



Design Guidelines

The mixing of residential and commercial activities is an important ingredient to maintaining and enhancing the character of a small town. One goal of the Planning Board is to ensure that future development will preserve this concept. The following design guidelines have been developed for use when reviewing site plan and special permit applications. These guidelines provide advice and guidance to developers and should be utilized by the Special Permit Granting Authority when reviewing applications.

1. Purpose.

- 1.1. Purpose. The purpose of the design guidelines is to preserve and enhance the rural characteristics of the Town of Pepperell to promote visually pleasing and attractive structures and surrounding areas to facilitate a pedestrian-friendly commercial neighborhood while protecting existing neighboring residential properties. These Guidelines shall follow the intent and purpose of the “Design Criteria” from the Planning Board Rules and Regulations for Special Permits and Site Plan Reviews and the “Site Plan Approval Objectives” in Section 9400 of the Zoning Bylaws.

2. New Structures.

- 2.1. New construction should reflect the historic nature of the surrounding neighborhood(s) and maintain a sense of place through continuity. A relationship between existing structures and the streetscape should be maintained. This should include the architectural style and exterior materials to maintain consistency between new and existing structures.

The following guidelines are recommended:

- Reflect existing building heights and rooflines
- Maintain setbacks consistent with neighboring buildings
- Consider the same size and type of windows and doors
- Consider similar color schemes and exterior materials
- Create a pedestrian friendly façade
- Offer a street fronting orientation

- Avoid a blank facade
- Use continuous visual features which may include recessed doorways, bay windows, columns, cornices, and awnings
- Offer pedestrian-friendly features such as walkways directly from existing sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and outdoor seating
- Incorporate gabled rooflines or the appearance thereof to conceal rooftop equipment



3. Existing Structures.

3.1. Existing structures are the backbone of the community and surrounding neighborhoods. The re-use of existing structures is encouraged and should reflect the historic nature of the area. Existing structures offer opportunities for reutilization and preservation.

The following guidelines are recommended:

- Avoid removal or alteration of any distinctive historical feature and where possible, restore any architectural features that may have been covered or removed.
- Maintain original design scheme through materials and color utilizing similar or same products.
- Blend all construction or additions seamlessly and allow for additions to be placed to the side or rear of the existing building.
- Consider surrounding buildings and strive for visual coherence.
- Maintain any existing vegetation or constructed buffer, if possible. If disturbance must occur re-establishment of the buffer must occur.
- Maintain signage and addressing for the structure which identifies all businesses or residences within the structure.
- Minimize impacts to any abutting residential areas.
- Preserve and enhance characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood.



4. Parking and Loading Areas

4.1. Parking and loading areas are an important necessity for all businesses. They can be incorporated into the site of the new or existing structure to become a part of the entire landscape of the property.

The following guidelines are recommended:

- Treat the areas as an accessory to the building with placements to the side or rear of the building and reflect the secondary nature of the component to the structure.
- Minimize visibility through the use of appropriate landscaping and consistency with the existing architecture.
- Design egress to direct the pedestrian with no adverse affects to the character of the architecture.
- Utilize fencing, stone walls, islands, trees, walkways with plantings to minimize the existence of visible parking areas.
- Provide loading areas away from the front of any building allowing for egress to the rear of the structure for delivery and/or pick-up of merchandise, supplies, equipment, etc.
- Provide screening for any parking and loading areas not provided to the side or rear of the structure.



5. Signs.

- 5.1. The signage for a business becomes the main advertising for that business. The look and feel of this advertising should reflect the nature of the community and offer basic information without cause for confusion or clutter. All signage should be used as an important tool to direct patrons to the business.

The following guidelines are recommended:

- Utilize signage of similar size, proportion, and materials for adjoining or adjacent structures using colors to offer emphasis and variety.
- Consider important architectural features of a building and allow signage to blend with its features and complement the surroundings.
- Insure easy readability by both pedestrian and vehicle traffic approaching the area.
- Utilize spotlighted signs or signs of a monument style with limited back lighting to encourage customer traffic.
- Using sandwich boards or small additional “special” signage should not be a constant occurrence.



6. Lighting.

- 6.1. Lighting can provide a project with illumination levels appropriate for the designed activity (i.e. parking, pedestrian access, signage, and security). Illumination levels should be reasonably uniform throughout the site and should be located in a manner which compliments the site and does not create competing levels of illumination between adjacent properties. Lighting designs should complement the architecture and character of the building and site.

The following guidelines are recommended:

- Minimize reflection and glare of all free standing and surface mounted signs (i.e. down lighting directed solely at the sign, parking area, sidewalk, etc.).

- Utilize shields, diffusers, or refractors to reduce glare and control direction of the illumination to eliminate all lighting directed towards a public roadway or adjacent property.
- Locate light poles in a manner which becomes part of the landscape of the site. Keep the height of all lamp posts to fourteen (14) feet or less.
- Use uniformity to space lighting throughout the area without crossing property lines.
- Consider styles of lighting fixtures that will complement the architectural style of the building and surrounding area.
- Minimize or eliminate the use of flood style lighting on the site.
- Try to incorporate exterior safety and security lighting into the architecture of the building while considering the placement and directionality of the lighting which is proposed for use during dusk till dawn hours.
- Utilize low level landscape lighting to minimize the need for high levels of broadcast illumination on the site.



7. Landscaping and Public Spaces.

- 7.1. Landscaping can serve many purposes. A well-landscaped streetscape and property will draw people – and customers. Proper use of landscaping can lend consistency and cohesion to the downtown area. In areas where residential and non-residential properties abut, landscaping offers an excellent opportunity to ensure "good neighbor" relations are maintained. Refer to Section 5400, Screening, Fencing, Walls and Barriers in the Zoning Bylaw for the minimum standards.

The following guidelines are recommended.

- Preserve mature plantings, stone walls and other historic features where possible.
- Encourage preservation and protection of established shade trees as well as planting new ones.

- Define the street edge and parking areas with trees and landscaping that is consistent with neighboring properties and complementary to the rest of the street.
- Create screening of parking lots and service roads that abut residential lots along the edges using fencing and dense evergreen plantings.
- Create screening of all loading docks, service areas, storage area, mechanical equipment, HVAC, transformers, and trash dumpsters with fencing and/or dense plantings.
- Consider use of a landscape architect or landscape designer.

7.2. Public, outdoor spaces promote foot traffic and entice people to visit and explore an area, rather than simply jump in and out of their car. Outdoor spaces, such as a simple bench under a shade tree or landscaped common area, provide a place for people to gather, thus promoting a sense of community in the heart of our downtown.

- Consider the use of amenities that invite public use such as benches, bike racks, water features, and shaded gathering spaces.
- Consider plantings and trees that define outdoor spaces, shade pedestrian spaces, and create buffers between public spaces and roads, parking areas and/or mechanical equipment.
- Consider sidewalks and walkways that provide pedestrian access and connections to neighboring commercial establishments or public amenities.
- Consider creative designs that use stone or brick walls, wood fencing, paving materials and plantings to define walkways to enhance the pedestrian experience.
- Consider the use of lighting fixtures that complement landscape features and follow the lighting guidelines to illuminate walkways and outdoor areas.



8. Administration

These Design Guidelines do not replace or supersede the requirements of the Pepperell Protective Zoning Bylaws. These Design Guidelines may be revised or amended by the Planning Board in accordance with the procedures of the Planning Board Rules and Regulations for Special Permits and Site Plan Reviews.



Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

February 8, 2012

Richard McHugh, Chairman
Planning Board
Town Hall
One Main Street
Pepperell, MA 01463

A Multi-Disciplinary

Regional Planning

Agency Serving:

RE: Proposed Design Guidelines

Dear Mr. McHugh:

Billerica

Chelmsford

Dracut

Dunstable

Lowell

Pepperell

Tewksbury

Tyngsborough

Westford

The Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) wholeheartedly supports the Planning Board's initiative to adopt design guidelines for future development and redevelopment projects. The design guidelines are intended to encourage sound and quality development, while protecting abutters and preserving community character. The guidelines will also assist developers and private property owners in better understanding the overall development goals and concepts encouraged by the Pepperell Planning Board.

Ensuring coordinated development and cohesive neighborhoods will benefit the entire community, and help attract future economic investment to town. At the same time, the proposed guidelines allow for the creativity needed to accommodate the limitations and unique characteristics of each project and site.

NMCOG believes that development and redevelopment projects designed in accordance with these guidelines will ultimately contribute to creating a more unified, vibrant and dynamic neighborhoods, in which the community can take pride.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the guidelines. NMCOG commends the Planning Board for its efforts to enhance and improve the community by encouraging development projects that are of high quality and in keeping with the desires of the town's residents.

Stephen C. Themelis
Chair

Beverly A. Woods
Executive Director

40 Church Street
Suite 200
Lowell, MA
01852-2686

TEL: (978) 454-8021

FAX: (978) 454-8023

www.nmcog.org

Sincerely,

Beverly Woods
Executive Director