

DEEP RIVER DESIGN ADVISORY GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The Deep River Design Advisory Board (DAB) is available to provide guidance to developers and property owners on the exterior design characteristics of development and redevelopment, including to the existing properties within the Commercial and Industrial Districts, within the Gateway Conservation Zone, and Residential Districts for work requiring Special Permits and Site Plan Approvals, or as may otherwise be requested by Deep River's Planning and Zoning Commission. The DAB will be available if requested of Selectmen for review of Town or public projects.

Purpose

The purpose of this Board is to encourage architectural design that is in harmony with the surrounding neighborhoods and with the character of Deep River. The intent is not to advocate historically accurate design or duplication of architectural detail of other structures within the town, but rather to encourage the use of elements that are common to the existing streetscape and to minimize the removal of historic, traditional or significant structures while enhancing pedestrian access to downtown and providing an overall aesthetic atmosphere that will help attract new homeowners, tourists and businesses.

Goals

The Goals of the Design Advisory Board are:

- 1. To provide design guidance to developers at an early stage in the projects*
- 2. To establish reasonable design review criteria and guidelines for all applications requiring design review prior to submission to the Deep River Planning and Zoning Commission.*
- 3. To Provide insights regarding Deep River's design objectives and Economic Development goals.*

Design Standards

The DAB is required to devise and publish the design criteria that will be considered in making recommendations. Categories for standards include Design Context, Site Design, Building Design, Signage, and Lighting.

Membership

The DAB shall consist of seven members, all appointed by the Town's selectmen. All members should have some background in architecture, landscape architecture, site planning, engineering, town planning, graphic or interior design, historic preservation and other related fields or shall have otherwise demonstrated a high level of interest and commitment to the work of the DAB. In order to ensure the diversity of members on the DAB, at least four members shall have been advanced by the Deep River Historical Society, the Deep River Land Trust, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the Economic Development Commission/Merchants Association. All members shall be electors of Deep River.

The DAB members shall elect a Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary to call and preside at the meetings, the dates of which are set as needed.

Members of the Design Advisory Board serve at the direction of the Board of Selectmen and any vacancy on the Board shall be filled by the Board of Selectmen.

Process

The applicant shall submit to the Secretary of the Design Advisory Board application and plans for the proposals recommended for review before the proposal's official date of receipt by the Deep River Planning and Zoning Commission. It is recommended that Projects with substantial new construction be submitted to the Design Advisory Board significantly prior to submission to the Planning and Zoning Commission to provide early review of preliminary plans when revisions can easily and inexpensively be made.

These plans should include as a minimum, drawings, models, or renderings of the proposed construction: photographs of the site showing its relationship to its surroundings and samples of the proposed materials and colors.

The Design Advisory Board shall meet within 15 days of receipt of an application and prepare a review to be distributed to the applicant, Board of Selectmen and the Planning and Zoning Commission. It is the applicant's responsibility to provide sufficient time for the review to be considered by P&Z prior to the scheduled Public Hearing or if no hearing is scheduled the meeting at which a Planning and Zoning decision may be made.

If the DAB makes no report within the time frame noted above, the Planning and Zoning Commission may act without a review from the Design Advisory Board.

The recommendations of the Design Advisory Board are not binding, however all Design Board recommendations will be presented to the Board of Selectmen and the Planning and Zoning Commission during the application process.

A more detailed description of the recommended process is outlined in the Appendix.

These guidelines are intended to help protect and enhance Deep River's small town way of life and architectural heritage. The Design Review process was established to help ensure that development activity occurs in ways that are sensitive to the overall community and harmonize with the current and planned character of the Town. This manual outlines the kinds of design issues that will be part of the application review process.

Design advisory provides a framework for citizens and developers to work toward achieving a better environment through attention given to fundamental design principles. Design guidelines offer a flexible tool, an alternative to prescriptive requirements, and will allow new development to respond better to the distinctive character of its surroundings.

Design advisory has three principal objectives:

- 1. To encourage site planning and architectural design that will enhance the character of the town and ensure new development sensitively fits into its context;**
- 2. To provide flexibility in the application of development standards; and**
- 3. To improve communication and participation among developers and the Town early in the design process.**

USE OF GUIDELINES

The guidelines have been prepared so that applicants and designers can know, at the earliest stages of the design process, the issues that will be considered by the Design Advisory Board (DAB) and how such issues will be addressed.

Applicants and designers are encouraged to become well versed in the design issues discussed in this manual. Although not all issues can be anticipated in advance, it is expected that careful consideration and response to the issues outlined in the manual will enhance the overall compatibility of the development within the community. During the dialogue with the DAB, an applicant or designer may wish to modify an application to address concerns.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

The design guidelines fall into five categories: Design Context, Site Design, Building Design, and Signage and Lighting

I. Design Context

A. Site Planning for a Pedestrian Environment

In general, the pedestrian environment (sidewalks, pathways, entries and crossings) should be safe, accessible to all, and pleasant. Development should reflect these principles by enhancing Deep River's streetscapes with proposals that make pedestrian activity at the street level a priority.

Does the project encourage and facilitate pedestrian activity?

Guidelines:

1. Minimize curb cuts and interruptions of the pedestrian sidewalk
2. Maintain continuity of sidewalks and streetscape including lighting and plantings
3. Use benches, paving materials and other amenities to enhance the pedestrian space
4. Provide walkways to entrances from the sidewalk and pedestrian paths from other downtown destinations

B. Natural and Open Space Resources

Is the development ecologically responsible and does it acknowledge the site context and character of the land?

Guidelines:

1. Identify significant natural features (e.g. mature trees, land forms, rock outcroppings, etc.) and use as design determinants while preserving as much as possible
2. Minimize development on steep slopes or leveling the site topography
3. Augment open space areas where possible
4. Avoid development on ridgeline or hilltop that will affect views

C. Visual, Historic and Cultural Resources

Compatibility matters regarding the relationship of new construction with pre-existing structures, landscaping, open space, and function. It is not the intent to replicate existing conditions but to design new projects in a way that respects and enhances existing conditions with variation

Does the application preserve and enhance its physical, cultural and historic context?

Guidelines:

1. Protect and create views of distinctive landscapes and historic sites and structures
2. Honor pre-existing cultural/historical patterns by reinforcing scale, massing, and proportion
3. Encourage the conversion, conservation, and preservation of existing buildings and sites representative of the distinctive character of the community

II. Site Design

A. General

Is the site plan related to the building and the immediate context?

Guidelines:

1. Spaces, structures, and related site improvements visible from public roadways should be compatible with the building and adjacent neighborhood
2. Maintain visual privacy between public and private spaces
3. Separate sites of incompatible uses with planted buffers, berms, open space, and/or fences as appropriate
4. Factor in local climate conditions (including solar and wind influences)
5. Organize the site (e.g. circulation system, parking, structures, landscaping, entrances, etc.) in a unifying manner

B. Landscaping

Is the planting material used in an attractive and logical manner that organizes space and relates to buildings and structures?

Guidelines:

1. Integrate existing mature vegetation
2. Use native plants and avoid unusual or exotic plants, especially invasive species
3. Choose plant materials that have year-round interest
4. Use plant material as design features and not exclusively as buffers
5. Use plantings and land forms to shield unsightly areas
6. Preserve existing street trees and infill missing street trees consistent with the established patterns

C. Circulation

Does the site plan provide a safe, logical approach and entry to all site use areas and buildings giving equal importance to the pedestrian and vehicle?

Guidelines:

1. Emphasize entrances and exits
2. Integrate handicapped access provisions with architecture and site development.
3. Minimize conflicts between pedestrian and vehicle movement
4. Segregate service traffic/loading docks or outdoor storage facilities

D. Site Parking

Is the parking integrated into the site design providing a positive visual element?

Guidelines:

1. Create a strong architectural edge at the street by locating the majority of parking out of site from the pedestrian approach
2. Screen (with landscaping, berms, fencing, etc.) parking area from street view
3. Make use of shared, municipal or street parking
4. Landscape areas at the parking perimeter
5. Minimize vehicle headlight glare on adjacent land uses
6. Provide space for snow placement or removal

E. Public Spaces and Streetscape

Does the site plan incorporate places promoting pedestrian activity that reinforces community life?

Guidelines:

1. Provide outdoor spaces that are convenient, safe and visually engaging locations
2. Create opportunity for passive recreation
3. Install seating and trash receptacles near assembly areas
4. Consider design elements that reinforce primary and auxillary/accessory activity

F. Service / Utility Areas

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

Guidelines:

1. Conceal views of mechanical equipment (e.g. HVAC, exhaust fans, etc.)
2. Locate and screen accessory buildings and functions (e.g. trash containers, storage sheds, and emergency generators) away from public view.
3. Locate delivery areas discretely and concealed from the public right-of-way

III. Building Design

The quality of Deep River’s small town “feel” is expressed in the existing architecture. One way to preserve and continue the small town quality in new development is through the siting, massing and design of new buildings. New development should be compatible with the appearance of adjacent structures.

Elements and materials that reference existing architecture are encouraged. The quality of Deep River’s built environment can be characterized as mixed – good buildings that are architecturally interesting mixed with others with indistinct style or character - and therefore a selective approach to contextual design is warranted. New development should respond to Deep River’s context by providing enough visual linkages between the existing stock of good buildings and the proposed structure so as to create a cohesive overall effect.

A. General

Does the architecture establish a balanced relationship between prominent natural land features, prevailing landscape patterns, and adjacent land uses?

Guidelines:

1. Integrate the architecture with existing site conditions
2. Balance the proportions of the building (mass and scale) with the site (terrain, landscape, views)

B. Streetwall

A streetwall is the part of a building that faces the street, but it generally refers to how and where several buildings line up to define a proper walking environment. At the most basic level, buildings should be set back an equal distance so that facades are even for as far as a pedestrian can see. An ideal streetwall offers a sense of formality and includes a broad variety of elements and styles at the street level.

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

Guidelines:

1. Create interesting and proportional outdoor spatial relationships between buildings, open space, and setbacks on adjacent sites
2. Design a main entrance to be clearly identifiable from the primary public vantage points
3. Establish building references (e.g. eave or cornice heights, wall detailing, ground window heights, etc.) with adjacent building forms for visual continuity
4. Create variety using surface recesses, and projections.
5. Acknowledge visual and functional focal points (e.g. “town green”, landmark structure, public park, etc..)
6. Respect prevailing established building setbacks at both front and side yards consistent with the established street wall.

C. Scale, Massing and Proportion

Are the individual design elements and details consistent with the context?

Guidelines:

1. Acknowledge pre-existing conditions of neighborhood architectural scale, spacing, setbacks, and orientation
2. Break larger building volumes into smaller forms to lessen the total building mass and provide continuity with nearby patterns
3. Maintain proportions between building height, length and width
4. Create variety through compatibility rather than conformity

D. Rooflines, Facades and Entrances

Are the rooflines simple, functional, and reflective of the broader community building stock and does the public face of the building present a clear, well-defined, and balanced façade?

Guidelines:

1. Consider relationship of adjacent rooflines and entrances
2. Form a consistent composition between the roof mass and building façade
3. Build elements (e.g. protective canopies, columns, stairs, roof projections, etc.) to human scale at sidewalk level to encourage pedestrian use
4. Avoid false detailing (e.g. mansard roofs, partial HVAC screens, truncated roof structures, etc.) which detracts from the building's integrity
5. Accentuate entrances with strong definition and individual legibility for individual occupants
6. Create an agreeable pedestrian environment including weather protection, convenience, and safety features
7. Arrange window patterns with a balanced spacing and conscious rhythm
8. Provide a logical and visually appealing approach to the entrance

E. Materials, Color and Surface Texture

Are the materials durable and functional and is the use of color and texture reflective of local style and character?

Guidelines:

1. Limit the number of different materials on the exterior to avoid visual overload
2. Use naturally durable materials and anticipate patina and natural weathering of materials
3. Coordinate color scheme and textures with neighboring buildings, and the neighborhood as a whole, to reinforce harmony

IV. Signage & Lighting

Signage is a vital component of a town's environment. When a sign is in scale with its architecture, appropriately placed and well designed, it gives a positive impression. The visual clutter of too many small signs or signs that are too large or not well placed actually reduces the effectiveness of the signage.

Street lighting can be enhanced with additional outdoor lighting. Lighting can highlight interesting architectural details and business signs while respecting the privacy of abutting buildings and residential housing.

A. General

Are signage and lighting clear, simple and effective?

B. Signage

Does the sign reflect the character of the architecture, site, and neighborhood?

Guidelines:

1. Avoid visual competition with other signs in the area
2. Integrate signage to become a natural part of the building façade
3. Scale signage appropriately for pedestrian and vehicular wayfinding

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

Guidelines:

4. Display information such as symbols, logos, and illustrations as well as street number as required for identification. Brevity and simplicity are encouraged.
5. Use permanent, durable weather resistant materials
6. Avoid glare from light background colors or over illumination
7. Coordinate sign background, trim, text, and detail with the architecture

C. Sign Lighting

Is the sign lighting used judiciously?

Guidelines:

8. Coordinate sign illumination with the building design and lighting on neighboring properties

D. Site Lighting

Does the lighting plan provide functional and aesthetic benefits while mitigating the potential for nuisance?

Guidelines:

1. Coordinate lighting fixture and standard details with the architecture and neighborhood character
2. Avoid relative brightness differences with adjacent properties
3. Lights should not blink, flash, or change in intensity
4. Conceal the lighting source from the public right-of-way
5. Use white light lamps (e.g. metal halide) for site development illumination and avoid mixing light source colors (Avoid low or high-pressure sodium sources)
6. Illuminate items of visual interest

Appendix - The Advisory Process

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

Step 1: Meet with the Design Advisory Board (DAB) in advance of making an application.

For new construction or significant renovations, the process begins with a review of the proposal between the property owner, developer or architect and the Design Advisory Board. 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 DAB.

As the proposal begins to take shape, ask DAB Secretary to place the proposal on the Design Review Committee's Agenda. The goal during such an informal review is to ensure that the proposal addresses the Town's design standards and concerns before completing the more substantial design documentation and drawings required for a formal application.

Recommended Informal Presentation Materials include:

- **narrative description of the proposed project**
- **conceptual site plan**
- **conceptual elevations or perspective sketches**
- **Photographs of the site from principal vantage points showing existing buildings, natural features, and vegetation including all adjacent properties**

The Design Review Board may make specific design recommendations for a subsequent meeting, or may (if shown sufficient information) waive the formal review and forward a recommendation directly to the Planning and Zoning Commission and Selectmen.

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

Prepare a brief written design concept statement for submittal to the Design Advisory 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 agenda.

Following discussions and comments, the Design Advisory Board will provide comments and recommendations to the Planning and Zoning Commission

Recommended Materials For A Formal Presentation

1. **Site photographs** - from principal vantage points including:
 - a. Existing buildings on and adjacent to site
 - b. Natural land features (e.g. topography, ledge, water course, etc.)
 - c. Mature vegetation
2. **Site design** - to scale including:
 - a. Buildings in plan

- b. Natural land features - existing to remain and proposed contours
 - c. Parking and circulation plans including:
 - i. Location and number of parking spaces
 - ii. Pedestrian and vehicular circulation system
 - iii. Landscape design including:
 - d. Locations of proposed and existing landscaping to remain
 - i. Species
 - ii. Size
 - iii. Quantities
 - e. Site lighting design including:
 - i. Parking and circulation locations
 - ii. Fixture style, height, and surface color
 - iii. Lighting source (e.g. metal halide, fluorescent, etc.)
 - f. Miscellaneous site structures including:
 - i. Trash containers or storage enclosures locations
 - ii. Mechanical or electrical equipment
 - iii. Furniture, art, etc. manufacturer's information
3. **Architectural design** - to scale including:
- a. Building exterior elevations
 - b. Accessory structures (e.g. canopies, screens, walls, etc.)
 - c. Plans
 - d. Sections
 - e. Material and finish samples
4. **Signage plan and elevations** - drawn to scale including:
- a. Site location including property lines and street lines
 - b. Landscape plan
 - c. Lettering/graphic design
 - d. Sign board materials and support details
 - e. Lighting fixture information if applicable