

## Village Plan Alternative Subdivision

*Related tools: transfer of density rights, open space/conservation subdivision, infill development, workforce housing, livable- walkable development design.*

### Background and Purpose

The VPA is a planning tool that promotes compact development with a mix of land uses, including residential, small-scale commercial, recreation and conservation in close proximity to one another within a neighborhood. It is designed to implement the specific provisions of RSA 674:21.VI (a) to allow for the creation of new villages with mixed-used development that is scaled to the smaller populations and lower density of New Hampshire towns.

The ordinance was designed to respond to the economic, environmental and social consequences of conventional two-acre lot zoning that segregates the locations of work, home, and recreation and produces a sprawling development pattern. The VPA addresses these economic, environmental and social consequences by promoting the smart growth principles of compact, mixed-use development, preserving the working landscape, and protecting environmental resources.

The VPA is based on the best examples of village design and Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND), scaled to a rural setting. The ordinance includes provisions to require design at the human scale by providing for pedestrian access, clear delineations of public and private spaces, and connections between residential and small-scale retail areas. Provisions are included in the VPA to protect open space, provide access to parks and recreation, and preserve and enhance the rural, small town character of many New Hampshire towns.

### Appropriate Circumstances and Context for Use

The VPA is most appropriate as an alternative to cluster or open space development occurring in undeveloped areas. It may be useful to think of this option where the development is of a size and location where a new village, or an extension of an existing village, would be an appropriate outcome. Towns should consider the use of the VPA as a tool to support larger-scale goals from the Master Plan and/or regional planning process to conserve a network of contiguous, open-space lands, such as un-fragmented forest blocks or wildlife corridors, as well as to protect specific sensitive environmental resources.

The VPA differs from cluster zoning in two ways: first, a mixed-use village component is included in the VPA, and second, the VPA requires a 20/80 split in the amount of developed land versus the amount set aside for conservation. The VPA differs

from a Planned Unit Development, which is also listed as an innovative land use control, because the VPA requires the 20/80 split, and because the VPA was designed to create a smaller, village-like development compared to the larger new town development that the PUD was originally modeled on.

The model ordinance contemplates that many towns will not have public water and sewer infrastructure, and allows septic systems and wells to be located in adjacent open space areas. DES-approved innovative septic systems, which may use smaller areas of land and can be sited within small lots, are encouraged, as are community wells and community septic systems, with appropriate safeguards and legal review of maintenance and ownership documents by Town Counsel.

A town with an area zoned for higher density and/or mixed use development or an existing historic downtown area may wish to adopt portions of this ordinance, such as the dimensional requirements or design standards.

### **Legal Basis and Considerations for New Hampshire**

There are two key requirements of the Village Plan Alternative per RSA 674:21. First, the entire density permitted by existing land use regulations must be located within 20 percent or less of the entire parcel available for development. Second, the VPA must comply with existing subdivision regulations relating to emergency access, fire prevention, and public health and safety, however, lot size setbacks, density regulations, and lot size regulations, shall not apply. Although dimensional regulations do not apply, the model includes minimum and maximum design standards because the village concept relies on spatial dimensions and relationships between elements such as buildings, streets, and open areas in order to achieve the goal of a compact, mixed-use village.

The model ordinance is set up as a conditional use ordinance, under the jurisdiction of the Planning Board. Procedures for waiver and for review of decisions made by the Planning Board under this ordinance are included in the model language.

Expedited review was required under the original VPA legislation but was removed in a subsequent amendment. Expedited review is not precluded, however and is used in this model ordinance as an incentive to encourage developers to design their projects utilizing village design principles. The locations and extent of areas in a town zoned for the Village Plan Alternative should be set forth in the Master Plan, based on the considerations given in the above sections.

### **Examples and Outcome of where Technique has been applied**

The VPA was passed by the New Hampshire legislature in 2002. A model ordinance was developed in 2003 by the Rockingham Planning Commission to assist towns in utilizing this new section of RSA 674:21. Due to its recent development, the VPA has not yet been widely adopted. Several towns in New Hampshire either currently allow mixed-use development, Planned Unit Development, or are currently considering the Village Plan Alternative ordinance as they update their master plans.

The Town of Fremont recently approved two developments that represent the village plan concept, even though the town has not formerly zoned an area for the VPA. The first development, Coopers Corners, contains a mixed-use residential, retail and light industrial component connected with an area of single-family homes. This development also represents a re-use of an existing industrial site that was formerly a barrel factory. The second development is an area of multi-family elderly housing units connected with a retail development that is a reuse of an existing historical barn complex.

The Rockingham Planning Commission has also developed model plans for village development based on the site-level physical and environmental limitations of two parcels in Rockingham County. Towns may also wish to consider examples discussed in *Achieving Smart Growth in New Hampshire*, available at <http://www.nh.gov/oep/programs/SmartGrowth/index.htm>.

Other examples of development utilizing the principles found in this ordinance may be found in other states. These developments are often called Traditional Neighborhood Design developments or New Urbanism developments. Although some of these developments have been built at a scale that is much larger than many New Hampshire towns, they share many common design principles. Readers seeking specific examples may wish to study one of the following developments: Kentlands, Seaside, I'on, and Coffee Creek Center. The Congress for the New Urbanism website (<http://www.cnu.org/>) lists several other developments as well.

### **Model Language, Illustrations, and Guidance for Implementation**

The following section contains the model language for the Village Plan Alternative Subdivision.

# MODEL ORDINANCE FOR A VILLAGE PLAN ALTERNATIVE SUBDIVISION

## I. PURPOSES

- A. To encourage the preservation of open space and environmental resources wherever possible;
- B. To permit the efficient layout and lower maintenance costs of roads, utilities, and other public and private infrastructures, and the reduction of traffic congestion and air pollution;
- C. To create a neighborhood that provides a mix of uses, including residential, commercial, civic, and recreational uses in close proximity to one another; and
- D. To provide a mix of housing styles, types and sizes, to accommodate households of all ages, sizes, and incomes.

## II. APPLICABILITY

### A. Applicability.

The standards in this section are applicable within the areas zoned for the Village Plan Alternative Subdivision and are defined as those areas whose location and boundaries have been selected to be consistent with policies in the Master Plan, encouraging compact mixed-use development in areas where village development would be appropriate for the reasons detailed in that plan.

*Although the RSA does not specify a minimum acreage necessary for the VPA, sufficient acreage may be necessary to ensure that mixed-use retail or commercial uses will be viable.*

1. **Size and Location.** The Village Plan Alternative subdivision ordinance (VPA) is designed to apply to new development of ten acres or more:
  - 1) Areas contiguous to existing subdivision development;
  - 2) Areas contiguous to existing cluster subdivisions with the intent of connecting contiguous conservation lands, greenways, or unfragmented forest areas; or
  - 3) Other appropriate locations for development consistent with the town's Master Plan for future land use.
2. **Redevelopment and infill.** The VPA is generally NOT designed to apply to redevelopment or infill development. Other innovative land use tools are generally more appropriate for redevelopment or infill development, such as redevelopment of

abandoned mills, factories, or other vacant industrial/commercial or brownfield areas or structures is encouraged. An exception to this general rule is a situation where an existing commercial area is contiguous to an area or parcel in town where conservation to protect natural resources would be appropriate.

### **3. Health, safety and welfare factors and consistency with the Master Plan.**

- a) The Planning Board shall determine whether the development is appropriate for the area by considering the following additional factors: 1) pre-existing development near the proposed site; 2) environmental resources that may be detrimentally impacted by the development; 3) consistency of the development with the Master Plan, and 4) any other relevant factors to protect the health, safety, and welfare of town residents.
- b) Emergency access, fire prevention, and setbacks for wells, septic, or wetlands requirements imposed by DES shall apply, as shall local health and safety restrictions.

**B. Conditional Use Permit.** This ordinance is adopted pursuant to 674:21, allowing the administration of the ordinance by Conditional Use Permit. Compliance with the individual provisions of this ordinance shall constitute the conditions required for the issuance of a Conditional Use Permit. Any provision of this ordinance may be waived, when, upon application by the Applicant to the Planning Board, the Board shall determine in its sole discretion 1) that requiring compliance with the particular provision for the granting of a Conditional Use Permit would create an unreasonable hardship and 2) that the application would be consistent with the spirit and intent of this ordinance. Provisions included as mandatory for a Village Plan Alternative Subdivision by RSA 674:21 shall not be waivable as such would be contrary to state law. Requests for waivers must be written and the Planning Board must vote on each waiver request at a properly noticed public hearing.

**C. Appeals.** Any person aggrieved by a Planning Board decision that constitutes a denial of a Conditional Use Permit due to noncompliance with one or more of the waivable provisions of this ordinance may appeal that decision to the Superior Court, as provided for in RSA 677:15. A Planning Board decision on the issuance of a Conditional Use Permit cannot be appealed to the Zoning Board of Adjustment (RSA 676:5 III).

### III. USES AND USE AREAS

#### A. General

**Use Areas.** VPAs may consist of up to three areas: Village Residential Areas, Small-scale Retail Areas, and Village Conservancy Areas. At a minimum, they must contain both a Village Residential Area and a Village Conservancy Area. Village Zones may consist of the Village Residential Area and the Small-Scale Retail Area.

**1. Village Residential Areas** provide locations for a broad range of housing types, including single-family detached, semi-detached, and attached, and may also include accessory dwelling units.

**2. Village Conservancy Areas** are permanently protected open spaces, including greens, commons, and private non-common acreage within larger estates, country properties, or other parcels used for agriculture, wholesale nurseries, tree farms, equestrian facilities, etc.

**3. Small-Scale Retail Areas** are intended primarily to provide uses that meet the retail and service needs of a traditional community center and its vicinity, and may contain other compatible uses, such as civic and institutional uses of community importance, including second-story residential uses.

The small-scale retail area is not intended to be used for industrial uses, large-scale retail or commercial buildings, or storage, unless such use is completely architecturally integrated into the overall development, and in no case shall any industrial uses other than light industrial uses be permitted.

**Residential/nonresidential phasing.** In approving a conditional use application for a new village with or without mixed uses according to the standards for conditional uses listed in the zoning ordinance, the Planning Board shall ensure by approval of a condition, phasing schedule, or other measure, that the nonresidential portions of the development are occupied only in accordance with a schedule that relates occupancy of such nonresidential portions of the village to the completion of a specified percentage or specified

*The scale of retail uses intended for these areas is small, and would include small stores and businesses, libraries, galleries, and other small commercial, institutional and retail uses typically found in small New England towns. Consideration should also be given to the compatibility of the retail and commercial areas to the residential areas within the development. Banks, daycare facilities, doctor's offices, or small groceries are some of the retail uses that may be compatible with a small village.*

*The purpose of this phasing section is to provide a mechanism to ensure appropriate residential to nonresidential density proportions.*

number of phases or sections of the residential portions.

**B. Uses Permitted in All Areas**

1. Single family detached dwellings
2. Open space land permanently protected through conservation easements
3. Municipal or public uses, such as public parks and recreation areas, or government or public utility buildings, except for storage or materials, trucking or repair facilities, or private or municipal sanitary landfills.
4. The Planning Board reserves the right to determine the allowability of any use not expressly allowed or prohibited in this ordinance. All uses shall be governed by any applicable standards in any other applicable state or local law or regulation that would restrict uses based on environmental concerns.

Where two provisions conflict, the stricter provision shall apply.

**C. Conditional Uses**

The following uses are classified as conditional uses and shall adhere to the dimensional standards and design standards in the following sections of this ordinance. The purpose of this section is to enable the Planning Board to ensure that the overall design of the development is compatible with the Town's existing land use, future plans for land use, and the needs of the community.

**1. Village Residential Area Conditional Uses**

- a. Two-family and multi-family dwellings designed according to the standards in this ordinance.
- b. Architecturally integrated accessory dwellings, home occupations and other uses related to residential uses.

**2. Small-Scale Retail Area Conditional Uses**

- a. Retail uses, professional offices, and personal or professional services in one-and-one half story buildings of 1,500 square feet or less, and up to 5000 square feet when in buildings of two or more stories. Buildings in this type of area may contain other compatible uses, such as civic and institutional uses of community importance, specifically including second-floor residential uses. The maximum building footprint for any single

*Towns may wish to consider the typical building size of uses they would like to encourage or discourage. For example, if a town wishes to allow a mid-sized grocery store, the 5000 limit would be too small.*

building or group of buildings owned or operated by the same entity shall be 10,000 feet.

- b. Bed and breakfast establishments or inns
- c. Schools, day care centers, libraries, churches, and other houses of worship
- d. Two or three family dwellings designed in accordance with the provisions of this ordinance.
- e. Second-story residential units are encouraged to be located above shops and or offices, to the extent that on-site parking, or off-site parking shared with other users, can be provided.
- f. Live/work uses for artisans, professionals, and service providers such as studios or small shops.

#### IV. DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS AND DENSITY DETERMINATIONS

- A. **Overall Village Size.** Village Plan Alternative Subdivisions shall range in size from 25 dwellings to 100 dwellings. The purpose of this restriction is to provide enough dwellings in a development to support the accompanying small-scale retail and to allow the Town to better plan for and provide the increase in local services that accompanies population growth within a town.
- B. **Density Determination.** The entire density permitted by existing land use regulations must be located in 20 percent or less of the entire parcel available for development. Village Plan average density shall vary depending on soil conditions, suitability of on and off-site locations for septic systems and community water systems, wetlands, topography, and other features of the land. In no case shall the average density be lower than that of a conventional subdivision.

The intent of the dwelling limitation is to reflect typical New Hampshire village scale. Communities may choose larger limits as appropriate.

Optional: It is up to a community to determine whether they want to award density bonuses for certain design attributes, such as providing for affordable housing, protection of significant resources, or public access to community amenities. Density bonuses for providing affordable housing should be used only if the community has established standards

### C. Density Bonuses.

1. A density bonus of one unit for 5 acres shall be granted where applicants use a community well or community septic system or a DES-approved innovative septic design utilizing a smaller land area to provide for VPA development.
2. A density bonus of one unit for 5 acres shall be granted where applicants provide for full public access to community amenities, such as trails, ball fields, or playgrounds.
3. The Board may develop other density bonuses based on provision of affordable housing, protection of sensitive environmental resources, or provision of other amenities.

*According to DES, where septic and water are both located off-site, there is no required minimum lot size. We suggest a range of between 5,000 and 10,000 sq. feet as a lot size that would be likely to be adopted by communities.*

### 3. Dimensional Standards for Village Residential Area

A density bonus for using innovative or community septic systems is suggested because a developer might view using such an approach as more difficult or time-consuming to permit, yet a traditional village-type development likely cannot be done with conventional septic systems.

- 1. Dimensional Requirements.** Conventional lot size regulations, dimensional requirements for frontage and setbacks from all property lines, and lot size regulations, as well as density regulations, shall NOT apply. This ordinance establishes its own minimum and maximum dimensional requirements. In no case can lesser density requirements be imposed for a Village Plan Alternative Subdivision.
- 2. Minimum lot area.** Where septic systems and water supply are located off-site, the minimum lot size shall be 10,000 square feet. Where both septic and water are located on-site, or where septic is located on site, and water is located off site, the minimum lot size will depend on compliance with the provisions found in the DES publication "Subdivision and Individual Sewage Disposal System Design Rules, Chapter Env-Ws 1000, August 1999, and subsequent amendments or updates."

- a) For the Village Residential Areas, applicants should refer to Table 1005-2 Minimum Lot Sizes – Cluster Subdivisions.
- b) Applicants should consult with the Water Division of the Department of Environmental Services during the design phase of the development to determine appropriate lot sizes and septic/water system design.

*Lot size and shape are important in creating the spatial relationships of a village. Long, narrow lots work well to allow home owners the privacy of backyards, while maintaining the walkability and scale of a village. Form-based codes typically contain minimum as well as maximum standards.*

**3. Minimum street frontage.**

- a) Lots must have a minimum of 40 feet of frontage either on a street or back lane or shared driveway. Lots should have a maximum frontage of 70 feet.
- b) Houses served by rear lanes may front directly onto parks or greens, which shall have perimeter sidewalks.

**4. Flag lots.**

- a) Flag lots must possess at least 30 feet of frontage on a street.
- b) No more than two contiguous flag lots shall be created.
- c) Flag lots shall not comprise more than five percent of all lots within a village.
- d) The “pole” end of such lots shall not be longer than 200 feet.

**5. Minimum and Maximum Standards.** Variations in the principal building position and orientation are allowed, but the following minimum and maximum standards shall be observed:

- a) **Front yard.** Principle buildings: 12 feet minimum depth, 6 feet to front porches or steps, and 20 feet maximum.
  - 1) **Attached garages** (front loaded) must be flush with or set back from the front wall or façade of the principle building. Attached garages (side loaded) must be flush with or set back from the front wall or façade of the building and must be architecturally integrated with the principle building.

*Setting standards for buildings results in a neighborhood that avoids the monotonous wall of garages so prevalent in conventional subdivisions, and encourages attention to the design and orientation of buildings.*

2) **Detached garages** must be flush with or set back from the front wall or façade of the principle building. Detached garages located behind principle structures are encouraged. No more than two garage doors facing a street may be located in a row, and such rows of garage doors must be separated from any other garage door facing a street by at least ten feet.

b) **Rear yard.** Principal buildings: 30 feet minimum depth. Rear-loaded garages: minimum 20 feet from paved edge of alley or lane, and 9 feet to the alley right-of-way.

c) **Side yard.** Principal buildings: 20-foot separation between principal buildings on adjacent lots.

**6. Building-to-Building minimum and maximum distance.**

Houses on opposite sides of the street shall be located between 70 and 100 feet across from each other, except along a boulevard, which is defined as a divided street with a center landscaped strip at least ten feet wide, and except when buildings face onto greens, commons, or other open space.

a. **Maximum and minimum height.** Buildings shall be of at least one-and-one-half story construction, but no more than three stories. Church steeples or buildings containing historic architectural features may be higher than three stories if the height of the building is consistent with the overall design of the development. Buildings on corner lots may be as high as three and a half stories.

**E. Dimensional Standards for Small-Scale Retail Area**

1. **General.** Small-scale retail areas may take a variety of forms that include rehabilitation of existing buildings, new town centers, or mixed-use developments that combine residences and businesses.

2. **Minimum Frontage.** Lots shall have a minimum of 20 feet of frontage on a street to provide access. The minimum lot width at the building line shall be 40 feet.

*These standards encourage the spatial relationships found in traditional villages, which promote alternative means of transport, such as walking and bicycling.*

3. **Setbacks, minimum and maximum.** There is no required minimum front setback. The maximum front setback shall be 10 feet.
4. **Building-to-Building Distance.** Commercial buildings on opposite sides of new streets shall be located between 50 and 75 feet across from each other, except where buildings face onto public greens.
5. **Building Height.** Buildings shall be between one and one-half and three stories above grade, except for architectural embellishments such as church steeples or clock towers, and buildings on corner lots, which may be three and a half stories high.

**V. Open Space Requirements**

A. **Open Space and Recreational Requirements.** The entire density permitted by existing land use regulations must be located in 20 percent or less of the entire parcel available for development. Remaining land shall be reserved through a recorded easement solely for one or more of the following: conservation, agriculture, forestry, or public recreation.

B. Land area reserved as protected open space should represent the area of the site that is most valuable in terms of open space features, such as (but not limited to) providing scenic views or having other aesthetic qualities, containing significant wildlife habitat or rare or outstanding landscape features, containing high-productivity agricultural soils or forest soils, or providing high-quality community recreation opportunities (e.g., includes a portion of an existing trail network).

C. All developments shall install at least one outdoor playground or other youth recreation facility, such as a baseball diamond or playing field, in an area that is designed to be pedestrian accessible as well as buffered from vehicular traffic by fencing and suitably landscaped. Such facilities must be shown in the plan set and include plans for grading, drainage, and maintenance.

D. Snowmobiling or ATV use is generally discouraged but if allowed will be permitted only on designated separate trails with appropriate signage, mitigation efforts to control erosion, designated hours of use, noise control measures, and measures to ensure safety of pedestrians.

*The first provision listed here is required by statute. Subsequent provisions are suggestions for types and uses of required open space.*

- E. The deed and related documents for the property must clearly state the conveyance of a conservation easement for the open space land to the town, land trust, or other appropriate entity reserving the conserved open space land area solely for agriculture, forestry, and conservation, or for public recreation. Covenants that run with the land as well as appropriate documents and bylaws that explain the maintenance and use of the open space shall be established if the open space lands are to be retained in ownership by a homeowner's association or private individual.
- F. The open space must be accessible by walking trails. If public access is provide to these trails, a dedicated parking area shall be provided near an access point.
- G. Each development must contain a community building that can reasonably accommodate at least 20 people at any one time.

**VI. SEPTIC SYSTEMS**

- A. Where public sewer is unavailable, applicants may choose to use conventional, individual septic systems, a community septic system, a community leach field, an innovative septic system or any combination thereof, subject to DES approval.
- B. Applicants will consult with the Town's engineer in proposing the plan for the septic system of the development. Where developments are adjacent to town centers or other areas in which eventual sewer construction is foreseen, applicants must install capped sewer connections and related infrastructure so that the development can be connected to the Town's system in future years.
- C. Applicants must specify measures for the management of community systems as well as the schedule and methods for regular maintenance of such systems. Applicants must provide appropriate deed language for access easements for maintenance of these systems. Town counsel will review all submitted documents for management, ownership and access.

**VII. DESIGN STANDARDS FOR ALL AREAS**

**A. Overall Form and Spatial Relationships**

- 1. **Overall Form.** Areas of new construction shall be sited so as to best preserve natural vistas and existing topography.

- a. In all areas, peripheral greenbelt open space shall be designed to follow the natural features whenever possible and to maintain an agricultural, woodland, or countryside character.

*This section can be used as a stand-alone section by towns that do not adopt the VPA, to improve the overall appearance of town center and Main Street areas. These standards are typical of village design for small towns.*

- b. The village shall be distinguished from the peripheral, greenbelt open space by a well-defined line or edge so that developed areas will transition very quickly to rural, undeveloped lands.

## 2. **Village Layout**

- a. **Overall layout.** Villages shall be designed in a pattern of interconnecting streets and alleys, defined by buildings, street furniture, landscaping, pedestrian ways, and sidewalks. The layout should be suited to the existing topography and other natural features of the area to minimize cut-and-fill and grading throughout the site.
- b. **Pedestrian connections.** No less than one eight-foot pedestrian alley or way must be provided for every 250 feet of street frontage in the Small Scale Retail Area, connecting with rear parking lots.
- c. **Building orientation.** Houses shall be oriented to maximize passive solar energy, natural shade and windbreaks, and to orient rooms such as kitchens and bedrooms based on light and heat requirements at different times of the day. The use of energy-efficient appliances and materials is encouraged.

## B. **Street and Sidewalk Network**

1. **Sidewalks.** Sidewalks are required along all road frontages of new development. The width of the sidewalk shall be consistent with the prevailing pattern in the immediate neighborhood, provided that no new sidewalk shall be less than four feet wide.
2. **Curbs.** Where curbing is used, it shall be granite curbing for durability.
3. **Overall street layout.** Each development shall have at least two points of entry and egress, and shall be connected to other existing streets to provide for the future extension of the community's street network. Main roads should not cut through the center of the development, but instead should provide access to secondary roads that begin at the periphery of the street layout.

4. **Cul-de-sacs.** Cul-de-sacs are prohibited, unless conducive to a harmonious village pattern due to topographic constraints.
5. **Traffic calming.** In order to calm traffic speeds and to provide for pedestrian safety, the use of “T” intersections, small roundabouts, and four-ways stops shall be used.

**C. Pedestrian and Bicycle Access.**

1. **Connections between uses.** Pedestrian and bicycle connections between mixed-use development and residential areas are required.
2. **Bicycle parking.** Small-scale retail areas shall provide areas for parking and locking of bicycles.

**D. Streetscape**

1. **Trees.** Any new development must be accompanied by a landscape plan that will address the location, suitability, and species of trees, shrubs, or other plantings within the development. In new developments, street trees shall be planted every 35 linear feet of street right of way.
2. **Benches and other street furniture.** New developments shall provide benches with seats and backs every 500 feet of street right-of-way in the Small-Scale Retail Area.
3. **Buffer zones.** A vegetated buffer of at least 100 feet shall be provided between Residential Areas and adjacent industrial zones.
4. **Public Space.** Each Small-Scale Retail Area shall contain one or more public spaces such as a green, pocket park, gazebo, or picnic area. These spaces should be designed to encourage community interaction.
5. **Lighting.** Lighting shall be provided in all public spaces within the Small-Scale Retail Area, and at appropriate intervals along the street. Where appropriate, lighting shall be provided in Village Residential Areas as well. All light fixtures shall meet the specifications for full cut-off or cut-off fixtures as defined by the Illumination Engineering Society of North America.

## **E. Architectural Design Standards**

1. **General.** The following architectural design standards shall apply to all structures.
2. **Buildings-Scale and Style.** Buildings shall generally relate in scale and design features to the surrounding buildings, showing respect for the local context. Buildings shall reflect a continuity of treatment obtained by maintaining the building scale or by subtle 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, and by extending horizontal lines of fenestration.
3. **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. Buildings on corner lots may be three and a half stories high.
4. **Walls and Planes.** Retail and commercial 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.
5. **Facades facing public streets.** Buildings with more than one façade facing a public street or internal open space shall be required to provide multiple front façade treatments. 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.
6. **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

*Requiring good design helps to ensure that when businesses come and go, subsequent owners and tenants of the buildings will be able to quickly occupy and convert the building to use by a new business, thus protecting the vitality and continuity of a town's local business districts.*

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.

7. **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 not permitted in either the Small-Scale Retail area or the Residential area. Storefronts are an integral part of the 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.
8. **Entrances.** Main 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.
9. **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 use of low-pressure sodium, tube-fluorescent, or mercury vapor lighting either attached to buildings or to light the exterior of buildings shall be prohibited.
10. **Lighting.** Streetlights 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.

Lighting on residential streets should be confined to intersections, pocket parks, and corners. Small-scale retail areas shall utilize reduced lighting after business hours to conserve energy and to encourage dark, starry skies characteristic of rural areas. Lighting shall be properly shielded to reduce glare for the safety of motorists.

11. **Air conditioners and other fixtures.** All air conditioning units, HVAC systems, exhaust pipes or stacks, elevator housing, and 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.
12. **Fencing.** In no case will chain-link fencing be permitted. Fencing must be iron rod or wood, and no higher than three feet unless used as screening for trash collection areas.
13. **Fire escapes.** Fire escapes shall not be permitted on a building's front façade.
14. **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.

#### **F. Signs in Small-Scale Retail Areas**

1. **General.** All signs 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, neon, 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 higher than four feet and no wider than six feet.
5. **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.
6. **Signs in residential areas.** No signs shall be permitted in the residential area, except one sign no larger than 2 square feet related to a home occupation.

#### **G. Landscaping**

*(Readers may wish to refer to the chapters on **Landscaping and Permanent (Post-Construction) Stormwater Management** in this handbook for a more comprehensive set of requirements).*

1. All developments must contain a landscaping plan that lists the location, species, and suitability of plant species to the site.
2. Trees shall be planted at regular intervals no greater than thirty-five (35) feet to enhance public spaces, open spaces, and streetscapes. A variety of native and non-invasive species shall be used.
3. Low-impact stormwater management designs that treat and recharge runoff on-site are encouraged.

#### **H. Parking**

1. Parking for small-scale retail areas must be on-street or in the rear of buildings. No more than five spaces may be located in front of the building.
2. Rear parking areas shall be landscaped with an area of low shrubs or suitable foliage at least ten feet wide between every

*The location and layout of parking areas is a key spatial aspect in the creation of a village.*

*Pedestrian safety, stormwater management, access management, and aesthetics are primary elements.*

two rows of spaces. This area shall include a pedestrian walkway at least four feet wide for pedestrian safety. Crosswalks and walkways at regular intervals shall connect this strip to building entrances. Applicants are encouraged to utilize permeable pavement and other low-impact techniques suitable for cold climates for on-site water recharge in parking lot design.

3. Landscaped islands must contain curb breaks and utilize ecological engineering methods to allow maximum on-site water recharge and to minimize sheet flow.

## VII. **REVIEW PROCESS**

**Worksheet.** The Planning Board shall establish a worksheet, outline, or checklist of the pre-application and application procedure to assist applicants with the relevant town ordinances and regulations in the review process and to discuss potential issues concerning the design or feasibility of the site plan, based on town ordinances and regulations.

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