

RESOLUTION NO. 17 - 2

**RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE REVISED
DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS FOR COMMERCIAL USES
FOR WORCESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND**

WHEREAS, §§ ZS 1-118(b)(9) and ZS 1118(b)(11) of the Zoning and Subdivision Control Article of the Code of Public Local Laws of Worcester County, Maryland provide that the County Commissioners may adopt development standards and plans, respectively; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of the impacts commercial development has on a community the County Commissioners included key goals and objectives in the Worcester County Comprehensive Plan adopted on March 7, 2006 to promote appropriate design; and

WHEREAS, the pertinent goals, objectives and recommendations contained in the Comprehensive Plan state that Worcester County will maintain its rural and coastal character and protect its environment and natural resources; that commercial development standards will be updated to reflect changes in scale and intensity; that new development's architecture and landscaping will be designed to visually improve its surroundings; that special attention must be given to the volume, location and design of commercial uses and areas because they, by their nature, locate on prominent sites and can visually dominate a community; that strip commercial centers and typical franchise architecture are discouraged; and that commercial areas, while providing important services, should be developed to enhance community character; and

WHEREAS, the County Commissioners adopted Design Guidelines and Standards for Commercial Uses by Resolution No. 09-25 on November 3, 2009; and

WHEREAS, the County Commissioners established a Design Guidelines Task Force in 2016 to review and make recommendations for changes to the Design Guidelines and Standards for Commercial Uses ; and

WHEREAS, proposed changes to the Design Guidelines and Standards for Commercial Uses as recommended by the Design Guidelines Task Force were presented to the County Commissioners at their meeting on December 20, 2016; and

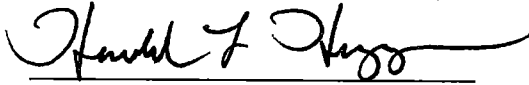
WHEREAS, the County Commissioners accepted public comment on the revised Design Guidelines and Standards for Commercial Uses at their meeting on January 17, 2017 pursuant to a duly advertised public hearing.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the County Commissioners of Worcester County that the revised Design Guidelines and Standards for Commercial Uses, attached hereto and made a part hereof, are hereby adopted by the County Commissioners and shall replace the Design Guidelines and Standards for Commercial Uses originally adopted by Resolution No. 09-25 on November 3, 2009. Furthermore, with the exception of photographs, illustrations or diagrams added or modified solely for the purpose of providing better or additional representative illustration, the provisions of the Design Guidelines and Standards for Commercial Uses shall be modified only by resolution of the County Commissioners following a duly advertised public hearing.

AND, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution shall take effect upon its passage.

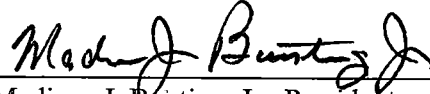
PASSED AND ADOPTED this 17th day of January, 2017.

ATTEST:



Harold L. Higgins
Chief Administrative Officer

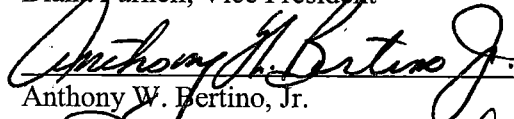
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF
WORCESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND



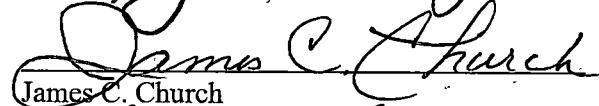
Madison J. Bunting, Jr., President



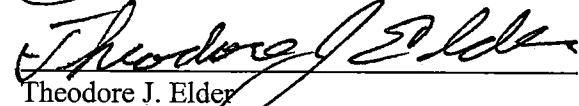
Diana Purnell, Vice President



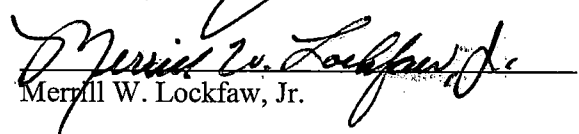
Anthony W. Bertino, Jr.



James C. Church



Theodore J. Elder



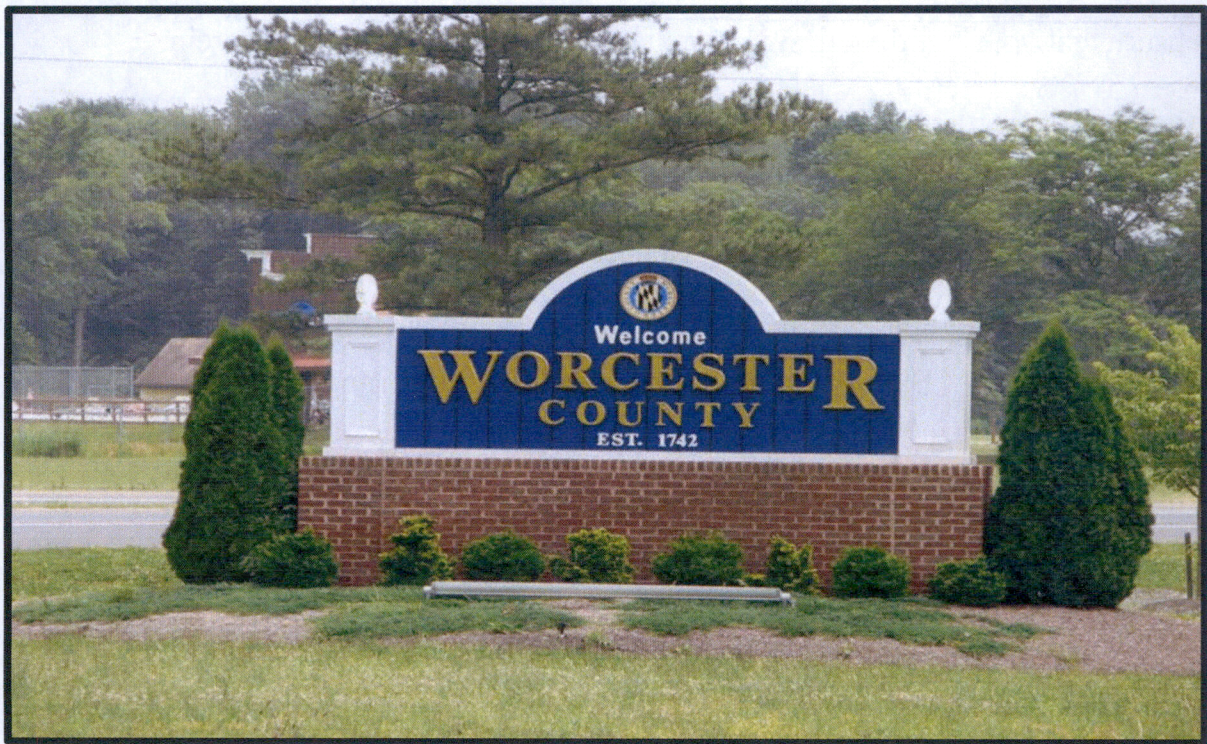
Merrill W. Lockfaw, Jr.

Absent

Joseph M. Mitrecic

WORCESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND

DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS FOR COMMERCIAL USES



ADOPTED JANUARY 17, 2017



Welcome to Worcester County, and thank you for your interest in Maryland's beautiful seaside community! We invite you to take a look at our design guidelines, and we encourage you to contact us with any questions you may have. Our goal is to offer you a representation of traditional seaside, town center and agricultural designs that will assist you in the construction of your building(s). Our design guidelines are predominately voluntary; however, we strongly encourage you to ensure that your building design is representative of the examples herein.

You will find Worcester County to be a dynamic, pro-business marketplace that abounds with new opportunities. Strategically located in the heart of the Delmarva Peninsula, our communities offer a superb family friendly lifestyle, outstanding school system, and ready access to major metropolitan markets, including Washington D.C., Baltimore and Philadelphia. We pride ourselves on our low tax structure, an abundant workforce, and a transportation network of highways, rail and airports to serve your business needs.

We look forward to working with you to establish or grow your business!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "mm", written over a faint, light blue circular watermark.

Meredith M. Mears
Director

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Section 1. Findings and intent.

- (a) Findings. Commercial development gravitates to high visibility, high traffic locations, thus often dominating key roadsides and creating strong visual impressions. Consequently, commercial development can impact an area's visual and architectural tone. If these impacts are unfavorable, it can make an area unattractive and become problematic. Additionally, poorly planned development can also adversely affect traffic safety when motorists are distracted by confusing or incompatible development or when the free flow of traffic is disturbed because insufficient consideration is given to site design. This is especially true for regions with tourism-dependent economies such as Worcester County. Good design harmonizes new development with its context and pays careful attention to a development's height, mass, overall form, color, landscaping and signs. In recognition of the impacts commercial development has on a community, the Worcester County Commissioners included key goals and objectives in the *Comprehensive Plan* adopted on March 7, 2006 to promote appropriate design in accordance with the guidelines and standards. The *Comprehensive Plan* thus supports the creation of these design guidelines and standards for commercial uses. Additionally, the County Commissioners find that, in certain circumstances, waivers to the mandatory design standards are feasible when proposed alternative building or site design features generally achieve the overall objectives of the Design Guidelines and Standards.
- (b) Intent. These design guidelines and standards respond to the *Comprehensive Plan's* design statements and recommendations by identifying architectural styles and features indicative of Worcester County's heritage and by providing direction for developers to utilize in designing projects that reflect this local character. To achieve this Worcester County will apply accepted design principles. These guidelines and standards strive to inform developers of the community's design aspirations and augment the *Zoning and Subdivision Control Article's* existing regulations with more specific provisions for commercial development, conveying the principles with words and graphics. The aim is to create a basic level of architectural variety within the context of the County's main development traditions and to provide an assessment tool that is used to evaluate the suitability of a development. It is not the intent of these provisions to limit creativity or restrict development to a particular architectural style.
- (c) Authority. The County Commissioners are empowered by § 4.01.(c)(1) of Article 66B of the *Annotated Code of Maryland* to impose restrictions, conditions or limitations that they consider appropriate to preserve, improve, or protect the general character and design of land and buildings. § ZS 1-118(b)(9) of the *Zoning and Subdivision Control Article* grants the County Commissioners the authority to adopt development standards. Additionally, § ZS 1-118(b)(11) stipulates that the County Commissioners may adopt plans, including comprehensive development plans, transportation corridor plans and any plans necessary for the purposes of the *Zoning and Subdivision Control Article* by resolution after a public hearing. These design guidelines and standards for commercial

development were adopted by the County Commissioners by Resolution No. 17-2 on January 17, 2017 following a public hearing held on January 17, 2017.



Photo 1



Photo 2

Worcester County's beauty - from beach to bay and beyond.

Section 2. Procedure.

(a) Applicability.

- (1) These guidelines and standards apply to all projects other than multi-family and townhouse development which are subject to site plan review under § ZS 1-325 of the *Zoning and Subdivision Control Article* and which cumulatively total ten thousand square feet in gross floor area or more. They shall also apply to building additions exceeding fifty percent as calculated herein. Calculation of additional square footage shall be the cumulative increased area added to an existing building's area as of the adoption date of these guidelines and standards. It shall also apply to structures of at least five thousand square feet in gross floor area on parcels which abut the service road identified in the US Route 50 Transportation Corridor Plan as may be amended from time to time.
- (2) Items identified as "guidelines" are not mandatory but are provided to educate planners, design professionals, developers, and County staff about the design objectives. It is encouraged that these guidelines be complied with voluntarily.
- (3) Items described as "standards" are mandatory unless otherwise indicated.
- (4) The words "should" or "may" are permissive whereas the words "shall" or "must" are mandatory.
- (5) These guidelines and standards are to be used in conjunction with all other

pertinent regulations in the *Code of Public Local Laws of Worcester County, Maryland* or other applicable regulations, plans, etc.

- (6) Design professionals are highly encouraged to meet with the pertinent County staff at the onset of the design phase to obtain necessary information and to seek clarification or answers to any questions.
- (b) Waiver of requirements. The Planning Commission is empowered to grant waivers to the mandatory standards where it finds that the proposed alternative building or site design features generally achieve the overall objectives of the guidelines and standards that apply to the waiver being requested. In reviewing waiver requests, the Planning Commission shall focus on the issues in a collective fashion as they apply to a particular facet of a project and not on each individual item in and of itself. The objective is to appreciate that in building or site design the total can truly be greater than the value of each component individually. Substantive building or site features which are provided beyond those required either by the terms of the *Zoning and Subdivision Control Article* or this document shall weigh heavily in evaluation of waiver requests.
- (c) Administrative waiver. The Department or the Technical Review Committee may grant waivers to the mandatory standards under the aforementioned circumstances for those projects which qualify for an administrative waiver under the terms of § ZS 1-325(d)(2) of the *Zoning and Subdivision Control Article* or as a minor site plan under the terms of § ZS 1-325(f)(1) of that *Article*.
- (d) Procedure. Pertinent data and other information shall be provided on the site plan or associated documents to address these guidelines and standards. Compliance shall be evaluated as part of the site plan review and must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Department, Technical Review Committee or Planning Commission prior to the granting of site plan approval under § ZS 1-325(g) or an administrative waiver granted under the terms of § ZS 1-325(d)(2).
- (e) Continuing jurisdiction. The Planning Commission and the Department shall have continuing jurisdiction, without time limitation, over all site plans acted upon in accordance with § ZS 1-325 of the *Zoning and Subdivision Control Article* and may, from time to time, review such plans and conduct inspections to ensure compliance with the *Zoning and Subdivision Control Article* and with other applicable regulations.

Section 3. Definitions.

- (a) General interpretations. For the purposes of this document certain terms or words used herein shall be interpreted as follows:
 - (1) The word "person" includes a firm, association, organization, partnership, trust,

company, corporation, or governmental agency as well as an individual.

- (2) The present tense includes the future tense.
- (3) The singular number includes the plural; the plural number includes the singular.
- (4) The words "shall" or "must" are mandatory; the words "should" or "may" are permissive.
- (5) The word "used" or "occupied" includes the words "intended, designed or arranged to be used or occupied.

- (b) Definitions of words and phrases. For the purposes of this document the following definitions shall apply:

ARCADE - A covered pedestrian passageway, especially one lined with shops or other commercial uses, or a line of arches and their supporting columns. Arcades do not include off-street loading/unloading areas, driveways or parking areas.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW - Regulations and procedures requiring the exterior design of structures to be suitable, harmonious and in keeping with the general appearance, historic character and/or style of Worcester County's architectural traditions. A process used to exercise control over a building's design, location and other characteristics along with its setting.

ARCHITRAVE - The lowermost or base member of an entablature, resting originally upon columns. A beam spanning between columns that forms a bond beam at the top of a wall. (See Figure 1.)

ARTICULATE - To give emphasis to or distinctly identify a particular element through creating a joint or change in the structure's surface plane. An articulated facade would be the segmentation of elements on a wall face, including a change in setback, materials, roof pitch or height.

BERM - An earthen mound designed to provide visual interest on a site, screen undesirable views, reduce noise or provide a buffer from adjoining uses.

BREEZEWAY - A roofed passageway connecting a main building or structure on a property with other buildings.

BUFFER - An area provided to reduce the conflict between two different land uses. Buffers are intended to mitigate undesired views, reduce noise and glare and provide greater privacy to neighboring land uses. Typical buffers consist of plant materials, walls,

fences, earthen berms and/or significant land area to separate the uses. Also see "screen."

BUILDING FACE, FRONT - Any building face which can be touched by a line drawn perpendicular to the road (public or private but not an interior driveway) which the property borders.

BULK - The total volume of a structure.

CALIPER - The diameter of a tree trunk measured at four and one-half feet above finished grade. Also known as "diameter at breast height."

CLEAR SIGHT TRIANGLE - A triangular shaped area of land at the intersection of roads, or a road and a driveway, within which nothing may be erected, planted, placed, or allowed to grow in such a manner which will obstruct the vision of motorists entering or leaving the intersection. The triangular area shall be that area bounded by the road right-of-way lines of two or more roads or by the road right-of-way line and the edge of any driveway surface and a straight line joining points on said right-of-way or driveway lines thirty feet from the intersection. Nothing shall exceed forty-two inches in height (at maturity if plant materials) above the established street grade where erected, planted, or placed within this clear sight triangle.

COMMUNITY SPACE - An area devoted to the public as an amenity. The space can include covered areas, drinking fountains, sitting benches, water features, plazas, courtyards, etc. It shall not include storage or display areas for merchandise or other service/utility areas.

CORNICE - Any horizontal member, structural or nonstructural, of any building, projecting outward from the exterior walls at the roof line, including eaves and other roof overhangs. A cornice is the top of an entablature. (See Figure 1.)

DEPARTMENT - The Department of Development Review and Permitting or its successor.

DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS - Statements and graphics intended to direct the planning and development of the built environment in a particular manner so that the end result contributes positively to the overall development.

DORMER - A projection from a sloping roof that contains a window.

DRIVE-THROUGH WINDOW/AREA - An opening in the wall of a building or structure intended to be used to provide for sales and/or service to patrons who remain in their vehicles.

ENTABLATURE - A horizontal superstructure supported by columns and composed of an architrave, a frieze, and a cornice. (See Figure 1.)

ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS - Site areas comprised of wetlands, stream beds, floodplains, forested areas, threatened and endangered species habitat, and areas designated Green Infrastructure by the *Comprehensive Plan*.

EXISTING SIGNIFICANT TREES - Trees existing on the site that are six inches in diameter or greater measured at four and one half feet above existing grade.

FACADE - The portion of any exterior building elevation extending from grade to the top of the parapet, wall or eaves and extending the entire width of the building.

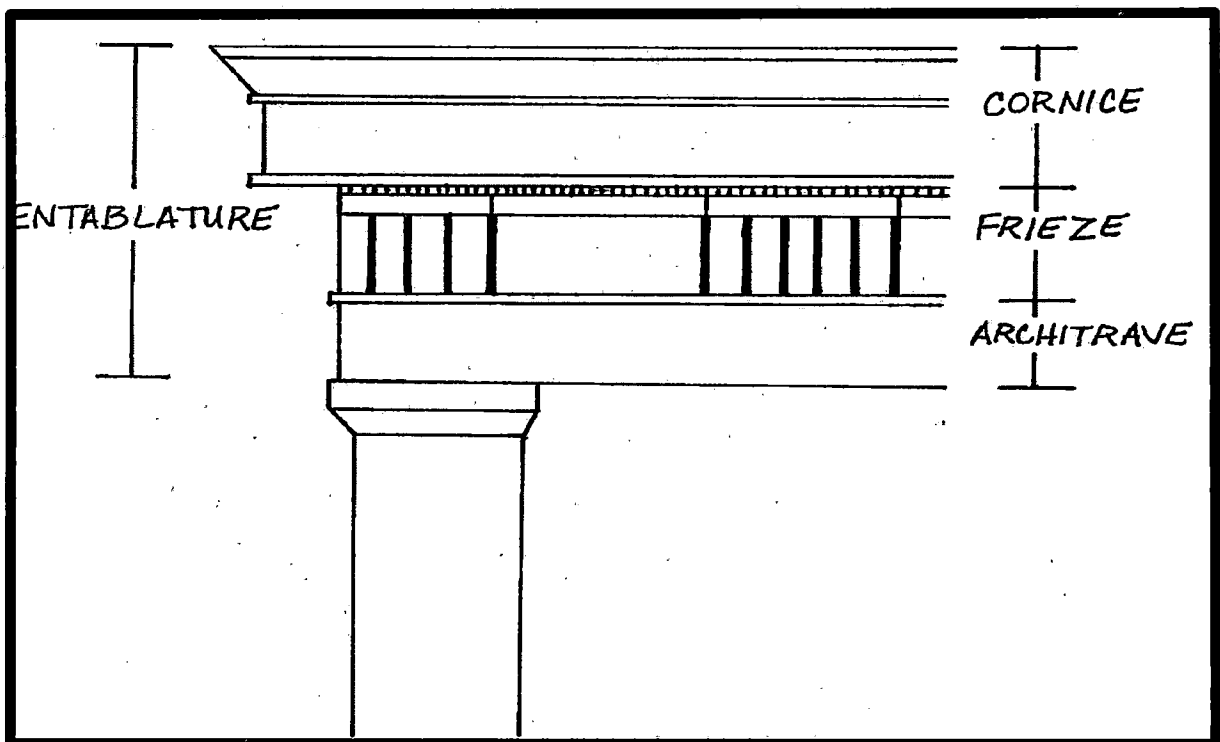


Figure 1

FACADE, FRONT - Those portions of a facade which face and are most closely parallel to the front lot line. Can be touched by a line drawn perpendicular to the road (public or private but not an interior driveway) which the property borders.

FACADE, PUBLIC - Any building side that is visible from public or private

rights-of-way and/or the faces of the building that contain a public entry.

FENESTRATION - The design, proportioning, and disposition of windows, doors, and other exterior openings of a building.

FLOOR AREA, GROSS - The total area of all floors or portions of floors in a structure and measured from the outside to the outside of exterior walls.

FLOOR AREA, PUBLIC - The total area of all floors or portions of floors in a structure or exterior use area and measured from the inside wall or dimension to the inside wall or dimension of the public use area used for commercial purposes. It does not include attic space providing headroom of less than seven feet, storage areas, work areas, refuse areas, exterior steps, stairways, fire escapes, rest rooms, utility areas or other similar areas not normally accessible to customers or to the general public.

FRIEZE - The part of an entablature between the architrave and cornice. (See Figure 1.)

GABLE - A triangular wall section at the end of a pitched roof, bounded by the two roof slopes.

GLARE - The effect produced by brightness sufficient to cause annoyance, discomfort, or loss in visual performance and visibility.

HARDSCAPE - Manmade or constructed elements, permanently in place, that are part of the completed project. These include but are not limited to the structures, parking lots, sidewalks, etc.

HEIGHT, BUILDING - The vertical distance of a building or structure measured from the average finished grade at the building line to the highest point of the coping of a flat roof or the ridge of a gable, hip, mansard, gambrel or other pitched roof.

HIP ROOF - A roof with sloping ends and sides.

INTERNAL WALKWAYS - All pedestrian walkways located within a site.

LANDSCAPING - The combination of natural elements such as trees, shrubs, ground covers, vines, or other organic and inorganic materials which are installed for purposes of creating an attractive and pleasing environment, softening building views, screening unsightly views, reducing environmental impacts, filtering air pollution, and minimizing noise.

LENGTH - The horizontal long axis of an element.

LIGHT TRESPASS - Light spill falling over property lines that illuminates adjacent grounds or buildings in an objectionable manner.

MASS, BUILDING - The three dimensional bulk of a structure, defined by its height, width and depth.

MASSING - Provision of architectural features giving a structure a sense of depth or three-dimensional characteristic.

MODULE - A visually distinct section of a larger building. Individual modules are characterized by offsets or changes in roofline from the adjoining module and may have color, trim or other distinguishing characteristics.

MONOLITHIC GLASS UNITS - Doors or windows made of a single large pane of glass.

NATURALLY VEGETATED - A landscaped area planted with or containing species of which at least seventy-five percent are native to Worcester County. These areas are to be planted according to the afforestation or reforestation standards of the County's current Forest Conservation program.

NONREFLECTIVE GLASS - Glass through which the viewer can clearly and equally see objects on the other side from both sides of the glass. Such glass does not produce a mirror image of its surroundings.

PARAPET - The portion of a wall that extends above the roofline.

PATHWAY - A cleared way for pedestrians and/or bicycles that is made of pervious materials and in a more informal manner than sidewalks or pedestrian walkways.

PEDESTRIAN ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT - Development which is designed with a primary emphasis on the street sidewalk or connecting walkway access to the site and building, rather than on auto access and parking lots. In pedestrian oriented developments, buildings are typically placed relatively close to the street and the main entrance is oriented to the street sidewalk or a walkway. Although parking areas and garages may be provided, they are not given primary emphasis in the design of the site.

PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY - A surfaced walkway, separate from the traveled portion of a public or private right-of-way or parking lot/driving aisle. They provide connectivity and interconnectivity to and through a development for pedestrians. Walkways are made of pervious or impervious materials.

PORTICO - A porch or walkway with a roof supported by columns, often leading to the entrance to the building.

PRIMARY CUSTOMER ENTRANCE - The building elevation which fronts on a public street, public parking lot, private parking lot available to the general public, or pedestrian walk where the principal customer access to a structure is available. For the purposes of this definition each establishment in a building shall have only one primary customer entrance.

PROPORTION - The geometric relationship of a structure's vertical and horizontal elements, as conveyed by that structure's height, width and depth, as well as the relationship of its elements (windows, doors, detailing and other surface features). Proportion is essentially a perception, i.e., what is visible.

PUBLIC/PRIVATE RIGHT-OF-WAY - Any public or private road or access easement intended to provide public access to any lot/development but excluding any internal driveways or aisles within parking lots.

REFLECTIVE GLASS - Glass which is opaque or nearly opaque, producing a mirror image of its surroundings by transmitting nearly all light back from its surface regardless of the angle of the viewer.

ROOF PITCH - The angle of roof slope defined by the change in rise in inches over the run of twelve inches.

ROOF SHAPE - The pitch, slope and configuration of a roof. The most common examples are gable and shed roofs.

SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT - The relationship of a particular project or development, in terms of its size, height, bulk, intensity, and aesthetics, to its surroundings.

SCALE, BUILDING - The relationship of a particular building, in terms of building mass, to other nearby and adjacent buildings.

SCALE, HUMAN - The proportional relationship of buildings and spaces to people. A human scale gives users of the built environment a sense of comfort and security by utilizing site and building design elements corresponding in size to the human body. Also see "Scale, pedestrian."

SCALE, PEDESTRIAN - The proportional relationship between the dimensions of a building or building element, street, outdoor space, or streetscape element and the average dimensions of the human body, taking into account the perceptions and walking speed of a typical pedestrian. Also see "Scale, human."

SCREEN - The sole purpose of a screen is to block views. A screen shall be constructed

of opaque materials or planted and be of sufficient height and density to obstruct unwanted views. Also see "buffer."

SIDEWALK - An improved surface made of impervious or pervious materials that is used as a pedestrian walkway and typically separated from a roadway.

SIGN, MONUMENT - A freestanding sign supported primarily by an internal structural framework or integrated into landscaping or other solid structural features other than support poles and where the base of the sign structure is on the ground or a maximum of twelve inches above the adjacent grade.

SIGN FACE AREA - The area of a sign including the copy area. It is measured to the outside of the sign's edge or frame but shall not include mountings.

SMALL COMMERCIAL USES - The portion of a project, owned or leased separately, which is disconnected from the principal building and has a footprint of up to ten thousand square feet of gross floor area and a separate exterior customer entrance.

STREETSCAPE - A design term referring to all the elements that constitute the physical makeup of a street and that, as a group, define its character, including building frontage, street paving, sidewalks, street furniture, landscaping, including trees and other plantings, awnings and marquees, signs, and lighting.

TRANSOM - A window located above a door or another window.

VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE - A style of architecture exemplifying the most common building techniques and based on the forms and materials of a particular historical period, region or group of people.

WALL WASHER - A wall-mounted light fixture, the sole purpose of which is to project its light onto the building in a fan-like effect.

XERISCAPING - Landscaping characterized by the use of vegetation that is drought-tolerant or of low water use in character.

Section 4. Design principles.

- (a) Design principles generally. The components of good design for the built environment address design basics, the setting and neighborhood, site design, building design and sign design. Arranging components in such a way that people feel comfortable is known as human scale. Places that are out of human scale, either too small or too large, make people feel ill at ease and they tend to either avoid such a place or move through it quickly. Principles related to size, bulk, proportion and scale most influence a design's

character.

- (1) A compatible and unified design results from attention to:
 - A. Mass and its articulation, exhibited by the building height, bulk and nature of the roofline.
 - B. Scale, conveyed by the building itself as well as doors, windows and other elements related to the size of a human being.
 - C. Form and proportion, demonstrated by the ratio of width to height and of front area to side depth.
 - D. Openings, including the solid to void ratio and the relationship and rhythm of openings.
 - E. Roof type and form.
 - F. Materials, textures and color.
 - G. Detail and ornamentation.
 - H. Signs.
 - I. Surroundings.

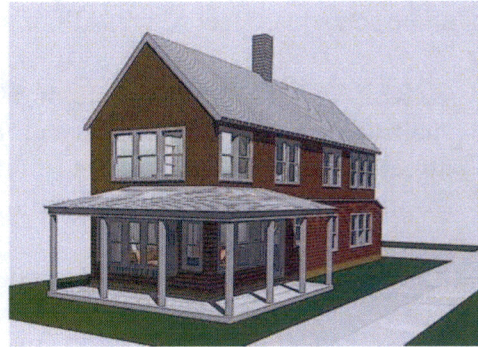


Figure 2 - Very simple building forms exemplify local architectural traditions.

- (2) Design principles encouraged for Worcester County state that developments should:
 - A. Respect their built and natural surroundings in scale, mass and proportion.
 - B. Be determined by the site's natural features.
 - C. Be at a human scale, with the dimensions of human interaction primary to the design rather than the dimensions of vehicular circulation and convenience.
 - D. Add to rather than clash with the County's architectural traditions and neighborhood character while also providing architectural variety and adaptability.

- E. Use low-rise buildings with simple forms and materials characteristic of the region. (See Figure 2.)
- F. Use clapboard or shingle siding of wood or materials having a wood appearance or, where appropriate, brick.
- G. Have simple roof lines, with the predominant roofing materials being shingles or metal. (See Figure 3.)
- H. Locate buildings parallel to streets with sidewalks and street trees for street definition and a sense of enclosure.
- I. Provide a mixture of commercial uses to encourage pedestrian activity, lively streetscapes and economic vitality.
- J. Balance the needs of pedestrians and vehicles.
- K. Have sufficient green spaces to counter-balance structures.
- L. Have signs designed to inform but not overpower.
- M. Respect neighboring residences and other properties by minimizing glare and noise with buffers.
- N. Reduce monotonous and bulky structures by articulation and properly scaled fenestration.
- O. Provide shops and restaurants at street level along sidewalks.
- P. Encourage window shopping with display windows along main and secondary walkways.
- Q. Accommodate facilities for alternatives to the automobile, such as buses, bicycles and walking.

BASIC FORMS

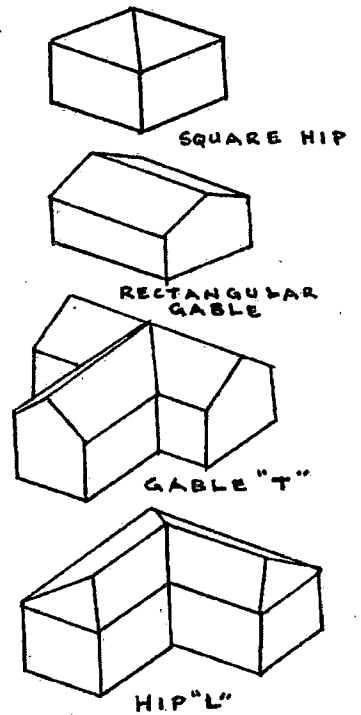


Figure 3