

Commercial Development: Architectural Standards

The Green Valley Institute exists to help the communities and citizens of The Last Green Valley, also known as the Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor, sustain their environment and quality of life while growing their economics.

We are a non-regulatory organization dedicated to:

- Improving the knowledge base from which land use and natural resource decisions are made,
- Building local capacity to protect and manage natural resources as our region grows.

The GVI was created through a formal partnership of the Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor and the University of Connecticut's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Massachusetts' Cooperative Extension System and other partners.



Regulations and design standards for commercial development can enhance town character, create a sense of place and encourage economic development. This fact sheet is the third in a series on this topic. Other fact sheets in the series are an overview of commercial development, and individual fact sheets with suggested regulation standards for site planning, signage, lighting and landscaping. Thoughtful **architectural** design that takes into consideration the building's size, shape, windows, materials and details can benefit the business owner and become a valuable addition to a community.

Objectives for Commercial Architecture

New construction should be designed to fit the individual characteristics of the particular site and be influenced by traditional New England patterns while meeting the needs of the intended use and users. National franchises should be required to use their New England prototypes.



These Dunkin' Donuts and McDonald's buildings were designed to meet community's design standards.

Buildings and other elements should be designed to human scale, meaning the form, massing and openings should be proportional to the size of a human figure.

All renovations and additions to existing structures are an opportunity to add visual interest to a building and enhance the original structure.

Accessory structures (canopies, storage units, recycling or trash enclosures, cart corrals, and the like) should coordinate with the primary building through the repetition of form, materials, details and color.

Facade Design Standards

Design buildings to have an attractive and human scaled facade to the street, internal drives, parking areas and surrounding neighborhoods, with main entrances that are easy to distinguish, reinforced through site and architectural features, and, wherever possible, clearly visible from the street. Incorporate the proposed facade-mounted sign in the design of the building.



Use design techniques to distinguish the main entrance facade from the other facades and to define the customer



entry while relating to each other and the scale of the building for a harmonious overall design. Techniques to add visual interest to a main entrance facade are covered porches or arcades, gables and dormers, pilasters, display windows, outdoor seating areas, recesses or projections or other features designed to add scale and visual interest to this facade

Design all facades facing public roads, residential neighborhoods or abutting properties to match or complement the main entrance facade with similar elements such as windows and roof lines.

Reduce the scale of buildings with recesses or projections in proportion to the building's height and



length that limit the length of the plane of any facade to 40'.

Break the plane of all building facades with window and door openings that are in scale with the facade.

Coordinate the design of all exterior components, such as signs, lighting, landscaping and other elements to be in scale with, and complementary to, the main entrance facade.

Treat all mechanical and functional elements as an integral part of the architecture, these elements would include vents, downspouts, flashing, electrical conduits, meters, HVAC equipment, service areas, loading docks, service connections and other functional elements. Incorporate downspouts and vents into the facade design through detailing and color. Contain meters, utility connections, HVAC equipment and other exterior service elements in service closets, behind walls or locate out of view from the public.

Standards for Materials and Details

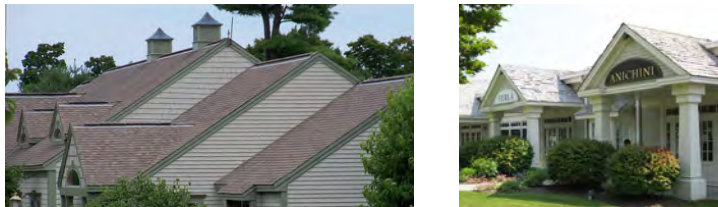
Treat building materials as a significant design element in defining the appearance of the building. Limit the number of material types selected.



Use historic buildings in town as an inspiration for materials and patterns.

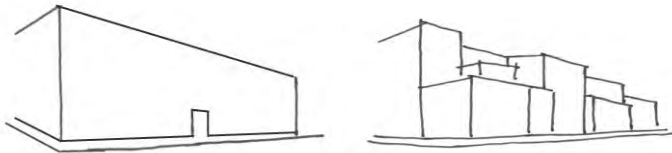
Choose low reflective colors for the body of buildings and a complementary trim color. Use darker colors to reduce the scale of large buildings.

Design roof lines to provide diversity to the building form, to reduce the mass of large buildings, to emphasize entrances and to add visual interest.



Large Scale Buildings Standards

Design buildings greater than 20,000 square feet in a manner to break up their mass into smaller visual components through the use of projections, recesses and varied facade treatments.



The two drawings show how changing the design and massing of a large building can dramatically alter the perceived scale of the building from one large building to many smaller ones.

Incorporate display windows on all facades that face a public area or street; use colonnades, pilasters, gable ends, or canopies to add interest and reduce the scale.

Design large scale buildings to limit the length of any facade to 70' by using recesses or projections in proportion to the buildings height and length. Use techniques to reduce the scale of the building such as strong shadow lines, changes in the roof line, patterns in the surface material and wall openings. Coordinate all facade elements with the landscape plan for balance, proportion and continuity.

Enhance the pedestrian environment by providing seating areas and other focal feature or amenities of the same quality as the building and consistent with overall site plan.

Linear Commercial Building Standards

Design all linear buildings (strip shopping centers, one-story multi-tenant offices and other linear commercial buildings) with facade and roof line elements that reduce their scale and add architectural interest.

Use techniques to effectively reduce the scale of the building and to add visual interest, such as varied roof lines, raised roof line at key entryways, projections and offsets, open colonnades, and similar features.

Clearly delineate pedestrian entrances to each tenant to convey a sense of individuality through the use of architectural detailing, roof line breaks, landscaping and lighting.



These three linear buildings have been designed to reduce the visual scale of the building with changes in roof lines, projections and offsets all of which add to their architectural interest.

Standards for Vehicular-focused Buildings

Design buildings for service and gas stations, convenience stores, car washes, drive-throughs and the like with facade and roof line elements that reduce their scale and add architectural interest.

Orient the building to face the street; locate all pump islands and canopies in the rear whenever possible, or at the side.

Design the facades and roof lines as any other commercial building; incorporate windows or other fenestrations in the facade facing the street.

Design service and drive-through canopies to be visually compatible with the main structure through consistency in roof pitch, architectural detailing, materials and color; locate at the side or rear of the building and avoid facing any street or residential area.



This New York Hess gas station and convenience store would meet these standards.

Integrate vehicular doors for service bays or car washes into the design of the building and site so they are not directly visible from a public street, common area or adjacent residential area.

Additional Information:

Green Valley Institute: www.GreenValleyInstitute.org

Scarborough, ME Design Guidelines: www.scarborough.me.us/planning/pb/spguidelines.pdf

EPA, Smart Growth Development: www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/codeexamples.htm



A publication of the Green Valley Institute. Please contact us at 860-774-9600 to schedule a workshop on this topic.