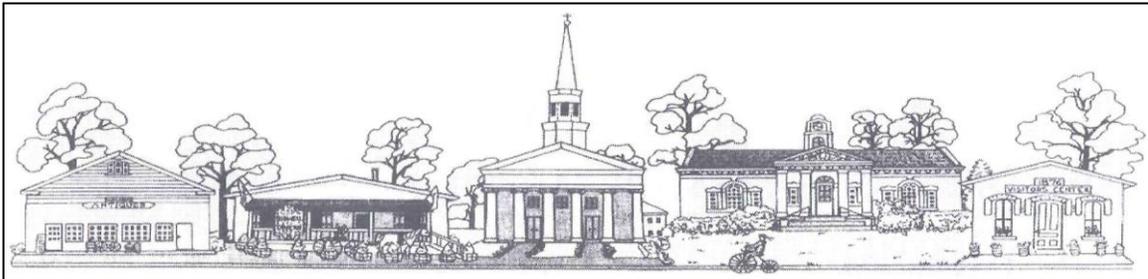


Design Guidelines



Village & Gateway Districts Town of Coventry



Developed by The Green Valley Institute
September 2003

OVERVIEW

The design guidelines strive to maintain and enhance Coventry's small town way of life, rural character, historic value and scenic charm. They encourage the use of forms and materials that are human in scale and allow expression of Coventry's sense of community.

Design Review

Design Review provides a framework for citizens and developers to work toward achieving a better built environment through attention given to fundamental design principles. Design Review is intended to affect how new development can contribute positively to Coventry's historic mill village setting. Design guidelines offer a flexible tool—an alternative to prescriptive zoning requirements—and will allow new development to respond better to the distinctive character of its surroundings.

Design Review has three principal objectives:

1. To encourage site planning and architectural design that will enhance the character of the town and ensure that new development sensitively fits into the village;
2. To provide flexibility in the application of development standards; and
3. To improve communication and participation among developers, neighbors and the town early in the design and siting of new development.

Design Review is a component of the permit application along with other components, such as environmental review, variances, etc., administered by the Planning Department. Like these other components, Design Review applications involve public notice and opportunity for comment. Unlike other components, projects subject to Design Review are brought before the Planning Commission for its recommendations or to staff through a Preliminary Administrative Design Review. The Planning Commission, together with the decisions on any other components, makes the final decision on Design Review.

Context and Design Issues

The Coventry Village District design guidelines reveal the character of the village as known to its residents and businesses. The guidelines help to reinforce existing character and protect the qualities that the village values most in the face of change.

The overriding objective of the design guidelines is to ensure that new development fits in well with its surroundings. The following design guidelines share this objective, and with an emphasis on siting and design conditions and priorities supported by the community, aim to guide the design of new development in a manner that strengthens the village's mixed-use commercial core. The community has clearly stated its desire to maintain the small town atmosphere and qualities that have historically characterized the village. However, it was also recognized that new development provides the opportunity for a broader mix of businesses and services, residential units and employment and an expanded tax base. The Main Street Partnership recommended the development of design guidelines to ensure that new

development creates a compact, mixed-use commercial core that is pedestrian oriented in scale, character and function. Several design issues and related priorities were identified and have been incorporated into the Coventry Village Design Guidelines.

OVERALL GOALS OF THE DESIGN GUIDELINES FALL INTO THREE CATEGORIES:

1. Site Planning for a Pedestrian Environment

In general, the pedestrian environment (sidewalks, pathways, entries and crossings) should be safe, accessible to all, connect to places people want to go, and provide good places to be used for many things. New development should reflect these principles by enhancing Village and Gateway Districts streetscapes with proposals that makes pedestrian activity at the street level a priority.

The overall goal of these guidelines is to aid in creating districts in which new development supports a mix of uses and engages the public realm (i.e. sidewalk) in a pedestrian- oriented manner.

The Village Center District along Main Street from Monument Hill to Mason Street is recognized as the area’s primary pedestrian-oriented mixed-use district. This district should offer pedestrian connection to the Mill Brook greenway, Coventry Lake recreation area, Town library as well as the other areas of the village. This district should have a continuous pedestrian scale and high level of comfort at the street level.

The two Gateway District areas should set the stage for the Village Center District and while providing on-site parking, should focus on the pedestrian comfort and safety and through site design, encourage pedestrian movement within each district as well as to the other village districts.

Coventry recognizes that a successful pedestrian environment is really a pedestrian “network”, extending beyond sidewalks to include paths, crossings and building entries. Mid-block pedestrian connections are encouraged to be incorporated into larger new development to link parking and surrounding streets to the village core.

2. Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

The quality of Coventry’s small town “feel” is expressed in the existing architecture. One way to preserve and continue the small town quality in new development is through the siting, massing and design of new buildings. New development in all districts of the village must be consistent with the height, bulk and scale of the other structures in the village.

3. Architectural Character

Elements and materials that respect and strengthen the village core are encouraged in new building design. The quality of Coventry's built environment can be characterized as mixed – good buildings that are architecturally interesting mixed with others with indistinct style or character - and therefore a selective approach to contextual design is warranted. New development should respond to Coventry's context by providing enough visual linkages between the existing stock of good buildings and the proposed structure so as to create a cohesive overall effect. Appropriate visual linkages are simple, basic features such as window proportions, entryway placements, decorative elements and materials. For example, many of the area's most successful commercial buildings exhibit human scale window proportions and bold cornices. Repeating such elements in new development would continue an appropriate pattern.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Amenity: Aesthetic or other features of a development that increase its marketability or usability to the public.

Articulation: The manner in which portions of a building form are expressed (materials, color, texture, pattern, modulation, etc.) and come together to define the structure.

Cornice: A molded or projecting horizontal feature that crowns a façade

Design Guidelines: Statement of preferred design practices or aesthetics that are used to guide development projects in a particular city, community, or neighborhood.

Façade: Any vertical, exterior face or wall of a building, often distinguished from other faces by architectural details

Fenestration: The arrangement and design of windows and doors on a buildings façade.

Frieze: The area of a façade dividing upper stories from the ground level story; generally one to two feet high and continuing the width of the building; may contain ornamentation.

Gable: The upper, triangular portion of a façade, usually flanked by sloping roofs.

Kickplate: The area below a display window.

Modulation: A stepping back or projecting forward of sections of a structure's façade within specified intervals of building width and depth, as a means of breaking up a structure's apparent bulk.

Parapets: A low wall used as protection in any location where there is a drop like at the edge of a roof, balcony or terrace.

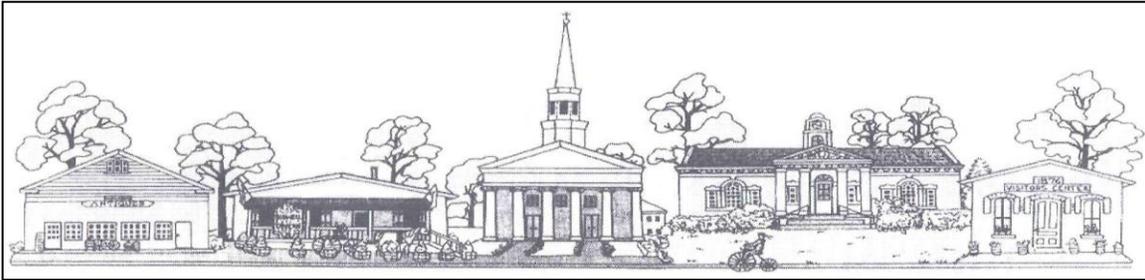
Pedestrian Scale: Used to describe the quality of a building or streetscape that includes structural or architectural components of size and proportions that relate to the human form and/or that exhibits through its structural or architectural components the human functions contained within.

Streetscape: The visual and functional character of an entire street including: buildings, paving material, plantings and street amenities such as lamps and benches. Also, the environment created for human activity and interaction.

Street Wall: The façade of a building facing a pedestrian or vehicular way.

Transom: A small, often hinged, window or multi-paned window opening above a door or another window, usually capping the street-level of a commercial building.

COVENTRY VILLAGE DESIGN GUIDELINES



The overriding objective of these design guidelines is to ensure that new development fits well with its surroundings. New development *must* be contextually sensitive to the history, community and environment that make the village. These guidelines are intended to provide guidance and direction so that new construction can meet that requirement.

1. Site Planning for a Pedestrian Environment

A pedestrian-oriented streetscape is perhaps the most important characteristic to be achieved in new development in Coventry's mixed-use areas: Village Center District and the Gateway District.

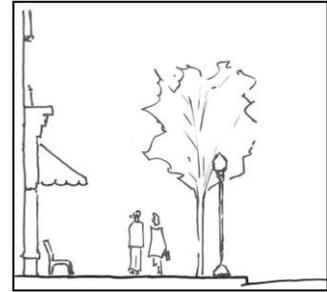
New development in-fill in the Village Center District will set the precedent in establishing desirable siting and design characteristics.

- A. Create continuous pedestrian interest and activity:**
 - a. Street wall with minimal space between buildings
 - b. Frequent entries to street level businesses, and frequent windows with a view of the activity within.
 - c. Include street trees, drop lighting on buildings, benches and planters
 - d. Provide small seating areas or other areas for human interaction.
- B. Provide safe environment for pedestrians**
 - a. Limit direct vehicle/pedestrian interaction
 - b. Pedestrian has clear access to business via sidewalk or walkway, not through or around parking area
 - c. Only clear, well designed crossing of pedestrian path is allowed; pedestrian maintains the right of way

Human Activity

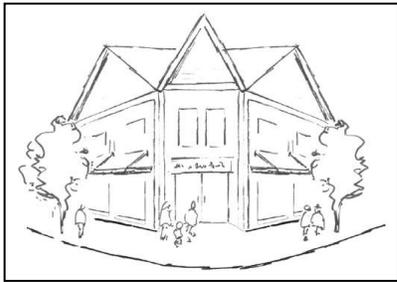
An active and interesting sidewalk engages pedestrians through effective transitions between the public and private realm.

In the Village Center District, proposed development is encouraged to take advantage of the zero front line set back, but to also incorporate areas of recesses for public/private spaces, such as café seating. Building facades should give shape to the space of the street through arrangement and scale of elements. Display windows should be large and open at the street level to provide interest and encourage activity along the sidewalk. At night, these windows should provide a secondary source of lighting.



Corner Lots

Pedestrian activities are concentrated at street corners. These are places of convergence, where people wait to cross and are most likely to converse with others. New development on corner lots in the Village Center District should take advantage of this condition, adding interest to the street while providing clear space for movement.



New buildings should reinforce street corners, while enhancing the pedestrian environment. Public space at the corner, whether open or enclosed, should be scaled in a manner that allows for pedestrian flow and encourages social interaction. To achieve a human scale, these spaces should be well defined and integrated into the overall design of the building. Consider: - providing seating; - incorporating art that engages people; - setting back corner entries to facilitate pedestrian flow and allow for good visibility at the intersection.

Redesign of existing buildings on corners should also be oriented toward the corner.

Other Considerations

Outdoor power and water sources are encouraged to be provided in order to facilitate building maintenance and exterior decorative lighting needs. Conveniently located sources could also be taken advantage of for special community events.

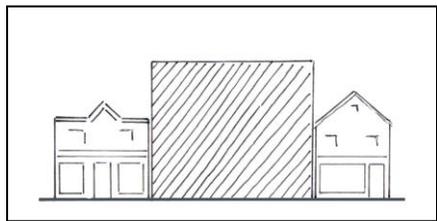
2. Height, Bulk and Scale

The scale of existing commercial/mixed-use development on contiguous properties must be considered for new development in the Village Center and Gateway Districts. A transition in height, bulk and scale—in terms of relationship to surrounding context and within the proposed structure itself—must be considered.

1. Applicant must analyze the site in relationship to its surroundings. This should include:
 - Patterns of urban form in existing built environment, such as setbacks and massing compositions.
 - Size of Code-allowable building envelope and footprint in relation to existing build environment.

2. New buildings should use architectural methods including modulation, color, texture, entries, materials and detailing to break up the facade— particularly important for long buildings —into sections and character consistent with traditional, multi-bay commercial buildings prevalent in the village’s commercial core.

3. The arrangement of architectural elements, materials and colors should aid in mitigating height, bulk and scale impacts of village development, particularly at the upper levels. For development greater than 1-1/2 stories in height, a strong horizontal treatment (e.g. cornice line or frieze) should occur at the first story. Consider a change of materials, as well as a progressively lighter color application to reduce the appearance of upper levels from the street and adjacent properties. The use of architectural style, details (i.e. rooflines, cornice lines, fenestration patterns), and materials found in less intensive surrounding buildings should be considered.



A



B

The height and width of the new building ('A') is at odds with the rhythm of the smaller buildings along the street. Consider breaking the mass of large structures into form elements similar to the scale and character of the surrounding street frontage (Building 'B').

3. Architectural Character

The physical appearance of new development in the Village Center and Gateway Districts is an important aspect that will shape the character of the village. The overall design, details and material will be a key component in determining context sensitivity.

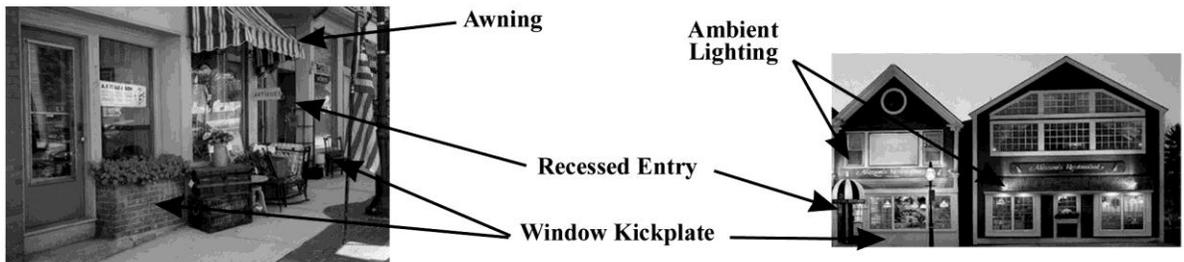
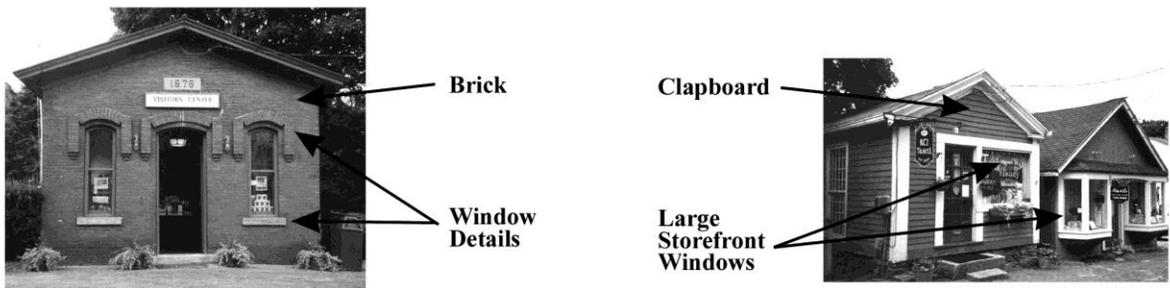
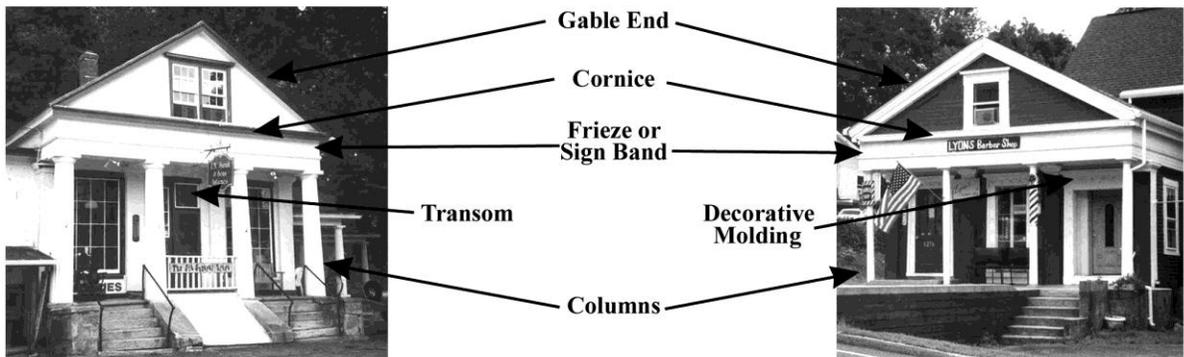
Facade Articulation

To make new, larger development compatible with the surrounding architectural context, facade articulation and architectural embellishment are important considerations in mixed use and multifamily residential buildings. Large buildings should have facade articulation that reflects a group of small buildings and reinforce the architectural rhythm established in the commercial core.

Architectural Cues

New mixed-use and commercial development should respond to several architectural features common in Coventry's best storefront buildings to preserve and enhance pedestrian orientation and maintain an acceptable level of consistency with the existing architecture. To create cohesiveness in the village, identifiable and exemplary architectural patterns should be reinforced. New elements can be introduced - provided they are accompanied by strong design linkages.

Preferred elements can be found in the examples of commercial and mixed-use buildings included on this page.



Architectural Concept and Consistency

New multi-story developments are encouraged to consider methods to integrate a building's upper and lower levels. The base of new mixed-use buildings – especially those zoned 40 ft. in height - should reflect the scale of the overall building. New mixed-use buildings are encouraged to build the commercial level, as well as one to two levels above, out to the front and side property lines to create a more substantial base. The use and repetition of architectural features and building materials, textures and colors can help create unity in a structure. Consider how the following can contribute to a building that exhibits a cohesive architectural concept:

- facade modulation and articulation (i.e. recesses and protrusions);
- windows and doorway (fenestration) patterns;
- trim and moldings;
- grilles and railings;
- roof lines;
- lighting and signage.

Human Scale

Facades should contain elements that enhance pedestrian comfort and orientation while presenting features with visual interest that invite activity. Overhead weather protection should be functional and appropriately scaled. It should be viewed as an architectural amenity, and therefore contribute positively to the design of the building with appropriate proportions and character.

Overhead weather protection should be designed with consideration given to:

- continuity with weather protection on nearby buildings;
- when opaque material is used, the underside should be illuminated; and
- the height and depth of the weather protection should provide a comfortable scale for pedestrians.



Signage. Signs should add interest to the street level environment. They can unify the overall architectural concept of the building, or provide unique identity for a commercial space within a larger mixed-use structure. Design signage that is appropriate for the scale, character and use of the project and surrounding area. Signs should be oriented and scaled for both pedestrians on sidewalks and slow moving vehicles.

The following sign types are encouraged:

- pedestrian-oriented blade and window signs;
- marquee signs and signs on overhead weather protection;



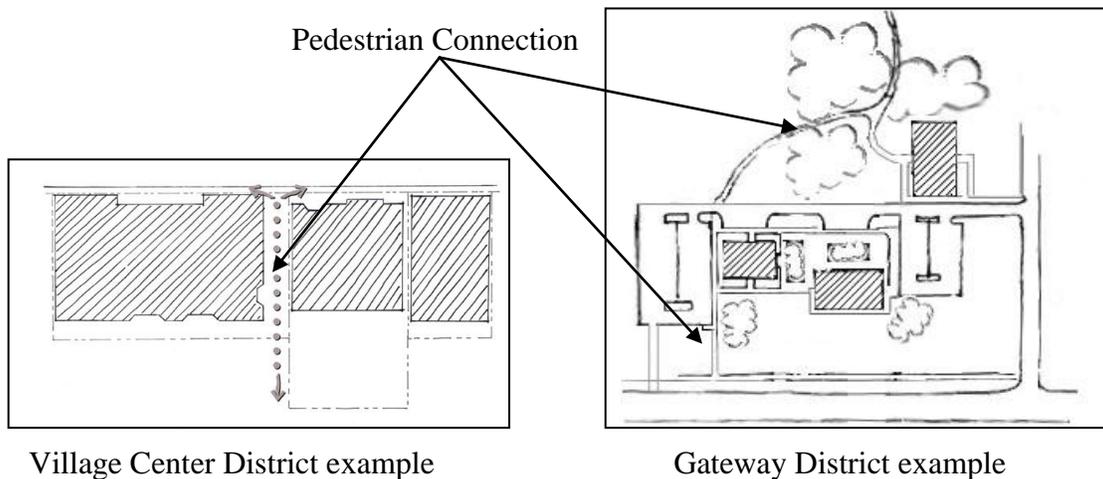
Utilities/Service. All utilities, loading docks, dumpsters and other service equipment or service entrances should be hidden from pedestrian view. All rooftop equipment should be placed so it is screened from Main Street.

4. Village Experience

The Village Center and Gateway Districts are focused on the pedestrian environment. Pedestrian connections to other areas of the village are an important factor, and must be considered in each new development. Also, creating areas for pedestrian interaction – benches, terraces, or even performance areas all contribute to the character of the village.

Pedestrian environment, open spaces and entrances

Design projects to attract pedestrians to the Village Center District. Larger sites are encouraged to incorporate pedestrian walkways and open spaces to create small breaks in the street wall and encourage movement through the site and to the surrounding area. The Planning & Zoning Commission would be willing to entertain a request for departures from development standards increased height to 4 stories to recover development potential lost at the ground level for pedestrian connection to the Mill Brook Greenway or other pedestrian connection or open spaces.



Street Amenities

Streetscape amenities mark the entry and serve as way finding devices in announcing to visitors their arrival in the Gateway and Village Center districts. Consider incorporating the following treatments to accomplish this goal:

- pedestrian scale sidewalk lighting, or droplights on the facade;
 - accent pavers at storefront entrances;
 - planters;
 - seating;
- or if the front set back is greater than 8'
- performance or gathering area;
 - area for merchandise display

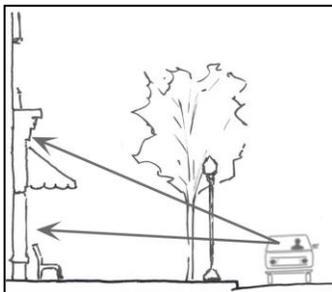


Pedestrian enhancements should especially be considered in the street frontage where a building sets back from the sidewalk.

Greenscape

Trees and shrubs play an important role in creating a welcoming atmosphere in the village; the planting of new and replacement plant material is encouraged.

In the Village Center District wherever feasible, shade trees, shrubs and other plantings should be encouraged. In the Gateway Districts shade trees should be planted in parking lot islands, street edges, and near buildings to enhance the site. The trees selected must be listed on the Recommended Street Trees for Connecticut as compiled by the University of Connecticut Plant Science Department.



All trees planted between the building and the street should be sized and located to enhance the site without interfering with the site line of driver-to-building.

For each 1000 square feet of parking, 1 shade tree must be planted and maintained.

Safety and visual impacts of parking areas in the Village and Gateway Districts.

Within the Village Center District, there should be no auto access from Main Street to a parking area unless no feasible alternative exists. Located at the rear property line, the design of the parking area could potentially be neglected. The rear portion of a new building should not turn its back to the alley or parking area, but rather embrace it as potentially active and vibrant environment.

Parking areas, including any structures, should be designed and sited in a manner that enhances pedestrian access and circulation from the parking area to retail uses. The design of parking structures/areas adjacent to the public realm (sidewalks, alley) should improve the safety and appearance of parking uses in relation to the pedestrian environment.

The side of a structure facing a parking area should be compatible with the rest of the building and the surrounding streetscape. Where appropriate, consider the following treatments:

- Integrate the parking area with building's overall design.
- Consider the parking area as an extension of the building
- Screen the view of dumpsters, utilities and other service related features from the parking area

Parking garages, or garage areas should incorporate design of the commercial/mixed-use building:

- Provide a cornice, frieze, canopy, overhang, trellis or other device to “cap” the parking portion of the structure.
- Incorporate architectural elements into the facade.
- Recess portions of the structure facing the alley to provide adequate space to shield trash and recycling receptacles from public view.