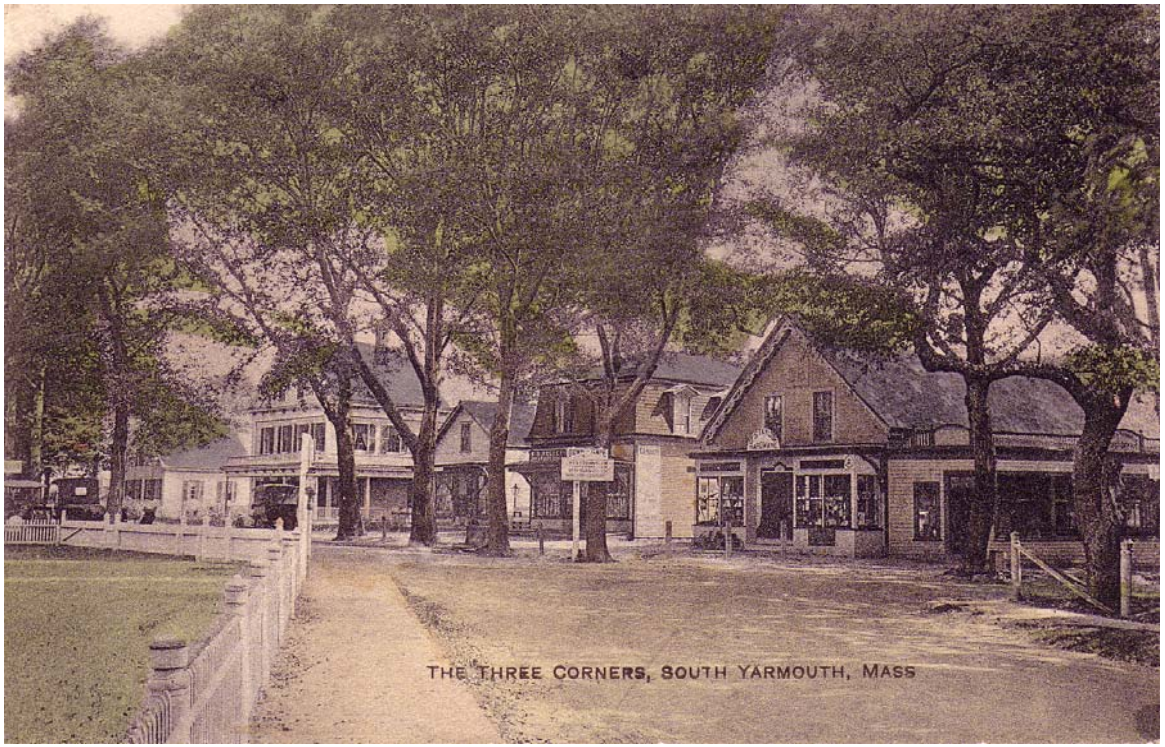
YARMOUTH
ARCHITECTURAL AND SITE DESIGN STANDARDS



Photos of South Yarmouth Village from the Collection of Gloria Smith

Date Adopted by the Planning Board: August 16, 2006

Revised to: January 19, 2011

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Revisions to the Yarmouth Architectural and Site Design Standards:

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January 19, 2011

PURPOSE

Yarmouth has many desirable aesthetic qualities and areas with unique character. These attributes have been closely guarded and nurtured by programs and initiatives intended to protect the community's aesthetic qualities and ensure design excellence. Despite this tradition, increasing development pressure for standardized and corporate driven design solutions threaten the very essence of what makes Yarmouth a desirable and unique place. These standards are intended to promote good design that is responsive to its contextual setting. These standards outline the Town's expectations with regard to the design of commercial retail/mixed use and motel/hotel establishments and are intended to assist residents, applicants, decision-makers, and staff in the consistent development review, and consideration of all proposals.

APPLICABILITY

The Yarmouth Planning Board's Architectural and Site Design Standards are applicable to all development considered by the Planning Board under Zoning Bylaw section 411, the Revitalization Overlay Architectural District provisions and under Yarmouth Zoning Bylaw section 404, Motels, including, but not limited to, new construction, reconstruction, remodeling, additions, and renovation of buildings, whether as of right or by Special Permit from the Planning Board. The Planning Board's Standards are intended to act as minimum acceptable standards for all projects and compliance is mandatory. The Standards are to be applied to an entire site, including the landscape, parking, lighting, signs, buffers and all existing and new buildings and structures on a site; it is not the intent of the Standards to allow partial site compliance. Relief from provisions of the Architectural and Site Design Standards may be possible in the form of a Special Permit from the Planning Board.

OBJECTIVES

- Protect and enhance the character and quality of Yarmouth while maintaining and strengthening a recognizable identity and character that is unique to Yarmouth.
- Enhance the human scale of development and respect the scale and character of residential neighborhoods that adjoin commercial uses.
- Mitigate the negative visual impacts arising from the scale, bulk and mass inherent to large commercial buildings and centers.
- Strengthen the pedestrian environment.
- Allow for needed flexibility to respond to conditions and constraints inherent to specific sites and specific areas within the community.
- Provide flexibility to respond to the unique characteristics and constraints inherent to mixed use development and too evolving development configurations.
- Require and promote building designs and practices that are adaptable to multiple uses for extended building lifecycles.
- Minimize negative impacts from on-site activities to adjacent uses.

- Balance the economic requirements of the development with aesthetic concerns of the community.
- Promote energy and resource efficiency.
- Promote sustainability.

PROCESS

Jurisdiction:

In accordance with Zoning Bylaw section 103.4, the Design Review Authority is authorized to review all commercial and mixed-use plans for projects south of Route 6 (the Jurisdiction).

Review Authority:

1. The Planning Board shall be the Design Review Authority for all projects in the Hotel Motel Overlay District 2 (HMOD2), which is outlined in Zoning Bylaw section 404.2 and for all projects submitted in conjunction with the Revitalization Overlay Architectural District (R.O.A.D.) which is outlined in Zoning Bylaw section 411. The Design Review Committee will also submit its recommendations to the Planning Board.

2. The Design Review Committee shall be the Design Review Authority for all projects within the Hotel Motel Overlay District 1 (HMOD1), as outlined in Zoning Bylaw section 404.1 and for all other commercial projects within the Jurisdiction.
The process of design review in relation to this Design Standard, is part of Site Plan Review process which is outlined in Yarmouth Zoning Bylaw section 103.3. A Yarmouth Design Review Representative will attend Site Plan Review to represent the Design Review Authority and present their review for compliance with the Standards.

Review:

Conceptual Review Meeting. It is strongly recommended that an applicant meet informally with the Design Review Authority for input on the proposed project prior to application for formal design review. A conceptual review is intended to allow discussion about a project before plans are fully developed and will provide feedback on site planning, architectural design, signage, parking, and landscape issues. At this stage, Design Review Authority members may give valuable advice about how to make a project work for both the developer and the town.

Formal Design Review. As outlined in Zoning Bylaw section 103.4, the Design Review Authority shall review and the applicant's plans and its representative shall present its findings as to compliance with this Design Standard to the Site Plan Review Committee at the time of Formal Site Plan Review.

Design Review Outcome. Formal Design Review by the Design Review Authority will result in various possible actions:

a. Recommendation. The project meets or exceeds the Design Standards. The applicant may then move forward in application for a Building Permit. Compliance will be indicated on the written formal Design Review and formal Site Plan Review Comment Sheet.

b. Continuance. If there are outstanding issues at the conclusion of formal Design Review, the Design Review Authority may continue the items to a future meeting, with the consent of the applicant. If the meeting is continued, plan revisions may be required. For projects in the HMOD2 or those submitted under the R.O.A.D. provisions of the Zoning Bylaw. if the applicant does not agree to a continuance to resolve issues, the Design Review Authority is obliged to direct the applicant to the Special Permit Granting Authority.

c. Special Permit. For projects in the HMOD2 or those submitted under the R.O.A.D. provisions of the Zoning Bylaw, if the applicant's plan(s) do not comply with the Standards, the Design Review Authority shall provide written detail of all discrepancies for correction or for the project proponent's application to the Special Permit Granting Authority for relief in the form of a Special Permit.

SITING STRATEGIES

1. Contribute to the village streetscape/follow established patterns

Follow established setbacks

Design new buildings to front on the street and to maintain established setback patterns, consistent with traditional village design. Include a street-oriented entrance and principal windows on the street elevation to reinforce the building's primary relationship to the street. Incorporate window and architectural detailing as well as pedestrian amenities where appropriate. The form and scale of the buildings should incorporate pedestrian-scaled amenities (such as porches and stoops) and doors and windows that are consistent with the pedestrian nature of the building.

Façades

For long front facades, vary the setback, height, and roof form of the building within the range provided by traditional buildings in the region to continue the established rhythm of facades on the street.

In most cases, long facades should be avoided, generally extending no more than 50 feet without a change in the wall plane. Setbacks and projections of at least 6 feet and preferably 10 feet in depth are most effective at visually breaking up large facades, as illustrated in Figure 1. Smaller setbacks used in conjunction with larger setbacks can be effective. Variation and architectural detailing that provides a rhythm to the building facade should be established. This is particularly important in historic areas and neighborhoods, where the bulk and mass of the building should be broken down to a scale that reflects the context of the surrounding neighborhood.

Figure 1. Variation in height, orientation and setbacks create interest and continue the rhythm of facades along the streetscape, as illustrated in this sketch.

Accommodate public areas

Increased setbacks may be provided to accommodate a small park, pedestrian plaza, or public area if appropriate. These areas provide relief, soften the street edge, and provide an opportunity for gathering and interaction that contributes to the vitality of centers.

2. Incorporate Smaller tenant spaces in the front of a large building

Add small tenant spaces

Create several smaller tenant spaces in the front of a large building to replicate the Cape's development pattern of smaller uses fronting the roadway. Large facades can be designed to incorporate several "storefronts," thus adding to the amount of variety on the building facade and repeating the setback, scale, and massing pattern of development in the surrounding streetscape. Each use should include separate display windows and outside entrances.

Small tenant spaces can be used to screen larger, unadorned buildings behind. This is particularly useful for large businesses that do not typically incorporate display windows or other pedestrian-oriented features on their own facades. Encourage a variety of uses in the smaller tenant spaces to create a mixed-use development, increasing the potential vitality of the area

Figure 2: Smaller storefronts add variety to a facade

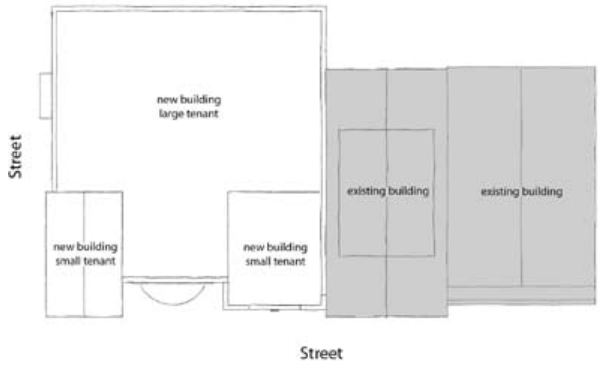

Figure 3: Small tenant spaces can be used to screen larger, unadorned buildings behind.

3. Define and enhance the street edge

Move closer to the street:

In strip commercial areas particularly, focus on reducing the vast spaces between the roadway and buildings by bringing mature trees, landscaped areas, and structures closer to the road edge. New buildings should be sited near the roadway to re-establish the street edge and relate the building to the street, or to shield larger elements of the development to the rear. Buildings should also be sited in clusters to the greatest extent possible to establish a cohesive grouping that more closely relates to traditional village patterns, with parking to the sides or rear.

Figure 4: Traditional Cape Cod villages are typically characterized by buildings close to the street with parking located to the side or rear. This creates a well defined street edge and sense of enclosure to the roadway.

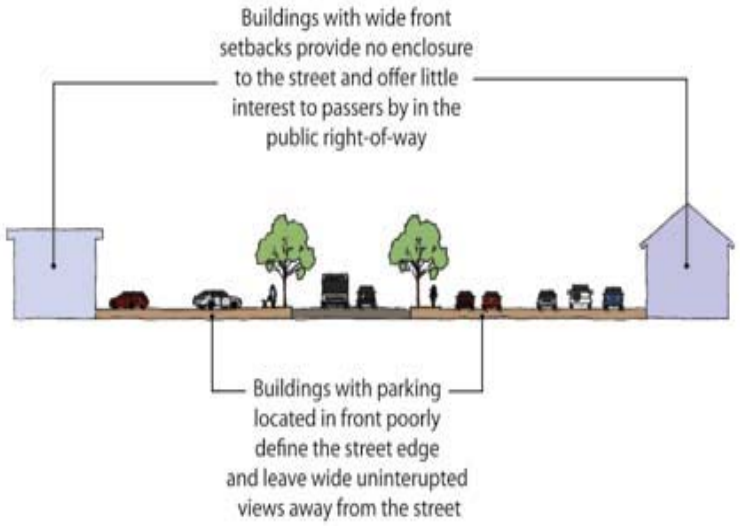

Figure 5: Strip development in particular results in poorly defined road edge and leaves wide open views from the street (above). Establishing the street edge by either providing landscape elements (plants, walls, fences, etc.)

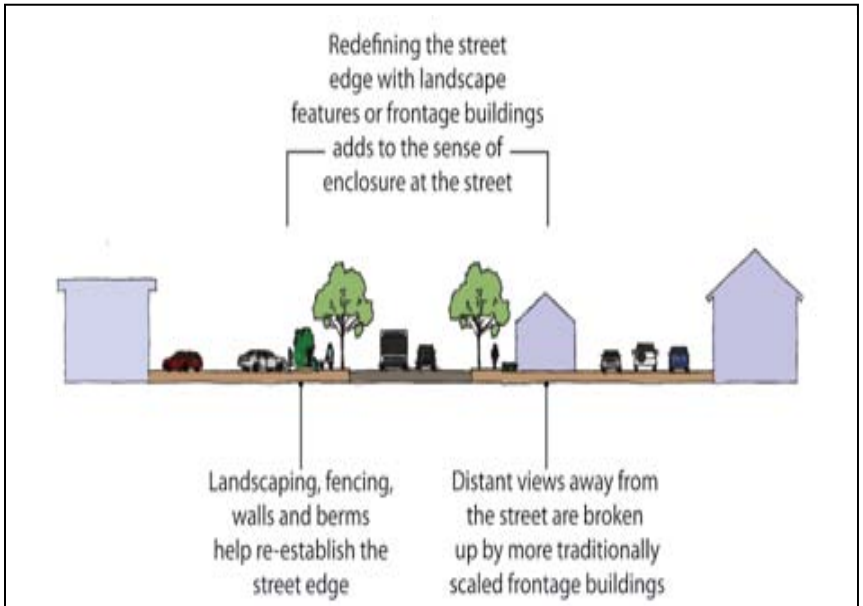

Figure 6: Frontage buildings create the enclosure more in keeping with that seen in Cape Cod villages.

Use landscape features to continue the building line

Fences, low walls, arbors, and plantings should be used to continue the building line close to the road edge and maintain a sense of enclosure along the roadway. Break up the wide vistas of buildings and parking lots with mature trees and plantings, landscape structures and small buildings placed near the roadway to help bring the scale of development closer to that found in traditional village areas. These elements can also effectively separate pedestrian walkways from traffic areas, improving the pedestrian experience and safety.

Use street trees to further define the street edge

Use street trees to maintain the sense of enclosure found along roads in the Cape's villages and wooded areas. Trees can be helpful in defining the street edge, contributing to a comfortable pedestrian environment and providing a continuous overhead canopy and are required in buffers, per Zoning Bylaw section 301.4.4. In village centers and other densely developed areas with sidewalks, street trees should be planted between the sidewalk and the curb with a uniform spacing of 20 feet between trees. In some situations, street tree plantings may be combined with other features such as fences, walls, and pedestrian amenities to shield parking areas and define the street edge where buildings are set farther back from the road.

Figure 7: Low walls and trees obscure these parking lots from view and define the roadway edge.

Species selected for roadside planting must be able to tolerate difficult growing conditions such as road salt spray, road salt runoff, drought, poor soil, and wind, in order to have the best potential for success.

On roads with a narrow right-of-way or where overhead utility lines are present, trees with a mature height of less than 30 feet should be selected. Although not as effective visually, small or columnar trees may have the advantage of meeting design constraints while providing height, color, and texture to help define the streetscape. Where possible conflict with overhead utilities exists, trees should be set back from the roadway.

4. Shield large buildings with smaller frontage buildings

Place larger structures behind frontage buildings

Building on back lots behind existing buildings takes advantage of established infrastructure and promotes increased density within already developed areas. By effectively screening new development behind traditional structures, a more contemporary design for the larger building may also be more easily accommodated.

When new frontage buildings are constructed, the scale and setback should be determined based on the range found in traditional village streetscapes. Frontage buildings should be sited to provide optimal screening of larger developments.

5. Design a second story

Add a second story to reduce footprint

New development should be designed with a usable second or, where allowed by the Zoning Bylaw, a third story consistent with the region's traditional forms of development. Building a second story, rather than placing the entire floor area on the ground level, can reduce the overall footprint of the proposed use and result in a building with a scale that more closely matches regional forms.

Add a second story to accommodate a mix of uses

A second story can accommodate different uses from the first floor, such as residential or office space above retail, creating a mixed-use development and allowing for more varied architectural features. Alternatively, a second story may be designed without added floor area, but simply to allow natural light to pass more freely into the interior of the building through an atrium space.

6. Use existing topography to screen new development

Use landscaped berms to screen buildings

Use existing site contours or enhance site topography to shield views of new structures and parking areas from adjacent roadways and significant landscapes. Berms should be designed to be consistent with the local topography so that the general character of the area is maintained. Appropriate landscaping can also be combined with the berm to effectively screen buildings that are out of context with their more rural surroundings.

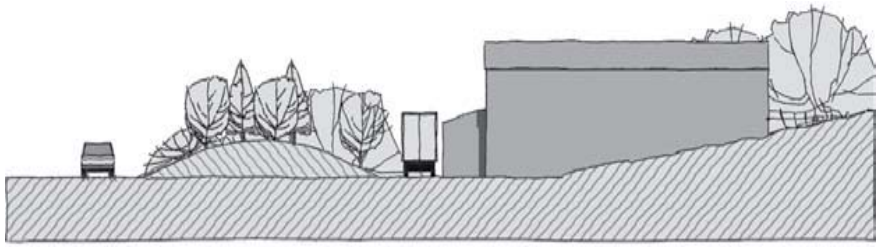

Figure 8: As shown in this sketch, partially burying a structure and/or using an appropriately landscaped berm helps reduce the visibility of larger industrial/warehouse buildings.

7. Create effective landscape buffers/full screening

Use buffers to screen development that is out of context

Use substantial landscape buffers to screen new development in areas outside village centers.

Maintain as many mature trees on site as possible and design the project around existing vegetation so that the existing maintained buffer serves to screen the project. In cases where existing vegetated buffers have been degraded, disturbed, removed, or otherwise altered, plantings should be provided to augment or reestablish a buffer of sufficient density to provide screening of the new development. New plantings should consist of mixed hardwood and evergreen trees, with associated shrubs and groundcovers, planted to provide full screening within three years of planting. A sense of visual depth may be created through massed plantings that include vegetation of various textures, sizes, and colors.

Buffer access points

Entrance roads or site accesses should be designed, wherever possible, to meander through the buffer (Figure 9) to limit views into the site. Trees are especially important along access roads to large commercial/office sites to limit broad views of the development and provide enclosure in context with outlying areas.

Figure 9: Illustration of how access to a development can meander through a wide landscape buffer to reduce visibility from the street.

8. Reduce the visibility of parking areas

Place parking to side or rear

Locate new parking lots behind or to the side of buildings to effectively screen them and maintain the character of the streetscape. Alternatively, take advantage of existing on-street parking and parking lots that can be shared in village centers and developed areas. Churches, offices, restaurants, and other uses that operate at different times may be willing to enter into agreements to share parking areas or connect parking areas, where allowed by the Zoning Bylaw.

Parking lots may also be screened from the street by the use of a low wall, fence, hedge, or landscaping (as noted in paragraph 3: Define and enhance the street edge).

Place parking underneath a structure

In some situations, incorporating a parking structure into the design of proposed buildings may be desirable to limit the amount of land area devoted to parking. Parking structures are preferably designed to the rear of a structure or under the building. If they are visible from the street, they should be incorporated into the design of the building, with a similar level of architectural detail.

9. Break up large parking lots

Incorporate landscaped islands

Reduce the visual impact of wide expanses of parking with large landscaped islands and planting strips. Islands should include a variety of trees, shrubs, and groundcover to provide vegetation at varied heights and to achieve a visual buffer within the parking area. The use of canopy trees, in particular, is effective as a visual break and also provides shade for vehicles and pedestrians.

Plant species appropriate for parking lot landscaping may include a mix of native and non-native vegetation. Proposed plantings should be carefully selected to withstand difficult parking lot conditions and may also be selected to function as part of a low-impact stormwater design for the site. Trees should be a minimum of 3-inch caliper when planted and should consist of deciduous canopy-type hardwoods and evergreens. Shrubs should not exceed a mature height of 4 feet to allow visibility for drivers, should be a mix of evergreen and deciduous species, and possibly should include some with groundcover growth habit.

Individual planting strips and islands should contain an area of at least 50 square feet per tree, with the narrowest dimension being at least 6 feet wide. Combining planting strips to create greenbelts of at least 10 – 20 feet in width is most effective and allows pedestrian amenities such as sidewalks and benches to be incorporated into the planting area.

10. Locate utilities underground

Relocate overhead utilities

Relocate overhead utility lines underground or to the rear of buildings to improve the visual quality of the streetscape and to reduce conflicts between sidewalks, plantings, and utility poles. Undergrounding utilities can open up scenic vistas or may allow trees with a mature height of 40 feet or more to be planted along major roadways. Trees that reach this size at maturity are more successful in creating a sense of pedestrian scale and continuity than trees with a small mature height.

When designing projects in village centers or developed areas, it is important to plan for street tree planting by locating underground utilities or structures in areas where street trees will not be planted, or by locating them at least 4 feet below grade. When underground utilities are placed in below-ground vaults, the top of the vault should be located at least 4 feet below grade

to allow ample room for tree roots.

11. Shield loading and delivery areas

Screen delivery/loading areas

Where possible, loading areas should be sited outside primary visual corridors or shielded from view by separate structures, projecting building wings, or distinctive landscaping and fencing.

Trash collection and outdoor storage areas should be incorporated into the overall design of the building and landscaping, and screened from visual corridors. Site design and building design techniques should also be used to conceal compressors, generators, and other utility equipment from view.

BUILDING STRATEGIES

1. Break down the building mass into multiple buildings

Separate structures into massings of 5,000 square feet or less

Break down the building mass into separate structures of 5,000 square feet or less. Organize the separate buildings either in a varied line, around a central space, or clustered within the site in order to more closely follow regional patterns.

2. Break down the building mass with smaller sub-masses

Create a main building mass with attached sub-masses

Reduce the apparent size of a large building by designing a main mass with several smaller, attached components. Smaller masses projecting forward from the primary mass help to reduce the scale and bulk of the building.

Figure 10: Setbacks in the façade line corresponding to variations in height help to break down the building mass.

3. Vary the facade line

Create variation in setback of facade

New development should vary the building footprint so that there are pronounced changes in the wall planes and building mass.

For example, for every 50 linear feet of facade, at least 5 feet projection or setback in the facade should be accommodated. The recess or projection can be split into several components, but changes in the facade line of 10 feet or greater are most likely to reduce the visual impact of the building mass.

Incorporate open wall elements

Covered arcades and porches should be used to accentuate variations in the footprint of the building, but should not take the place of changes in the exterior building walls. A varied rhythm of elements, rather than a strict repetition of the same feature, is most effective for breaking down the building mass into smaller components and providing visual interest to a design. Adjacent wall sections should be varied in length, setback, and height.

4. Vary wall heights

Create variety in wall height along facades

Provide changes in the building wall height to reduce the overall bulk of the structure and to increase variety along the facades. Portions of the building above 20 feet in height should be roof forms unless the established development pattern in the area includes higher building walls. If a third floor is created it should be setback so as to maintain a pedestrian and traditional scale to the building.

5. Vary the roof line

Alter roof forms to break down large roof

Vary the height of the roof line at both the roof peak and the eaves to break down large roof masses into smaller elements and to vary its relationship to the ground. Incorporate several different roof forms on different parts of a large building. Gable, shed, gambrel, mansard and hip roofs are compatible with regional styles and forms and can be effectively combined on a single building. Flat roofs, when combined with these other roof treatments and styles, may be appropriate in some areas and circumstances where scale and mass would allow or when a plan exhibits exemplary architectural attributes that meet or exceed the goals and objectives of the Standards and their philosophy.

Figure 11: Roof peaks at various heights help to break down the building mass and effectively screen the flat roof on this commercial building.

6. Bring down the building edges

Bring down the edges with smaller, attached masses

Bring the edges of the building down with smaller attached masses such as arcades, entrances, or lower additions (Figure 12). The use of arcades (a series of arches supported by columns) that are not physically attached to the building, but are stepped forward and essentially act as a frontage building, can be particularly effective in breaking up the apparent massing of a large building.

Figure 12: As shown on this sketch, lower roof heights on attached masses to reduce the apparent scale of the building.

7. Vary building materials to add depth to the façade

Use a variety of materials to add depth

Use a variety of building materials with different colors, textures, and patterns to add depth and interest to the building façade (Figure 13). In prominent areas with entrances, display windows, and other pedestrian amenities, the use of high-quality, traditional building materials and greater architectural detail is strongly recommended.

With large building facades, the design should take a cue from the regional traditional forms. Vary the detailing, materials, and colors in adjacent sub-masses to resemble the traditional variety found in the region's village centers.

Figure 13: Simple changes in the pattern of the exterior materials and the use of bands of different materials can create interest in the façade.

8. Use traditional and natural building materials

Use traditional materials that weather naturally

Use high quality, traditional materials such as wood shingles on the exterior of the building to reflect regional building traditions. Incorporate low-reflective, neutral, and earth tones to retain the subtle character of the region's traditional materials. Renewable and sustainable materials and man-made materials with similar color tones and textures may also be appropriate. High-intensity, reflective, and metallic colors and materials are not appropriate. Brick and stone may be used in combination with the above materials.

9. Incorporate pedestrian-scaled features

Incorporate pedestrian-scaled structures

Smaller structures such as can act as frontage buildings to help shield larger structures. Such structures should be located to screen views to the main building from prime viewing areas where they will be most effective.

Use pedestrian-oriented landscape areas adjacent to the building to add variety and depth to a large building façade. Arbors, pergolas, gazebos, bicycle shelters, and other pedestrian shelters can be combined with landscaping to effectively break up a large flat façade, adding different materials, depth, and vegetation. Within large projections or setbacks in the façade, incorporate landscaped areas to provide relief and provide interest while also softening the building exterior and mass.

Figure 14: A partial arcade creates a lower, pedestrian-scaled façade.

10. Incorporate energy-efficient or "green" architecture in the design

Incorporate energy-saving features

Promote sustainable development in the region by incorporating energy-saving features and by using building materials from recycled or renewable sources. The use of non-traditional building materials and contemporary designs to reduce a development's environmental impacts are encouraged, especially when they are used in combination with traditional forms and materials.