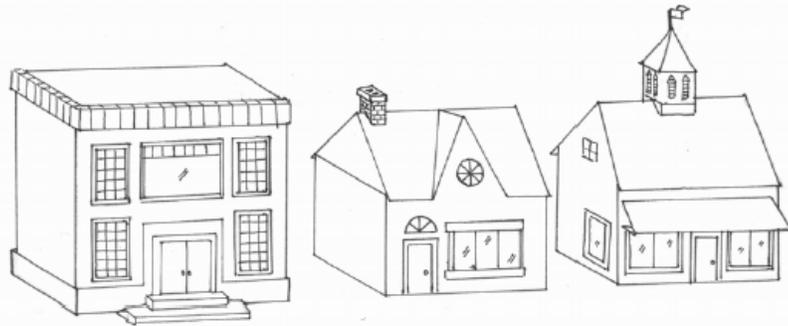


Figure 5. Roofs

- h) Roofs. Gable roofs with a minimum pitch of 9/12 should be used to the greatest extent possible. Where hipped roofs are used, it is recommended that the minimum pitch be 6/12. Both gable and hipped roofs should provide overhanging eaves on all sides that extend a minimum of one foot beyond the building wall. Flat roofs should be avoided on one-story buildings, but may be used on buildings with a minimum of two stories, provided that all visibly exposed walls shall have an articulated cornice which projects horizontally from the vertical building wall plane. Other roof types should be appropriate to the building's architecture. Mansard roofs are generally discouraged, particularly on buildings less than three stories in height. Architectural embellishments that add visual interest to roofs, such as dormers, belvederes, masonry chimneys, cupolas, clock towers, and other similar elements are encouraged.

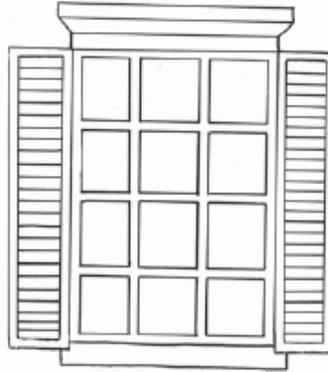


Figure 6. Windows

- i) Windows/fenestration. Fenestration shall be architecturally compatible with the style, materials, colors, and details of the building, and appropriate to a rural New England setting. Windows shall be vertically proportioned wherever possible. To the extent possible, upper story windows shall be vertically aligned with the location of windows and doors on the ground level, including storefront or display windows. Blank, windowless walls are discouraged. Storefronts are an integral part of building and shall be integrally designed with the upper floors to be compatible with the overall façade character. Ground floor retail, service, and restaurant uses should have large pane display windows, framed by the surrounding wall, and shall not exceed 75 percent of the total ground level façade area.
- j) Entrances. All entrances to a building shall be defined and articulated by architectural elements such as lintels, pediments, pilasters, columns, porticoes, porches, overhangs, railings, balustrades, and others, where appropriate. Any such element utilized shall be consistent with the style, materials, colors, and details of the building as a whole, as shall the doors. Awnings are permitted where they compliment the building's architectural style.
- k) Light fixtures. Light fixtures attached to the exterior of a building shall be architecturally compatible with the style, materials, colors, and details of the building and shall comply with local building codes. The type of light source used on the exterior of buildings, signs, parking areas, pedestrian walkways, and other areas of a site, and the light quality produced, shall be the same or compatible. Facades shall be lit from the exterior, and, as a general rule, lights should be concealed through shielding or recessed behind architectural features. The use of low-pressure sodium, fluorescent, or mercury vapor lighting either attached to buildings or to light the exterior of buildings shall be prohibited. Mounting brackets and associated hardware should be inconspicuous.

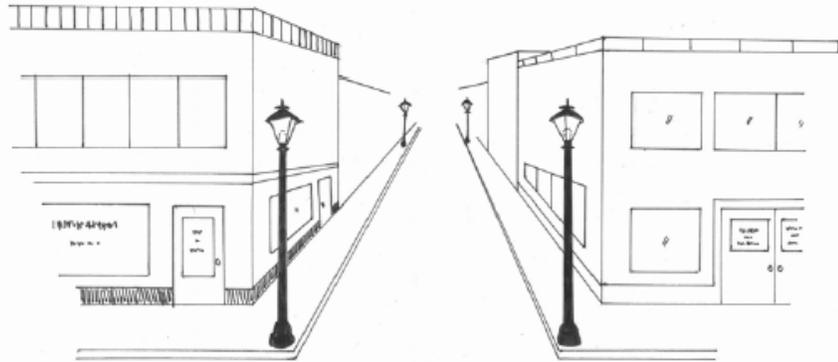


Figure 7. Street lights

- l) **Lighting.** Street lights shall be decorative and shall blend with the architectural style of the community. Along all commercial or mixed-use streets, parking areas, sidewalks, walkways, courtyards, community greens, and interior open spaces, decorative light posts shall be provided at regular intervals. Posts shall be spaced at no greater than 80 feet on center on both sides of a commercial or main street. Light posts should be at least ten feet high. In parking areas, post heights may extend to a maximum of sixteen feet. Wall-mounted light design shall be incorporated into the street lighting design.
- m) **Air conditioners and other fixtures.** All air conditioning units, HVAC systems, exhaust pipes or stacks, elevator housing, dumpsters, propane/fuel tanks, transformers, satellite dishes, and other telecommunications receiving devices shall be thoroughly screened from view from the public right-of-way and from adjacent properties by using walls, fencing, roof elements, or landscaping. In no case will chain-link fencing be permitted for screening.
- n) **Fire escapes.** Fire escapes shall not be permitted on a building's front façade. In buildings requiring a second means of egress pursuant to the local building codes, internal stairs or other routes of egress shall be used.
- o) **Security.** Solid metal security gates or solid roll-down metal windows shall not be permitted. Link or grill type security devices shall be permitted only if installed from the inside, within the window or door frames. Security grilles shall be recessed and concealed during normal business hours.

B. Signs

- 1. **General.** All signs within a new development must conform to the following requirements. All signs within a development must be consistent with the overall design of the development, and should be constructed of wood, granite, painted cast metal, bronze, brass, or other material consistent with the materials used in the building's façade or fixtures. Plastic panel rear-lighted signs are not permitted. Billboards are not permitted. Signs employing mercury vapor, low pressure and high-pressure sodium, and metal halide lighting are not permitted.

2. Design. Unique and interesting designs are encouraged in the lettering and graphics of each sign. Signs may be attached to the building and project outward from the wall so long as the sign does not project outward from the wall to which it is attached more than eighteen inches. Projecting signs must be no larger than four square feet. Projecting signs must be at least ten feet above the ground. Signs attached to the front façade shall not exceed the dimensions of the façade.
3. Height. The maximum permitted height of signs is fifteen feet above the front sidewalk elevation, and shall not extend above the base of the second floor windowsill, parapet, eave, or building façade.
4. Freestanding signs shall only be permitted where the business is not attached to any other buildings. All freestanding signs must be no larger than four feet in height and no greater than six feet in width. Freestanding signs constructed of natural materials such as granite or wood are encouraged.
5. Signs that list more than one business shall not be permitted except in instances where a building contains multiple businesses or offices that are not distinguishable from the street.
6. Street address numbers shall be clearly marked in any new development and included in the design of the front façade or signage of individual buildings.
7. Company logos that contain bright or garish colors or designs shall be muted to harmonize with the overall color scheme and design of the development.

C. Landscaping

1. All developments must contain a landscaping plan that lists the location, species, and suitability of plant species to the site.
2. Existing trees and other features of the land shall be protected in the development of the site to the greatest extent feasible.
3. Where merited, trees shall be planted to enhance public spaces, open spaces, and streetscapes. The Planning Board will meet with the developer's landscape architect to review the landscape plan and suggest any appropriate landscaping improvements to the site to enhance the development consistent with the landscape requirements mentioned elsewhere in this ordinance.

D. Parking

1. All parking for commercial areas must be on-street or in the rear of buildings.
2. Rear parking areas shall be landscaped with a line of low shrubs or suitable foliage every two rows of spaces.

Drawings within this ordinance provided by David West and Jill Robinson, Rockingham Planning Commission