

# 7. Main Street Revitalization

## DETAILED TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

### SAMPLE ORDINANCES

Village Districts,  
Southampton, New  
York

Town Center Overlay  
District, Niskayuna,  
New York

Ground-floor  
Windows Treatment,  
Portland, Oregon

see Section 7.8

Suburban sprawl consists of a variety of commercial development types: strip-style commercial corridors, regional shopping malls, and "power centers" with five or more "big-box" retailers. These commercial sites have become the main locations for shopping, eating out, and entertainment for suburban dwellers. They have popular chain stores, drive-through services, giant movie theaters, large-format restaurants, and most importantly, abundant parking and easy highway access. Some even host special events (photos with Santa, for example), provide public services (Town Hall offices, post offices), or provide a place for entertainment, eating out, and socializing (movie theaters, food courts, etc.).

In this way, commercial sites have taken over many of the functions formerly served by traditional "Main Street" areas. Many older towns in the Hartford region have old town centers in varying degrees of economic health. Some town centers have been plagued with vacant storefronts and disinvestment, but some communities have been able to turn their Main Street centers around. West Hartford Center, which initially could not compete with West Farms Mall, managed to renew itself through a multi-faceted revitalization program. West Hartford Center has been successful because it has managed to build off of the unique attributes that distinguish it from suburban commercial sites: historic architecture, a traditional "Main Street" ambiance, a safe and pleasant walking environment, and unique non-chain stores. Similar initiatives are currently being undertaken in Windsor Center and Downtown Rockville (Town of Vernon). Other such Main Streets throughout the Hartford can also be retooled, so that they continue to function and prosper, even in the face of new commercial development in outlying areas.

### 7.1 SMART GROWTH REGULATIONS AND INCENTIVES

Revitalizing an old town center is not primarily a zoning exercise. Although conducive zoning is necessary, the revitalization strategy must start with an economic development strategy for Main Street shops.

#### DEVELOPING A MARKET NICHE

The first step toward revitalization of a town center must be to identify and develop a market niche. A "market niche" is a collection of stores, services, restaurants, and attractions that follow a theme and appeal to a segment of the potential customer base. Identification of a market niche involves an analysis of existing retailers along Main Street, nearby competitors, and overall retailing and economic trends regionally. Once the right market niche has been identified, a strategy needs to be developed to build up that niche.

There are some excellent examples of town centers that have developed market niches. The City of Easton, Pennsylvania, for example, recently adopted a Downtown Strategy for its turn-of-the-century Main Street area. Between the 1960's and the 1990's, downtown Easton experienced decline. Most of the convenience shopping that had once been located in

downtown (i.e., clothing, furnishings, appliances) moved to the Phillipsburg Mall, just over the city line.

Knowing that downtown could not directly compete with the Mall, the City and business community sought to build on its strength as a charming, turn-of-the-century town center and promote a unique mix of stores, services, restaurants, and attractions that would appeal to regional residents and tourists, not just local residents. While shopping centers and the Mall provide excellent convenience and comparison shopping, they are not particularly appealing from an aesthetic viewpoint. With 20 million people living within a two-hour drive, there was an opportunity to develop tourism, entertainment, and cultural activities as downtown's market niche.

The Downtown Strategy makes a variety of recommendations for building the tourism niche of the downtown area, while still maintaining the district's authenticity. Such authenticity is essential for sustainability. The recommendations called for the Town to:

- Support the development and growth of downtown attractions and foster development of the arts;
- Encourage coordinated marketing and programming for downtown destinations, in order to promote longer visits.
- Promote historic preservation.
- Pursue streetscape improvements.
- Promote specialty restaurants and outdoor dining;
- Promote stores and restaurants oriented to children and families;
- Promote antique stores and furniture stores; and
- Preserve eclectic specialty stores.

The cornerstone project was Two Rivers Landing, involving the redevelopment of the City's former department store as a children's museum sponsored by Binney & Smith, Inc., the makers of Crayola products. The museum has exceeded visitation projections, property values have doubled, and the downtown vacancy rate has been halved.

## **PROTECTING TRADITIONAL CHARACTER**

Another major aspect of revitalizing a town center is to protect and enhance the traditional, historic character of the area. Many of the buildings in old town centers were built prior to the adoption of zoning regulations in the 1920's and prior to widespread use of the automobile. They typically have a compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented pattern of development. Buildings line the sidewalks along Main Street, with shops, restaurants, and civic uses on the ground level, and offices or residences on the upper floors.

On surrounding side streets, there may be a mix of stores, offices, apartments, houses, and parks, all built in a compact, pedestrian-oriented format. Parking areas and garages tend to be located to the rear or to the side of buildings, rather than in front, and there are public parking lots as well as on-street parking spaces. In addition, many of the buildings in the old downtown may have distinctive architectural features, such as decorative masonry, stained glass windows, carved doorways or window frames, and so on. Some buildings could have historic value.

The traditional character of an old town center is one of its greatest *economic* assets. It is one of the principal features that distinguishes the town center from a suburban commercial site. As a result, it helps create a unique shopping environment that provides an alternative to mall or strip-mall shopping. This unique environment is one of the features that can be used to entice shoppers and visitors. Traditional buildings should not be demolished to make way for strip-style commercial development or parking lots, and new buildings should be required to follow a traditional format.

If new development follows the strip-style format, the town center would likely be damaged in several ways.

- First, the front-yard parking and free-standing signs often associated with such uses would be out of character with the rest of the town center, marring its quaint atmosphere.
- Second, the new building would break up the pedestrian-oriented fabric of the town center, interrupting the walking patterns and pedestrian traffic upon which Main Street shops depend for business.
- Third, although an auto-oriented building format can be extremely successful along a commercial corridor with heavy pass-by traffic, it may not be successful in a town center setting. As a result, the building may experience frequent turnover or may lie vacant for long periods, because the location is not conducive to success.

Other chapters of this manual have discussed in detail those “traditional” attributes that require protection through zoning regulations. In particular, Chapter 4 provides a discussion of how to maintain and promote mixed-use development in a village setting, and Chapter 6 discusses pedestrian-oriented design, streetscape design, and parking lot landscaping. The principals discussed in those chapters are as appropriate for an old town center as they would be for a newly developed neighborhood.

## **COORDINATED PARKING**

Another major component of town center revitalization is parking coordination. Many of the sites in a traditional town center lack on-site parking lots. In addition to whatever private spaces they may have, businesses rely on on-street parking spaces or public parking lots. In many cases, there is a sufficient count of parking spaces, but the parking lots and spaces are inefficiently laid out and used. Better coordination could yield more parking spaces and better serve customers. Shared parking arrangements or parking management districts, as discussed in Chapter 8, can be utilized to this end.

In Hartford, the Farmington Avenue Joint Committee (FAJC) has been giving a great deal of consideration to parking issues in planning for the two commercial nodes along Farmington Avenue: Asylum Hill and the West End. In each node, commercial sites have varying numbers of parking spaces. Some sites have carved out as many off-street parking spaces as possible, whereas older buildings make due with front-yard, rear-yard, or on-street parking spaces. FAJC is considering a proposal to combine some rear-yard lots and some front-yard lots in order to create additional parking spaces, allow shared parking between adjacent businesses, and reduce curb cuts.

## **7.2 COMPLEMENTARY ACTIONS**

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While economic development, traditional development and design, and coordinated parking are the cornerstones of town center revitalization, there are several complementary actions that can make revitalization efforts even more successful.

### **IMPROVEMENTS TO STREETSCAPES, PARKS, AND PUBLIC SPACES**

As a pedestrian-oriented environment, the walking areas in the town center must be safe, convenient, comfortable, and attractive. Decorative paving, antique street lighting, street trees, benches, landscaping, coordinated street furniture (bike racks, trash receptacles, traffic lights, news stands, kiosks), flags, and banners can all be used to make sidewalks and plazas more attractive and lively. Plazas could also provide an opportunity for the siting of public art, fountains, or other features that provide visual interest and create a sense of place.

The facades and front-yards of buildings facing those sidewalks and plazas must be pedestrian-friendly. Display windows should provide visual interest and views into stores; entryways should allow pedestrians to enter and exit the building; awnings should provide cover from inclement weather. Parking should not be located in the front yard, and space in front of the store window could be given over to outdoor dining or landscaping.

Park planning, in conjunction with Main Street redevelopment, could also contribute to the pedestrian environment. Small parks in or around Main Street can serve several functions. They provide places for visitors to rest and relax in the middle of a shopping trip, as well as a place for outdoor crafts fairs, art shows, farmer's markets, or other events. Green spaces with shade trees are particularly attractive on hot summer days. They provide a place for picnic lunches, such that visitors could buy sandwiches or other take-out meals at a local store or restaurant and eat in the park. Visually, such parks balance out the built-up character of the rest of the town center, which may have clustered, multi-story structures. In many New England villages, the town green serves this function.

### **DEVELOPING AND PROMOTING CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS**

Cultural attractions can help draw customers into a town center. Libraries, museums, concert halls, theaters, and other similar facilities provide unique cultural experiences for which people are often willing to make a special trip. A cultural facility can have beneficial effects on a town center. People attending cultural events and exhibits, once they have arrived in the town center, can be enticed to visit nearby shops and restaurants. Thus, a cultural facility can serve as an anchor, much like a department store serves as the anchor tenant in a shopping mall or a multi-plex movie theater serves as an anchor in a "power" center. People are drawn in by the anchor or become aware of the place by the anchor, but then patronize other establishments as well. An excellent example is the Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam.

To be truly beneficial, cultural attractions should be located and designed in such a way that they encourage their patrons to explore the town center on foot. For example, in Easton, it is necessary to exit the Crayola Children's Museum and walk along Main Street to visit the Crayola store and outlet. It is critical that pedestrian connections be provided between the attraction's entrances and the surrounding streets. It is also important that off-site satellite parking lots be provided for the cultural attraction, such that visitors have to walk along Main

Street between their car and their main destination. If all parking is provided on-site, the cultural attraction becomes an island of activity, with patrons never setting foot in any of the town center's shops, restaurants, or other attractions.

## **ORGANIZING BUSINESS LEADERS**

Business leaders know their shopping area intimately and understand the needs and wants of their clients. For a Main Street revitalization program to be effective, business leaders must be involved in the conceptualizing, planning, and implementation of the revitalization program.

The creation of a Special Services District (SSD) can be extremely beneficial for the long-term health of a town center. A SSD can provide practical services, like trash collection and disposal and security, on a day to day basis. The SSD can also serve a variety of planning and coordinating functions. It can be used to solicit new businesses and development, to market and advertise downtown shops and services, and to organize events that draw in potential customers. For example, the SSD in downtown Stamford organizes arts and other events which draw thousands of people into downtown on weekends.

The first SSD in the City of Hartford was established in June 2002 in the Park Street business center. Property owners approved the district by means of a mail-in referendum. The referendum had to meet two criteria for passage. It had to represent a majority of owners (each parcel was allowed one vote), and those voting (yes or no) had to own more than half the district's assessed property value. The referendum passed overwhelmingly by 76 to 4 votes, with 27 owners not casting. The voters represented 84 percent of the district's value. The overwhelming support for the SSD on Park Street demonstrates how eager many business owners are to pool their resources for the purpose of district-wide improvements and services.<sup>1</sup>

SSD's are not the only way to rally resources. For instance, in the Rockville district of Vernon, the Rockville Downtown Association (RDA) was organized as a non-profit, volunteer organization of local businesses and other interested groups and individuals. The RDA works with public and private organizations to promote economic development and property revitalization in the downtown area. It also sponsors special events and festivals, publishes a local newsletter, and facilitates citizen workshops on downtown revitalization. A major concern of the RDA is enhancing and protecting downtown's historic character.<sup>2</sup>

## **FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

Façade improvement can make the town center more attractive. In some old town centers, facades along Main Street have few or no windows, narrow entrances, poor signage, and look shabby and unappealing overall. Façade improvement can help create a more inviting look that entices passing pedestrians to explore the ground-floor shop. A municipality can consider establishing a façade improvement program, which would provide a mixture of grants and tax incentives to encourage façade cleaning, door and window replacement and repair, enlarged windows, compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and installation of awnings

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Pazniokas, "Park Street Owners Approve District," *The Hartford Courant*, June 19, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Rockville Downtown Association, Inc. <[www.munic.state.ct.us/VERNON/rda.htm](http://www.munic.state.ct.us/VERNON/rda.htm)>, visited April 13, 2002.

and planters. Wherever there are vacant lots or parking lots along all downtown streets, decorative fencing, landscaping, trees, low walls, or benches should be added in order to mask the empty space and preserve the continuity of the street frontage.

### **7.3 FISCAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS**

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Town center revitalization can have an extremely positive fiscal impact on a municipality. There are examples throughout the country of once-ailing town centers that have become extremely prosperous commercial centers, mainly because they have been able to retool themselves into popular destinations for day-trippers and tourists. There are some extremely good examples in the Hudson Valley region of New York State, such as Cold Spring, Hudson, Millbrook, Nyack, Pine Plains, and Red Hook.

Of those, the town that has experienced the most drastic turn-around since the 1980's has been Nyack. Nyack's charming shops, turn-of-the century buildings, and attractive Hudson River waterfront lure regional residents bored with the prevailing suburban landscape; and the adjacent Tappan Zee Bridge provides excellent access. Main Street has an eclectic mix of antique stores, restaurants, and cafes equally oriented to tourists, regional residents, and locals. Nyack is now considered one of the most attractive and promising towns in the Hudson Valley, and both commercial and residential property values have been increasing rapidly.

Because downtowns are often in such a desperate financial situation, municipalities are often tempted to approve a project that may be ill-suited to the town center, just in order to allow some economic use of the area. This "lowest common denominator" approach, while attractive in the short run, can actually damage the town center's long-term chances for revitalization. As already discussed, an inappropriate development project can diminish the quaint charm and pedestrian vitality of the town center, two of its key economic assets. As the traditional building fabric becomes broken up, the remaining pedestrian-oriented stores can no longer function as a coherent "Main Street" commercial district, further diminishing property values, commercial viability, and tax revenues.

### **7.4 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

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Implementing a downtown revitalization program is not just a matter of making an adjustment to the zoning provisions. It requires ongoing initiatives on the part of municipal staff, business leaders, and other downtown stakeholders, including residents, property owners, and the representatives of cultural facilities.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC INVESTMENT**

The municipality's staff can provide direct assistance to the Main Street area in several ways. First and foremost, staff members can work directly with business leaders and property owners to provide technical assistance with regard to economic development. That is, working toward the development of a market niche, the municipality can help property owners solicit the appropriate commercial tenants and can help interested tenants to find space.

Also, the municipality can work to attract development on vacant sites, help coordinate parking, clean up brownfield sites, provide funding for façade improvements, and coordinate public investments for streetscape improvements, parking lots, public plazas, parks, and so on.

The municipality could provide financial assistance by seeking alternate funding and applying for grants to be used for town center improvements.

For all of these functions, it would be extremely helpful if the municipality could work directly with a Special Services District (SSD) or business association that represents the downtown business owners. If an SSD or business association does not already exist, town staff should work to organize business leaders and establish one. SSDs collect tax revenue from local businesses in order to pay for local improvements, maintenance, special events, and advertising. These fees are similar in nature to the fees imposed by mall proprietors and can therefore help place a Main Street center on a more level playing field with a local mall. At the same time, towns must make sure that an adequate tax base exists or can be built up in order to support the SSD. Otherwise, the additional tax burden could result in business displacement and storefront vacancies.

## **MAIN STREET PROGRAMS**

One critical component of success is the meaningful involvement of community members in the revitalization process. Initiating a Main Street program is an excellent way to organize local business leaders, to develop a shared vision for the Main Street area, and to work toward that vision through well-considered, incremental implementation strategies.

There have been many successful Main Street programs throughout the country. An excellent program has been established in the Town of Windsor. The “First Town Downtown” organization (referring to Windsor’s claim as Connecticut’s first town to be settled by Europeans) was established in 1996 to promote economic development *with* historic preservation in Windsor Center. The organization has established a vision statement declaring that “the historic and natural assets of the Center will be nurtured and promoted, serving as the basis for creating a charming and unique social center bustling with energy and activities.” A four-point approach emphasizing (1) building consensus and cooperation among local groups; (2) enhancing the physical appearance of downtown; (3) compatible business attraction and retention; and (4) promotion, through special events and marketing materials.<sup>3</sup> The organization has been successful in bolstering the image and business vitality of Windsor Center, and for its efforts, Windsor Center was recognized as an Exemplary Main Street Community in 2001 by the National Main Street Center.<sup>4</sup>

## **ZONING REVISIONS**

New zoning provisions that promote traditional development are also required. Traditional zoning in this context is primarily a confirmation of existing conditions in that area. Some specific use regulations, nevertheless, may raise controversy, especially where there may be potential land use conflicts between adjacent uses. Zoning for traditional neighborhoods and commercial streets is discussed in Chapters 4 and 6.

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<sup>3</sup> First Town Downtown: A 2001 National Certified Main Street Community, <[www.firsttowndowntown.org](http://www.firsttowndowntown.org)>, visited April 13, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> National Main Street Center, <[www.mainst.org](http://www.mainst.org)>, visited April 13, 2002.

## ROADWAY STANDARDS AND TRAFFIC CIRCULATION

Preservation of a traditional atmosphere in a town center also requires attention to roadway standards. More than parks, plazas, and architecture, the character of the public streets is one of the defining characteristics of a town center. In newly developed suburban areas, new roads tend to be curved and wide. This pattern of roadway design is meant to allow for heavy volumes of traffic, higher speeds, and access for emergency vehicles in the case of multiple calls. In addition, suburban streets in individual subdivisions typically do not provide connections to adjacent subdivisions or through-roads, but instead curve around in loops or dead-end into cul-de-sacs.

In an older town center, streets are typically organized in a grid (or a variation thereof), and many of the streets are considerably narrower than in newly developed areas. This traditional street pattern is part of what gives a town center its charm, and from an economic development point of view, it should be preserved to the greatest possible extent. Nevertheless, because many town centers experience traffic congestion, there is often pressure to bring these older streets up to contemporary standards that would increase their capacity to channel traffic. Throughout Connecticut, the State Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) has widened and reconfigured roads running through old village centers, in order to improve traffic flows. One recent example was the widening of Route 10 and the alteration of the Route 10-Highland Avenue intersection in downtown Cheshire. Many towns have also considered the elimination of historic structures to realign right-of-ways in order to improve traffic flow. In other towns, the creation of one-way streets has been considered.

All such changes are potentially dangerous with respect to the economic health of the town center, because they result in an increased number of cars in downtown and an increase in traffic speeds. To accommodate wider roads, sidewalk widths are reduced and pedestrian amenities are eliminated. Pedestrians have to cross more lanes of traffic in order to cross the street, reducing cross-fertilization of stores located opposite one another.

There are several alternatives to road widening that can be considered. The most obvious alternative is to create a bypass road around the town center and move the state highway designation to the bypass road, thereby channeling traffic off Main Street. This option, if selected, should be used with caution. Although congestion along Main Street may be a frustration, traffic also brings in customers, and traffic activity also lends vitality to Main Street. More often than not, a Main Street without traffic congestion is unsuccessful. As cars are moved from Main Street to the bypass road, there will be pressure for commercial development along the bypass. Even if the zoning is not initially adjusted to allow for commercial development, variance applications will soon come forward for gas stations, fast-food restaurants, a grocery store, and so forth. The bypass road can evolve into a commercial center of its own right that competes with downtown. In such a scenario, the town center would then have to be retooled to accommodate a different market niche. While all these steps could work out in the municipality's favor, it should be kept in mind that the creation of any sort of bypass road would have economic implications for the town center and that the municipality should be prepared to deal with the economic changes that would follow.

The other major alternative is to use the town center's traditional street pattern for improved traffic management. Each town center must be evaluated individually in order to determine whether this option would be feasible, given the configuration of existing streets. In general,

there are a few key options that should be explored, and in many cases, a multi-faceted strategy may be best.

- First, if a street grid is present, incoming traffic could potentially be directed down a variety of parallel streets, effectively dispersing cars and preventing congestion along any one street.
- Second, visitors bound into the town center could be diverted — using signage — into parking lots before they reach Main Street.
- Third, improved signalization could be used to prevent delays resulting from turning movements. On-street parking could be removed near the intersection in order to allow room for a left- or right-turn pocket.
- Fourth, curb cuts of adjacent parking lots could be consolidated, such that delays resulting from driveway "friction" could be reduced.

## **PARKING COORDINATION**

Better coordination of parking is one critical component of a larger economic development strategy for Main Street. In village centers where parking is not coordinated, customers may have more difficulty gaining access to businesses. Too much land area may be given over to asphalt and driveways, while arbitrary lot lines divide adjacent parking lots and result in less than the potential number of parking spaces.

To reduce these problems, parking lots in a Main Street setting should be combined or shared. The major choice to be made is whether to create some form of a parking district that oversees parking for the entire downtown, or whether to encourage shared parking agreements between adjacent property owners. The answer to this question partly depends upon the size, density, and character of the town center area, as well as the parking need. In more intensively developed areas with a chronic parking shortage, a parking district would provide a stronger mechanism for handling the parking need. In less densely developed areas, shared parking may be adequate. Shared parking is discussed extensively in Chapter 8.

As for the creation of a parking district, the proposal can be contentious, because it suggests the imposition of an additional tax burden on downtown property owners and businesses. One way to offset some of the tax burden would be to charge for parking. This proposal in itself may be contentious, partly because it may be perceived to turn away customers. If a town center is directly competing with a nearby commercial corridor for shoppers, then this perception may be justified. Nevertheless, if the town center is transformed into a unique market niche that offers products and services unavailable elsewhere, customers would be willing to pay a reasonable rate for parking. The most cost effective method of paid parking is the use of meters or another similar mechanical payment system, which avoids the cost of having a paid employee collect fees.

Another reason to having paid parking is to encourage the turnover of prime parking spaces. In unmetered downtowns, on-street parking spaces and off-street spaces close to building and store entrances fill up early in the morning, will little turn-over during the course of the day. People occupying these spaces are usually local workers and merchants, who then complain about the lack of parking for their customers. Paid parking encourages workers and merchants to park in more remote spaces, freeing the best spaces for patrons. As a result, customers have a greater chance to park "right in front" of their destination, an appealing perk that helps

encourage repeat visits. Local workers can be given parking passes that allow them to park for free, provided that they park in specified "remote" spaces.

## **7.5 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### **REGIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

The challenge for towns in the Hartford region will be to identify feasible market niches for their town centers. Aside from scattered tourist attractions throughout the region, there is no mass tourism market that can be tapped in the immediate area. Specialty shopping and restaurants are the most obvious candidates for a town center, but these uses have a limited market potential without either tourists or a large daytime population generated by offices. Residents are only willing and able to spend a certain amount of money on such venues, and there are already a few popular destinations, like West Hartford and Windsor centers.

Yet some towns may have a unique facility, like a college or preparatory school campus, that creates an opportunity for promoting campus-oriented shops, services, and entertainment. For example, the Farmington Avenue Joint Committee (FAJC) is currently considering an economic development proposal to promote student-oriented cafes, restaurants, bars, book stores, music stores, and other similar venues in the Asylum Hill and West End shopping areas. Such uses are intended to appeal to students at the University of Hartford and other nearby colleges, many of whom live in the apartment buildings along Farmington Avenue.

Since increased tourism would provide a great economic opportunity for these town centers, CRCOG and other regional entities should work to promote tourism as part of the regional economy. Located midway between two major metropolitan centers — New York City and Boston — the Hartford region is within day-trippers' driving distance from those regions. This campaign should attempt to build interest in the natural beauty and historic character of the region, as well as opportunities for sporting activities like hiking and biking. As tourists venture into the region for such activities, towns should begin to retool their town centers for tourism, by making use of the multi-faceted strategies discussed throughout the chapter.

Currently, the Hartford region has a unique opportunity to draw tourists and visitors, because of various major projects that are currently being developing or planned. Adriaen's Landing in downtown Hartford will introduce a retail/entertainment center with a convention center, hotel space, and housing that re-connects downtown to the riverfront. Rentschler Field in East Hartford will serve as a new home for the UConn football team and will also host various special events. With 40,000 seats, it is expected to become a major regional attraction. There has been a proposal to establish an historic corridor between Hartford and Springfield that would link together the historic and cultural sites in between those two cities. With these major attractions, the Hartford region has the potential to build up the regional market for tourists and visitors.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Capital City Economic Development Authority, <[www.cceda.state.ct.us](http://www.cceda.state.ct.us)>, visited May 2002.

## RETHINKING ROADWAY STANDARDS

Although there are ways that municipalities can cope with traffic congestion other than road-widening, State officials have complete jurisdiction over State highways. Many rural villages, such as historic Suffield, have State highways running through their cores. CRCOG should work with the State Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) in order to consider more flexible roadway standards for those village centers. In particular, allowing narrower roads, sharper turning radii, and traffic calming devices should all be options in a village environment. The federal government has adopted policies and legislation that encourages multi-modal transportation planning, as well as pedestrian- and bicycle-oriented planning. Making State roadways more walkable in historic village centers would be consistent with the spirit of federal legislation. Proposed roadway improvements in village centers should also be consistent with local plans for conservation and development.

There are a variety of sources that CRCOG and ConnDOT can explore more flexible roadway standards. The Federal Highway Administration has published a guide called “Flexibility in Highway Design”. Under ISTEA and TEA-21 legislation, the federal government strongly supports initiatives for multi-modal transportation and pedestrian and bicycle improvements. Protecting the pedestrian environment in a town center through flexible roadways standards would be consistent with the spirit of federal legislation. CRCOG can work with ConnDOT to consider adopting a similar shift in policy at the State level.

ConnDOT has already been exploring the concept of “context sensitive design” since the late 1990’s. In 2000, ConnDOT released its new *Highway Design Manual*, which is used as the basis for engineering improvements (i.e., widening, re-alignment) on State highways. One of the most innovative features of the manual is that it contains different standards for rural and urban roads. The introduction of the manual stresses that “each project should be designed as part of the total environment, specifically designed to fit into the context of the area where it will be constructed.”<sup>6</sup> Reflecting ConnDOT’s agreement with the Federal Highway Authority to conduct a pilot training program for “context sensitive design,” the manual also emphasizes public outreach in conjunction with highway improvement projects.<sup>7</sup>

While ConnDOT’s initiatives are commendable, even more can be done to promote appropriate roadway design and further encourage pedestrian and bicycle activity in town centers. CRCOG should work with ConnDOT to continue developing an even wider range of tools for ensuring context-sensitive roadway design.

## 7.6 RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

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### REPORTS

American Planning Association. *Planning Advisory Service Report Number 479: The Principles of Smart Development*. Chicago: American Planning Association, 1998.

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<sup>6</sup> Connecticut Department of Transportation, *Connecticut Highway Design Manual*, December 2000, page 1-1, <[www.dot.state.ct.us](http://www.dot.state.ct.us)>, visited April 13, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Connecticut Department of Transportation, *Context Sensitive Design: Activities and Pilot Schedule*, <[www.dot.state.ct.us/geninfo/hwydsn/hdmcsd.htm](http://www.dot.state.ct.us/geninfo/hwydsn/hdmcsd.htm)>, visited April 13, 2002.

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## **LIBRARIES & BOOKSELLERS**

Planning Advisory Service  
American Planning Association  
122 S. Michigan Avenue, Suite 1600  
Chicago, IL 60603  
Phone: (312) 431-9100  
Fax: (312) 431-9985  
[www.planning.org/pas/pas.html](http://www.planning.org/pas/pas.html)

**NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

American Planning Association  
122 S. Michigan Avenue, Suite 1600  
Chicago, IL 60603  
Phone: (312) 431-9100  
Fax: (312) 431-9985  
<[www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org)>

Connecticut Main Street Center  
c/o CL&P  
P.O. Box 2370  
Hartford, CT 06146-2370  
Phone: (860) 280-2337  
Fax: (860) 280-2487  
<[www.ctmainstreet.org](http://www.ctmainstreet.org)>

Congress for the New Urbanism  
The Hearst Building  
5 Third Street, Suite 725  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Phone: (415) 495-2255  
Fax: (415) 495-1731  
<[www.cnu.org](http://www.cnu.org)>

National Trust for Historic Preservation  
National Main Street Center  
1785 Massachusetts Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
Phone: (202) 588-6219  
Fax: (202) 588-6050  
<[www.mainst.org](http://www.mainst.org)>

New Hampshire Main Street Center  
Community Development Finance Authority  
State of New Hampshire  
14 Dixon Ave, Suite 102  
Concord, NH 03301  
Phone: (603) 223-9942  
Fax: n.a.  
<[www.nhcdfa.org/mainstreet.html](http://www.nhcdfa.org/mainstreet.html)>

Project for Public Spaces,  
153 Waverly Place, 4th floor  
New York, NY 10014  
Phone: (212) 620-5660  
Fax: (212) 620-3821  
<[www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)>

## 7.7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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American Planning Association. *Planning Advisory Service Report Number 479: The Principles of Smart Development*. Chicago: American Planning Association, 1998.

Gratz, Roberta Brandes; and Norman Mintz. *Cities Back from the Edge: New Life for Downtown*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998.

Farmington Avenue Joint Committee. *A New Farmington Avenue: Phase I: Identification of Issues*. Prepared by Project for Public Spaces, Urbitran Associates, and Abeles Phillips Preiss & Shapiro. May 2001.

## 7.8 SAMPLE ORDINANCES

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Several sample ordinances are included in this section, each one highlighting a different aspect of Main Street zoning. The first is an excerpt from the zoning code of the Town of Southampton, New York that presents the use and bulk regulations pertaining to the Town's Village Business (VB) zones. The VB zone covers most of the Town's traditional turn-of-the-century hamlet centers. The second is the Town Center Overlay District zoning ordinance from the Town of Niskayuna, NY, a small suburb of Albany and Schenectady. The strength of the Niskayuna ordinance is its emphasis on regulating signage, façade design, and streetscape treatments. The third and final example is a set of regulations pertaining to ground-floor window treatments from Portland, Oregon. Acknowledging that pedestrians are averse to walking along blank-walled streets, these regulations are intended to promote a lively pedestrian-oriented environment along Main Street shopping areas.

**TOWN OF SOUTHAMPTON, NEW YORK  
VILLAGE BUSINESS DISTRICT — USE AND DEMENSIONAL STANDARDS**

**§330-33, BUSINESS DISTRICTS TABLE OF USE REGULATIONS  
VB—VILLAGE BUSINESS DISTRICT**

P = Permitted Use

SE = Special Exception Use

**A. Residential Uses**

P: (1) Dwelling lawfully existing prior to adoption of this chapter

SE: (1) Apartment

(2) Conversion into residential condominium or residential cooperative

**B. Residential Community Facilities**

P: (1) Church or similar place of worship or religious instruction, parish house, rectory, seminary or convent

(2) Park, playground or recreational area when authorized or operated by the municipality

(3) Public library or museum

(4) Fire station, municipal office or any governmental building of similar character

(5) School, elementary or high, public, denominational or private, operated or licensed by the New York State Education Department

SE: (1) Nursery school or child day care

(2) School for the mentally retarded, public or private, nonprofit, for which a certificate of incorporation has been approved and an operating certificate issued under Article 31 of the Mental Hygiene Law of the State of New York

**C. General Community Facilities**

P: (1) Bus passenger shelter

SE: (1) Nursery school or child day care

(2) Philanthropic, fraternal, social or educational institutional office or meeting room, non-profit

(3) Public utility structure right-of-way, sewage treatment plant or water supply facility necessary to serve the municipality, except wireless communications towers and antennas

(4) Wireless communications towers and antennas

**D. Business Uses**

- P:
- (1) Accounting, auditing and bookkeeping services
  - (2) Advertising services
  - (3) Antique stores
  - (4) Art galleries
  - (5) Banks and credit agencies
  - (6) Beauty or barber shops
  - (7) Bookstores
  - (8) Business, professional and labor organizations
  - (9) Camera and photographic supply stores
  - (10) Candy, nut and confectionery stores
  - (11) Cigar stores and tobacconists
  - (12) Civic, social and fraternal associations
  - (13) Clothing, personal furnishings and accessories
  - (14) Computer and data processing services
  - (15) Credit/mercantile reporting agencies
  - (16) Dairy products stores
  - (17) Department stores
  - (18) Drapery, curtain and upholstery stores
  - (19) Drugstores
  - (20) Engineering, architectural and surveying services
  - (21) Floor covering stores
  - (22) Florists
  - (23) Fruit and vegetable markets
  - (24) Furniture and home furnishings
  - (25) Furriers
  - (26) General merchandise stores
  - (27) Gift, novelty and souvenir shops
  - (28) Greenhouse, agricultural
  - (29) Grocery stores
  - (30) Hardware stores
  - (31) Hobby, game and toy stores
  - (32) Household appliance stores
  - (33) Insurance offices
  - (34) Jewelry stores
  - (35) Laundry, dry cleaning and garment services (pickup drop/off centers only)
  - (36) Legal services

- (37) Liquor stores (beer and wine)
- (38) Luggage and leather goods
- (39) Mailing, reproduction, commercial art and steno services
- (40) Mail-order houses
- (41) Management, consulting and public relations services
- (42) Meat and fish stores
- (43) Miscellaneous apparel
- (44) Miscellaneous home furnishings
- (45) Motion picture, film and tape distribution
- (46) Music stores
- (47) News dealers and newsstands
- (48) Noncommercial educational, scientific and research organization
- (49) Other food stores
- (50) Other investment offices
- (51) Other membership organizations
- (52) Other services
- (53) Paint, glass and wallpaper stores
- (54) Personnel supply agencies
- (55) Photographic studios
- (56) Plant nursery
- (57) Political organizations
- (58) Protective and security agencies
- (60) Radio, television and related stores
- (61) Real estate offices
- (62) Restaurant, standard
- (63) Restaurant, take-out
- (64) Retail bakery, baking and selling
- (65) Retail center, non-hamlet
- (66) Security and commodity brokers, exchanges and services
- (67) Sewing, needlework and piece goods stores
- (68) Shoe repair
- (69) Shoe stores
- (70) Sporting goods and bicycle shops
- (71) Stationery stores
- (72) Used merchandise stores
- (73) Variety stores
- (74) Watch, clock and jewelry repair

- SE: (1) Dance halls, studios or schools  
(2) Greenhouse, commercial  
(3) Motion picture theaters, community  
(4) Offices of physicians, dentists and other health practitioners and medical arts buildings  
(5) Restaurant, fast-food  
(6) Retail center, hamlet

**E. Industrial Uses**

- P: None.  
SE: (1) Printing or publishing

**F. Accessory Uses**

- P: (1) Customary accessory structures and/or uses, except those prohibited by this chapter  
(2) Home occupations other than home professional offices  
(3) Home professional offices  
(4) Private garages or private off-street parking pursuant to §§ 330-92 through 330-101  
(5) Private swimming pools  
(6) Signs pursuant to §§ 330-85 through 330-91  
(7) Greenhouses, private  
(8) Accessory apartment pursuant to Article 11A of this chapter
- SE: (1) Accommodations for not more than 2 roomers or boarders in 1-family detached dwelling, provided that separate kitchen and entrance facilities shall not be provided  
(2) Housing for restaurant employees  
(3) Bed-and-breakfast in an accessory building

**§330-34, BUSINESS DISTRICTS TABLE OF DIMENSIONAL REGULATIONS  
VB—VILLAGE BUSINESS DISTRICT**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Requirement</i>
Lot Area	
- Minimum (square feet)	None
- Minimum per dwelling unit (square feet)	None
Lot Coverage	
- Maximum lot coverage by main and accessory buildings	70%
Lot Width, Minimum	20 feet
Height, maximum	
- Stories	2.5 stories
- Feet	35 feet
Yards, principal building, minimum	
- Front	10 feet
- Side, minimum for 1	No requirement, but
- Side, total for both on interior	15 feet if provided
- Side, abutting side street on corner lot	10 feet
- Rear	35 feet
Yards, accessory buildings and structures, except fences and retaining walls, minimum	
- Distance from street	20 feet
- Distance from rear line	35 feet

1. Where public sewerage is not available, no lot shall be built upon which has insufficient space for a private sanitary waste disposal system, as determined by the town and Suffolk County Department of Health Services.

Source: Town of Southampton, Chapter 330 of the Code of the Town of Southampton: Zoning. § 330-33 and § 330-34. Updated through August 27, 1999.

**TOWN OF NISKAYUNA, NEW YORK  
TOWN CENTER OVERLAY DISTRICT**

**ARTICLE VIIIA. TOWN CENTER OVERLAY DISTRICT**

**Section 220-48.1. Purpose**

- A. The purpose of the Town Center Overlay District is to develop an identifiable center of the town of Niskayuna with the Town Hall and county branch library as its nucleus. Its intent is to further define a sense of community and to promote a traditional architectural and visual environment deemed important as part of the town's comprehensive planning process. A fully realized Town Center concept will incorporate the elements of institutional, commercial, vehicular, and pedestrian environments into an integrated commercial and civic design which reflects the community focus of the town.
- B. The town center concept is implemented by use of an overlay district which imposes additional criteria on the underlying zoning districts. The boundaries of the Town Center Overlay District are shown on the Zoning Map of the Town of Niskayuna.

**Section 220-48.2. Objectives.**

In order to achieve the town center concept, the following objectives shall be realized:

- A. Signs shall be of a scale, height, material, and illumination which reflect the traditional concepts being promoted in the Town Center.
- B. The pedestrian environment in the Town Center is essential for developing the sense of community desired by the town. Amenities shall be provided in the Town Center to promote pedestrian usage.
- C. Vehicular circulation and parking should be accommodated without impacting the pedestrian experience. Adequate measures shall be provided to reduce vehicular/pedestrian circulation conflicts.
- D. The architectural character of new and renovated buildings should be harmonious with the traditional architectural styles of the Town Hall and county Library as focal points of the Town Center.
- E. The size and scale of buildings in the Town Center should be complementary to a pedestrian environment. Buildings located near the perimeter of the Town Center should be designed to provide a harmonious transition between the commercial development and its residential neighbors.

**Section 220-48.3. Applicability.**

In addition to the applicable regulations for the underlying zones contained elsewhere in this chapter, certain requirements shall apply to properties located within the Town Center Overlay District. All applications for new signs or modification or replacement of existing signs shall

be subject to the requirements of Section 220-48.4 of this Article. All applications for site plan review as specified in Section 220-41 of this chapter shall be subject to Section 220-48.5. All applications for new building construction and building exterior renovations/modifications which require a building permit, with the exception of single-family dwellings and their accessory uses, shall be subject to Section 220-48.7.

- A. Signs shall be of a scale, height, material, and illumination which reflect the traditional concepts being promoted in the Town Center.
- B. The pedestrian environment in the Town Center is essential for developing the sense of community desired by the town. Amenities shall be provided in the Town Center to promote pedestrian usage.
- C. Vehicular circulation and parking should be accommodated without impacting the pedestrian experience. Adequate measures shall be provided to reduce vehicular/pedestrian circulation conflicts.
- D. The architectural character of new and renovated buildings should be harmonious with the traditional architectural styles of the Town Hall and County Library as focal points of the Town Center.
- E. The size and scale of buildings in the Town Center should be complementary to a pedestrian environment. Buildings located near the perimeter of the Town Center should be designed to provide a harmonious transition between the commercial development and its residential neighbors.

#### **Section 220-48.4. Signs**

- A. *Purpose.* The purpose of these standards is to promote signs which are visually compatible with their surroundings and which avoid inappropriate materials and design.
- B. *Applicability.* At any time that there is a new sign or a modification or a replacement of an existing sign in the Town Center Overlay District, the following standards shall apply. These sign requirements shall be considered a supplement to those standards in Section 220-22. In all cases where there is a conflict, these standards shall take precedence over Section 220-22 standards in the Town Center Overlay District.
- C. *Permitted signs.* The following signs shall be permitted in the Town Center Overlay District:
  - 1. Freestanding monument (ground) signs limited to only public or private place identification, further limited to private sites of five or more acres. Freestanding signs shall not be utilized for individual businesses.
  - 2. Façade signs
  - 3. Directional signs
  - 4. Temporary signs

D. *Prohibited signs.* The following signs shall be prohibited in the Town Center Overlay District:

1. Moving signs
2. Flashing signs
3. Animated signs
4. Pennants/ribbons/logo flags
5. Pylon signs
6. Neon signs
7. Backlit canopies

E. Minimum performance criteria. The following performance standards shall apply to signs in the Town Center Overlay District:

1. *Materials*
  - a. Monument signs shall be constructed with materials used in the main structure and shall be compatible with the area.
  - b. Façade signs shall be made of wood or signboard, carved and/or sandblasted and finished with gold leaf or paint stains. Uniform material shall be used for signs on buildings that are connected by common walls, located in a common plaza or otherwise associated as a single group.
  - c. Directional signs shall be of materials compatible with façade signs.
  - d. Temporary signs may be of cloth or vinyl plastic.
2. *Height.* Freestanding monument signs as permitted in Subsection C(1) of this section shall be no greater than eight feet in height above the finished grade.
3. *Size.* Freestanding monument signs as permitted in Subsection C(1) of this section shall have a maximum area of 50 square feet per sign face for the primary sign and 24 square feet per sign face for any secondary signs. Double-faced signs are permitted. For all other signs, the size standards specified in Section 22w0-22 and Schedule I for the underlying zoning district shall apply.
4. *Illumination.* Sign lighting should minimize glare and maintain the aesthetic character of the area.

Therefore:

- a. Signs may not be internally lit.
  - b. Raised-lettering signs may be backlit. All other signs shall be externally lit.
5. *Logo.* In the event that a picture logo is displayed on a sign, it shall be incorporated into the permitted sign area to comprise not more than 30 percent of the sign area. All colors associated with a logo, as defined in this chapter, may be permitted.

6. *Colors.* Except as provided in Subsection E(5) above, a maximum of three colors shall be utilized for a sign. Colors shall match or complement the predominant building color.
7. *Lettering.* A maximum of two lettering styles shall be permitted on signs, except that all lettering associated with a logo, as defined in this chapter, may be permitted.
8. *Setbacks.* Freestanding monument signs shall have a minimum setback of 10 feet from the right-of-way line and 10 feet from the side property line and shall be located in a manner that does not interfere with required minimum sight distance at driveways or intersections.
9. *Number of signs.* A maximum of one façade sign per use is permitted, except that a use fronting on two streets may have one sign for each building front. A maximum of one freestanding monument sign as described in Subsection C(1) of this section is permitted per driveway up to a maximum of three signs, except that for two or more signs, driveways must be separated by a minimum of 200 feet as measured center line to center line.

#### **Section 220-48.5. Pedestrian and Streetscape Amenities**

- A. *Purpose.* The purpose of these standards is to promote the pedestrian environment in the Town Center Overlay District through the provision of appropriate amenities.
- B. *Applicability.* The standards in this section are applicable to all actions proposed within the Town Center Overlay District which are subject to site plan review as specified in Section 220-41. In addition to the materials regularly submitted for site plan review, the following items shall be incorporated into plans and details for a project located in the Town Center Overlay District.
- C. *Minimum performance criteria.* The following minimum performance criteria shall be utilized for site designs within the Town Center Overlay District. The Planning Board is authorized to consider variations in the criteria to allow for flexible design concept.
  1. *Sidewalks*
    - a. Sidewalks shall be constructed in accordance with the Sidewalk Plan and Section detail contained in this chapter.
    - b. Sidewalks to be dedicated to the town for public access shall be contained within appropriate rights-of-way. They shall be concrete and a minimum of five feet in width.
    - c. Sidewalks outside the public right-of-way shall be privately owned and maintained. They may be comprised of concrete, pavers, or other materials acceptable to the Planning Board. They shall be a minimum of four feet in width.
  2. *Bikeways.* Where a bikeway is required, it shall be designed in general accord with the Guide for Development of New Bicycle Facilities, published by the

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), most recent edition, and with the Town of Niskayuna Bikepath Standards.

3. *Lighting.* Lighting shall follow the Planning Board and Zoning Commission of the Town of Niskayuna Guidelines for Lighting of Outdoor Areas Under Site Plan Review.
  - a. Lighting in public areas shall meet the style and specification requirements as shown in the Composite Street Amenities Exhibits contained [in this chapter]. In general, pole-mounted lighting shall not exceed a total height of 30 feet from finished grade to top of fixture in public rights-of-way and a total of 18 feet in other public areas.
  - b. Lighting in private areas shall be consistent in style with that described for public areas. In general, pole-mounted lighting in private areas shall not exceed a total height of 18 feet from finished grade to top of fixtures.
  - c. Light sources for public and private lighting shall be metal halide.
4. *Amenities.* Amenities shall be required and included on the landscape plan to be reviewed by the Planning Board as part of site plan review. The plan shall include, but not be limited to, benches, bike racks, trash receptacles and recyclable receptacles. These amenities are to be provided on the private portion of the site plan and will be privately owned and maintained. Amenities are shown separately and on the Composite Street Amenities Exhibits detail [in this chapter].
5. *Parking.* Parking shall comply with the standards established in Section 220-19 of this chapter. Off-street parking should be designed to minimize traffic and utilize space through combined access. Screening shall be applied in the parking lot design along parcel boundaries in order to maintain an aesthetic quality. Acceptable screening materials include fencing, berms, and vegetation. Setbacks and signage for parking areas shall follow existing zoning regulations.
6. *Landscaping.* Landscaping shall be included on each site in order to maintain an aesthetic quality in the Town Center and to provide screening for parking, loading, and storage areas. Landscaping internal to the parking area as well as adjacent to it at property lines shall be considered in the overall parking lot design. Conceptual techniques are illustrated in the landscaping detail contained [in this chapter]. Plant materials shall be selected with respect to scale and allotted amount of space. In addition, although plant materials maybe listed under one category, they may also meet the requirements of another, depending on usage. A suggested plant list includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the following plant materials. Salt-tolerant species for use along public rights-of-way or interior parking areas are identified by an asterisk.
  - a. Street trees:

*Deciduous trees*

*Acer platanoides* (Norway maple); (high tolerance\*)

Acer saccharum (sugar maple)  
Gleditsia triacanthos inermis (thornless honey locust)  
Quercus borealis rubra (northern red oak); (high tolerance\*)  
Ginkgo biloba (maidenhair tree)

*Specimen trees*

Crataegus oxyacantha pauli (Paul's scarlet hawthorn)  
Malus floribunda (Japanese flowering crab apple)  
Prunus sargentii (sergeant cherry)  
Pyrus calleryana bradford (bradford pear)  
Tilia cordata (little leaf linden)  
Prunus pendula subhirtella (weeping Japanese cherry)

b. Screening material:

*Coniferous trees*

Pinus nigra (Austrian pine) \*(high tolerance)  
Pinus strobus (Eastern white pine)  
Pinus sylvestris (Scotch pine)  
Picea abies (Norway spruce)  
Thuja occidentalis (Eastern arborvitae)  
Picea pungens (Colorado blue spruce) \*(high tolerance)

*Deciduous shrubs*

Viburnum tomentosum (doublefile viburnum)  
Viburnum lentago (nannyberry viburnum)  
Cornus mas (cornelian cherry)  
Euonymus alatus (winged euonymus)  
Rosa rugosa (rugosa rose)  
Viburnum burkwoodii (burkwood viburnum)  
Viburnum dentatum (arrowwood viburnum)

*Coniferous shrubs*

Juniperus chinensis (Chinese juniper)  
Pinus mugo (mugho pine)  
Taxus canadensis (Canada yew) \*(high tolerance)

c. Ground cover:

Hedera helix (English ivy)  
Vinca minor (common periwinkle)  
Juniperus horizontalis (creeping juniper)

Cotoneaster horizontalis (rockspray cotoneaster)

Pachysandra terminalis (pachysandra)

### **Section 220-48.6. Application Procedures**

- A. *Transmittal of application to the Planning Board.* As provided in Section 220-67F(3) of this chapter, the Zoning Enforcement Officer shall transmit one copy of the application for a zoning and building permit and all related material to the Planning Board as required by Section 220-41.
- B. *Material to be submitted*
  - 1. Applications subject to site plan review shall supplement the requirements of Section 220-43 with such information as the Planning Board may require to promote understanding of the applicant's compliance with the minimum performance criteria of Sections 220-48.4 and 220-48.5.
  - 2. In those instances where the application is for a building and zoning permit for a sign alone, the applicant shall provide a sign detail only showing location, size, lighting, color, materials, and design.
- C. *Modifications and waivers.* The Planning Board may waive one or more of the specific requirements of this Article upon a showing by the applicant that the regulation imposes an undue hardship due to such factors as existing conditions, site topography, or site configuration. The Planning Board shall approve the minimum waiver necessary to allow the application to be approved. The applicant for any such waiver shall have the burden of showing that the proposed project with such waiver shall have a minimum negative effect on aesthetics and compatibility with neighborhood character.

### **Section 220-48.7. Architectural Review Standards**

- A. *Purpose.* The purpose of these standards is to achieve an integrated commercial design that provides an architectural and visual environment consistent with the town center concept.
- B. *Applicability.* With the exception of single-family dwellings and their accessory uses, this Section is applicable to all new building construction and building exterior renovations/modifications which require a building permit.
- C. *Minimum performance criteria.* In order to determine that new building construction or building exterior modifications contribute to a harmonious effect in the Town Center Overlay District and promote a cohesive architectural appearance, based on color, materials, and style, the following minimum performance criteria shall apply:
  - 1. *Colors.* Colors utilized for building exteriors shall be compatible and shall visually reflect the traditional concept of the town center. Examples of incompatible colors include metallic, neon, and/or primary colors.
  - 2. *Materials.* Traditional materials (masonry, wood and stone) are generally required in the Town Center; however, contemporary materials (glass, steel, concrete and plastic/vinyl siding) may be considered if they are treated in a

manner complementary to the traditional concept of the Town Center architectural theme. Examples of incompatible materials include exposed concrete block, metal siding, and reflective glass.

3. *Mechanical equipment.* Mechanical equipment shall be screened with appropriate architectural treatments consistent with the materials listed in Subsection C(2) above.
4. *Architectural features and details*
  - a. Exterior facades, including eaves, columns, pilasters, cornices, windows (and window surrounds), door balusters, canopies, fascias, and roofs, shall be proportionate with the building and consistent with the town center concept. The scale of new construction, including the arrangement of windows, doors and other openings within the building façade, shall be compatible with surrounding buildings in the Town Center Overlay District.
  - b. Compatible finishes and colors shall relate to the town center concept as identified in Subsection C(1) above. Inappropriate contemporary materials which are deemed not to be consistent with or not to blend well with the traditional context of the town center concept are prohibited on building facades [see Subsection C(2) above]. To the extent practicable, accessory structures shall conform to the finishes and colors established for the principal building.

D. *Architectural Review Board*

1. *Duties.* The Architectural Review Board shall review all proposed building construction or building exterior modifications within the Town Center Overlay District and make advisory recommendations to the Planning Board with respect to their consistency with the minimum performance criteria of Section 220-48.7C.
2. *Credentials.* The Architectural Review Board shall consist of five members appointed by the Town Board. Members shall include at least one architect and one additional design professional who shall be an architect, landscape architect, land use planner, or engineer. Members shall be appointed for five years and serve in staggered terms.

E. *Application Procedures*

1. *Transmittal of application to Architectural Review Board.* In the Town Center Overlay District, the Zoning Enforcement Officer shall refer two copies of an application for a zoning and building permit for construction, renovation, and/or modification of a building exterior to the Planning Board, which shall transmit one copy of the application and related materials to the Architectural Review Board.
2. *Application material; material to be submitted.* Upon receipt of an application, the Architectural Review Board may require that the applicant submit such additional information as follows, which shall provide for understanding of the

project's compliance with the minimum performance criteria of Section 220-48.7C above. Such materials shall be prepared by a licensed engineer, architect, surveyor, land use planner or any combination thereof and shall constitute the architectural plan.

- a. Architectural elevations of buildings, specifying dimensions, and materials.
- b. Details of ornamentation which include, but are no limited to, windows, roofs, facades and other building features.
- c. A color rendering which depicts actual colors, textures and building scale.
- d. Samples of materials and colors of building components.

3. *Modification and waivers*

- a. The Architectural Review Board may require such additional information on the architectural plan that promotes further understanding of the applicant's compliance with the minimum performance criteria.
- b. The Architectural Review Board may, at its direction, judge that certain requirements of the architectural plan are not applicable in its review of an application and, therefore, may allow the applicant to submit only those elements which it deems necessary to its review of the particular application.

4. *Action on Application*

- a. Upon reaching its decision, but in no more than 45 days from receipt of a complete application, the Architectural Review Board shall provide its recommendation to the Planning Board with respect to project compliance with the minimum performance criteria.
- b. The Architectural Review Board shall provide its recommendations to the Planning Board on a copy of the architectural plan along with a written report supporting its recommendations.
- c. The Planning Board may accept the report of the Architectural Review Board as a condition of its approval of the architectural plan or, upon showing of undue hardship by the applicant, waive one or more of the specific recommendations of the Architectural Review Board. The Planning Board shall approve the minimum waiver necessary to allow the application to be approved. The applicant for any such waiver shall have the burden of showing that the proposed project with such waiver shall have minimum negative effect on aesthetics and compatibility with neighborhood character.

*Source: American Planning Association. Planning Advisory Service Report Number 479: The Principles of Smart Development. Chicago: American Planning Association, 1998.*

**CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON  
GROUND-FLOOR WINDOWS REGULATIONS**

**CHAPTER 33.218. COMMUNITY DESIGN STANDARDS**

**33.218.140. Standards for All Structures in the RH, RX, C and E Zones**

- A. *Ground-floor windows.* Street-facing elevations must meet the providing ground-floor windows, proposals in E zones may provide public art if the following conditions are met:
1. The area of the ground-level wall that is covered by the art must be equal to the area of window that would have been required;
  2. The artist and the specific work or works of art must be approved by the Portland Regional Arts and Cultural Council; and
  3. The art must be composed of permanent materials affixed to the building. Acceptable permanent materials include metal, glass, stone and fired ceramics.
- B. *Distinct ground floor.* This standard applies to buildings that have any floor area in nonresidential uses. The ground level of the primary structure must be visually distinct from upper stories. This separation may be provided by:
1. A cornice above the ground level;
  2. An arcade;
  3. Changes in material or texture; or
  4. A row of clerestory windows on the building's street facing elevation.

**CHAPTER 33.130. COMMERCIAL ZONES**

**33.130.230 Ground-Floor Windows**

- A. *Purpose.* In the C zones, blank walls on the ground level of buildings are limited in order to:
- Provide a pleasant, rich, and diverse pedestrian experience by connecting activities occurring within a structure to adjacent sidewalk areas;
  - Encourage continuity of retail and service uses;
  - Encourage surveillance opportunities by restricting fortress-like facades at street level; and
  - Avoid a monotonous pedestrian environment.
- B. *Required amounts of window area*
1. In CN1 and 2, CO1 and 2, CM, CS, and CG zones, exterior walls on the ground level which are 20 feet or closer to the street lot line must meet the general window standard in Paragraph 3 below. However, on corner lots, the general standard must be met on one street frontage only. The general standard must be

met on the street that has the highest street classification according to the Arterial Streets Classifications and Policies. On the other street(s), the requirement is one-half of the general standard. If two or more streets have the same highest classification, then the applicant may choose on which street to meet the general standard.

2. In CX zone, exterior walls on the ground level which face a street lot line, sidewalk, plaza, or other public open space or right-of-way must meet the general window standard in Paragraph 3. below.
  3. *General standard.* The windows must be at least 50 percent of the length and 25 percent of the ground-level wall area. Ground-level wall areas include all exterior wall areas up to nine feet above the finished grade. The requirement does not apply to the walls of residential units or to parking structures when set back at least five feet and landscaped to at least the L2 standard.
- C. *Qualifying window features.* Required window areas must be either windows that allow views into working areas or lobbies, pedestrian entrances, or display windows set into the wall. Display cases attached to the outside wall do not qualify. The bottom of the windows must be no more than four feet above the adjacent exterior grade.
- D. *Adjustments.* Public art may be considered for adjustments to the ground-floor window provision. In all cases, the Metropolitan Arts Commission will review the application to determine whether public art is appropriate at the location, taking into account the scale and character of the building and area. The budget, selection process, final artwork, and installation must follow the guidelines of the Metropolitan Arts Commission and must be approved by the Metropolitan Arts Commission. Covenants will be required, following the regulations of Section 33.700.060, Covenants with the City, to ensure the installation, preservation, maintenance, and replacement of the public art.

*Source: American Planning Association. Planning Advisory Service Report Number 479: The Principles of Smart Development. Chicago: American Planning Association, 1998.*