

Guidelines for Community Design

October 15, 2012

Design Review Board Town of Simsbury, Connecticut

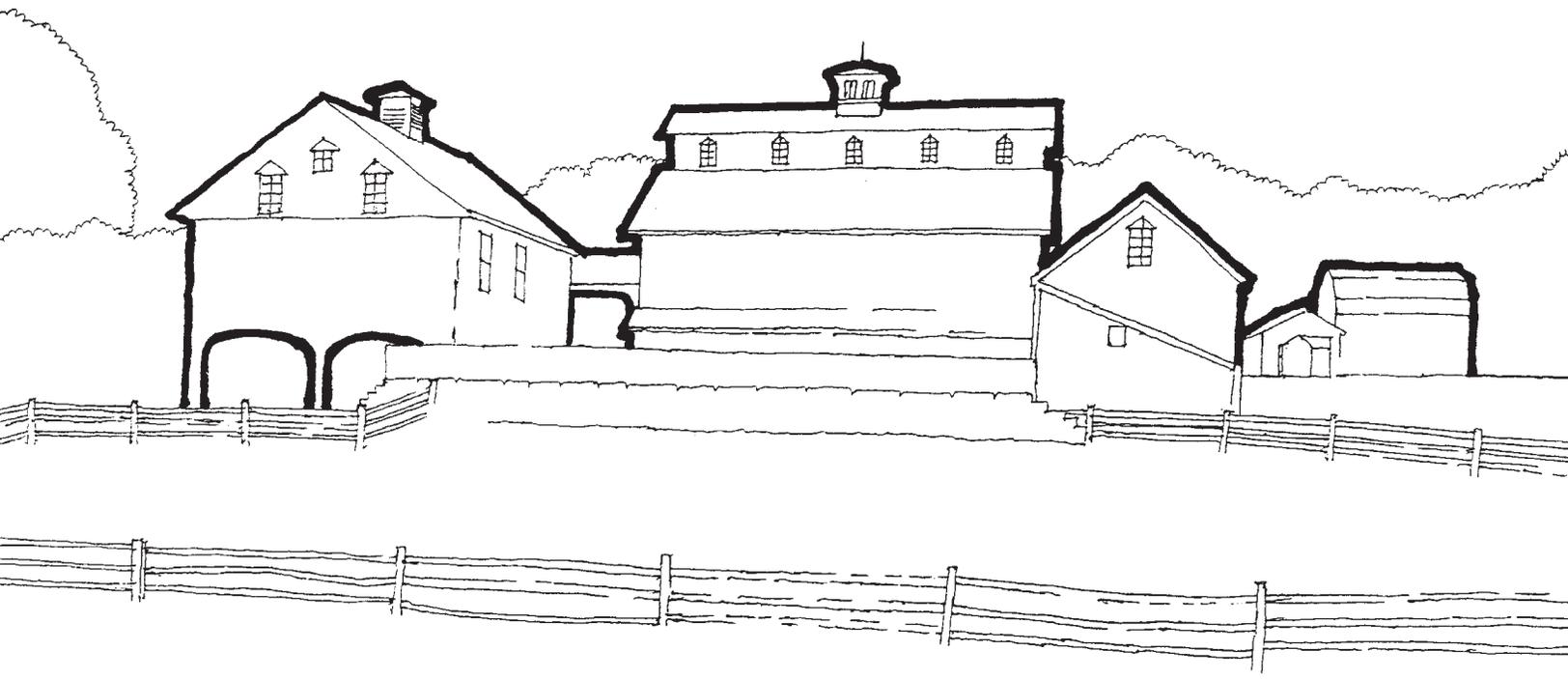


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Acknowledgments

Simsbury Design Review Board

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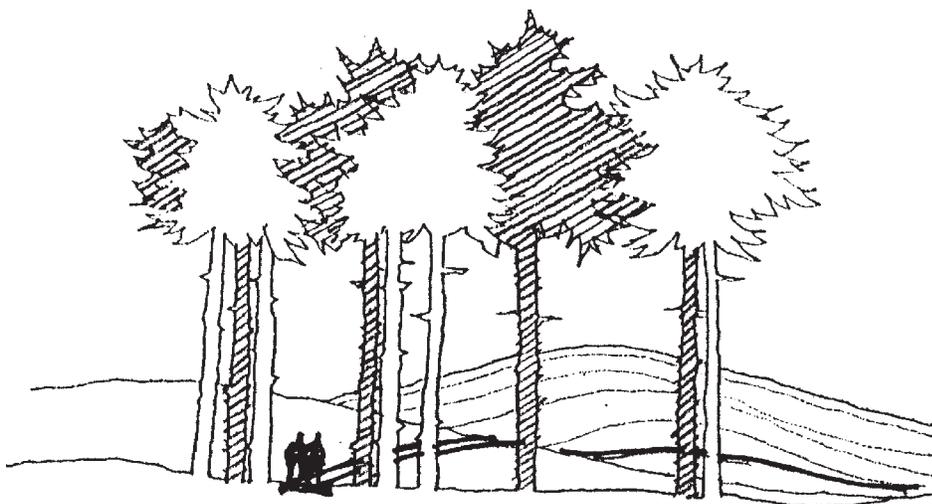
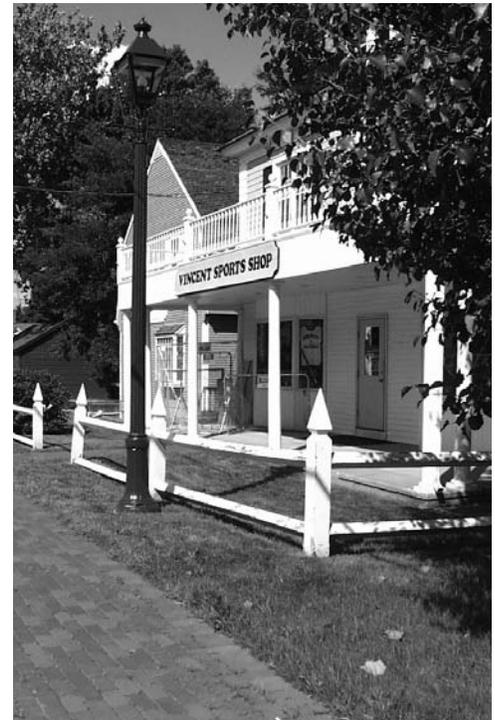
This publication has been financed in part by the Connecticut Historical Commission with Federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views of the Commission or the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Commission or the Interior. The program through which this publication was funded receives Federal financial assistance for the identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, or handicap in its federally assisted programs.

The Simsbury Board of Selectmen established the Design Review Board in December 1988 to serve as an advisory body to the Planning and Zoning Commissions on matters of site and building design. There are seven regular members and three alternates, all of whom are appointed and are qualified to serve by reason of training or experience in Architecture, Site Planning, Landscape Architecture, Historic Preservation, Professional Engineering, Graphic Design or other disciplines as determined by the Board of Selectmen. The Design Review Board is appointed on a two-year basis and is responsible for reviewing applications according to design guidelines and making recommendations to the Planning and Zoning Commissions.

The Town's 1994 Plan of Development and Implementation Guide directed the Design Review Board to "develop guidelines for community design and appearance." This document is the result of that request. It was originally adopted in 2001, and was updated to include the *Town Center Guidelines* Chapter in 2012.

The underlying principles of this document reflect the philosophy of the Design Review Board. Specifically:

- Quality design is a study of relationships – connections among individual structures in the built environment, the natural landscape, the historical context, and the people who experience it.
- Architecture and landscape design should emerge from local climate, topography, history, and building practices. Individual projects should link seamlessly with their surroundings, transcending style.
- Preservation and renewal of historic buildings, districts, and landscapes affirm the continuity and evolution of our community.
- The whole of Simsbury is greater than the sum of its parts.



Managing Change in Simsbury

Simsbury is the quintessential small, post-industrial New England town. What began as an early settlement in the 1600s became a farming community in the 1700s, a manufacturing town in the 1800s, and is today a viable balance of agriculture, commerce, industry, and housing. Vestiges of the town's evolution are apparent in its settlement patterns, historic architecture, and variety of natural and cultural resources.



Simsbury's natural resources include a variety of topographical landforms, agricultural and natural open spaces, woodlands, and watercourses. Visual resources encompass ridgelines, meadows, woodland walks, and scenic roadway vistas. Its cultural resources include agricultural and recreational open space, a unique manufacturing industry, distinct villages, school campuses, a well-defined historic Town Center, and an array of other notable historical, commercial, and residential architecture.

However, what makes Simsbury so attractive and liveable is more than the breadth and depth of those resources. It is the cohesive way those assets fit together to create a distinctive, engaging, and functional small town - a town shaped over many years through meaningful human interaction with the natural landscape. The relationship between human and habitat (brought together by imagination and a deep understanding of "place") has created a sense of belonging. It is that relationship that remains most vulnerable to change.

Using the Design Guidelines

The *Guidelines for Community Design* provide flexible tools for evaluating future development in the context of Simsbury's unique character and architectural heritage. They also strengthen the local business environment and enhance property values by promoting a high quality built environment.

The guidelines address the following questions regarding the character of the community:

- What is the community's vision for its future?
- How can the Town manage change so that it enhances, rather than undermines, Simsbury's general character?

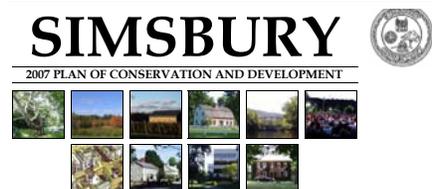
The *Guidelines for Community Design* are used by a diverse range of residents and organizations to stimulate creativity and promote compatible design. Key users of the design guidelines include:

- **Property Owners, Architects and Developers** use the guidelines to help determine what types of alterations, additions and new construction are most appropriate in the Town Center and to guide the design of specific projects.
- **The Design Review Board** uses the guidelines to review project applications submitted to the Zoning and Planning Commissions. The Board suggests ways to preserve, enhance and add to the design and/or aesthetics of proposed projects.
- **The Planning and Zoning Commissions** use the guidelines to review Design Review Board recommendations and approve or deny applications submitted by property owners, architects and developers.
- **City Staff** use the guidelines to advise property owners and make recommendations to the Design Review Board, Zoning Commission, and Planning Commission regarding proposed projects.
- **Town Residents** and others may also review the guidelines to better understand the community's vision for the design character of the Town Center.

The following pages include a summary of the overall design review system and a guide to the organization of this document.



the role of the guidelines Plans and Zoning



Unlike policy documents such as Simsbury's overall *Plan of Conservation and Development*, the *Guidelines for Community Design* do not recommend or provide funding mechanisms for specific public improvements such as coordinated streetlights or the undergrounding of power lines. The guidelines are used only within a design review process that occurs when a specific development is proposed.

The guidelines are also distinct from zoning standards in the Town's prescriptive codes. Zoning provides the quantitative standards for development such as maximum height and minimum setbacks. The guidelines provide qualitative tools that work with zoning standards to further shape development. For example, zoning standards may limit a building to a maximum height of 56 feet while design guidelines further shape the building by indicating that its height should step down adjacent to a lower-scaled neighbor.

Introduction

Using the Design Guidelines



town of simsbury Planning Department



The Town of Simsbury Planning and Land Use Department is available to assist with the design review process. Property owners, architects and developers should contact the department early in the process of designing a project to review applicable regulations and guidelines. The Planning Department can also schedule informal meetings with the Design Review Board.

Town of Simsbury Planning and Land Use Department
933 Hopmeadow Street
Simsbury, CT 06070

Phone: (860) 658-3245

http://www.town.simsbury.ct.us/Public_Documents/SimsburyCT_PlanningZone/index

The Design Review System

The *Guidelines for Community Design* are intended to stimulate creativity and, through the design review process, help property owners, architects and developers pursue designs that complement, and are compatible with, the existing fabric of site and building design in Simsbury. The overall process is summarized in Chart 1: Design Review Process on page 5. The process for submitting an application to enter the design review process is summarized below.

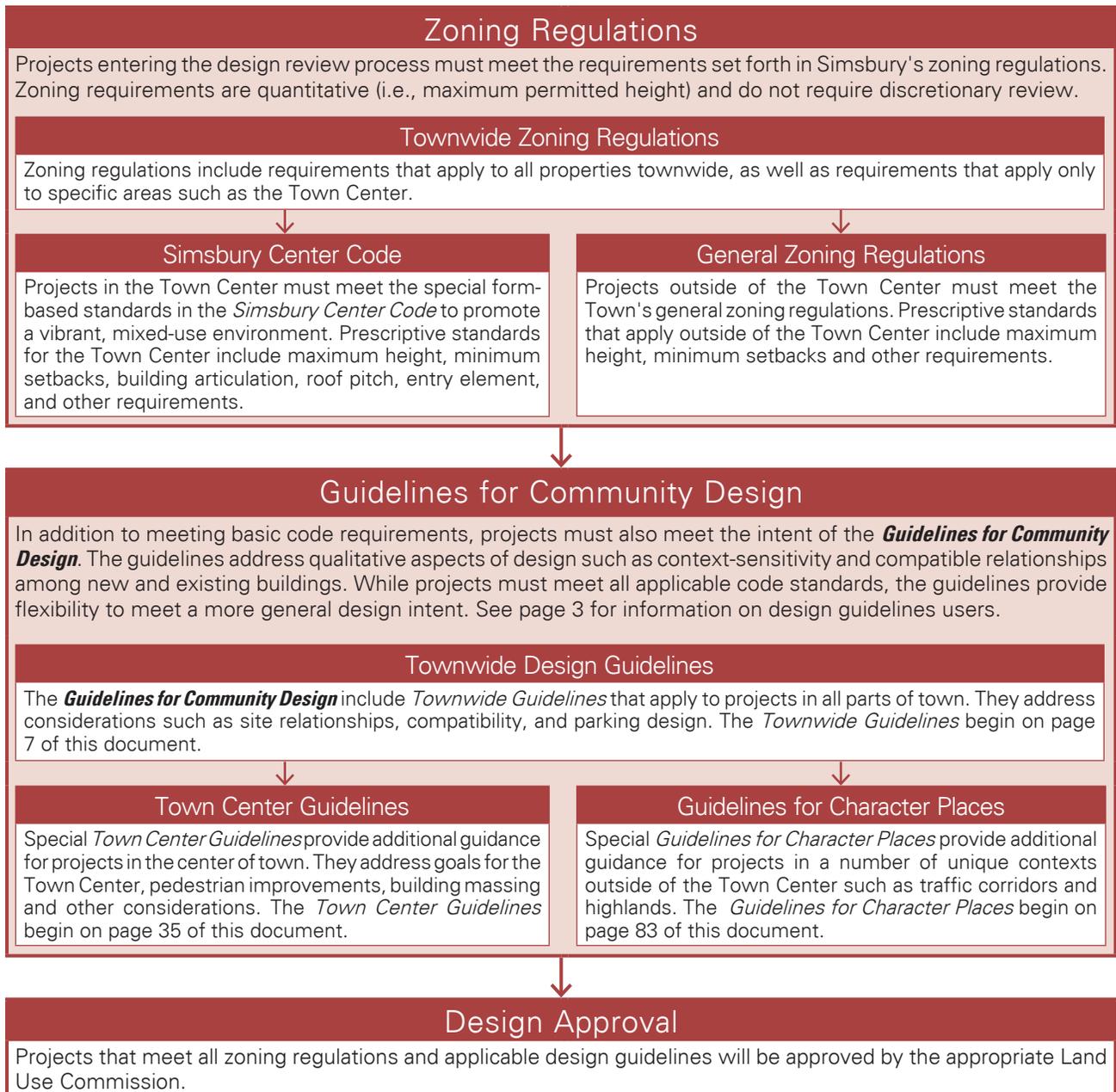
Application Process

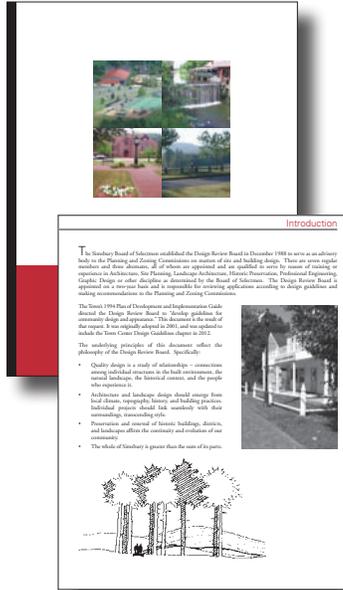
The application process begins with informal meetings between the applicant (property owners, architects and developers), Planning and Land Use Department staff and the Design Review Board. The applicant then submits a formal application to the appropriate Land Use Commission (Inland Wetlands, Planning Commission, Zoning Commission and/or Historic District Commission) who will use Design Review Board and Town Staff recommendations to review and approve or deny the proposal. Details of the pre-application and application process are provided in Appendix C: Application and Review Procedure on page 104.

Each application is unique and no single set of requirements fits all cases. Applicants should use the design guidelines as a checklist during the presentation and review process. Much of the success of an application depends on the following four items:

1. Applicants read and understand the guidelines as they apply to their projects.
2. Applicants come prepared to answer questions based on those guidelines germane to their projects.
3. Applicants meet with the Design Review Board in an informal (pre-application) session to better understand Simsbury's design goals before finalizing plans and project documents (meetings may be requested through Town staff).
4. Applicants provide complete documentation (scale drawings, site photographs including existing buildings, color samples, fixture specifications, etc.) at the time of their formal presentation to the Design Review Board. Recommendations on applications cannot be made on partial submittals.

Chart 1: Design Review Process





Document Organization

Following this introduction, the *Guidelines for Community Design* are organized into three primary chapters. The *Townwide Design Guidelines* chapter is applicable to all projects. Depending on the location of the project, either the *Town Center Design Guidelines* chapter or the *Character Places* chapter will also apply. The Town Center Design Guidelines address the unique context of Simsbury's Town Center while the Character Places chapter addresses other unique landscapes that are related by common resources.

Design Guidelines Format

The individual design guidelines included in the *Guidelines for Community Design* are formatted in two styles. The *Townwide Design Guidelines* and *Guidelines for Character Places* chapters share the same guidelines format while the newer *Town Center Guidelines* chapter uses the updated format described on page 38.



Site and Landscape Organization



site design

synthesis of the art of man
with the beauty of nature

“Site planning is the art of arranging the external physical environment to support human behavior. . . . It is not simply a collection of buildings and streets but a system of structures, surfaces, spaces, living things, climates and details.”

Kevin Lynch
Site Planning Second Edition

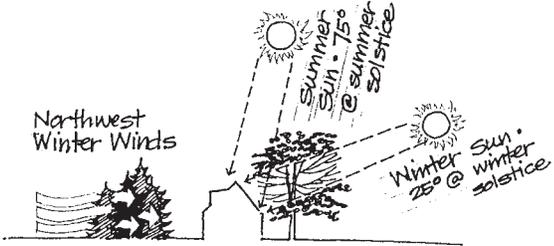
Relationship to the Natural Environment

Is the development ecologically responsible?

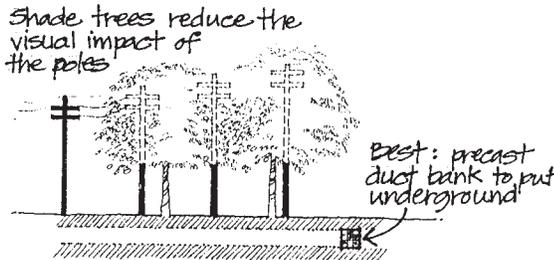
Does the development recognize the site context and character of the land, and design with it and within it?

Guidelines:

- Identify existing natural features (e.g. mature trees, topographic features, rock outcroppings, etc.), consider as design determinants, and preserve as much as possible. Avoid extensive topographic reshaping and/or clearing.
- Preserve or create scenic views.
- Maintain visual privacy between public and private spaces.
- Minimize adverse impacts and safety hazards on adjacent properties (e.g. noise nuisance, surface drainage, etc.).
- Factor in local climate conditions (including solar and wind influences) when designing for energy efficiency.
- Situate utilities below ground wherever possible and relocate existing overhead services below ground.
- Protect places (e.g. special open space, rare vegetation, scenic water features, wildlife habitat, etc.) which lend a unique character to the specific setting.
- Avoid development on ridgeline or hilltop.



Energy Saving Considerations



Reducing Impact of Utilities

Townwide Guidelines

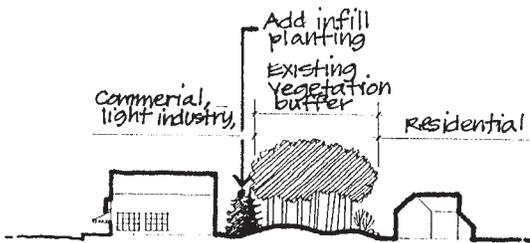
Site and Landscape Organization

Relationship to the Community

Does the site plan maintain pre-existing variety by patterning its design on its cultural and historic context?

Guidelines:

- Continue pre-existing visual patterns (e.g. density, lot size, location of sidewalk and parking areas) in those neighborhoods historically based on functional activities.
- Separate incompatible uses with large open space or natural buffers.
- Allow a mix of uses (where permitted by regulation) of small scale commercial within primarily residential areas.



Buffer Incompatible Uses



Circulation – Vehicular and Pedestrian

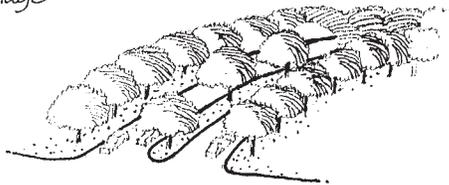
Does the site design provide vehicles and pedestrians with a safe, logical approach and entry to all site use areas and buildings?

Is equal importance given to the pedestrian as to the vehicle in terms of comfort and access?

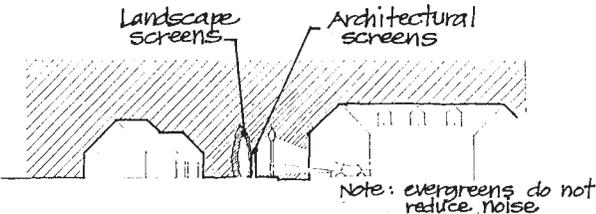
Guidelines:

- Locate circulation system close to proposed land use.
- Create permanent planted setbacks from the public right-of-way to meet current and projected parking requirements.
- Emphasize entrances, exits and internal barriers with site lighting.
- Avoid screens or structures that block sight lines at entrances or while moving through the site.
- Provide safe and convenient handicapped access (i.e., walks, ramps, handrails, and curbs) to blend with the architecture and landscape plan, and to avoid sharp visual contrast.
- Minimize conflicts between pedestrian and vehicle movement with design elements (e.g. grade changes, screens, structures, etc.)
- Minimize traffic lane widths while allowing for vehicular maneuvering.
- Segregate general traffic movement from service traffic/loading docks or outdoor storage facilities.
- Incorporate landscaping and scenic views along circulation system.
- Provide safely textured and decoratively patterned walking surfaces.
- Minimize vehicle headlight glare on adjacent land uses.
- Maintain fire and emergency vehicle access.
- Provide space for snow placement or removal.

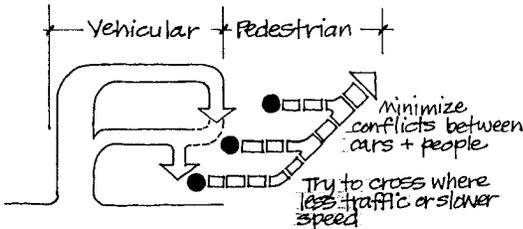
Boulevards provide identity and project a positive image



Boulevards Ease Traffic Impact



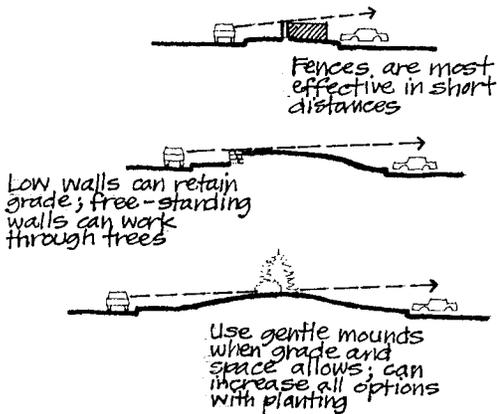
Reducing Impact Between Properties



Create Traffic Hierarchy

Townwide Guidelines

Site and Landscape Organization



Some Screening Options

off street parking Simsbury Town Center



Context-sensitive design is especially important for off street parking lots and structures in the Town Center.

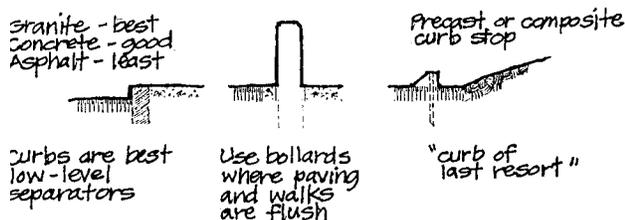
Additional design guidelines for the treatment of surface parking in the Town Center are provided on page 57 and guidelines for parking structures in the Town Center are provided on page 80.

Off Street Parking

Does the parking, as integrated into the design, provide a positive visual element, or does it dominate the landscape?

Guidelines:

- Create a strong architectural edge by locating the majority of parking at the rear and remainder at the side yard.
- Screen (with landscaping, berms, fencing, etc.) parking area from street view.
- Keep covered parking compatible in scale, character, and detail with the architecture that it serves.
- Provide vehicle barriers (curbs, bollards, or low walls/fences) located to protect and not obstruct adjacent walks, or where required for other safety purposes (e.g. grade changes, traffic lanes, trees, etc.).
- Minimize the use of wheel stops in parking spaces. Use only in areas with no pedestrian movement.
- Protect end row parking from turning movements of other vehicles with curbed landscaped areas.
- Illuminate the parking area for security and safety.
- Locate no more than ten parking spaces in a row without a generous landscaped divider strip.
- Use concrete, stone or similar curbing to contain landscape materials and provide protection from vehicles.
- Maintain a spatial separation or landscape barrier between the parking area and the building.
- Provide space for snow placement or removal.
- Pave and grade parking so that storm water will not cross public sidewalks.



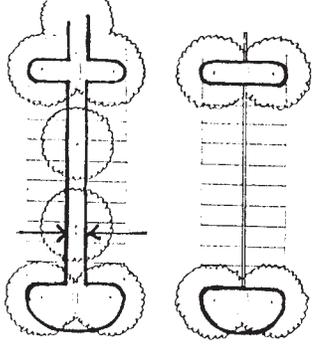
Vehicle Pedestrian Separators



First choice:
linear islands
w/shade and/or
evergreen trees

Second choice:
islands every 10
spaces - the more
the better

Ideal width: 8'+up



Reducing the Impact of Asphalt



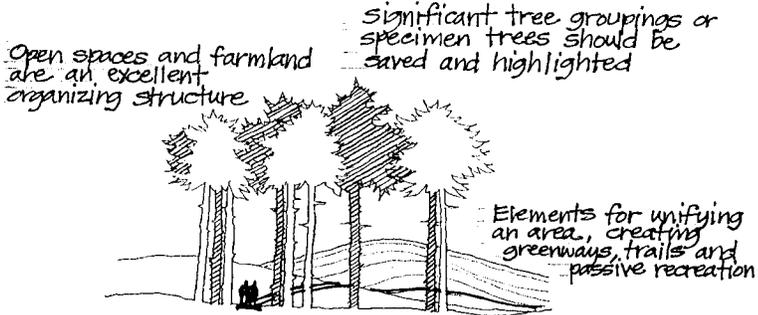
Public Spaces

Does the site plan incorporate places for outdoor social activity (i.e. plazas, courtyards, parks, greenways, etc.) that reinforce community life?

Guidelines:

- Encourage planned and/or spontaneous public gathering at convenient, safe, and visually engaging locations.
- Create opportunity for passive recreation in natural wooded or open space settings.
- Locate active recreation open space convenient to roads and public parking.
- Place spatial elements (e.g. green spaces, gardens, or parks) to establish neighborhood landmarks.
- Utilize peripheral green belts to form spatial boundaries separating individual neighborhoods.
- Use greenways and trails to encourage active recreation (e.g. walking, biking).





Creating Public Spaces



Landscape and Street Tree Plan

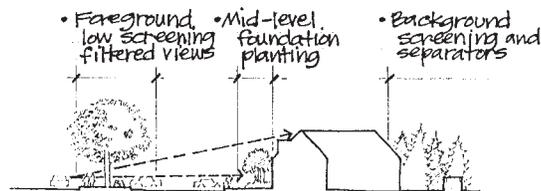
Is the plant material used in a logical, orderly manner that defines spatial organization and relates to buildings and structures?

Does it affirm the historical and regional identity of the location?



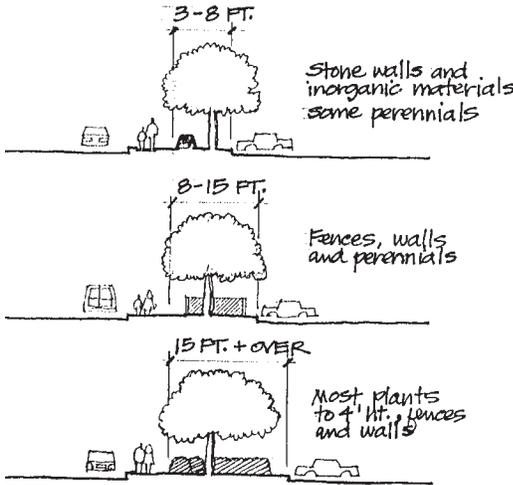
Guidelines:

- Prepare and present a comprehensive landscape plan (refer to Appendix A).
- Use indigenous plants to establish 1) continuity with surrounding areas, and 2) a self-sustaining environment. Avoid unusual cultivars.
- Integrate mature vegetation into the design where possible.
- Use plant material as design features and not exclusively as buffers.
- Utilize plant material as transitional edges between new developments and rural or undeveloped land use (agricultural land or publicly used open space).
- Incorporate open space breaks and preserve existing vegetation in large developments with multiple buildings to create identifiable places within.
- Vary plant material (heights and widths) and integrate open space when buffering an adjacent site.
- Balance the quantity of on-site landscaping with the scale of the proposed development.
- Use plant material to screen local climatic conditions (wind and shade) for pedestrian comfort.

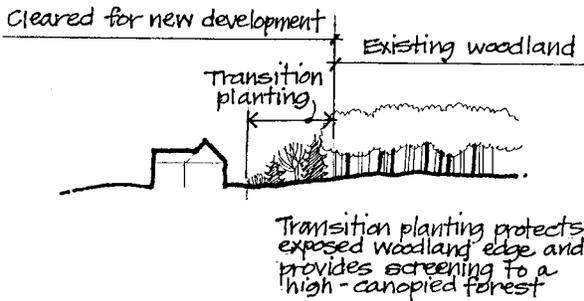


Landscape at All Heights/Distances

- Plant street trees around public and private areas in sufficient numbers and spacing to create canopies at maturity for environmental and spatial impact.
- Landscape around buildings to establish continuity within the site, soften the harshness of regrading, and introduce human scale at the sidewalk level. Choose plant materials that have year-round interest (deciduous color, spring flower, fruits, or branching patterns) as well as their form, texture and shape.
- Protect and incorporate significant quantities of existing trees as design elements, and avoid excessive tree clearing (see the sidebar on page 39 for more information about preserving existing mature trees in the Town Center).
- Avoid blocking sight lines at intersections and curb cuts, and avoid conflicts with overhead or underground services.



Island Width Treatments



Protecting Exposed Woodland Edges

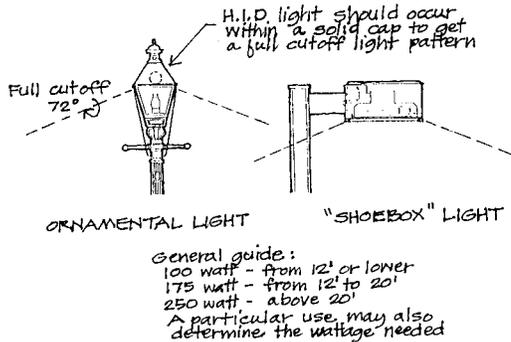
Townwide Guidelines

Site and Landscape Organization

Exterior Site Lighting

Is the lighting durable, low maintenance, and functional?

Is its appearance (style, color, brightness, distribution pattern, etc.) consistent with local character?



Some Lighting Considerations



Guidelines:

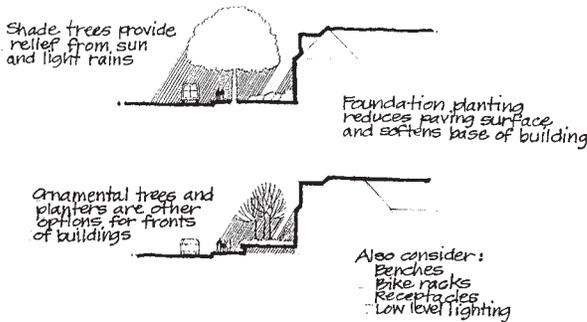
- Locate lighting fixtures to respond to the anticipated use (e.g. signage, site features).
- Avoid relative brightness differences with adjacent dissimilar land uses. Provide photometric data as requested for specific development.
- Use selective night lighting of buildings. Lights should not blink, flash or change in intensity.
- Use lighting fixtures with shielding devices or sharp cut-off refractors to eliminate up lighting. Direct down lighting without light splay off site.
- Conceal the lighting source wherever possible from the public right-of-way.
- Use white light lamps (e.g. metal halide, fluorescent, incandescent) for all new site development illumination. White light is crisp and has true color rendition.
- Do not use low or high-pressure sodium sources.
- Ensure that location of lighting supports does not create a pedestrian or vehicular safety hazard.
- Use lighting standards generally no more than fourteen feet high.
- Use shatterproof coverings for low-level lighting.
- Select a fixture style within the same “family” of standards accepted for specific character areas (e.g. the “Simsbury” fixture for Simsbury Center Zone development).
- Coordinate lighting fixture assembly with architecture it serves.

Streetscape Components

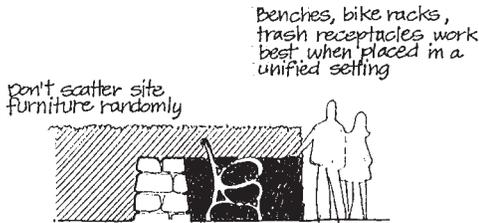
Does the plan promote pedestrian comfort and visual pleasure through the use of well-designed, durable, and useful amenities?

Guidelines:

- Use sidewalks as organizing elements to define public, as separate from private, areas.
- Include benches and/or low walls to encourage pedestrians to gather in places where they will be used without creating an obstruction.
- Enliven street or driveway appearance with design elements (e.g. fences, kiosks, stone walls, pots, planting beds, sculpture, etc.).
- Install trash receptacles where accumulation of trash is likely to occur.
- Strengthen security with adequate area illumination and street visibility.



Incorporate Pedestrian Amenities



Integrate Furniture into Site

Architecture

commodity:
to shelter human activity

firmness:
to durably challenge gravity
and the elements

delight:
to be an object of beauty



“In architecture, as in all other operative arts, the end must direct the operation. The end is to build well. Well building hath three conditions: Commoditie, Firmeness, and Delight.”

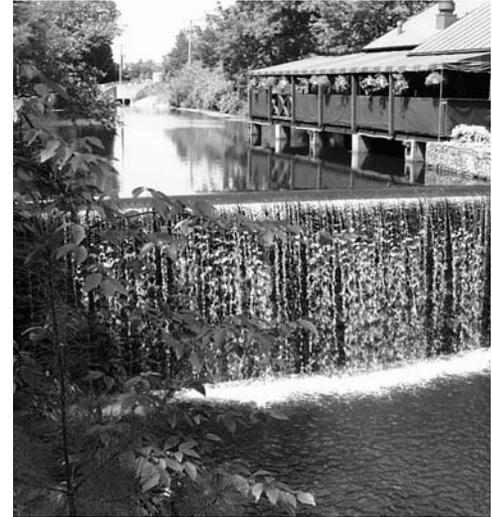
Sir Henry Wotton, 1642.

Relationship to the Site

Does the architecture establish a balanced relationship between prominent natural land features, prevailing vegetation patterns, and adjacent land use development with regard to organization, visibility, and character?

Guidelines:

- Use prominent site features (e.g. topography, rock, mature vegetation, water, etc.) to organize the architectural composition.
- Establish a balanced proportional relationship between the building (mass and scale) and the site (terrain, landscape, views).
- Design primary building orientation (horizontal or vertical) to flow from related landforms.
- Design the main building entrance to be clearly visible and identifiable from the primary vantage points or public right-of-way.
- Provide a logical and visually appealing approach to the entrance.
- Orient the building consistent with energy conservation principles.
- Respect prevailing established building setbacks at both front and side yards.



Townwide Guidelines

Architecture

historic resources Simsbury Town Center



Simsbury's Town Center is the historic heart of the community, and includes a number of older buildings that are valued by the community.

Design guidelines for treatment of Heritage Buildings in the Town Center are provided on page 63.



Historic Resources

Does the development directly or indirectly impact historic resources?

Guidelines:

- Treat resources in a manner consistent with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
- Preserve and/or enhance natural views and features of historical importance.
- Incorporate historic cultural landmarks (e.g. houses, commercial buildings, old stone walls, barns or sheds, fences, tree stands on open space edges, etc.) into new development.
- Preserve and reinforce historic scale, massing, and proportion where applicable.



Form and Space

Do the building forms and surrounding spaces reflect continuity of density, streetscape rhythm, yard setbacks, and community character?

Guidelines:

- Design to create interesting and proportional outdoor spatial relationships between buildings, open space, and setbacks on adjacent sites.
- Establish building rhythms with adjacent building forms for visual continuity.
- Create variety using building clustering, surface recesses, projections, and open space breaks.
- Honor local historic detailing with simple roof forms and shapes.
- Avoid long, large, unarticulated structures which are uninviting and do not contribute to the streetscape.
- Use large open spaces to provide strong, clear boundaries between different land uses or different neighborhood densities.
- Establish visual and functional focal points (e.g. “town green”, landmark structure, public park, etc.) for all large developments.



Scale, Massing and Proportion

Is the design statement simple, and are the design elements, materials, and details consistent with its contextual setting?



Guidelines:

- Balance the visual relationships of building bulk and size with its site, especially when viewed from a distant vantage point.
- Break larger building volumes into smaller forms to lessen the total building mass and to provide continuity with nearby patterns. Smaller forms could include projections (e.g. overhangs, awnings, etc.) or recesses (e.g. windows) on smaller buildings, or stepping back upper levels on larger buildings.
- Maintain proportions between building height, length and width consistent with prevailing architectural standards. Avoid distortion or exaggeration.
- Create variety through compatibility rather than conformity.
- Strive for visual simplicity rather than complexity.



Rooflines, Façades and Entrances

Are the rooflines simple, functional, and reflective of the broader community building stock?

Does the public face of the building present a clear, well-defined and balanced façade?

Guidelines:

- Consider rooflines of adjacent properties in the design to avoid clashes in style and materials.
- Form a consistent composition between the roof mass and building façade.
- Reference adjacent building roof details (e.g. dormers, fascias, roof pitches, etc.) when applicable.
- Establish horizontal continuity by referencing adjacent prominent façade detail elevations and rhythms (e.g. brick coursing, mouldings, fenestration, etc.).
- Include architectural detailing and apply it consistently throughout the design. Ensure such detailing is compatible with the historical context.
- Build elements (e.g. protective canopies, stairs, columns, wall or roof projections and recesses, etc.) to human scale at sidewalk level to encourage pedestrian use.
- Avoid false detailing (e.g. mansard roofs, partial HVAC screens, truncated roof structures, etc.), which detracts from a building’s integrity.
- Accentuate entrances with strong definition and individual legibility for individual tenants.
- Create an agreeable pedestrian environment, including weather protection, convenience, and safety features.
- Arrange window patterns with a balanced spacing and conscious rhythm.
- Observe historic precedents wherever possible.



Some false fronts are clearly add-ons and don't screen what they should

Some roof lines do not reflect a New England character



Inappropriate Roof Lines



Materials, Color and Surface Texture

Are the building materials durable and functional?

Is the use of color and texture reflective of local style and community character?



Guidelines:

- Limit the number of different materials on the exterior building elevation to avoid visual overload.
- Avoid large, unarticulated or monolithic areas on street façades. Use detailing to add relief and shadow patterns to otherwise flat façades.
- Create visual variety, aid in climate control, and establish character by creating shadow patterns using architectural elements (e.g. overhangs, trellises, projections, reveals, and awnings).
- Use natural materials in their traditional applications (e.g. wood, stone, brick, glass, metal, etc.) and avoid wherever possible the use of vinyl or aluminium siding, exterior insulation and finish systems, etc.
- Coordinate all exterior elevations of the building (color, materials, architectural form, and detailing) to achieve continuity.
- Coordinate color scheme and materials with neighboring buildings, and the town as a whole, to reinforce harmony.

Equipment and Service Areas

Are building equipment, storage, and service areas integrated into the site plan and architectural composition in ways that minimize adverse impacts?

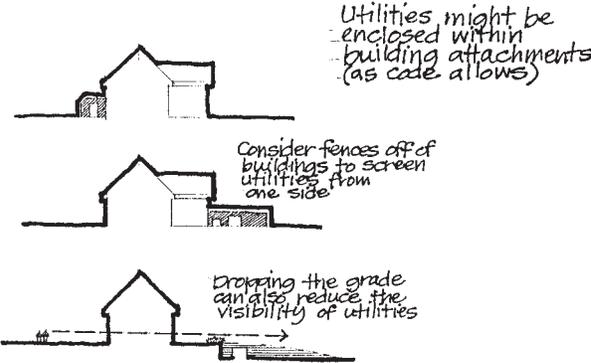
Guidelines:

- Install new utility service systems underground, and bury all existing above ground services when renovating.
- Conceal views of all roof-mounted equipment (e.g. HVAC, plumbing, exhaust fans, etc.) from the public right-of-way using detailing incorporated into the architectural design as opposed to an applied barrier.
- Screen all ground or concrete pad-mounted equipment (e.g. HVAC, electrical, gas, metering devices, etc.) using evergreen plant materials of different species and size, or architectural detailing complementary to the building.
- Locate and screen accessory buildings and functions (e.g. trash containers, storage sheds, and emergency generators) away from parking areas, walks, and adjacent land use. Use either a variety of evergreen plant materials, or an architectural enclosure in character with the primary building.
- Conceal garage doors and loading areas from view from surrounding streets.
- Protect adjacent residential neighborhoods from noise, traffic, risk of hazards, etc.

utility services
Undergrounding Power Lines

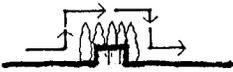


The Town seeks to negotiate with utility service providers to relocate existing power lines underground in several locations, including along Hopmeadow in the Town Center. New development should allow for future undergrounding projects along adjacent streets in such locations.



Concealing Utilities

Outlining a utility with one plant type attracts attention



Envelop and engulf with a variety of plants blends w/setting



Note: allow for some damage to plants when utility companies need to access box.

Screening the Exposed Utility Box

Signage



“One of the most readily apparent aspects of town character is signage. Since signs are intended to be highly visible and attract attention, they often produce a lasting impression on visitors and provide an indication of the commercial health of a business district.”

*Dealing with Change in the Connecticut River Valley:
A Design Manual for Conservation and Development.*

Overview

Does the signage achieve a level of commonality that reflects the character of the neighborhood and town without occurring at the expense of individual expression and design creativity?

Guidelines:

- Integrate the sign into the site plan, and ensure that it complements its surroundings.
- Avoid visual competition with other signs in the area.
- Minimize the number of building and directional signs to avoid repetition.
- Avoid markings on the pavement.
- Refer to Appendix B for approved sign types and specific requirements for a unified sign plan.



signage
Zoning Regulations and Review Procedures



The Town's zoning regulations set maximum size, height and other dimensional standards for signs (note that special sign standards for the Town Center are provided in the *Simsbury Center Code*). The application and review procedures for signs are summarized on page 107.

sign types
Photographic Examples

Sign Type	Examples
Building Signs	
Awnings/Canopy Signs	
Projecting Signs	

Photographs of a range of signs are provided in "Appendix D: Examples of Sign Types" on page 109 to assist with an understanding of the various sign types addressed in the zoning regulations and design guidelines.

Relationship to the Site and Architecture

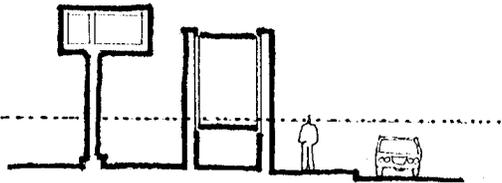
Does the sign design conform to the architectural character of the building in terms of historic era, style, location, and size?



Guidelines:

- Create a new sign proportionate to the dimensions of its location. Avoid exaggerated sign surfaces or individual sign letters on building parapets or other designated areas.
- Integrate signage programs to become a natural part of the building façade.
- At the time of application, replace existing over-sized sign with one more appropriate for the location.
- Directly proportion the overall sign area in relation to the setback from the primary vantage point (e.g. a 32 square foot sign viewed at 30 feet would be the equivalent of a 16 square foot sign viewed at 15 feet).
- Avoid repetitious signage information on the same building frontage regardless of the sign area allowed in the zoning regulations.
- Maintain a space (36 inches minimum) between tenants' adjoining wall signs and a space (18 inches minimum) to the vertical edge of the wall.
- Avoid roof-mounted signage where possible and consider parallel hung signage on the façade. Where roof signs are the only feasible option, ensure that the bottom of the letters or sign are mounted closely to the roof.
- Construct freestanding monument signs at a low height whenever site conditions allow for visibility.
- Avoid top heavy, pole mounted freestanding signs.
- Use driveway directional signs only for projects where circulation is complex and traffic must proceed through the site along a specific path.

Tall signs and stanchions are reminders of 1960s strip mall developments



Low-level signs are just as readable and more to a "New England" scale



The Scale of Signage

Graphics, Text and Information

Does the sign identify the business and street number, and avoid advertising?

Guidelines:

- Do not use advertising and business slogans. Signs may include information describing products sold or services provided.
- Design information to fit properly into the sign location attractively and without visual clutter.
- Avoid use of extremely small letters when the primary vantage is from the street rather than an adjacent sidewalk.
- Use symbols, logos, and illustrations as well as street number for identification.
- Use small-scaled informational signs (e.g. restrooms, elevators, telephones, etc.) that have a uniform appearance, for directing pedestrians.



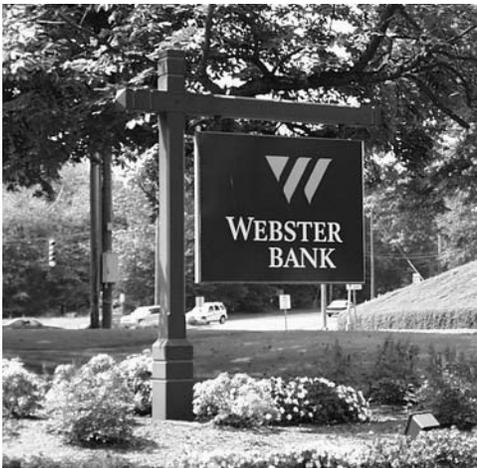
Materials, Color and Texture

Do the materials, color, and texture of the signage conform to the architectural character of the building and to the general character of the larger neighborhood?



Guidelines:

- Use permanent, durable materials (e.g. stone, brick, or wood) on the bases of freestanding signs. Avoid texture-coated sheet metal or plastic.
- Use durable, weather-resistant and vandal-proof materials for the sign.
- Avoid extremely bright background colors (e.g. bright red, orange, or yellow).
- Coordinate sign background, trim, message color, and detail with the architecture it serves.
- Avoid a white or off-white color in a large field of illuminated background.
- Avoid visible raceways and transformers for individual letters.
- Avoid exposed guy wires or supports to stabilize signs.
- Trim edges of flat sheet signs (i.e. plywood) or frame to improve the finished appearance.
- Avoid use of plastic foam letters if possible, or properly cap each letter with plexiglass and secure with studs and glue.
- Use a flat or semi-gloss finish on the surface and avoid a glossy, plastic finish.



Signage Landscaping

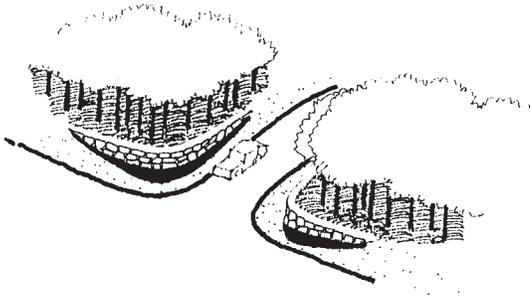
Is the sign integrated with the ground plane by using complementary plant materials as part of an overall planting plan?

Guidelines:

- Use durable and low maintenance plant materials with year round appeal at the base of freestanding signs.
- Utilize low walls to define specific plant beds when appropriate to the architecture.
- Irrigate planting beds when possible.
- Screen low-level lighting from view with plant materials.



Stone walls can define an entrance, help save existing trees and provide a base for signage



Integrating Signage

Signage Lighting

Is sign lighting used judiciously and specifically to illuminate useful information, and is the intensity consistent with neighborhood standards?



Guidelines:

- Use only back-lit (halo-lit, or reverse pan channel) individual letters on skyline signs located on the upper portions of the building.
- Use only external or back-lit illumination sources when lighting.
- Screen any external spot or flood lighting from view by the passersby.
- Illuminate only the sign surface. Avoid blinding motorists or pedestrians with light spill onto adjacent property.
- Avoid overly bright illumination for signage compared to surrounding lighting level intensities.

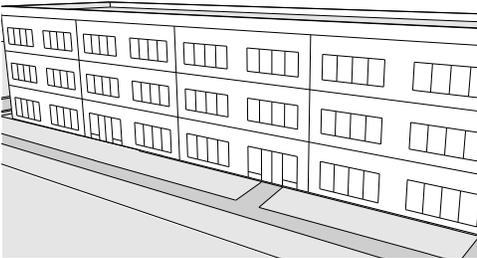


Town Center Guidelines

Founded long before the American Revolution, Simsbury Town Center anchors one of New England's oldest communities. In recent decades, the Town Center has become more automobile-oriented, with fewer pedestrians and a corresponding decline in vibrancy. However, the community's vision for the Town Center foresees a transformation into a more pedestrian-friendly, mixed use area complemented by street-oriented buildings and tree-lined streets.



predictability vs. flexibility Standards and Guidelines



Design Standards in the *Simsbury Center Code* address height, setbacks, building articulation, roof pitch and other design elements. Because they are quantitative and do not require discretionary review, such standards provide a high level of predictability.



Design Guidelines address more detailed design considerations such as building massing and compatibility with surrounding context. Because they are discretionary and require interpretation, guidelines are not as predictable as design standards, but offer greater flexibility.

This chapter provides design strategies that build on existing landscape and development patterns to promote the community's vision for the Town Center. Following a summary of overall goals, it is organized into sections by site/landscape and architectural characteristics.

Relationship to the Simsbury Center Code

The *Simsbury Center Code* provides special form-based zoning standards to promote a vibrant, mixed-use environment in the Town Center. Improvement projects must meet base code standards as well as the intent of the design guidelines. In some cases, the guidelines in this chapter reference specific code standards and suggest related design strategies.

Street Frontages. The code divides existing and future streets throughout the Town Center into frontage types that link to design standards for adjoining sites. Such standards address allowed uses, as well as the placement of buildings and parking. The design guidelines provide additional strategies for to ensure compatible development on a variety of street frontages.

Height Zones. The code also divides the Town Center into height zones that set maximum and minimum heights for all buildings. In some cases, the guidelines distinguish between height zone two, which applies along Hopmeadow and height zones three through four which allow taller heights in areas off Hopmeadow. Note that height zone one applies primarily to open space areas.

Special Code Flexibility. The code allows flexibility in the application of a limited number of specific standards to promote sustainable design and preservation of historic resources. Such flexibility may be granted by administrative review using the *Guidelines for Community Design*. Eligible standards are identified by sidebars within this chapter.

Relationship to the Townwide Design Guidelines

The *Townwide Guidelines* chapter beginning on page 7 provides general guidelines that apply to most improvement projects citywide. This chapter builds on the *Townwide Guidelines* with additional context-specific guidelines for improvement projects in the Town Center. Note that area-specific guidelines for projects that are not in the Town Center are provided in the *Guidelines for Character Places* beginning on page 83.

Overall Goals for the Town Center

The community's vision for the Town Center is supported by overall goals for new construction, additions, and preservation of existing buildings. The design guidelines in this chapter draw upon the goals and explain how they apply to specific improvements and settings. If the design guidelines do not provide sufficient guidance for a specific improvement, the overall goals are used to determine whether the improvement is consistent with the community's vision.

1. Design in Character.

Context. Some parts of the Town Center are anchored by historic buildings and landscapes. Other areas have a more contemporary context, with individual historic buildings appearing as accents. In still other areas, no historic structures exist and the area will develop with an entirely new character. New improvements should honor their context.

Local Design Traditions. The construction techniques, styles and materials used in the Town Center reflect the local landscape and historic influences. While a wide range of building types exists, many buildings share similar features, materials and forms. New improvements should convey this sense of local authenticity without directly copying historic architectural styles. Buildings, sites and other components of urban infrastructure that have historic significance should be preserved and used as inspiration for new work.

2. Design for Excellence.

Integrity and Creativity. The most highly valued buildings and places in the Town Center have a creative, but still cohesive design concept. New improvements should be designed around clear organizing principles while remaining diverse and innovative.

The Public Realm and Pedestrian Experience. New plazas, courtyards and open spaces for outdoor use and public enjoyment are essential to the Town Center's character and vitality. These should connect to sidewalks, paths and other pedestrian ways. Human-scale buildings that offer visual interest also contribute to a positive pedestrian experience.

3. Design for Permanence.

Durability. The Town Center's cherished buildings were designed for the long term. New improvements should use forms and materials that honor this tradition of durability and permanence.

Sustainability. New improvements should promote cultural, economic and environmental sustainability.



sustainable development
Cultural • Economic • Environmental



The **Guidelines for Community Design** promote new improvements in the Town Center that support the three primary components of a community sustainability effort, as summarized below.

Cultural Sustainability relates to maintenance of the community's cultural traditions and social fabric. New improvements that build on Simsbury's unique context and design traditions help support everyday connections between residents and the cultural heritage of the community.

Economic Sustainability relates to the economic balance and health of the community. The unique character of the Town Center sets Simsbury apart and helps attract and maintain businesses.

Environmental Sustainability relates to maintenance of the natural environment and the systems that support human development. Sustainable site design, green building practices, and maintenance of the materials and energy embodied in existing buildings promotes balance between the community and its natural surroundings.

Design Guidelines Format

As illustrated on the sample page below, the design guidelines in this chapter use a standard format with several key components. All components are used to determine whether a proposed improvement project in the Town Center meets the intent of the design guidelines.

Town Center Guidelines

1 Architecture in the Town Center

Building design within the Town Center should acknowledge traditional regional design principles while supporting development of a more vibrant, mixed-use context.

This section addresses key considerations for building design including sustainability, sensitivity to the historic context, maintenance of the public realm, architectural character, mass and scale, building elements, materials and parking structures. The objective is to promote buildings that are compatible with the traditional design context and respectful of their neighbors while injecting new vitality into the Town Center.

2 Relationship to the Site

The traditional development pattern in the Town Center establishes a balanced relationship between buildings and their sites. New development should help maintain this relationship while incorporating new sustainable building principles.

Building masses should be oriented to maximize the potential for natural light as well as both active and passive solar energy collection. Windows, materials and mechanical systems should be selected and applied to maximize the building's environmental performance while promoting compatibility with surrounding sites and buildings. Solar or wind systems are also encouraged if located to minimize visual impacts on neighboring sites or buildings. Where environmental or mechanical systems may generate noise, they should be located to minimize potential impacts on neighboring sites or buildings.

3 TC25. Orient a building to maximize green building principles while ensuring compatibility with adjacent, lower-scale buildings or neighborhoods.

4 Appropriate strategies include:

- Positioning the taller portion of a building near the north side of a property along a north-south axis to minimize shading on lower scale neighbors to the north (note that this may not be an appropriate strategy if solar panels will be installed on the building).
- Positioning a building to prevent shading on south-facing façades of adjacent buildings during winter months
- Positioning the taller portion of a building to minimize winter shading on adjacent sidewalks and open spaces to prevent ice-over



When possible, position the taller portion of a building (A) to minimize winter shading on adjacent sidewalks and open spaces to prevent ice-over.

Town of Simsbury Guidelines for Community Design Page 61

1 Design Topic: Describes the general topic and summarizes overall objectives. The design guidelines in this chapter fall into two general design topics.

2 Design Subtopic: Describes a more specific subtopic and provides an intent statement for the design guidelines that follow. If no guidelines address a specific design issue, the intent statement and overall design topic objectives will be used to determine appropriateness.

Where relevant, the relationship between the *Simsbury Center Code* and the design subtopic are noted. In some cases, design subtopics are further divided into several categories.

3 Design Guideline: Describes the desired design outcome. The design guidelines in this chapter begin with "TC" for "Town Center" and are sequentially numbered for easy reference.

4 Suggested Strategies: Provides a bullet list of suggested strategies for meeting the intent of the design guideline. Other strategies (not listed) for meeting guidelines intent may also be appropriate.

5 Photographs, Diagrams and Illustrations: Illustrate appropriate and inappropriate strategies for meeting the intent of the design guideline.

✓ Check marks denote appropriate strategies.

✗ Photographs, diagrams and illustrations marked with an X illustrate inappropriate strategies.

Site and Landscape Organization in the Town Center

Site and landscape design within the Town Center should help create a cohesive, well-functioning neighborhood with a sense of inter connectedness along streets and within individual parcels.

This section addresses key considerations for both public and private site design including sustainability, connectivity, open space design, landscaping and surface parking. The objective is to promote projects that take a comprehensive approach to the use of land, with a focus on enhancing the street, providing for efficient functional requirements and highlighting high quality and enduring improvements.

Relationship to the Natural Environment

Site and landscape design in the Town Center establishes a balanced relationship with the natural environment. New development should continue to recognize the character of the land while incorporating principles for sustainable site design.

Site designs should support and encourage green building principles to maximize energy efficiency, minimize effects on local ground water and limit negative impacts on local ecosystems. Site designs should also take into account effects on an adjoining property's solar access and ability to implement the same environmental design principles. Careful consideration should also be given to balancing sustainable site design principles such as environmentally friendly building locations with a need to minimize impacts on adjacent properties and low scale neighborhoods.

TC1. Consider views towards natural features when siting a new building (also see "Views" on page 68).

- Position buildings to frame views of natural features such as the river, wetlands and hillsides.
- Locate a building to maintain an important view from the public way when feasible.

TC2. Protect and incorporate mature trees into site plans for new development.

- Position buildings to frame existing mature trees as central design elements in new development.
- Consult the Town Center *Streetscape Plan* to identify the locations of existing mature trees when planning new development.



Consider views towards natural features when siting a new building.

mature trees Streetscape Plan



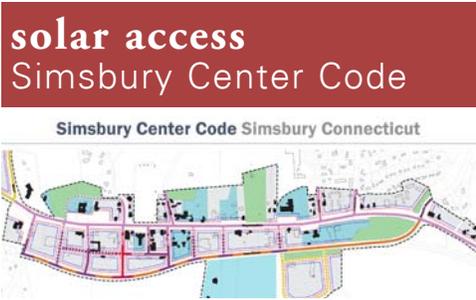
A *Streetscape Plan* identifies mature trees for protection throughout the Town Center. Such trees should be preserved and incorporated into site plans for new development.

Town Center Guidelines

Site and Landscape Organization in the Town Center



Existing mature landscape features provide shade and protection from wind.

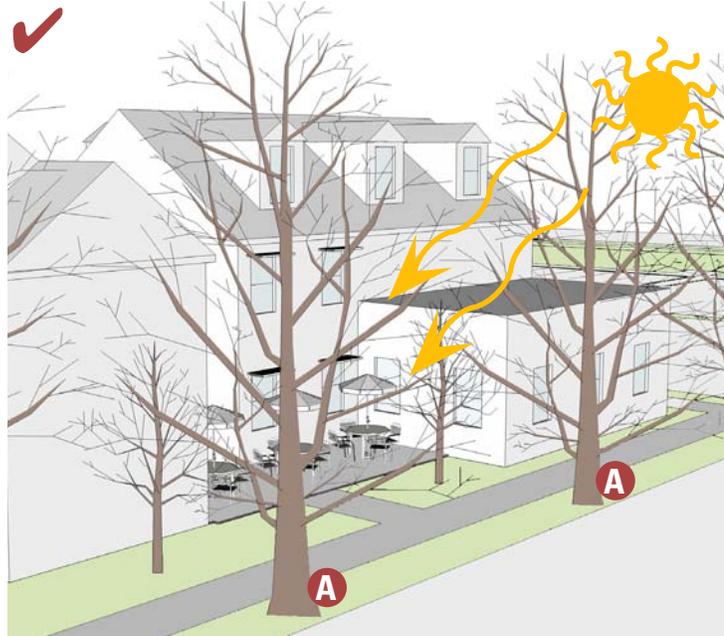


To encourage active, pedestrian-oriented streets, the *Simsbury Center Codes* specifies a minimum percentage of the building façade that must be located near the sidewalk.

Special Code Flexibility: Where an alternative building configuration would promote on and off-site energy efficiency through increased solar access, special flexibility in the application of code build-to standards may be allowed. Flexibility will be allowed only for a building configuration that meets the intent of the design guidelines, including Guideline TC3 "Organize sites to promote on and off-site energy efficiency."

TC3. Organize sites to promote on and off-site energy efficiency.

- Locate a new building to preserve solar access to neighboring properties.
- Consider seasonal solar and wind exposure patterns when positioning a new building on its site.
- Place taller portions of a building away from outdoor use areas where winter sun would be desirable.
- Retain existing mature landscape features that provide shade and protection from wind.
- Position new landscape features to take advantage of the shade and wind break effects for the building.
- Locate deciduous trees and vegetation to allow winter sun and provide summer shade.



Locate deciduous trees to allow winter sun (A) and provide summer shade.

Relationship to the Community

The Town Center is defined by its unique historic and cultural context. In some cases, such as along historic Hopmeadow, the objective is to maintain the existing community pattern. In other cases, such as in areas to the east of Hopmeadow, the objective is to establish a more urban context that reflects traditional patterns.

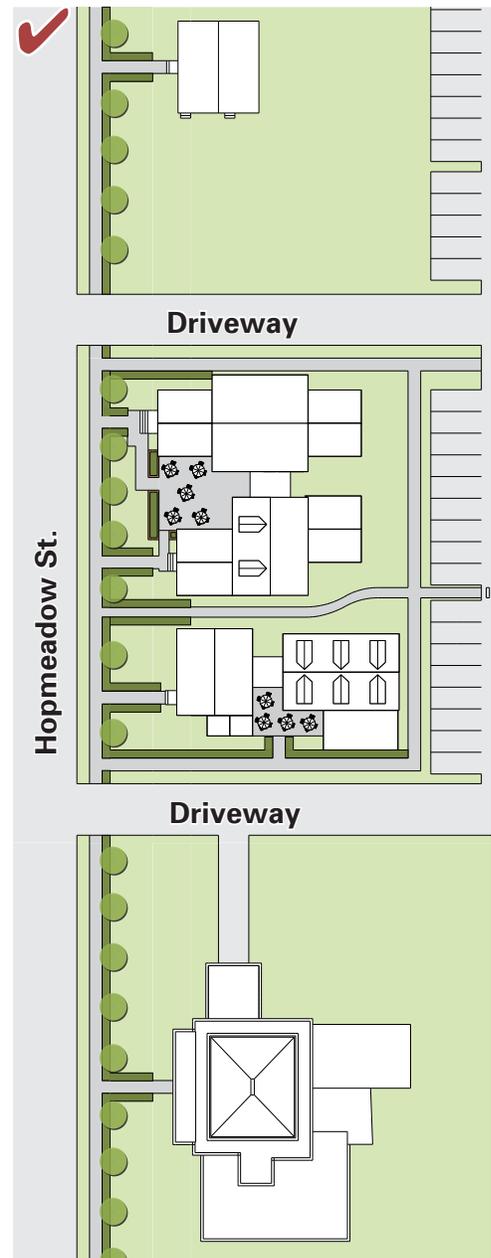
Designing in Context

The existing site context of the Town Center is highly varied. While many unique areas exist, the most important distinctions are between the historic area along Hopmeadow, the side streets between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse, and the areas along and to the east of Iron Horse. Along Hopmeadow (Street Frontage SC-1), the objective is to maintain the existing traditional development pattern. In areas to the east (Street Frontages SC-2 to SC-5), the objective is generally to establish a more urban context that reflects traditional development patterns.

The *Simsbury Center Code* includes minimum lot sizes, minimum street setbacks and build-to standards that promote placement of buildings near the sidewalk. Standards vary by street frontage. The following design guidelines provide strategies for working with, and meeting the intent of the code.

TC4. Respect the historic site development pattern along Hopmeadow (Street Frontage SC-1).

- Provide a street edge that is predominantly green, with buildings set back and landscape edges that include lawns and landscape materials similar to those used historically.
- Design new development to appear as small-footprint infill rather than large-scale redevelopment.
- Design and position new buildings to evoke the historic residential character.
- Organize sites to allow for future streetscape plans that may include undergrounding of power lines (see the sidebar on page 27 for more information).



Along Hopmeadow, provide a street edge that is predominantly green, with buildings set back behind a landscaped edge that includes lawns and planted materials.

Town Center Guidelines

Site and Landscape Organization in the Town Center



computer visualizations Town Center Charette



In 2010, residents, business owners, town staff and consultants engaged in an intensive multi-day work session to articulate the community's vision for the Town Center. The resulting *Town Center Charette Report* documents the process with a summary of existing conditions and future objectives.

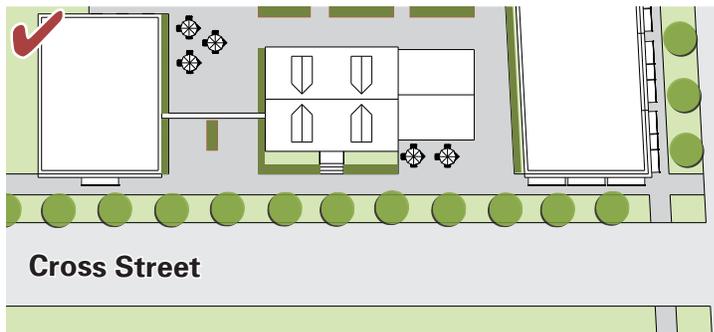
The charette report includes a series of computer visualizations to illustrate the community's vision for specific areas in the Town Center. These visualizations are re-printed above and on the following pages. They are intended to illustrate desired future conditions in a general way and do not represent specific development proposals.



As illustrated in the lower image above, existing conditions along Hopmeadow to the south of the fire station are defined by a green street edge and a number of small buildings. Future development along Hopmeadow should respect the historic site development pattern with small-footprint buildings set along a predominantly green street edge, as illustrated in the computer visualization at top.

TC5. On east-west streets between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse (Street Frontages SC-2 and SC-3), establish a more urban commercial site development pattern that reflects traditional characteristics.

- Provide a street edge that is predominantly urban, with buildings built near the sidewalk.
- When it is not possible to locate building façades near the sidewalk edge, consider using an alternative strategy to promote an active, pedestrian-oriented street frontage as illustrated on page 46.
- Frame the street and small open spaces with buildings.
- Design limited gaps in the street wall as highly pedestrian-oriented open spaces such as patios and courtyards.
- Near Hopmeadow (Street Frontage SC-1), transition the site development pattern to incorporate a green street edge and smaller footprint buildings.
- Where east-west streets intersect Iron Horse (Street Frontage SC-4), continue a more urban and commercial site development pattern around the corner.



On east-west streets between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse (Street Frontages SC-2 and SC-3), establish a more urban commercial site development pattern that reflects traditional characteristics.



On east-west streets between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse, establish a more urban site development pattern. (Woodstock, VT)

local and non-local Photos in this Chapter



Most photographs in this chapter illustrate the existing character of the Town Center. As captioned, photos from other communities are used only to illustrate specific design principles for new development. Other aspects of development illustrated in such photos may not necessarily be appropriate for the Town Center.

Town Center Guidelines

Site and Landscape Organization in the Town Center



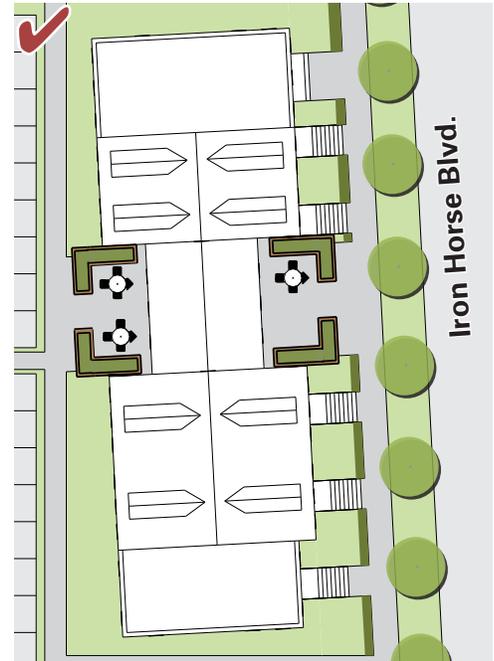
Future development along east-west streets between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse should establish a more urban and commercial site development pattern, as this computer visualization illustrates.

TC6. On Wilcox between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse (Street Frontage SC-2), establish a highly active, pedestrian-oriented site development pattern.

- Locate buildings very close to the sidewalk.
- Design limited gaps in the building wall at the sidewalk edge to incorporate highly active open space areas such as patios and courtyards.

TC7. On Iron Horse (Street Frontage SC-4) and potential new streets in the Simscroft-Echo Farms area (Street Frontage SC-5), establish a more urban multifamily residential site development pattern.

- Provide a street edge that is predominantly urban, with buildings built near the sidewalk edge.
- Frame the street and open spaces with buildings.
- Where Iron Horse intersects east-west streets (Street Frontages SC-2 and SC-3), transition to a more urban and commercial site development pattern.
- In the Simscroft-Echo Farms area (Street Frontage SC-5), orient buildings towards the street with resident-use open space located primarily to the rear.



On Iron Horse and potential new streets in the Simscroft-Echo Farms area, establish a more urban multifamily residential site development pattern.



Future development east of Hopmeadow should establish a more urban development pattern, as this computer visualization looking west across Iron Horse to its intersection with Wilcox illustrates. This includes establishing a highly active, pedestrian-oriented site development pattern along Wilcox and an urban multifamily residential site development pattern along Iron Horse.

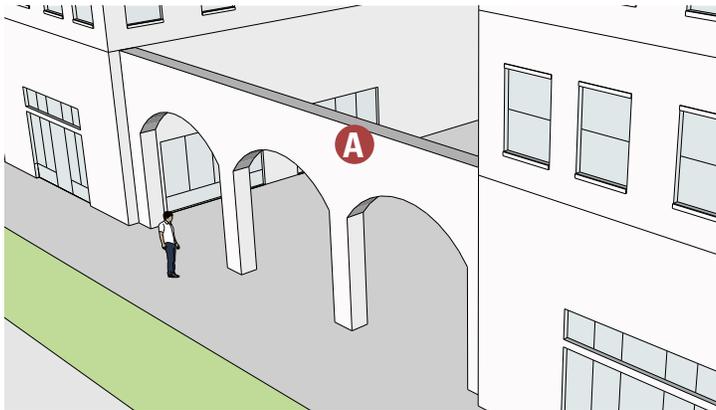
Town Center Guidelines

Site and Landscape Organization in the Town Center

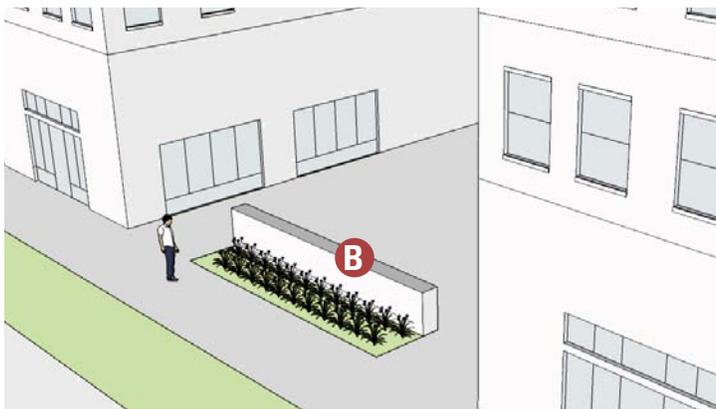
frontage options

Promoting Active, Pedestrian-Oriented Streets

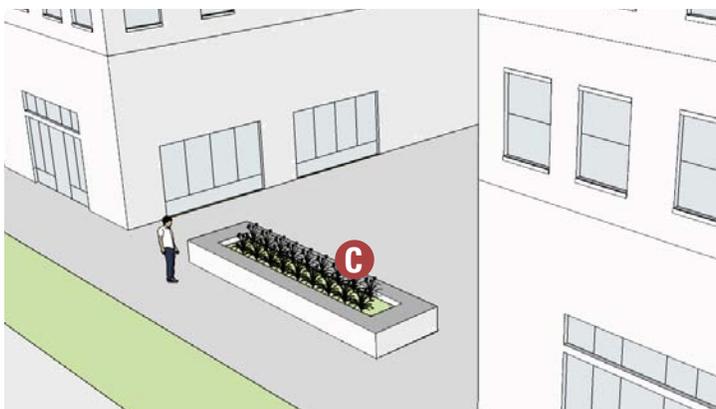
The *Simsbury Center Code* requires building façades to be located near the sidewalk edge in redeveloping areas east of Hopmeadow (Street Frontages SC-2 to SC-5). However, when it is not possible to build near the sidewalk edge, other strategies may be considered to promote an active, pedestrian-oriented street frontage. Three specific strategies are illustrated below.



Arcade. Extending an arcade wall (A) across a break in the building façade can help maintain an active, pedestrian-oriented street frontage. This strategy is especially appropriate along east-west streets between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse (Street Frontages SC-2 and SC-3) that are intended to redevelop with a more urban commercial site development pattern.



Garden Wall. A low wall with plantings to the front or rear (B) can help bridge a break in the building façade to maintain an active, pedestrian-oriented street frontage. This strategy is especially appropriate along Iron Horse (Street Frontage SC-4) and new streets in the Simscroft-Echo Farms area (Street Frontage SC-5) that are intended to redevelop with a more urban residential site development pattern.



Planter. A low planter (C) or series of planters can help bridge a break in the building façade to maintain an active, pedestrian-oriented street frontage. This strategy is especially appropriate along Iron Horse (Street Frontage SC-4) and new streets in the Simscroft-Echo Farms area (Street Frontage SC-5) that are intended to redevelop with a more urban residential site development pattern.

Open Space, Patios and Courtyards

Open space designed for outdoor activities, and visual enjoyment from the public realm is part of the heritage of the Town Center. Providing plazas, courtyards, patios and landscaped open space helps maintain the unique character of the Town Center and increase its pedestrian friendliness.

Open space that can be enjoyed visually and functionally is considered to be “positive,” as opposed to areas that are not well designed to accommodate use or serve as a visual amenity. Positive open space should be provided in a project, when opportunity exists. This may take the form of a plaza, patio or courtyard, but in some cases may simply be a landscaped feature that is visible from the public way.

The *Simsbury Center Code* sets forth a minimum percentage of open space that must be incorporated into each development in the Town Center. The following design guidelines provide strategies for working with, and meeting the intent of the code.



Landscaped open space helps maintain the unique character of the Town Center and increases its pedestrian friendliness.



Town Center Guidelines

Site and Landscape Organization in the Town Center



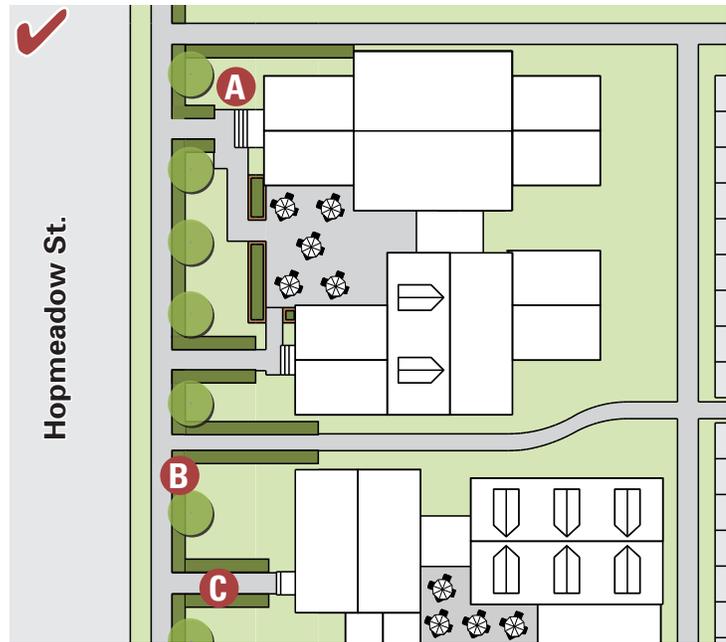
Low fences, gardens walls, hedges and foundation plants help provide street edge definition along Hopmeadow.

Open Space on Hopmeadow

Development along Hopmeadow, and areas to the west (Street Frontage SC-1), should continue the tradition of high quality, street-oriented open space. Buildings originally designed as single-family residences should continue to have a grassy lawn and foundation plants. Buildings originally designed as commercial may have smaller front yard areas, but they should continue to include foundation plants and hedges. Although such open space should provide a “green edge” along the street, it may be more actively used for commercial purposes such as street-oriented patios and courtyards.

TC8. Along Hopmeadow (Street Frontage SC-1), maintain a green edge of landscaped open space.

- Locate a fence or hedge between lawn areas and the sidewalk to provide street edge definition.
- Provide foundation plants and hedges along walkways leading to building entries.



Maintain a green edge of landscaped open space along Hopmeadow (A). Strategies to provide street edge definition include locating a fence or hedge between lawn areas and the sidewalk (B) and placing foundation plants and hedges along walkways leading to building entries (C).

Open Space on East-West Cross Streets

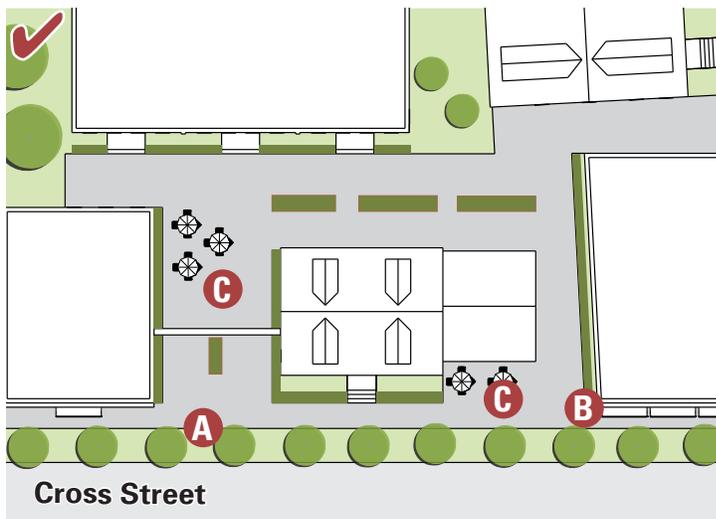
On east-west cross streets between Iron Horse and Hopmeadow (Street Frontages SC-2 and SC-3), open space was traditionally framed by clusters of buildings. In new development, this tradition should primarily be expressed as patios and courtyards that appear as breaks in the street wall. These spaces should generally have a very active, urban character, especially along Wilcox (Street Frontage SC-2), where the highest level of commercial intensity is envisioned.

TC9. On east-west streets between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse (Street Frontages SC-2 and SC-3), design open space to have a highly urban character.

- Locate open space within breaks in the street wall.
- Design open space primarily as patios, courtyards or other active, pedestrian-oriented spaces.
- On Wilcox (Street Frontage SC-2), locate and design open space as patios and courtyards within very limited breaks in the street wall.



On east-west streets between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse, locate open space, such as a patio or courtyard, primarily within breaks in the street wall. (Annapolis, MD)



On east-west streets between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse, design open space to have a highly urban character (A). Strategies include locating open within breaks in the street wall (B) and designing it as patios, courtyards and other active, pedestrian-oriented spaces (C).

Town Center Guidelines

Site and Landscape Organization in the Town Center



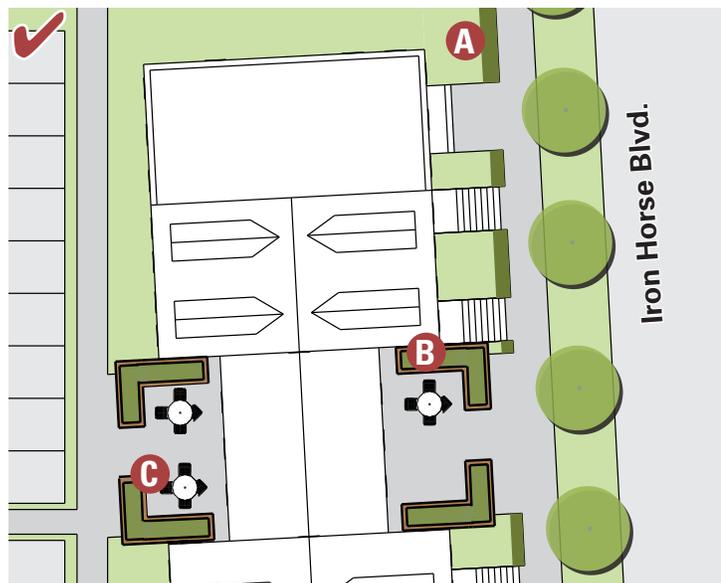
The Simscroft-Echo Farms area is adjacent to natural preserves along the Farmington River.

Open Space on Iron Horse and in the Simscroft-Echo Farms Area

Along Iron Horse (Street Frontage SC-4) and in the Simscroft-Echo Farms area (Street Frontage SC-5), the redeveloping multifamily residential context should include both active (highly street-oriented and public) and more passive (primarily for the use of residents in surrounding buildings) open space areas framed by clusters of buildings. Such open space should generally take the form of patios and courtyards with an urban character. However, where new development directly abuts natural preserves in the Simscroft-Echo Farms area, less formal, landscaped open space is appropriate.

TC10. On Iron Horse (Street Frontage SC-4) and in the Simscroft-Echo Farms Area (Street Frontage SC-5), design open space to have an urban residential character.

- Locate open space within breaks in the street wall, or in side/rear areas accessible from the sidewalk.
- Design open space primarily as patios, courtyards or other active spaces rather than passive green space, except where it abuts natural areas.
- Design open space with a less formal arrangement where properties abut a natural area.



Along Iron Horse, locate and design open space to have an urban residential character (A). Strategies include locating open space as patios and courtyards within breaks in the street wall (B), or in side/rear areas that are accessible from the sidewalk (C).

Patios and Courtyards

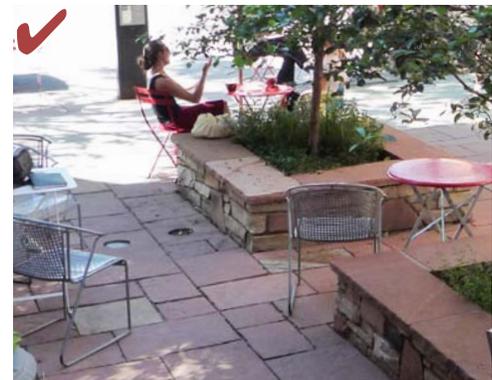
Patios, courtyards and other active open spaces provide places for people to gather, engage in activities and enjoy a sense of community. Such amenities are encouraged throughout the Town Center and should be planned to activate the street and enhance the pedestrian experience. They should be sized to accommodate the intended uses and provide a sense of energy. Patios and courtyards should not be oversized, which could cause them to appear to be under utilized.

TC11. Design a patio or courtyard to be actively used by pedestrians.

- Link a patio or courtyard to other pedestrian activities, primary circulation paths, views, cultural resources and natural features.
- Size a patio or courtyard to provide a comfortable scale for pedestrians.
- Define a patio or courtyard with building fronts that convey a human scale.
- Locate a patio or courtyard at the sidewalk level. A sunken or raised courtyard that is substantially separated from the sidewalk is discouraged.
- Locate a patio or courtyard where it will be activated by surrounding activities (not just left over space).
- Use a consistent design palette with durable materials and finishes for a patio or courtyard.
- Design a patio or courtyard to incorporate natural features.
- Position a patio or courtyard to make the best use of environmental conditions such as sun/shade and breezes.
- Use paving designs that enhance permeability and percolation of rainwater into soils. This includes porous pavers, as well as paving patterns that include spacing between paving units.



Define a patio or courtyard with building fronts that convey a human scale. (Stowe, VT)



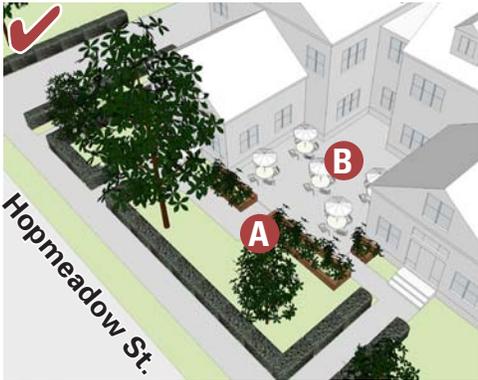
Use paving designs that enhance permeability and percolation of rainwater into soils. This includes porous pavers, as well as paving patterns that include spacing between paving units. (Boulder, CO)

Town Center Guidelines

Site and Landscape Organization in the Town Center



Along Hopmeadow, set back a patio or courtyard from the street edge, frame it with plant materials and locate it to the side of buildings where possible. (Ann Arbor, MI)



Along Hopmeadow, set back a patio or courtyard from the street edge, frame it with plant materials (A) and locate it to the side of buildings where possible (B).

TC12. Along Hopmeadow (Street Frontage SC-1), locate and design a patio or courtyard to enhance the traditional street edge.

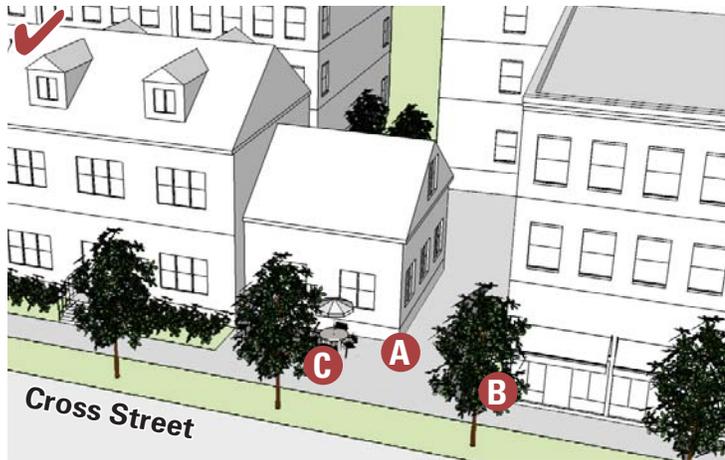
In this area, a patio or courtyard should be:

- Set back behind the predominantly green street edge
- Located to the side of buildings, where possible
- Framed with low hedges and bedding plants

TC13. On east-west streets between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse (Street Frontages SC-2 and SC-3), locate and design a patio or courtyard to have a public, pedestrian-oriented character.

In this area, a patio or courtyard should be:

- Located within limited breaks in the street wall
- Located near the sidewalk edge
- Designed to accommodate outdoor cafe seating or other active uses

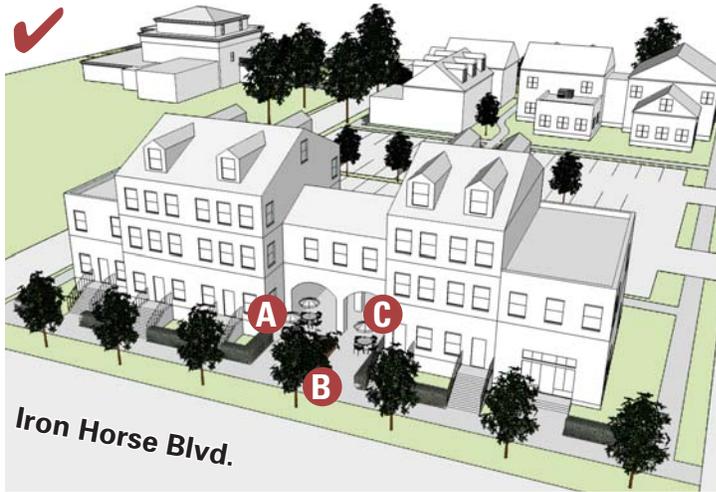


On east-west streets between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse, locate a patio or courtyard near the sidewalk edge (A) within limited breaks in the street wall (B) and design it to accommodate active uses such as cafe seating (C).

TC14. On Iron Horse (Street Frontage SC-4) and in the Simscoft-Echo Farms Area (Street Frontage SC-5), locate and design a patio or courtyard to serve the public and surrounding residents.

In this area, a patio or courtyard should be:

- Located within breaks in the street wall or to the side/rear of buildings
- Designed to include planters, small green spaces, street furniture, or other amenities that serve residents of adjacent buildings



Along Iron Horse, locate a patio or courtyard within breaks in the street wall (A) and include planters (B), small green spaces, street furniture (C) or other amenities to serve residents of adjacent buildings.



On Iron Horse and in the Simscoft-Echo Farms Area, design a patio or courtyard to include planters, small green spaces and street furniture that serve residents of adjacent buildings. (Bellingham, WA [top] and Wilmette, IL)

Town Center Guidelines

Site and Landscape Organization in the Town Center



The existing pedestrian network in the Town Center includes connections between properties and parking lots.



Provide mid-block connections for pedestrians when possible. (Saratoga, NY)

Pedestrian and Vehicular Circulation

Historically, properties in the Town Center were highly interconnected. Maintaining and enhancing this connectivity with well-designed pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems is an important objective.

Pedestrian Circulation

The Town Center should be highly pedestrian oriented, with most trips in the center made by foot. A pedestrian circulation system that provides access to buildings, courtyards, paths and sidewalks should be planned to facilitate pedestrian movement. This includes connections to the existing sidewalk network as well as pedestrian circulation internal to an individual parcel.

TC15. Connect a new development to established pedestrian ways.

Appropriate pedestrian connections include:

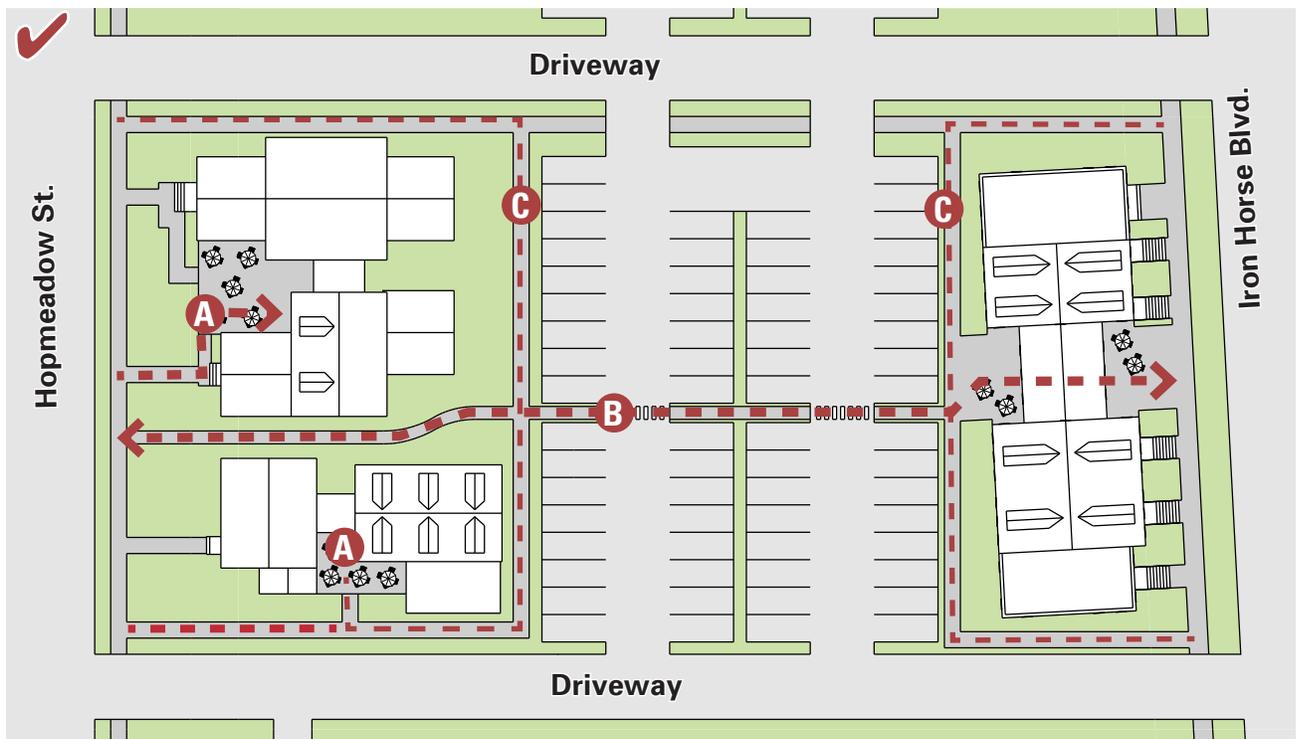
- Sidewalks
- Internal walkways, within an individual property
- Mid-block pedestrian connections
- Multi-use alleys

TC16. Locate a new walkway to animate the Town Center pedestrian network and its associated outdoor spaces.

- Direct a walkway through a plaza, patio, courtyard or other outdoor use area to help animate the space.
- Provide mid-block connections for pedestrians when possible.
- Connect with internal walkways on neighboring properties.
- Provide stairs, ramps or other connections for pedestrians to move towards the river and downhill side of properties from Hopmeadow.



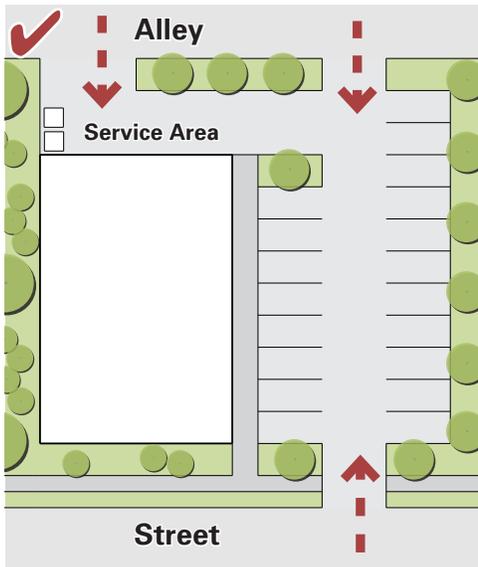
Locate a new walkway to animate the Town Center pedestrian network and its associated outdoor spaces. (Salisbury, CT)



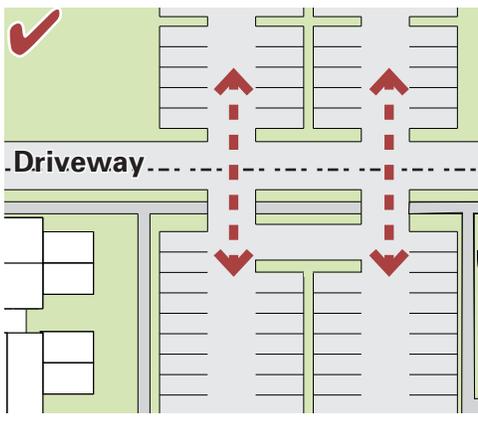
Locate a new walkway to animate the Town Center pedestrian network and its associated outdoor spaces. Appropriate strategies include directing a walkway through courtyards to animate the space (A), providing mid-block connections for pedestrians (B), and connecting with internal walkways on neighboring properties (C).

Town Center Guidelines

Site and Landscape Organization in the Town Center



Locate a service area that requires vehicle access to minimize impacts on pedestrians.



Provide off-street vehicular access points between properties whenever possible.

Vehicular Circulation

Most trips to and from the Town Center will continue to be made by private vehicle. Therefore, it is important to provide a vehicular circulation system that allows easy access and minimizes conflicts with pedestrians. Such a system should provide off-street connections between parking areas and facilitate parking once and completing additional trips within the center on foot. The objective is to promote pedestrian safety and activity by minimizing traffic crossing conflicts as well as avoiding the visual impacts of loading and service areas.

The *Simsbury Center Code* includes site access standards that specify minimum distances between driveways, maximum driveway widths and service area locations. The design guidelines below provide additional direction to promote a successful vehicular circulation system in the Town Center.

TC17. Locate driveways and vehicular access point to minimize impacts on pedestrians.

- Provide vehicular access from a rear alley or side street whenever possible (note that this is required by the code in Street Frontages SC-4 and SC-5).
- Provide off-street vehicular access points between properties whenever possible.
- Consider using decorative and porous paving materials, and grass strips to promote service drives as visual assets.

TC18. Locate a service area that requires vehicle access to minimize impacts on pedestrians.

- Provide access from an alley when feasible.
- If an alley access is not feasible, then consider using a secondary street.
- If necessary, install a service drive, which is located away from intersections and other areas with high levels of pedestrian traffic.

Surface Parking

Most parking in the Town Center is, and will continue to be, provided in off-street surface parking lots. The visual impact of surface parking should be minimized. On-site parking should be subordinate to other uses on the site and the street frontage should not appear to be a parking area. Where a portion of a lot will be exposed, it should be buffered with landscaping.

The *Simsbury Center Code* specifies minimum parking requirements and provides standards for location, size and screening of surface parking lots. The design guidelines below provide additional guidance to promote high quality parking design. Also see page 80 for guidelines on the design of structured parking.

TC19. Minimize the visual impact of surface parking.

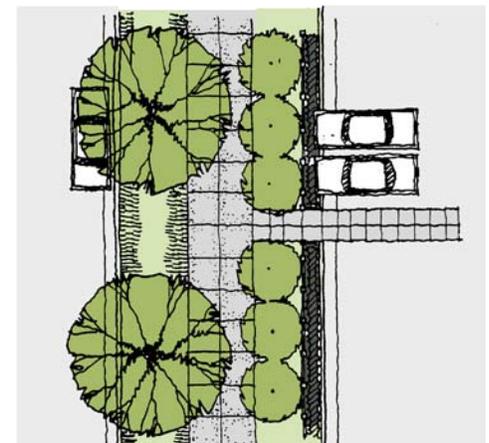
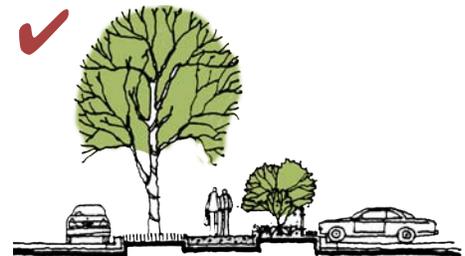
- Locate a parking area to the interior of a site. This is especially important on a corner property where the street wall should have a sense of enclosure.
- Divide a large parking area into small “pods” that maintain the traditional sense of smaller parking areas within a green landscape as prescribed in the code.
- Soften the view of parked cars where surface parking abuts a public sidewalk with a planted buffer of trees, shrubs and ground cover, or a low wall constructed from materials compatible with the site.
- Site a surface parking lot to be compatible with the surrounding context and street frontage.
- Along Hopmeadow (Street Frontage SC-1), site a surface parking lot in small pods to the rear and sides of a building.
- Off Hopmeadow (Street Frontage SC-1 to SC-5), site a surface lot so it will minimize gaps in the desired building wall.



Most parking in the Town Center is provided in off-street surface parking lots.



Provide a visual buffer along the edge of a parking lot. (New London, CT)



Soften the view of parked cars where surface parking abuts a public sidewalk with a planted buffer of trees, shrubs and ground cover.

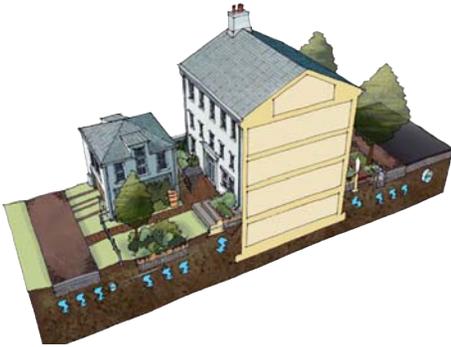
Town Center Guidelines

Site and Landscape Organization in the Town Center



Where possible, group deciduous trees and plants to provide summer shade and allow solar access in winter.

low impact development storm water guidelines



A separate document, the Simsbury Stormwater Design Guidelines, provides extensive guidance on Low Impact Development (LID) in Simsbury Center and other compact, walkable areas. Consult the storm water guidelines when planning site improvements as part of new development.

Additional design guidelines for sustainable development are included in "Relationship to the Natural Environment" on page 39 and "Relationship to the Site" on page 61.

Landscape Design

Landscape design in the Town Center should help maintain a sense of visual continuity with established plant species, walls or fences and compatible hardscapes. In general, plant materials that are indigenous or well-acclimated and noninvasive should be used. Indigenous plant species, or well-acclimatized noninvasive species that repeat throughout the neighborhood are encouraged.

TC20. Use landscape designs that promote energy efficiency and water conservation.

- Retain existing mature landscape features that provide shade and protection from wind.
- Where possible, group deciduous trees and plants to provide summer shade and allow solar access in winter.
- Where possible, use hardy plant species that are native to the region.
- When using non-native plant species, ensure that they are low maintenance and suitable to the local climate.
- Use a coordinated landscape palette to establish a sense of visual continuity in the design of a site.
- Coordinate the landscape palette throughout a property.
- Consider relating the landscape palette, including plant selections, to that established on neighboring properties.

TC21. Design storm water and drainage systems to promote the vision for an active, pedestrian-oriented Town Center.

- Design storm water retention basins to serve as usable open space areas or site amenities.
- Design storm water drainage systems to promote the Low Impact Development (LID) principles described in the Simsbury Storm water Design Guidelines.

Fences and Walls

Fences and walls occur in various applications throughout the Town Center. These include those that define yards on parcels that historically were residential, and those that screen parking and service areas. While they serve a utilitarian function, they should also enhance the character of the street and appear to be integral components of the site and landscape design. Aside from those that may be used to screen trash storage, fences should be relatively low in scale and permit partial views into the property.

TC22. Design a fence or wall to be an integral part of the site and landscape design.

- Use durable fence materials, such as metal or painted wood, especially along Hopmeadow.
- Use low fences and garden walls to provide street edge definition along the sidewalk edge on Hopmeadow.



A fence enhances the character of the street and appears to be an integral component of site design.

Low fences and garden walls are often used to define the street edge along Hopmeadow.



Provide shielded and focused light sources that direct light downward.

Site Lighting

Site lighting in the Town Center should be simple in character and used primarily to highlight signs, entrances, and architectural details.

TC23. Minimize the visual impacts of site lighting on neighboring properties.

- Use exterior light sources with a low level of luminescence.
- Use white lights that cast a similar color to daylight.
- Do not wash an entire building façade in light.
- Use lighting fixtures that are appropriate to the building and its surroundings in terms of style, scale and intensity of illumination.
- Provide shielded and focused light sources that direct light downward.

TC24. Use shielded and focused light sources to prevent glare.

- Provide shielded and focused light sources that direct light downward.
- Do not use high intensity light sources or cast light directly upward.
- Shield lighting associated with service areas, parking lots and parking structures.
- Avoid excessive light spill from buildings.

Architecture in the Town Center

Building design within the Town Center should acknowledge traditional regional design principles while supporting development of a more vibrant, mixed-use context.

This section addresses key considerations for building design including sustainability, sensitivity to the historic context, maintenance of the public realm, architectural character, mass and scale, building elements, materials and parking structures. The objective is to promote buildings that are compatible with the traditional design context and respectful of their neighbors while injecting new vitality into the Town Center.

Relationship to the Site

The traditional development pattern in the Town Center establishes a balanced relationship between buildings and their sites. New development should help maintain this relationship while incorporating new sustainable building principles.

Building masses should be oriented to maximize the potential for natural light as well as both active and passive solar energy collection. Windows, materials and mechanical systems should be selected and applied to maximize the building's environmental performance while promoting compatibility with surrounding sites and buildings. Solar or wind systems are also encouraged if located to minimize visual impacts on neighboring sites or buildings. Where environmental or mechanical systems may generate noise, they should be located to minimize potential impacts on neighboring sites or buildings.

TC25. Orient a building to maximize green building principles while ensuring compatibility with adjacent, lower-scale buildings or neighborhoods.

Appropriate strategies include:

- Positioning the taller portion of a building near the north side of a property along a north-south axis to minimize shading on lower scale neighbors to the north (note that this may not be an appropriate strategy if solar panels will be installed on the building).
- Positioning a building to prevent shading on south-facing façades of adjacent buildings during winter months
- Positioning the taller portion of a building to minimize winter shading on adjacent sidewalks and open spaces to prevent ice-over



When possible, position the taller portion of a building (A) to minimize winter shading on adjacent sidewalks and open spaces to prevent ice-over.

Town Center Guidelines

Architecture in the Town Center

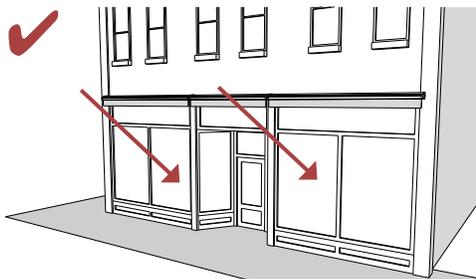
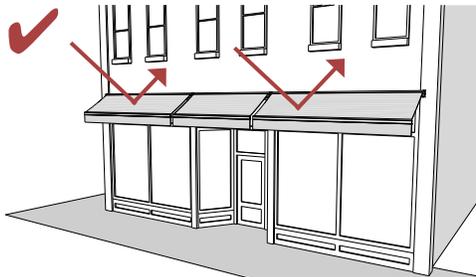


Use exterior shading devices to manage solar gain. (Northampton, MA)

solar gain Exterior Shading Strategies



Light Shelves or Solar Screens installed above south facing windows block direct summer sun while allowing low angle sun into the interior of buildings during the winter.



Awnings can be opened in the summer to block direct summer sun from the storefront and sidewalk (top) and closed in the winter to allow the sun to warm the interior of the building and melt sidewalk ice (bottom).

TC26. Design a building, or an addition, to take advantage of energy saving and generating opportunities.

- Design windows to maximize day lighting into interior spaces.
- Use exterior shading devices to manage solar gain.
- Where they are compatible with the context, or placed in a less visible location, install energy-generating technologies such as solar collectors and wind turbines.
- Use thermal storage walls on a portion of the south-facing building exposure, where appropriate.

TC27. Use features that allow for natural environmental control.

Such features include:

- Operable windows for natural ventilation
- Operable awnings
- Low infiltration fenestration products
- Rotating doors or wind locks at high volume entries
- Interior or exterior light shelves/solar screens above south facing windows



Where they are compatible with the context, or placed in a less visible location, install energy-generating technologies such as solar collectors (A).

Historic Context

The Town Center is the historic heart of the community with a number of buildings and properties that contribute to an overall historic context. New development should respect and enhance this context.

While many buildings in the Town Center may be considered background structures that contribute to a sense of visual continuity, others are important community resources. The 2010 Simsbury Town Center Charette (an intensive, multi-day, community work session) identified these "Heritage Buildings" (previously called "Protected Buildings" or "Buildings to be Protected"). They are typically civic, cultural and institutional facilities that serve a public function. Care should be taken when undertaking projects that affect Heritage Buildings to ensure that they continue to contribute to the historic character of the Town Center. See "Appendix F: Map of Heritage Buildings" on page 115 for more information.



Many historic resources identified as Heritage Buildings are civic, cultural or institutional facilities such as the Simsbury Town Hall.



The 2010 Simsbury Town Center Charette identified a number of Heritage Buildings in the Town Center.

historic designation National Register



A significant portion of the Town Center was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Simsbury Center District in 1996. Some individual properties are also listed.

Individually-listed properties and properties in National Register districts may be eligible for special incentives to encourage compatible rehabilitation. However, they are not subject to local preservation design guidelines unless they are also listed as local historic landmarks or districts.

Town Center Guidelines

Architecture in the Town Center



Heritage Buildings in the Town Center include a number of residential structures.

TC28. Design new development to be sensitive to Heritage Buildings.

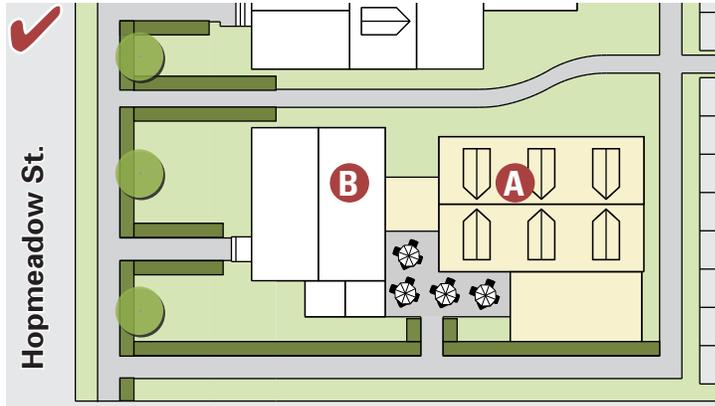
- Step down the height of a building towards an adjacent Heritage Building.
- Articulate the façade of a building to acknowledge the façade width and articulation of an adjacent Heritage Building.



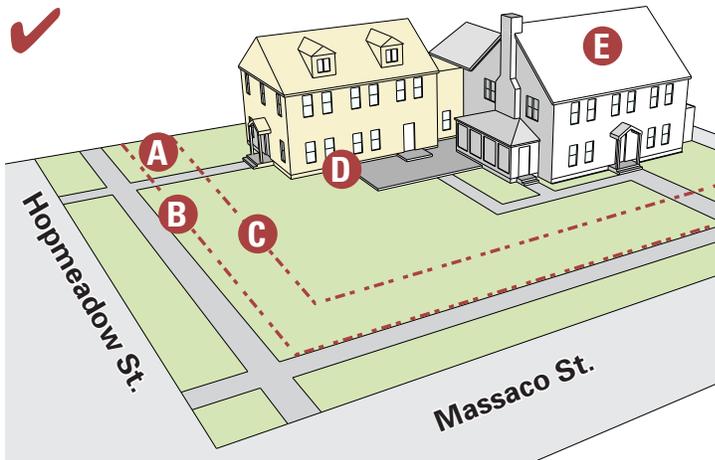
New development in the Town Center should be sensitive to resources identified as Heritage Buildings, such as the old Simsbury train station, which is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

TC29. Locate and design additions to be subordinate to Heritage Buildings.

- Locate an addition to the side or rear of a Heritage Building.
- Design an addition to be subordinate in scale to a Heritage Building.
- Clearly differentiate an addition to a Heritage Building.



Locate an addition (A) to the side or rear of a Heritage Building (B).



The Simsbury Center Code defines a street setback area (A) between the minimum street setback line (B) and the maximum allowed setback (C). The code build-to standard specifies a minimum percentage of building façade that must be located in the street setback area. In some cases, a compatible addition (D) located to the rear or side of a Heritage Building (E) may not meet this standard. Special code flexibility may be allowed to encourage compatible additions as described in the sidebar at right.



Clearly differentiate an addition to a historic building (Woodstock, VT)

historic sensitivity Simsbury Center Code

Simsbury Center Code Simsbury Connecticut



To encourage active, pedestrian-oriented streets, the *Simsbury Center Codes* specifies a minimum percentage of the building façade that must be located near the sidewalk as well as a minimum percentage of transparent glass on the building façade.

Special Code Build-to Flexibility: Where a compatible addition to a Heritage Building would not meet the code build-to standard, special flexibility may be allowed. Flexibility will be granted only for an addition that meets the intent of the design guidelines, including Guideline TC29 "Locate and design additions to be subordinate to Heritage Buildings."

Special Code Flexibility for Transparency: Where a compatible addition to a Heritage Building would not meet the code ground or upper story transparency standard, special flexibility may be allowed. Flexibility will be granted only for an addition that meets the intent of the design guidelines.



The public realm of the Town Center should be dynamic, active and inviting.

Form and Space

The Town Center's traditional form and space relationships reflect a continuity of density, streetscape rhythm and community character. These relationships promote a dynamic public realm and help maintain a connection to natural and historic features.

The Public Realm

The public realm of the Town Center should be active and inviting. New development should positively contribute to the public realm and coordinate improvements with adjoining properties. When a building is located close to a street or walkway, it should be designed to provide visual interest to pedestrians. For example, commercial buildings with storefronts are of interest to passersby, while porches, courtyards, and decorative wall surfaces add interest to multifamily housing designs.

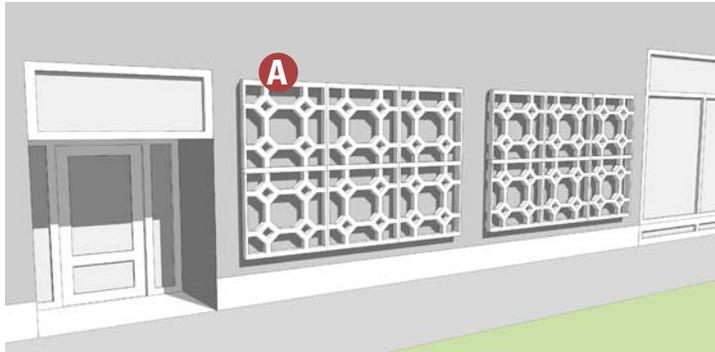
The *Simsbury Center Code* includes several standards that are intended to support the public realm and promote active, interesting street fronts. The code specifies minimum open space areas, requires buildings to be built near the sidewalk edge in most areas and specifies the minimum amount of transparency on a building's façade. The design guidelines below are intended to build on code requirements and offer additional alternatives for supporting an active public realm.

TC30. Design ground floor of a building façade to engage the public realm and support pedestrian activity.

- Incorporate a high percentage of transparent glass on the ground floor of a building façade to engage the street and provide pedestrian interest.
- When it is not possible to incorporate transparent glass throughout the ground floor of a building façade, consider using an alternative strategy to promote an active, pedestrian-oriented street frontage as illustrated on page 46.
- Locate and orient entries for pedestrians (also see "Building Elements" on page 77).
- Incorporate small public spaces linked to the sidewalk (also see "Patio and Courtyards" on page 51).

ground floor options Engaging the Public Realm

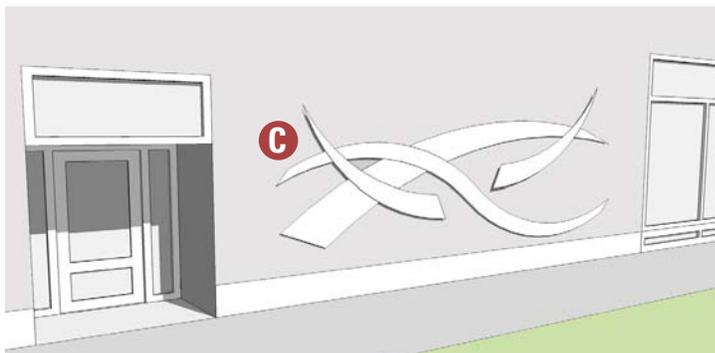
Incorporating a high percentage of transparent glass on the ground floor of a building façade is the preferred strategy for engaging the public realm and supporting pedestrian activity, especially along east-west streets between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse (Street Frontages SC-2 and SC-3) that are intended to redevelop with a more urban commercial site development pattern. However, when it is not possible to incorporate a high percentage of transparent glass, other strategies may be used to engage the public realm at the ground floor. Three specific strategies are illustrated below.



Architectural Details. Installing details such as architectural screens (A) along a blank portion of ground floor building façade can help create pedestrian interest and engage the public realm.



Display Case. Installing a case (B) for displaying products and artwork, or for advertising local events along a blank portion of ground floor building façade can help create pedestrian interest and engage the public realm.



Wall Art. Locating wall art (C), mosaics, or murals along a blank portion of ground floor building façade can help create pedestrian interest and engage the public realm.

Town Center Guidelines

Architecture in the Town Center



Views towards natural features and historic resources should be maintained whenever possible.

Views

Views from public ways to natural features and historic landmarks such as Eno Hall should be maintained. Planning for any work in the public way should take these view opportunities into consideration. Improvements to individual parcels may also provide opportunities to enhance or frame views.

TC31. Enhance views from the public way to natural features and historic landmarks, when feasible.

- Locate a building to maintain key views from the public way.
- Design a building such that it will frame a view as it may be observed from the public way.
- Consider setting a portion of building façade back from the street edge if doing so will help maintain a view (note that maintaining a uniform alignment of building façades would otherwise be generally preferable).

Architectural Character

A new building should reflect the traditional character of the Town Center while also establishing excellence and innovation in design.

TC32. Use innovative designs that draw on regional design traditions.

- Design a new building to be compatible with traditional architecture in the Town Center without exactly duplicating historic architectural styles.
- Consider incorporating traditional architectural elements and materials into a new building with a contemporary design.



Consider incorporating traditional architectural elements and materials into a new building with a contemporary design (Williamstown, MA)



Design a new building to be compatible with traditional architecture in the Town Center without exactly duplicating historic architectural styles. (Tiburon, CA)

Town Center Guidelines

Architecture in the Town Center



Creative use of modern materials can help differentiate new development while still reflecting the general design traditions of the region. (Boulder, CO) See "Materials, Color and Surface Texture" on page 78 for more information.

TC33. Design a new building to reflect the key features of its context.

- Design a building along Hopmeadow (Street Frontage SC-1), where there is a high concentration of traditional buildings, to incorporate clear references to traditional architectural character.
- In areas off of Hopmeadow, (Street Frontages SC-2 to SC-5), where a new context is emerging, design a building to be contemporary while reflecting the general design traditions of the region.
- Do not use nationwide commercial chain or franchise designs that have not been specifically adapted to the Town Center.



In areas off of Hopmeadow, where a new context is emerging, design a building to be contemporary while reflecting the general design traditions of the region. (Wauwatosa, WI)

Scale, Massing and Proportion

Traditionally, most buildings in Simsbury had simple forms and were constructed with durable materials and well-crafted details that helped promote a comfortable, human-scaled environment. The scale, massing, proportion and general architectural character of buildings in the Town Center should continue to promote a comfortable pedestrian environment and be compatible with existing historic resources and adjacent lower scale neighborhoods.

Human Scale

Maintaining a sense of human scale is a key objective for design in the Town Center. A building is perceived as having a human scale when one can reasonably interpret its size by comparing design features to comparable elements in one's personal experience. This does not mean that a building must be small. A building that is larger than those typically seen in the surrounding context can still have a human scale if it has windows of familiar dimensions, uses traditional building materials and is broken down into traditionally-sized modules.

The *Simsbury Center Code* limits the blank wall area on buildings to encourage façade variation and transparency that helps establish a sense of human scale. Code standards vary by street frontage. The design guidelines below provide additional guidance to promote human-scaled buildings throughout the Town Center.

TC34. Establish a sense of human scale in a building design.

- Use horizontal articulation techniques such as moldings, a change in material, or an offset in the wall plane to define the scale of lower floors in relation to the street.
- Use vertical articulation techniques such as moldings, columns, a change in material or an offset in the wall plane to define different building modules.
- Use recessed elements such as window and door insets to create visual interest and reinforce a traditional sense of scale. Incorporate variations consistently throughout a building to avoid the appearance of an overly complex building form.
- Use materials that convey scale in their proportion, detail and form. For example, materials applied in units, panels or modules help to convey a sense of scale (see "Materials, Color and Surface Texture" on page 78 for more information).



The scale, massing, proportion and general architectural character of buildings in the Town Center should continue to promote a comfortable pedestrian environment and be compatible with existing historic resources.



Dividing a building into smaller modules can help convey human scale.

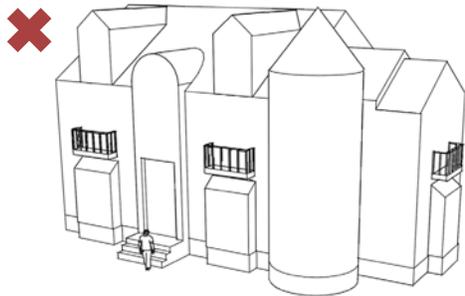
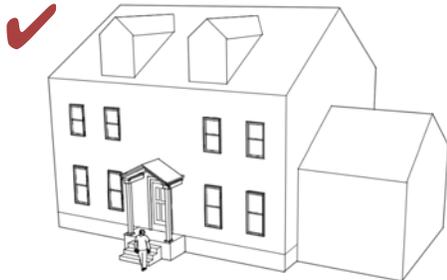
Town Center Guidelines

Architecture in the Town Center



Divide a larger building into modules that reflect traditional façade and lot widths in the Town Center. (Annapolis, MD)

building form
avoid complexity



Simple building forms composed of primarily rectangular elements are most appropriate in the Town Center (top). Overly complex building forms are generally out of character with local design traditions (bottom).

TC35. Design a larger building to reflect the mass and scale of nearby traditional buildings.

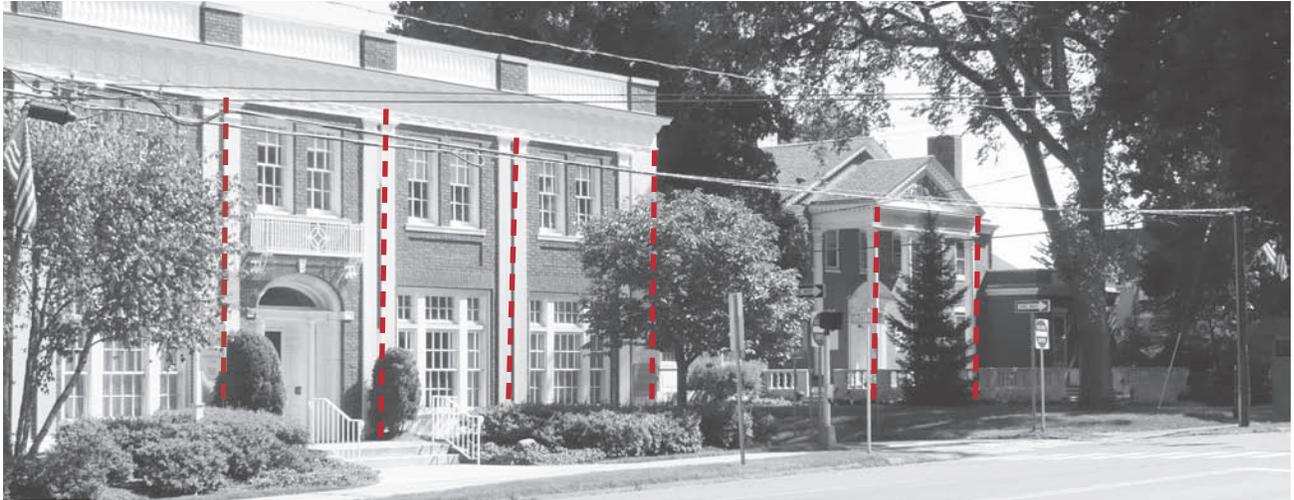
- Divide a larger building into modules that reflect traditional façade and lot widths in the Town Center. This is especially important along smaller-scale traditional street frontages such as Hopmeadow (Street Frontage SC-1).
- Break up long, uninterrupted wall planes by varying the roof profile, stepping down some portions of the façade, providing vertical or horizontal offsets or changing materials.
- Set back larger building masses from the street wall when possible.
- Use smaller projecting elements such as overhanging eaves, awnings, projecting gables, and dormers to reinforce a traditional sense of scale.



Divide a larger building into modules or a larger development into smaller building masses to reduce the overall mass and scale. For example, this development is organized into a series of five interrelated structures on one parcel.

building modules

Reflecting Traditional Lot and Building Widths



Traditional Building Widths. The traditional development pattern in the Town Center is composed primarily of smaller buildings reflecting the original pattern of underlying lots.



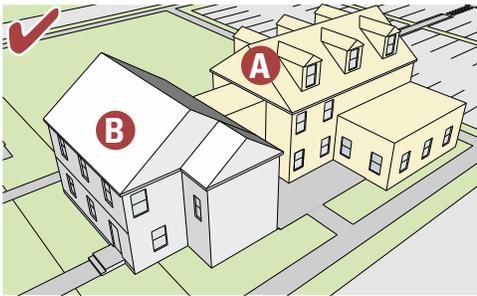
New Construction Reflecting Traditional Lot and Building Widths. While a new structure may be wider than was historically typical, it should incorporate design features that divide it into smaller modules that suggest the underlying historic lot pattern. Changes in building configuration, articulation or design features can help visually break the structure down into smaller modules

Town Center Guidelines

Architecture in the Town Center



Many existing structures on Hopmeadow are freestanding within large yard areas.



Placing an addition (A) to the rear of a building an existing building on Hopmeadow (B) will help maintain traditional scale and proportions along the street.

Scale on Hopmeadow

Hopmeadow is the traditional heart of the Town Center. It includes a range of building types from single-family houses to large residential estates, as well as commercial and institutional buildings. Larger buildings tend to be sited on large lots and often appear as free-standing structures surrounded by yard areas. In other cases, buildings are situated closely together in rows. In most cases, building façades facing Hopmeadow range from 35' to 50' wide. New buildings on Hopmeadow should maintain these traditional mass and scale characteristics.

Façade articulation standards in the *Simsbury Center Code* apply to buildings along Hopmeadow (Street Frontage SC-1). The standard requires horizontal wall offsets to break down the mass and scale of buildings. The design guidelines below provide additional guidance to promote appropriate scale along Hopmeadow.

TC36. Maintain the traditional width of building façades that face Hopmeadow.

- Provide vertical or horizontal offsets to reflect traditional façade widths.
- OR -
- Provide pilasters (attached columns) or changes in material with depth of detail to distinguish traditional façade widths.

TC37. Maintain traditional scale and proportions when expanding a building on Hopmeadow.

- Place an addition to the side or rear of the original building.
- Use wall plane or roof ridge offsets to distinguish an addition from the original building.

Building Height

A variety of building heights helps define the character of the Town Center. New development should continue this varied tradition to express and support human scale and architectural diversity. Varying height is especially important for a new larger building.

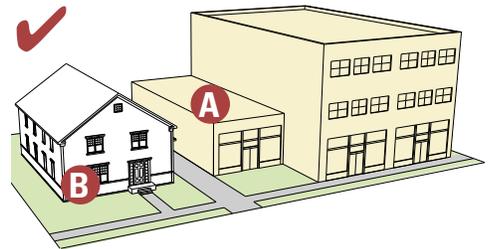
The *Simsbury Center Code* specifies minimum and maximum building height in each of several height zones, and provides additional standards for ground floor height, roof slope, dormer dimensions and other elements related to building height. The design guidelines below provide additional guidance to promote compatible building heights.

TC38. Vary building height to promote compatibility with traditional smaller-scale development.

- Position the taller portion of a structure away from neighboring buildings of lower scale or other sensitive edges.
- Position taller portions of a building away from sensitive edges or neighboring buildings of lower scale.
- Step down the height of a building towards lower-scaled neighbors and historic properties.
- Vary the height of a larger building to help it fit in with traditional smaller-scale development.



Vary building height and roof profile to reduce the perceived mass and scale of a building and help it fit in with traditional, smaller-scale neighbors. (Annapolis, MD)



Step down the height of a building towards (A) lower-scaled neighbors and Heritage Buildings (B).

Town Center Guidelines

Architecture in the Town Center



Traditional roof designs in Simsbury are relatively simple, with basic gable and hip shapes.

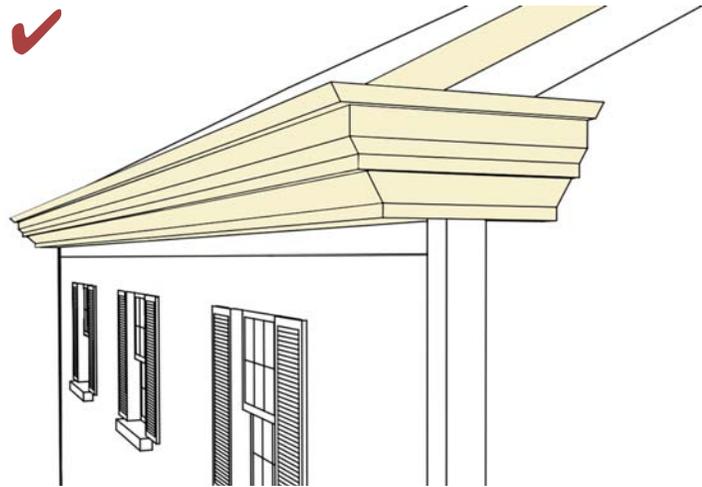
Roof Forms

Roof forms impact the perceived mass and scale of buildings. Traditional roof designs in Simsbury are relatively simple. Most have one central form, with smaller, subordinate roof elements connecting to it. This helps reduce the perceived scale and provides visual interest. Basic gable and hip shapes are typical primary roof forms, especially along Hopmeadow, although flat roofs also exist and are in character with the area.

The *Simsbury Center Code* specifies minimum and maximum roof pitch for buildings along Hopmeadow (Code Frontage SC-1) and provides dimensional standards for dormers. The design guideline below provides additional guidance to promote compatible roof forms.

TC39. Use a roof form that appears similar to those seen on traditional buildings in the Town Center.

- Consider using basic gable and hip shapes.
- Design a roof to have a simple composition.
- Ensure that dormers appear to be subordinate to the roof plane.
- Use a roof slope that is similar to the roof slope of surrounding traditional buildings.
- Provide substantial eave depth.



Use smaller projecting elements such as overhanging eaves to reinforce a traditional sense of scale.

Building Elements

Building elements such as porches and balconies are important character-defining features of the Town Center. When oriented to the street, a front entry helps to establish a connection with the neighborhood. Traditionally, doorways and porches were dimensioned to be of human scale. This characteristic should be continued. An entry should also be designed to be in scale with a building.

The *Simsbury Center Code* defines building elements that are allowed to encroach into street setbacks and provides minimum and maximum dimensions. The design guidelines below provide additional direction to promote compatible building element design.

TC40. Design a building entry element, such as a porch or stoop, to be proportional to the building's mass.

- Ensure that entry features do not overly dominate the building façade.
- Avoid the use of a grand entry or oversized doorway, which would convey a scale inappropriate to the area.



Building elements such as porches are important character-defining features of the Town Center.

Town Center Guidelines

Architecture in the Town Center



The consistent use of high quality building materials helps establish an inviting sense of human scale in the Town Center.

Materials, Color and Surface Texture

The consistent use of high quality building materials helps establish an inviting sense of human scale in the Town Center. Exterior building materials should continue to provide a sense of scale, texture and quality while reducing negative environmental impacts. Materials used in new construction and additions should contribute to the visual continuity of the context while conveying high quality in design, durability and detail.

TC41. Use building materials that contribute to the visual continuity of the Town Center.

- Use traditional materials such as painted wood lap siding (or alternative materials that appear similar and have proven durability, such as smooth-finished cementitious fiber board), masonry (in genuine units which appear authentic in their depth and dimension) and regional materials, such as stone, whenever possible.
- Consider using genuine hand-applied and detailed stucco if it is applied in a manner that is proven to be durable in the Simsbury climate.
- When using masonry, assure that units wrap around corners of walls, and thus do not appear to be an applied veneer.
- Use materials in creative and contemporary ways that respect overall neighborhood character.
- Do not use imitation materials, such as synthetic lap siding, synthetic stucco (EIFS), panelized brick or stone veneer or plastic except in limited applications, such as for an accent on upper floors.
- Do not use highly reflective materials.



Use materials in creative and contemporary ways. (Beaverton, OR)

TC42. Use materials to convey a sense of human scale.

- Add visual interest through texture, finish and detailing.
- Use changes in material to express human scale while assuring that the overall composition of the building design remains intact and does not appear overly busy.
- Apply materials in units, panels or modules that help to convey a sense of scale, and provide a sense of texture through shadow lines and other attributes which provide visual interest.
- Do not use large panelized products or other materials that produce extensive featureless surfaces.

TC43. Use high quality, durable materials.

- Use materials that are proven to be durable in the local Simsbury climate.
- Use materials that maintain their intended finish over time, or acquire a patina, which is understood to be a likely outcome.
- At the street level, use materials that will withstand on-going contact with the public, sustaining impacts without comprising their appearance (note that some synthetic materials will not sustain this degree of frequent contact.)



The texture, finish and detailing of materials in the Town Center adds visual interest.

Town Center Guidelines

Architecture in the Town Center



Wrapping a parking structure with another use is the preferred approach to minimize visual impacts. (Boulder, CO)



Locating an active, ground floor use between structured parking and the sidewalk edge helps minimize the visual impact of structured parking on pedestrians at the sidewalk edge. (Bloomington, IN)

Parking Structures

In the future, it may be necessary to provide parking in structures that serve multiple properties in the Town Center. Such structures may work with the site grade between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse, to provide direct access to upper decks from the uphill side of a site.

In most locations, structured parking should be separated from the street by an active use at the street level. However, there may be some locations where it would be impractical to require other uses to separate the parking area from the street.

The *Simsbury Center Code* specifies minimum parking requirements and includes a parking setback standard that applies to both surface parking and parking located in structures. In general, the parking setback standard prohibits parking structures built at or near the sidewalk edge. The following design guidelines provide additional guidance on compatible parking structure design.

TC44. Design a parking structure to be compatible with the mass and scale of surrounding active use buildings (see "Scale, Massing and Proportion" on page 71 for general mass and scale guidelines that apply to all buildings).

- Divide a larger building into modules that reflect traditional façade and lot widths in the Town Center (see page 73 for more information on building modules).
- Use vertical and horizontal articulation techniques such as moldings, columns, a change in material, or an offset in the wall plane to reflect traditional building proportions.

TC45. Minimize the visual impacts of a parking structure.

- Wrap parking with another use (preferred approach).
- Use high quality materials such as masonry on any portions of a parking structure façade that are visible from the street (see "Materials, Color and Surface Texture" on page 78 for more information on appropriate building materials).
- If parked cars within the structure are visible from the street, use decorative architectural screens with durable materials and finishes that reflect traditional window patterns. (note that complete screening of vehicles is not required, but should be sufficient to minimize visual impacts).

TC46. Minimize the impact of structured parking on pedestrians at the sidewalk edge.

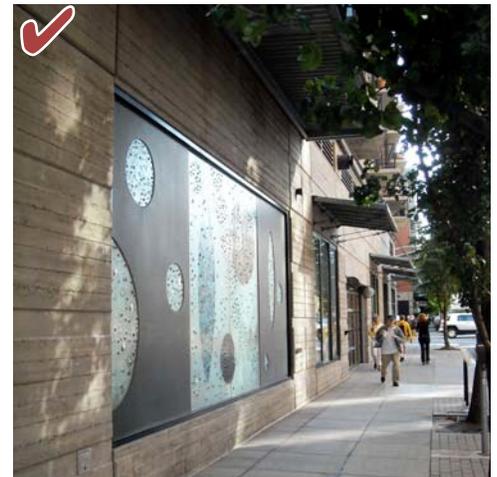
- On Wilcox between Hopmeadow and Iron Horse (Street Frontage SC-2), locate an active, ground floor use between structured parking and the sidewalk edge.
- On other street frontages, an active use is preferred, but other methods of providing visual interest may be employed, including architectural details, murals, wall sculptures or display cases at the street level (see page 67 for more information on options for engaging the public realm).



Use high quality materials such as masonry on any portions of a parking structure façade that are visible from the street. (Louisville, KY)



If parked cars within the structure are visible from the street, use decorative architectural screens with durable materials and finishes that reflect traditional window patterns. (Louisville, KY)



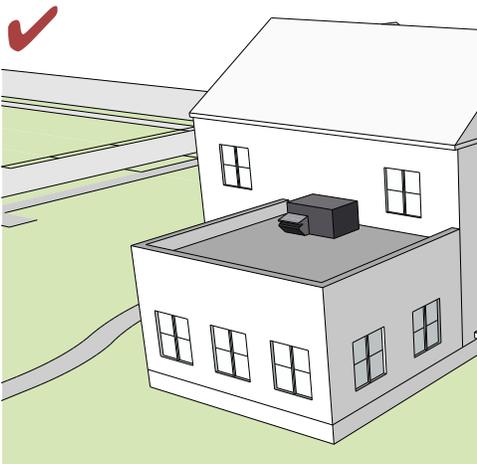
Murals and wall sculptures provide visual interest where there is not an active, ground floor use between structured parking and the sidewalk edge. (Portland, OR)

Town Center Guidelines

Architecture in the Town Center



Service areas should be visually unobtrusive and should be integrated with the design of the property. (Evanston, IL)



Locate telecommunication devices and mechanical equipment out of public view when feasible.

Equipment and Service Areas

Minimizing the visual impacts of equipment and service areas will help promote a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented environment in the Town Center. Junction boxes, external fire connections and standpipes, telecommunication devices, cables, conduits, satellite dishes, HVAC equipment and fans should be concealed to the extent feasible while meeting their functional requirements. For historic buildings, damage to historic features also should be avoided. Service areas should be visually unobtrusive and should be integrated with the design of the site and building.

The *Simsbury Center Code* includes general location and screening standards for service areas, loading areas, and mechanical equipment. The design guidelines below provide additional direction on equipment and service areas in the Town Center.

TC47. Minimize the visual impacts of building equipment on the public way and the surrounding neighborhood.

- Screen equipment from view or design it to be visually subordinate to the building.
- Do not locate equipment on a primary façade when feasible.
- Use low-profile or recessed mechanical units on rooftops.
- Locate telecommunication devices and mechanical equipment out of public view when feasible.

TC48. Minimize the visual impacts of service areas.

- Orient the entrance toward service lanes and away from major streets.
- Screen a service area with a wall, fence or planting.
- Use durable materials. Light weight fencing material is inappropriate.
- Where a service area must be oriented to the street, screen it with an architectural feature. The design should be in character with the building and provide visual interest at the street level.





villages

traffic corridors

open space and farmland

woodland and watercourse

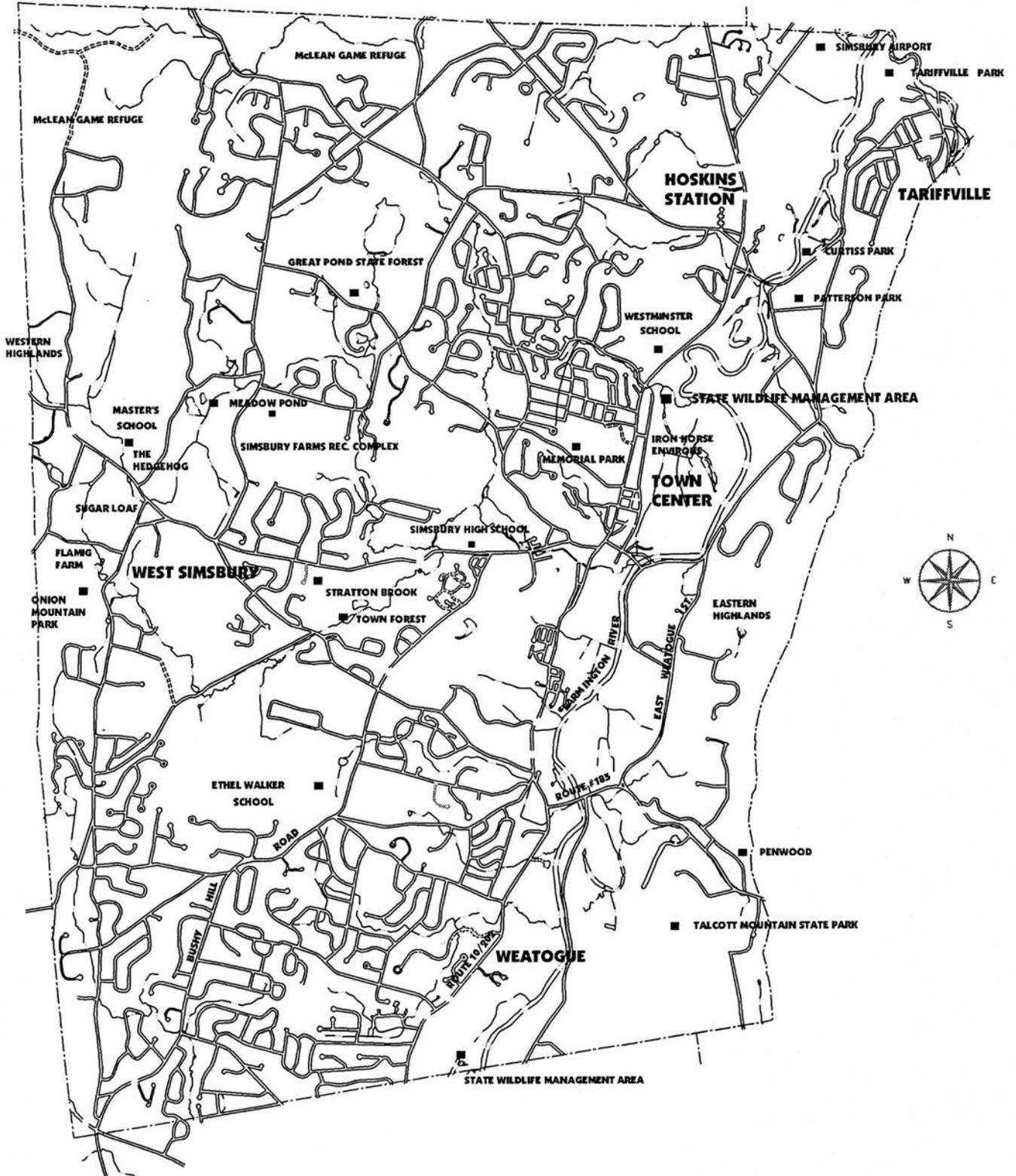
wetlands and floodplain

highland features

One effective way to understand and become familiar with Simsbury's natural, visual, historical, and cultural resource is by identifying character places – landscapes that share similar physical and cultural development that are the result of interaction between natural and social systems. Dense settlement patterns, or villages, along important transportation routes and broad open space for agricultural use are two examples of distinctly different environments that incorporate natural and visual features and were shaped by man's settlement. Character places include patterns of roads and structures, as well as cultural characteristics that were brought to the land by settlers, have evolved over time, and remain an integral part of the foundation of Simsbury. There are opportunities to harmonize with the existing character and to celebrate the distinctions between each character place by building within existing landscape patterns. The challenge is to identify the sensitivities of each distinct place, to understand how different character places require different design strategies in order to preserve valued resources, and to recommend design guidelines to honor and reinforce rather than to ignore and replace.

As a special character place, the Town Center is addressed in a separate chapter beginning on page 35. This chapter profiles Simsbury's other key character places through photographs and a brief narrative. It also includes suggestions for how development might fit into each area's distinct context by suggesting notable resources particular to each character place.

Just as these character places have been shaped by years of human interaction with the habitat, the design guidelines will be shaped by residents interacting with one another via education and discussion. The following section provides a resource for design ideas and a basis for that discussion.



Villages

Tariffville

West Simsbury Center

East Weatogue

West Weatogue

Hoskins Station – Westover Plain

School Campuses:

- Ethel Walker
- Master's School
- Westminster School

Village elements and patterns are familiar to the New England landscape. In the Simsbury area, villages include Tariffville, Hoskins Station and East and West Weatogue. The Simsbury Town Center embodies many attributes of a traditional New England village while retaining a distinctive character. It is discussed in detail in an earlier chapter. The discussion in this chapter applies more generally to villages throughout the area.

The village form evolved as a distinct assemblage of buildings coexisting simply and purposefully as an expression of functional relationships (sometimes referred to as a “cultural landscape”). Every component that the viewer sees existed for a reason and very little developed as purely ornamental. The buildings were closely related to the road for efficiency. The supporting buildings such as barns and outbuildings were located in close proximity providing shelter from wind. Front porches and trees planted close to buildings or along roads provided shade in the summer or shelter from rain. Villages supported the markets and became the nucleus of community activity for settlers in outlying areas.

Most villages shared similar physical conventions. For example, the village provided a variety of mixed uses – in addition to housing, there were places for assembly, education, and religious activity as well as for commercial and industrial development. Shops, workplaces, schools and residences for all income groups were located in proximity. Distinct neighborhoods were roughly defined within a five-minute walking distance from center to edge. The village displayed a clear perimeter as defined by broad open space or a “green belt” surrounding the settlement center. Typically, the open space contained neighboring farms. The size and

patterns of streets equitably met the needs of pedestrians and vehicle traffic. Building size and architectural character spatially defined the streets and squares. Parks were distributed and designed as communal places for recreation and social activity. And, finally, civic buildings occupied important places within the community and were symbolic of the community identity.

Each village developed in a distinctive pattern shaped by the circumstances of its location, such as along major transportation routes or rivers. Contrary to the popular belief that most New England towns evolved around a “town green”, Simsbury developed in a linear arrangement with a double row of buildings on opposing sides of a primary transportation route. Similarly, the other villages of Weatogue and Hoskins Station were nodes of community activity along the same north-south route. Tariffville, on the other hand, evolved as a mill town located at river's edge to harness available waterpower. West Simsbury developed primarily as a farming village without significant civic, commercial or industrial activities.

Several private school campuses within Simsbury adopted the settlement patterns of traditional villages. Buildings are organized around “common space” for public assembly and share similar architectural characteristics such as scale, form and shape, and façade and material detailing. Surrounding athletic fields provide open space separation from adjoining uses and delineate the edges of the campus site.

While each village is unique, they share many similar landscape patterns and notable physical conventions including:

- Historic structures and sites
 - Residences
 - Storefronts
 - Schools
 - Cemeteries
- Village settlement patterns
- Civic and commercial services
- Recreation
- Neighborhoods



West Simsbury Center



Ethel Walker School



Tariffville

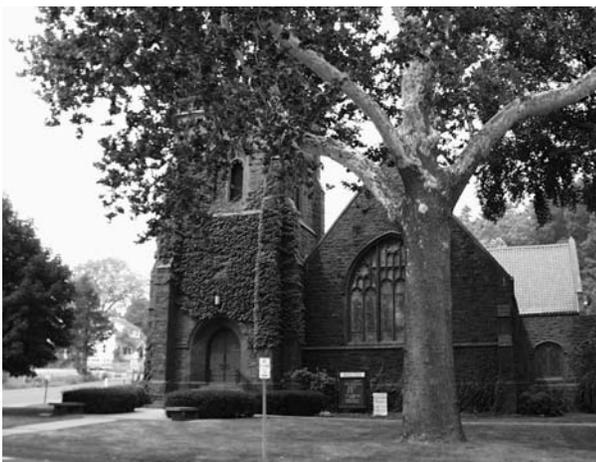


Guidelines for Character Places

Villages



View looking north at Hopmeadow and Plank Hill Road in 1900 (top) and in 2001 (below).



Vulnerability to change:

- Cultural qualities
 - Loss of unique community settlement patterns
 - Scale and siting continuity
 - Loss of public landscapes
 - Decline of neighborhood identity
 - Decline of commercial services
 - Loss of recreation and civic facilities
- Historic qualities
 - Loss of historic architecture
 - Loss of historic sites
- Visual qualities
 - Inappropriate siting and scale of new buildings
 - Inadequate upkeep, renovation, disuse, and demolition



Traffic Corridors

- **Bushy Hill Road**
- **Route 10/202**
- **Route 185**

The major north-south traffic route is a linear landscape influenced by history and evolving forms of transportation. Originally a Native American trail (Quinnipiac-Tunxis Trail) paralleling the western bank of the Farmington River, the corridor evolved into an important canal route to New Haven as well as an overland transportation road (College Highway). In the mid 1800s the New Haven Railroad was constructed linking many New England towns en route to Canada. Today Route 10 corresponds to the earlier routes, links the villages of Weatogue, Town Center, and Hoskins Station and feeds other major transportation routes both east and west.

Historically the development along this route supported commercial, residential, and industrial mixed-uses. Following World War II, Route 10 experienced the increase of automobile traffic and its associated changes. As the principle commuting route the road was widened for convenience and traffic speed, and various businesses developed in a linear arrangement to serve passing motorists. Typically businesses would grow as extensions of dense settlements. The route north of Hoskins Station represents this linear type of development that grew unchecked. Growth in Town Center, however, had physical limitations - natural “barriers” of river and high ground on the north end, a floodplain toward the east, an industrial complex on the south and high ground toward the west. Weatogue remains a pocket settlement surrounded by residentially zoned areas as well as floodplain toward the east. In that way, Town Center maintained its original “village” context of dense settlement pattern with surrounding buffers of open space and watercourse.

The most common landscape elements along a traffic corridor include parking lots and promotional signage to support the commercial activity. Frequently, however, commercial development has little relationship to the surrounding natural setting or to the physical form of the community. Fortunately, Simsbury has exceptions to that format. The southern



Bushy Hill Road / Route 44



Guidelines for Character Places

Traffic Corridors



Route 10 / 315



Route 10

portion of Route 10 has broad vistas across Meadow Plain toward the eastern ridge. The eastern side of Route 10 remains a Restricted Industrial zone with primarily residential zoning on the west. A changing commercial climate may also make this area subject to future development. The commuting routes of 185 and 315 as well as the road to commercial activities in Avon 167 (Bushy Hill Road) are increasingly more heavily travelled and are vulnerable to change.

Notable features in traffic corridors include:

- Historic architecture and sites
- Streetscape and landscape patterns
- Scenic landscape views

Vulnerability to change:

- Cultural qualities
 - Disruption of village patterns
 - Widening of roads and increased traffic speed disrupts pedestrian movement
 - Traditional land uses disrupted by traffic movement
- Historic qualities
 - Loss of historic architecture and sites
- Visual qualities
 - Commercial development supplants rural landscape
- Natural qualities
 - Loss of scenic views

Open Space and Farmland

- **Culbro Tobacco Farms**
- **Curtiss Park**
- **Flamig Farm**
- **Folly Farm**
- **Hall Farm on Old Farms Road**
- **Hopmeadow Country Club**
- **Memorial Park**
- **Nod Brook Field**
- **Pickin' Patch Farm**
- **Rosedale Farm**
- **Public School Properties**
- **Simsbury Farms Recreation Complex**
- **Terry's Plain Historic District**
 - **Case Meadow**
 - **Dewey Flower Farm**
 - **Hall Farm**
 - **Patterson Park**
 - **Pharos Farm**
 - **Wegner Hayfield**
- **Tower Ridge Country Club**
- **Town Farm**
- **Tulmeadow Farm**

Open space in Simsbury and for most of the Farmington Valley was farmland and floodplain at one time. Today, however, with the decline of agriculture the large tracts of farmland remaining are scattered throughout the landscape. Tobacco growing still provides a strong presence in the northern areas of Simsbury, although the continued use of this space is in question.

The cultivated fields of farmland provide expansive areas of open space permitting broad views, offer interesting visual patterns, and stand in pleasing contrast to adjacent denser settlements. The visual elements of this landscape typically include a cluster of buildings strongly related to the road, a combination of cultivated land, wood lots, hedgerows and wetlands, and in the case of the tobacco fields, simply shaped barns of rough sawn texture and minimal detail interspersed throughout the fields.



Guidelines for Character Places

Open Space and Farmland



In terms of hierarchy, the farmstead residence has primary importance by virtue of its relationship to the road and its amount of architectural detailing. The remaining cluster of buildings is organized by function and utility. The mass of the barn is typically larger and less adorned than the residential building. There are a variety of other structures with independent shapes, forms, and roof pitches that all share a common purpose.

Large shade trees planted around the farmstead parallel the roads and entry drives creating a distinct pattern. The surrounding fields reveal strong geometric patterns, which have a direct relationship to the surrounding soil types, landforms and cultivation techniques.



Not all open space is used for active farming. Succession fields are large areas that exhibit patterns similar to fields used for agricultural; however, the succession fields are partially filled in with brush or small trees and over time will reduce the visual openness. Today residential development occupies a large percentage of Simsbury's buildable land and continued development hastens the reduction of that open space character.

Areas for recreational activities occupy significant open space in Simsbury and contribute to an expansive landscape, most notable being the Simsbury Farms Recreation area occupying a prominent and centrally located knoll. Both active and passive recreation is important to the Town's residents and continued use and provisions for future open space development should be anticipated.



Notable qualities of open space and farmland environments include:

- Historic architecture
- Historic landscapes and patterns
- Open space
- Scenic vistas
- Agricultural soils

Vulnerability to change:

- Cultural qualities
 - Disappearance of traditional landscaping and building patterns
- Historic qualities
 - Loss of historic architecture and sites
 - Loss of historic structures such as walls and fences
- Visual qualities
 - Limits distant views
 - Loss of “green belt” separations of dissimilar uses
- Natural qualities
 - Loss of agricultural soils with non-agricultural development
 - Loss of mature trees and unique landscape patterns with contrasting development patterns.





Woodland and Watercourse

- Farmington River
- Great Pond State Forest
- McLean Game Refuge
- Meadow Pond
- State Wildlife Management Area
- Stratton Brook Forest
- Tariffville Gorge
- Tariffville Park
- Town Forest

Most of New England's older towns developed along waterways, which were used for navigation, irrigation, trade, shipping, and, in some cases, as a source of drinking water. In Simsbury, the principal waterway is the Farmington River.

Early settlements such as Town Center, Weatogue and Hoskins Station occurred along the river and near feeder streams such as Hop Brook, Owens Brook, Stratton Brook, and Nod Brook. The occasional farmhouse or stonewall running through the woodland or adjacent to a river provides a record of earlier settlement and a historic context. With new residential development rapidly expanding primarily at the expense of the woodland, the value, contribution, and preservation of the natural environment takes on added importance.

Like waterways, the Town's forests were once important elements shaping the community. Forests provided shelter, lumber, and attracted game. While neither the wetlands nor the forests factor into our daily lives today, both are prominent elements of Simsbury and contribute a strong force in shaping Simsbury's character.

The combined features of water and vegetation offer dramatic landscape views as well as provide a hospitable environment for wildlife. Large ponds provide an expansive view and smaller watercourses or narrow rivers suggest more intimate setting. The dense vegetation surrounding the water edges creates a sense of containment and provides a pleasing background to an interesting and varying landscape.

The woodland landscape covers the broadest sections



of Simsbury and is characterized by combinations of mature and succession forests with scattered watercourses of streams, ponds, or rivers. For the most part views are limited along roads with the growth typically extending to the street lines adjacent to the roads. The exception is an occasional opening penetrating the forest edge, at a water location, or at the changing composition of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs.

The most notable resources for woodland and watercourse environments include:

- Visual interest
- Water features
- Recreation
- Timber
- Wildlife habitat

Vulnerability to change:

- Cultural qualities
 - Loss of recreation and public access with private development
- Visual qualities
 - Modifications to landscape patterns
 - Lack of sensitivity of development design
- Historic qualities
 - Loss of historic record of settlement
- Natural qualities
 - Loss of wildlife habitat with location and density of development
 - Loss of timber with clearing and grading for development
 - Diminishing of water quality due to suitability of soils for septic systems or development proximity to water





Wetlands and Floodplain

- **East Weatogue Street Environs**
- **Iron Horse Boulevard Fields**
- **Wetlands along Old Farms Road**

Wetlands and floodplain offer a striking contrast with woodland and open space landscapes. The flat, lowland topography along the Farmington River from the southern portion of town through the north end of Town Center as well as along Old Farms Road provide expansive areas for wetland types of vegetation as well as broad scenic views. Simsbury has several types of wetlands as defined by particular vegetation and the animals supported. According to the Simsbury Land Trust the various types include “river and its tributary streams, year-round ponds, red maple or brush swamps, bogs, wet meadows, and vernal ponds.”

Typical of river valley areas bounded by highland ridges, wetlands can be found in numerous locations throughout the Town. At one time the wetlands were broad and extensive, however as changes occur, especially residential development in marginally appropriate areas, the continuity of wetlands has become fractured and the wetlands are increasingly found in isolated pockets throughout the town.

The unique wetland and floodplain vegetation as well as the water provide more than variety and visual interest. The wetlands provide the essential function of water retention and purification and a habitat for the largest amount and variety of life in Simsbury. However, although the Town and State own large sections along the river front as well as tributary streams and marshes, the wetland resources remain vulnerable.

The most notable resources for the wetland and floodplain environments include:

- Natural beauty
- Passive and active recreation
- Wildlife habitat
- Unique vegetation
- Broad scenic vistas
- Water retention and purification

Highland Features

- **Talcott Mountain Range**
 - Talcott Mountain State Park
 - Penwood State Park
 - Metacomet Trail Overview
- **West Mountains**
 - Onion Mountain Park
 - The Hedgehog
 - The Sugarloaf

Simsbury's most prominent landforms are the two dramatic geological ridges that flank either side of the river valley – the Talcott Mountain Range on the east and the West Mountains on the west. These prominent ranges rise approximately 500 feet above the valley floor and form distinct edges to Simsbury reinforcing that sense of place. Both ranges are covered with trees, and because of existing construction constraints both are viewed from the valley floor as a natural and scenic environment.

The highlands have a varied and complex geological history that encompasses deposition, deformation, erosion, and glaciations. The western ridge contains a curious collection of knolls (Onion Mountain, Sugarloaf, and the Hedgehog) that are familiar landmarks for the village of West Simsbury. The eastern ridge showcases a notable man-made landmark – The Heublein Tower – as well as a natural formation – King Philip's Cave.

Talcott Mountain State Park and the northerly ridge to Tariffville (Penwood State Park and the Metacomet Trail Overview) are massive formations of ancient igneous rock, dramatically revealed to the valley as a distinctive wall. The ledges of brown-red siltstone, sandstone, and conglomerate in evidence along Quarry Road provided material for many of the distinctive examples of historic architecture along Hopmeadow Street including the Town Hall, the Ensign Bickford Company, and several other businesses housed in what were formerly large residences within Town Center.



Guidelines for Character Places

Highland Features



This indigenous brownstone has become a signature material for Simsbury and its continued use as an exterior finish in more recent construction provides a symbolic continuity with the past.

Historically there is evidence that Native Americans may have used the ancient trails along the lower ridge of West Mountain. Settlers in the early 1800s harvested the flatlands as well as the ridges for firewood and later for charcoal, eventually stripping the land of trees thereby making the land available for cattle grazing. Many remnants of history exist in the form of stonewalls and fences that recall a time past. Today the mountains have reforested and contain elevated woodland trails and scenic overlooks to the adjacent valley floor providing the public with popular recreation activities.

The most notable resources for the highland environment include:

- Natural beauty
- Background to scenic vistas
- Elevated overlooks
- Active and passive recreation
- Historic structures and trails
- Wildlife habitat
- Geological interest



Afterword

“The issue remains, unsentimentally, reality: the beauty of what we have, how to see it as it is and value it for what it is, how to make it, democratically, more complete and the law of the land.”

Vincent Scully, Jr.

Essay for Towns and Town Making Principles

by Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk

All those who engage in the process of development (builders and developers, architects, landscape architects, surveyors, engineers) as well as those who review their work (board members, planners, lawyers, town officials, and interested citizens) benefit from asking the following:

- How would different development decisions change the way the town feels, looks, and functions, for better or worse?
- Are the tools in place to provide clarity and direction for development, and is the Town getting the result intended?

Communities are complex systems of interdependent elements. Concepts of historic and rural preservation, traditional neighborhood development, and transit-oriented design are only some of the many complicated issues facing contemporary towns. Simsbury has three tools available to address these public issues: design (creativity), policy (regulation), and management (implementation). All are integral to, and must be balanced for, the successful outcome of a design. This document addresses the first tool and provides a framework to broaden public discussion.

It is important to attract and expand the base of citizen support and participation. The values presented here are not an exercise in nostalgia or imitation, but recognition that certain qualities of history, culture and community are interconnected, timeless, and meaningful. Our built environment and the protection of our unique natural and cultural resources are the physical foundation of our society.

Stopping growth is not an option, but it is possible to manage growth so that it strengthens the community's core values. Simsbury can revitalize its village centers, celebrate its heritage, maintain its natural environment, provide for recreation, build on established landscape patterns, and, most importantly, preserve community identity through informed decision-making.



Appendix A: Glossary

Architectural style

The exterior design of a structure as it expresses a particular time, society or individual.

Character

Special characteristics of a structure or area that set it apart from its surroundings and contribute to its individuality. *

Comprehensive landscape plan

A plan, drawn to scale, showing dimensions and details for revegetating an area.**

Cultural/historical resources

Buildings, places, and amenities that transmit the beliefs, social forms, and material traits of the town to successive generations.

Circulation

Pedestrian and vehicular traffic patterns through an area.

Form

Shape and structure of a building as distinguished from its materials.

Human scale

A building's or open space's size relative to the average person. Specifically refers to the relationship between a passing or approaching pedestrian and the structure. A large, monolithic, undifferentiated façade alienates the passerby whereas the same structure built as a complex or as a group of smaller buildings connected with paths, shared gardens, etc., promotes human affinity.

Incompatible use

A use that is incapable of direct association with certain other uses because it is contradictory, incongruous, or discordant. *

Informal review

Presentation made to the Design Review Board during initial stages of design to ensure that the proposal will meet all of the Town's design standards. The informal review provides a forum for consultation prior to a subsequent formal review.

Mass

Expanse or bulk of a building.

Natural resources

Physical characteristics of an area that are not man-made. *

Private space

Areas intended for, or restricted to, the use of a particular person or group.

Public space

Defined open spaces designed for public use; often to foster a sense of community.

Scale

Size of a building relative to its surroundings and users.

Streetscape

The visual image of the streets, including such elements as buildings, open spaces, parking, sidewalks, signage, lighting fixtures, furniture, and vegetation.

Style

The configuration of artistic elements that together constitute a manner of expression particular to a certain time, society or individual.

Topography

The surface configuration of an area, including natural and man-made features.

Visual resources

Those attributes which appeal to the sight, such as scenic vistas, harmonious building styles, and beautiful gardens, etc.

* Definitions and ** abbreviated definitions taken from *A Glossary of Zoning, Development, and Planning Terms*, edited by Michael Davidson and Fay Dolnick. 1999, American Planning Association Chicago, IL

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Appendix C: Application and Review Procedure

In order to facilitate the review and approval process, minimize delay, misunderstanding and therefore cost, all applicants are urged to use the following recommended procedure:

Step 1: Contact the Town of Simsbury Community Development and Planning Department for discussion and explanation of the process.

For new construction or significant renovations, the process begins with a review of the proposal between the property owner, developer or architect and the Town's professional staff. These early discussions are as critical as any in the design review process to save time and expense since the various applicable regulations and guidelines can be explained more fully as they apply to a specific property before any design plans are finalized.

Step 2: Schedule an Informal Review with the Simsbury Design Review Board.

As the proposal begins to take shape, ask the Community Development and Planning Department to place the proposal on the Design Review Board's Agenda. The goal during such an informal review is to ensure that the proposal meets all of the Town's design guidelines and concerns before completing the more substantial design documentation and drawings required for a formal application.

Informal Presentation Materials required:

- Building and/or sign schematic site plan
- Building and/or sign schematic elevations or perspective sketches
- Photographs of the site from principal vantage points showing existing buildings, natural features, and vegetation
- Material samples and product literature (e.g. paint colors, lighting fixtures, furniture, roofing, siding, etc.)
- The Design Review Board may make specific design recommendations for a subsequent meeting, or may waive (if shown sufficient information) the formal review and forward a recommendation directly to the Planning and/or Zoning Commissions

Step 3: Schedule a Formal Review with the Design Review Board.

Prepare a brief written design concept statement for submittal to the Design Review Board that identifies the significant site features, supports the reasoning behind the architecture and site plan proposed, and explains how and why the site features are incorporated into the project design. Request to be placed on the Design Review Board agenda.

Formal Presentation Materials required:

- Site photographs from principal vantage points including: *
 - Existing buildings on and adjacent to site
 - Natural land features (e.g. topography, ledge outcropping, water course, etc.)
 - Mature vegetation
- Signage plan and elevations drawn to scale including: *
 - Site location including property lines and street lines
 - Landscape plan
 - Lettering/graphic design
 - Sign board materials and support details
 - Lighting fixture information if applicable
 - Color samples
- Site design to scale including:
 - Buildings in plan
 - Natural land features - existing to remain and proposed – and contours
 - Parking and circulation plans including:
 - Location and number of parking spaces
 - Pedestrian and vehicular circulation system
 - Landscape design including:
 - Locations of existing to remain and proposed
 - Species
 - Size
 - Quantities
 - Site lighting design including:
 - Parking and circulation locations
 - Fixture style, height, and surface color
 - Lighting source (e.g. metal halide, fluorescent, etc.)

Appendix C: Application and Review Procedure

- Miscellaneous site structures including:
 - Trash containers or storage enclosures locations
 - Mechanical or electrical equipment
 - Furniture, art, etc. manufacturer's information
- Architectural design to scale including:
 - Building exterior elevations
 - Accessory structures (e.g. canopies, screens, walls, etc.)
- Material samples including:
 - Roofing
 - Siding and texture
 - Actual colors, not photographic copies.

Note:

* Indicates presentation requirements for sign plan applications. Site plan applications require all items.

Following discussions and comments, the Design Review Board will make one of four motions in referring the application to the Planning and/or Zoning Boards:

- Accept the application as presented.
- Accept with modifications as noted.
- Recommend not accepting the application for specific reasons and request that the application be revised and resubmitted.
- Take no action pending further discussion or resubmission.

Step 4: Submit a formal application for Land Use Commission review.

Complete, submit, and pay the formal application fee to the Community Development and Planning Department for placement on the agenda of a subsequent meeting of the Inland Wetlands, Planning and/or Zoning Commissions, and Simsbury Historic District Commission as applicable. Confer with the Town's professional staff for specific requirements for review presentation materials, procedures, and application deadlines.

Step 5: Submit approved documentation to the Building Department for a construction permit.

Completed construction documentation submitted to the Building Department will be checked for conformance with applicable codes and regulations. Certain technical items may require review by other town departments such as the Fire Department, Department of Public Works, Conservation Commission, and the Water Pollution Control Authority.

Special Application and Review Procedure for Signs

In evaluating each application, whether formal or informal, the Design Review Board will consider, at a minimum, the following points:

1. **Sign Message.** The Town does not regulate a sign's message. However, simple signs with the name of the business and street number are strongly encouraged. Symbols, logos, or illustrations should be legible without clutter.
2. **Sign Color.** The Town does not regulate colors, but recommends selecting colors to complement either the body or trim of the structure served. No more than three colors should be used; generally a dark color for background, a contrasting color for lettering, and a third color for emphasis (i.e. borders, motifs, shadowing).
3. **Material.** Natural materials such as stone, metal and wood for the sign and its support(s) are favored because they tend to complement most building construction materials and architecture styles. Likewise, painted or stained finishes tend to compliment most buildings better than plastic surfaces. Mass-produced product "trademark" signs are not recommended because they detract from the historic nature of the Town.
4. **Size.** The Town's zoning regulations set maximum size and height for signs. Special standards apply to the Town Center as summarized in the sidebar on page 108. When reviewing sign size, the Design Review Board will consider a sign's purpose and location from the primary vantage point. There are five basic styles of sign:

A **Freestanding Sign** is a primary sign at the main/street entrance. Contains business name and street number. The maximum recommended area is a function of the distance from the street line as follows:

- 10 square feet if located within 10 feet
- 16 square feet if located 11-20 feet
- 24 square feet if located between 21-30 feet
- 32 square feet if located more than 30 feet
- Maximum height of sign: 7 feet
- Maximum height of support posts: 9 feet

A **Projecting Sign** is a primary sign that is hung off of building perpendicularly. Contains business name and street number. Maximum area: 10 square feet. Maximum distance projected from building: 5 feet. Minimum height from ground: 10 feet to the bottom of the sign.

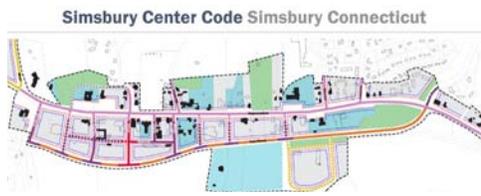
A **Wall Sign** can be the primary sign containing name and number or a secondary sign with more detailed information such as business hours. Affixed to building close to entrance. Maximum area: the lesser of 8 square feet or 15% of the area of the wall (including doors and windows) to which it is affixed.

A **Window Sign** states the name of the business. Maximum area: 30% of the glass area of the building front. Lighting: None, backlit by the businesses internal lighting.

A **Directional Sign** is used only when necessary. Marks entrance and directs vehicular traffic. Maximum area: 3 square feet.

5. **Lighting / Landscaping.** An exterior light source is recommended (internally-lit signs are prohibited by Zoning regulations). The light should be natural, soft light directed towards the sign with no spill-over. High-intensity lighting is discouraged. The light source should be concealed using plantings (for Freestanding signs) or by incorporation into the sign structure.

sign standards Simsbury Center Code



The *Simsbury Center Code* provides special sign standards for the Town Center, including allowed sign types, permitted frontages and Common Sign Plan requirements. For projects in the Town Center, the *Simsbury Center Code* supercedes sign requirements in the citywide zoning regulations.

Unified Sign Plan

For buildings with more than one occupant, a Unified Sign Plan/Common Sign Plan is required. The site should have an identifier sign that is generally freestanding and located at the main entrance. Signs for each occupant may be placed on the building and may contain logos and other information unique to each occupant. However, the basic design of these signs should be coordinated with each other and with the main sign at the building entrance. Directory signs can be located in convenient locations close to the building(s) but should not be used as the primary sign at the main entrance.

Sign Documentation

When making presentations to the Design Review Board, the presenter should begin with a brief overview of the scope of work. The Board requests sufficient presentation materials to be able to fully understand the design intent. For informal reviews that would include, but not limited to, the following:

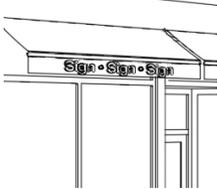
- A sketch of the sign drawn to scale and location on the site
- Samples of all proposed materials, colors, etc.
- Literature about, or pictures of, the proposed lighting fixtures and support

For formal presentations, the presenter should bring all of the aforementioned materials and other materials including, but not limited to, the following:

- A site plan showing the sign(s) location
- A sign elevation drawing done to scale
- Proposed sign content drawn to scale and using the intended lettering style.

Appendix D: Examples of Sign Types

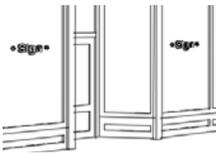
The Town's zoning regulations provide dimensional requirements for a range of sign types. The *Townwide Guidelines* chapter builds on the zoning regulations to address the character of signs throughout Simsbury (see page 28). Photographs of a range of signs are provided below to assist with an understanding of the various sign types. The photographs illustrate signs in a number of communities around the country and may not necessarily comply with all dimensional requirements that apply to signs in Simsbury.

Sign Type	Examples
<p data-bbox="233 579 410 611">Building Signs</p> <p data-bbox="276 625 444 682">Awning/Canopy Signs</p> 	
<p data-bbox="276 1184 391 1215">Wall Signs</p> 	

Appendices

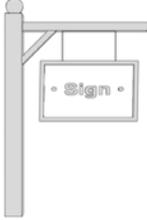
Appendix D: Examples of Sign Types

Sign Type	Examples
Building Signs	
Projecting Signs 	
Projecting Signs (Sculptural)	

Sign Type	Examples
<p>Building Signs</p> <p>Projecting Signs (Banner)</p>	
<p>Window Signs</p> 	
<p>Murals</p> 	

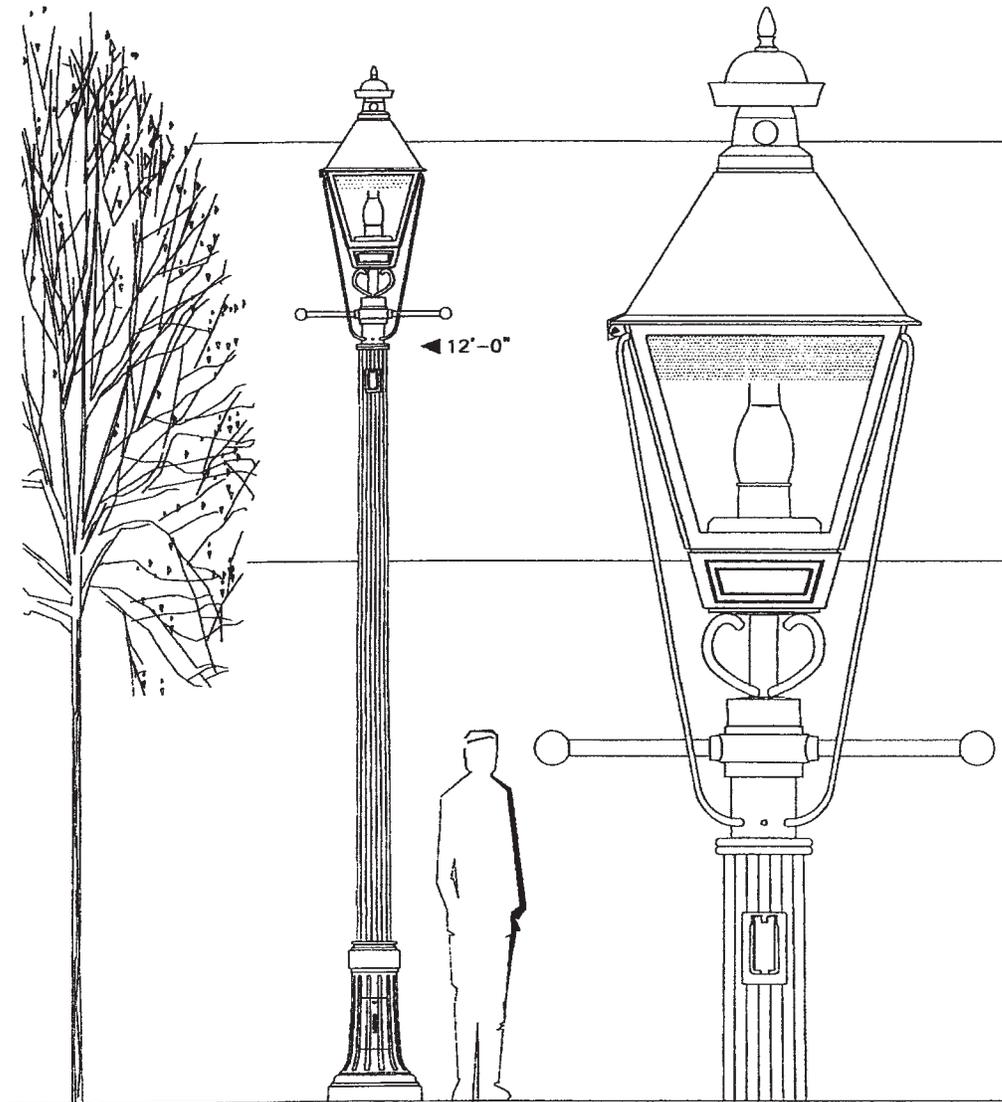
Appendices

Appendix D: Examples of Sign Types

Sign Type	Examples
<p data-bbox="185 302 425 331">Freestanding Signs</p> <p data-bbox="228 346 414 405">Bracket-Mounted Sign</p> 	
<p data-bbox="228 968 394 997">Monument Sign</p> 	
<p data-bbox="228 1402 394 1461">Temporary Sign (A-Frame)</p> 	

Appendix E: Streetscape Standards

Town Center Exterior Lighting Detail



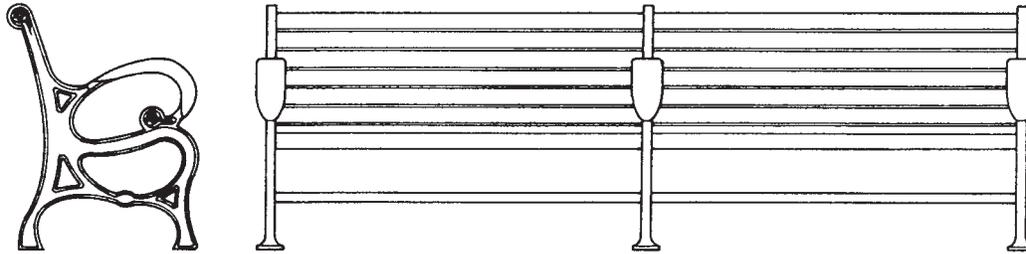
**The Simsbury Lighting Fixture
LUMEC, Inc.
Boisbriand
Quebec, Canada**

Appendices

Appendix E: Streetscape Standards

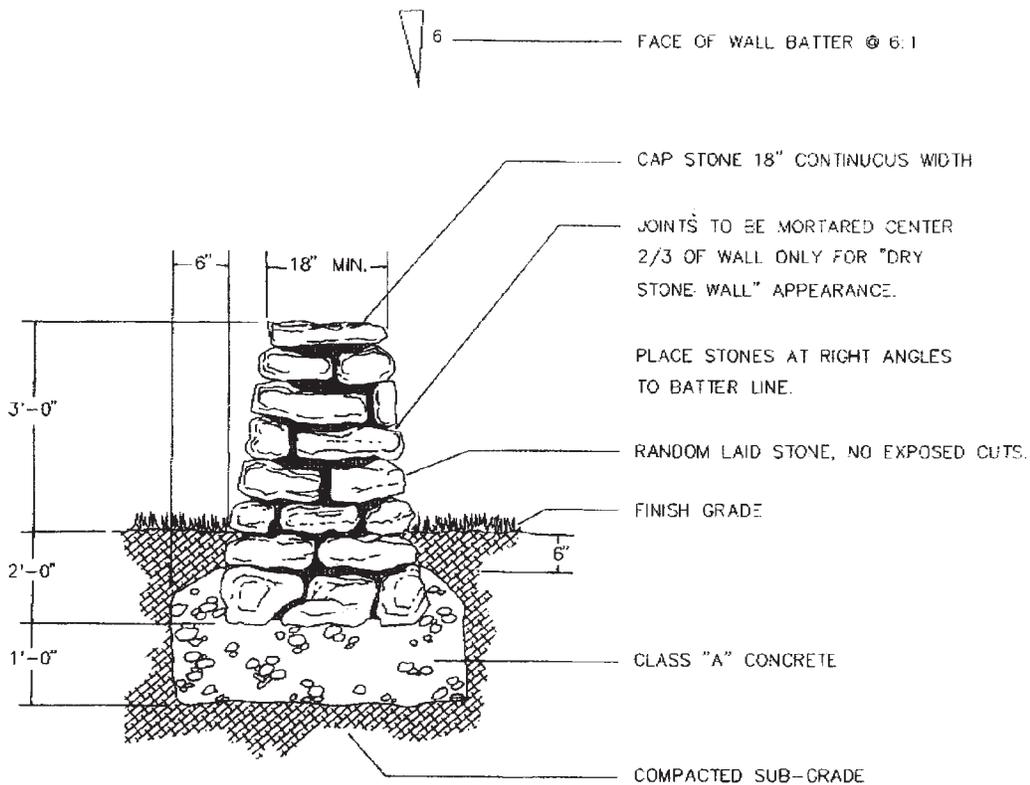
Town Center Bench Details

#2119-8



Columbia Cascade
1975 South West 5th Avenue
Portland, OR 97201

Open Space Post



Appendix F: Map of Heritage Buildings

The 2010 Simsbury Town Center Charette identified a number of important historic resources in the Town Center as "Protected Buildings" or "Buildings to be Protected." These are referenced in the *Simsbury Center Code* and the *Guidelines for Community Design* as "Heritage Buildings." Their locations are identified on the map below.



