

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN
City of Rochester Site Plan Regulations

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(A) FINDINGS

The City of Rochester Planning Board finds that:

- (1) Our city contains three historic downtown areas, myriad attractive residential neighborhoods, beautiful rural landscape replete with unique natural and cultural resources, an excellent architectural tradition, a colorful history, and much visual appeal.
- (2) Preserving and enhancing these features is integral to maintaining the character and identity of our community.
- (3) Building designs which are indifferent to the traditions of our city and region, aggressively seek the attention of passing motorists, do not consider the quality of the pedestrian environment, or are erected at the lowest possible cost without due concern for aesthetics harm the character of our community, depress property values, and impair our quality of life.
- (4) While subjectivity and judgment is invariably part of reviewing architectural designs there are universal principles of good design.
- (5) Well-crafted design standards can promote building design that is functional, economical, attractive, and harmonious. Quality development and sustainable economic development are not mutually exclusive; rather, they are interdependent.

(B) PURPOSE

The purpose of the Architectural Design Regulations is to:

- (1) Provide for high quality architecture that respects universal design principles, enhances the appearance of Rochester, reinforces pedestrian character where appropriate, and is sensitive to neighboring buildings, the broader setting, and natural and cultural resources.
- (2) Protect and enhance the positive visual qualities of Rochester's downtowns, residential neighborhoods, commercial corridors, industrial parks, and scenic and rural landscapes.

- (3) Encourage design, which is compatible with the traditional character of Rochester and New England.
- (4) Enhance property values and foster civic pride.
- (5) Minimize potential aesthetic conflicts between residential and nonresidential uses and between single family and multifamily uses.

Adherence to these standards should not be burdensome and they are by no means intended to stifle creativity or variety. On the contrary, the standards will likely encourage more thoughtful approaches to building design than often seen in recent years. There is much flexibility embodied in the regulations and many ways of meeting the objectives. It is hoped that they will serve as useful guidelines for design professionals and applicants seeking to produce quality designs respectful of place and context.

(C) ADOPTION

This section is adopted pursuant to the City of Rochester Land Use Plan and New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated sections 674:21 (Innovative Land Use Controls) and 674:44 (Site Plan Review Regulations).

(D) APPLICABILITY

Architectural design review is required as part of Site Plan Review for all nonresidential structures and for all residential structures where the total number of dwelling units, whether in one or more structures, in one development exceeds four (however, in no event would single family properties be subject to review). This includes all new construction, building additions, and alterations to buildings if those alterations would significantly affect the exterior appearance of the building. Design review is required only for building elevations and portions of structures that would be visible from a public street or path or from neighboring residential properties. All applicable development must conform with these regulations as reasonably interpreted and applied by the Planning Board.

Architectural design review is not conducted for development related to single family or two family structures, routine repair or maintenance of structures, any work on the interior of a building, any existing structures for which no exterior alterations are proposed, and modifications solely for the purpose of providing safe means of egress or access in order to meet requirements of the Code Enforcement Department.

(E) VARIOUS SECTIONS OF THE CITY

Various sections of the City differ from one another in character and in appropriate treatment. The following sections are listed in order, generally, from the most sensitive to the least sensitive section.

- (1) Downtowns. The three downtown areas (downtown, East Rochester, and Gonic) are highly sensitive because of the importance and challenge of maintaining a pleasing pedestrian environment. The most intensive area of downtown is the one block section of North Main Street between Wakefield and Union Street. As one moves closer to the core areas traditionally the buildings are taller, closer to the sidewalk, built of more substantial materials, and more elaborate in design and detailing.

(2) Existing residential neighborhoods. These areas are sensitive because some older neighborhoods that are zoned for mixed use have been harmed by incompatible multifamily - and in some cases nonresidential - development. New development should blend in with the traditional character of these neighborhoods in order not to diminish property values and the small-scale pedestrian nature of these areas.

(3) New residential areas. These areas are not as sensitive as existing neighborhoods in which existing residents could be vulnerable to new development over which they have little control. New residents have a choice whether or not to locate in these developments. Nonetheless, careful consideration of designs is important to enhance quality of life for new residents.

(4) Development in a rural setting. These areas (such as along Pickering Road and including other roads identified as scenic roads in the Transportation Master Plan) are sensitive due to the potential impact upon scenic views, recreation areas, historic properties, and cultural resources.

(5) Intensive commercial corridors. It is important to enhance the quality of commercial development along these corridors (such as Routes 11 and 125). Many serve as gateways to the city, carry high levels of traffic, and are the most prominent areas of the city. On the other hand, an intensive automobile oriented and big box/small box character is already established in many areas. Thus, while we seek to enhance the visual experience along these corridors there are generally fewer sensitive resources vulnerable to this type of development.

(6) Industrial park type settings. We seek to enhance the quality of our industrial parks (such as Airport Drive and Industrial Way). However, because these are located on dead end streets with almost no incidental traffic and with few vulnerable existing visual resources they are less sensitive.

(F) GENERAL GUIDELINES. An application is considered to meet the design requirements of the Architectural Design Regulations herein if the Planning Board, in its judgment, determines that the application overall demonstrates reasonable conformity with the Purpose, above, the General Guidelines, that follow, and Elements of Design in the next subsection.

(1) Recognizing that every property, every proposal, and every situation is unique the Planning Board may waive, modify, or soften any of the standards herein as it reasonably deems appropriate, based upon the individual circumstances of any application. No particular architectural style is stipulated and innovative, contemporary, and distinctive designs are encouraged, provided they are respectful of general design principles and context.

(2) Buildings should be compatible with traditional New England architecture. They should be articulated to express an architectural identity and ideally will be handsome and dignified.

(3) While the use of a traditional architectural vocabulary (gables, porticos, beltcourses, etc.) is desirable, designers are encouraged to use this vocabulary in an original manner that reads as contemporary.

(4) It is recognized that many national and regional chain businesses seek to build a standard design across the country or region without regard to local conditions. However, the Planning Board will evaluate all proposed designs for their compatibility with our own local community character and for conformance with the goals of these regulations. It shall be the obligation of the applicants to develop designs that are compatible with our community character; the City need not make adjustments to accommodate these template designs.

(5) Use of false or partial mansard roofs, unconventionally shaped roofs, overly bright colors, disproportionately sized building elements, crudeness of features, or a general a plastic feel of the building, is not appropriate.

(6) Buildings should possess an overall integrity. Architectural details should not give the impression of being tacked on but rather should be integral to the overall design. (For example, use of undersized shutters on a picture window or installation of an elaborate classical portico or cupola on an otherwise clearly utilitarian a big box would be discouraged.)

(7) Generally, the less visible or prominent a structure or facade is the lower the level of standards will be. For example, less strict review is in order for a building located a good distance from the road or for one that is partly obscured by another structure.

(8) While it cannot be required under these regulations the reuse of existing structures that have special architectural, historical, cultural, or contextual value by the applicant is strongly encouraged.

(9) Modifications and additions to existing buildings should be harmonious with the character of the existing building when the existing building would reasonably be considered to be in general conformance with the goals of these regulations.

(10) Building design should blend with other features of the site - signage, landscaping, lighting, fencing, outbuildings, etc. - to the extent practical.

(G) ELEMENTS OF DESIGN. Proposed designs should be harmonious with neighboring structures that have a visual relationship with the subject building in terms of mass, width, height, proportion, spacing, setback, and all of the other elements of design discussed below *when those neighboring structures* would reasonably be considered to be in general conformance with the goals of these regulations. This is particularly applicable to older buildings located in downtown areas and residential neighborhoods.

(1) Siting of building. To the extent practical, structures should be located and configured in a visually harmonious manner in keeping with the terrain and vegetation and should not impede scenic views.

Most buildings are oriented parallel or perpendicular to the street. This pattern reinforces the streetscape. Buildings should not be oriented at odd angles to the street unless this is already the prevailing pattern in the area or if it is dictated by strong topographic or site considerations.

(2) Scale. Every effort should be made to provide an appropriate scale to new buildings both in their overall size and in their details.

If practical, it is preferred that buildings contain at least two stories. Alternatively, a single story building should have a relatively steep roof or a high parapet. It is especially important in downtown areas for buildings to be multistory in order to reinforce the sense of enclosure of the street.

(3) Proportion. Buildings and their details should be well proportioned in accordance with commonly accepted design principles so as to create a sense of order and balance.

(4) Massing. Large structures should be broken into smaller masses to provide human scale, variation, and depth. These smaller masses should have a strong relationship to one another and, ideally, each smaller mass will have an integrity of form. Construction of unadulterated warehouses style a big box should generally be avoided (though their use is of less concern on Route 11 and in industrial parks). Blocky multifamily structures within predominantly single and two family neighborhoods are highly inappropriate.

(5) Roof. As a design element the roof has a significant effect on the buildings character. The lack of a roof often promotes a feeling of a boxiness. The taller the building the less necessary is a pitched roof. Multistory buildings in downtown and mill buildings rarely included a pitched roof.

Incorporation of a moderate slope is preferred. Where flat roofs are used, however, there should be a distinct cornice and/or parapet to emphasize the top of the building. Extensive areas of visible roof should be broken up with dormers, cross gables, cupolas, chimneys, parapets, balustrades, and towers.

(6) Building façade. Much attention should be given to create an attractive building facade. Broad expanses of blank walls are inappropriate. Traditionally, the parts of a facade that might be embellished, or at least articulated in some fashion include:

- (a) The horizontal *base* where the building meets the ground (such as a different treatment for the foundation or a water table)
- (b) The horizontal *top* where the building meets the sky (such as a projecting cornice with brackets)
- (c) A horizontal section in between (such as a belt course between stories)
- (d) The vertical corners on the left and right sides (such as corner boards or quoins)
- (e) Vertical articulation in the middle (such as pilasters)
- (f) The area around the door/entry (such as a portico)
- (g) The areas around the windows (such as window surrounds)

In addition, depth may be created for the facade through use of porches, projecting or recessed sections, bay windows, or arcades.

(7) Fenestration. Windows are an integral part of a building and should be incorporated on front facades, and preferably side facades to humanize the building. It is desirable that the windows along with the door establish a coherent, orderly pattern and rhythm.

It is preferable that windows be vertical or at least no more squat than square" (except as described in downtown areas, below). Horizontally shaped windows are discouraged. Where horizontal windows are sought a series of contiguous vertical windows with mullions in between should be used arranged in a horizontal band.

In pedestrian oriented downtown or village commercial centers use of large picture type windows for retail uses on the first floor is strongly encouraged. In residential areas and on upper floors of downtown buildings use of multiple panes of glass (or the appearance of multiple panes) rather than picture type windows is preferred.

Shutters, where appropriate, should be sized properly for the window opening (approximately one half the width of the opening).

(8) Entrance. The entrance is an important element in defining a building. Articulation of the entrance is encouraged through use of a portico, canopy, awning, sidelights, surround, or other device.

Generally, there should be an entrance, if not the primary entrance, located on the front facade. Use of a usable front porch on residential buildings is strongly encouraged.

(9) Materials. The use of natural materials or materials that appear natural is preferred. Materials should be high quality and durable. Wood (clapboard and shakes), brick, stone, fiber reinforced stucco, textured block, and terra cotta are the preferred materials, although fabricated materials which effectively imitate the character of these materials is acceptable. Conventional vinyl and aluminum siding arranged in horizontal clapboard pattern is acceptable but not preferred. Its use is inappropriate in downtown areas.

Sheet plastic, sheet fiberglass, T-111 plywood, pecky shingles, simulated brick, and similar materials should not be used. Use of highly reflective plastic or metal surfaces are inappropriate. Use of salvage style brick with multiple colors is discouraged. Prefabricated metal wall panels and undressed concrete/cinder block should not be used except in industrial park areas. When these materials are used in industrial park areas it is preferable to minimize the area over which they are used, minimize their use on front facades, and to combine their use with other materials, such as installing metal walls over a foundation of textured block.

(10) Color. Color of buildings is reviewed for nonresidential property only. Generally, it is preferable to use two or three colors. The main color(s) on a building should generally be nature blending, earth tone, neutral, or pastel in character. Bright colors should be limited to accent areas. High intensity colors, metallic colors, or fluorescent colors should not be used.

Subtle colors are appropriate on larger, plain buildings whereas smaller buildings with more detailing can more effectively incorporate brighter colors.

(11) Lighting. Use of low key, low intensity wall pack or spot type lighting, or lighting of signage on buildings is appropriate. Use of lighting to highlight the building in a prominent manner, such as brightly illuminated roof fins or neon tube lighting is discouraged.

(H) PARTICULAR BUILDING TYPES AND COMPONENTS

(1) Gasoline Station. Canopies should incorporate features to avoid the sense of a large, hovering mass. A pitched roof or other traditional roof form should be used (attractive examples include the Irving Stations in Northwood and Meredith). The fascia of the canopy should be short in height, generally not to exceed two feet. It is preferable that columns be articulated in some manner. All vertical surfaces should be nonreflective and colors should be muted.

(2) Miniwarehouses/Self Storage Facilities. When these facilities are located on major roads their design must be very carefully considered. Deep setbacks should be established. The structures should be located perpendicular to the road with no doors facing the road. Use of corrugated metal on the front facades is unacceptable. Use of textured block, brick, wood, or stucco is preferred though flat metal may be acceptable. Colors should be muted. (The facility located on Route 155 in Dover is well designed, including the fine selection of colors.)

(3) Garages. Garage doors should be relatively unobtrusive. To the extent practical, doors should be placed on side facades not facing the street, doors should be screened from view by landscaping or other structures, or garages should be set back a greater distance from the street. Where the garage is attached to the main building it is preferable for the garage section to be subordinate to the main section by reducing the size and recessing it beyond the main section.

(4) Utility elements. To the extent practical, all utility elements, such as dumpsters, utility meters, and ground mounted air conditioning units, should be screened and located such that they are not visible from a public way or neighboring residential properties.

Above ground storage tanks, with the exception of businesses, which sell fuel, should be screened or hidden from view.

(5) Fences. Use of chain link fences in front or side yards is discouraged. When they are used in these areas the chains should be covered in a colored vinyl (such as dark green) or equivalent.

(I) PROCESS

Applicants should submit elevation drawings drawn to scale of each pertinent facade. A color board containing actual color samples of exterior finishes, keyed to the elevations and indicating the manufacturers name and color designation should also be submitted. Applicants should also submit a material sample if appropriate, such as the type of brick proposed.

Any proposed building illumination must be submitted and approved. No such lighting may be installed without approval.

Elevation drawings must be prepared by a registered engineer, architect, or landscape architect (use of a registered architect is strongly encouraged). The Planning Board may waive this requirement in the case of smaller structures, less prominent structures, or as it deems appropriate.

While applicants are required to meet the guidelines herein it is not necessary to submit waiver requests from any specific design guidelines herein. It shall be up to the Planning Board to determine if the overall proposal meets the intent of this section.

At its option the Planning Board may secure the services of a consulting architect or other professional to assist in the review of an application. The board may impose reasonable fees upon an applicant to cover this expense.

These regulations are administered by the Minor Site Committee in the case of minor site applications and the Planning Department in the case of Special Downtown applications.

APPENDIX to SECTION 7 – ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The following definitions are incorporated herein as an appendix to Section 7 – Architectural Design of the City of Rochester Site Plan Regulations

DEFINITIONS

Note. Definitions are given for some words, which are not included in the text of these regulations for the purpose of enhancing discussions about architectural design among applicants, agents, staff, and the Planning Board.

Arcade: A series of arches supported by columns, sometimes forming a covered walkway.

Arch: A curved form spanning an opening; it may take various rounded forms including a pointed shape.

Axis: A line established by two points in space and about which forms and spaces can be arranged.

Axonometric drawing: A drawing showing a building in three dimensions.

Awning: A single sash window that opens outward from the top.

Baluster: An upright, often vase-shaped, support for a rail

Balustrade: A series of balusters with a rail.

Bargeboard: A board, typically decorated, on the sloping edge of an overhanging gable roof.

Bay: Vertical division of a building facade as delineated by some regular recurring feature such as windows or columns.

Bay window: A window element projecting from a building facade.

Bond: The pattern formed by bricks in a wall using one or more sides or positions (oblong or upright) of the brick.

Box: Generally refers either to "big box" or "small box"; a very simple building with minimal adornment or complexity in its form, usually a rectangular footprint with a flat roof, and few if any windows.

Bracket: A structural (or visually structural) element projecting from a wall which supports a roof overhang or other overhang, generally in the form of an "L" or a right triangle.

Build to line: The opposite of the conventional front setback requirements a maximum setback to which buildings must be placed, as opposed to a minimum setback.

Cantilever: A horizontal element projecting from a wall without external support.

Capital: The top portion of a column or pilaster crowning the shaft.

Casement: A single sash window that opens outward from the side.

Clapboard: Narrow, horizontal, overlapping wooded boards that form the outer skin of an exterior building wall.

Colonial: The style of architecture in the American colonies in the 17th and 18th centuries (prior to the American Revolution), derived mainly from English traditions.

Colonnade: A row of columns supporting a roof, arches, or an entablature.

Column: A freestanding upright support element usually round in cross section. In classical architecture consists of a base, shaft, and capital.

Corner board: A decorative vertical board placed at the corner of a wood frame building.

Cornice: Projecting top portion of an entablature or any linear element placed along the top of a buildings facade or atop a section of the facade to divide the facade into sections.

Course: A horizontal decorative band extending across a facade. Stringcourse refers to a narrow course while beltcourse refers to a wide course.

Cupola: Small enclosed or partially enclosed structure crowning a roof or tower.

Cross gable: A gable form attached to and placed perpendicular to a larger gable roof

Dentils: Small, rectangular blocks arranged in a tooth-like series under an overhang.

Dormer: Window rising vertically atop a roof.

Double hung window: A window with two vertical sliding sash, each closing half of the window opening

Eave: The horizontal or downward projecting overhang at the lower edge of a roof.

Elevation: A head-on drawing of a building facade, without any allowance for perspective, in fixed proportion to the measurement on the actual building; one exterior face or side of a building (comparable to a facade).

Engaged column: A column, which is attached to a wall (rounded in cross section).

Entablature: The horizontal top part of an order of classical architecture. It is supported by columns and consists of three levels - architrave, frieze, and cornice.

Facade: The front or principal exterior face of a building; may refer to other prominent exterior faces as well.

False front: A facade that extends well above the rest of the building, to give the impression that a building is larger than its actual size.

Fascia: A flat vertical board that forms the face along the edge of a flat roof or along the horizontal (or eave) side of a pitched roof.

Fenestration: Arrangement of windows on a façade including number, size, proportion, spacing, and composition.

Finial: Small vertical ornament at the top of a roof.

Frieze: A decorative, horizontal band set just below the cornice.

Frontispiece: An ornamental portal around the entrance

Gable: A simple pitched roof form with two opposite sloping sides; the triangular part of a wall formed by a gable roof.

Gambrel: A roof form with a double sloped profile - a steep lower plane and a less steep upper plane (differs from a mansard in that a gambrel is two sided while a mansard is four sided; also angle of the two planes on a mansard is closer to 90 degrees).

Hierarchy: The articulation of the importance of a form by its size, shape, or placement relative to the other related forms.

Hipped roof: A roof which slopes upward from all four sides of a building (it may have a ridge or end in a point).

Lintel: A horizontal structural member that bridges an opening

Lozenge: A diamond shaped ornament applied to a wall.

Lunette: A semicircular or half-moon window or other element on a facade.

Mansard: A steep, story high roof with two planes on all four sides, the first plane almost vertical and the second plane above, nearly flat; named for Francois Mansart, 17th century French architect.

Masonry: Heavy materials including stone, brick, concrete, concrete block, and stucco.

Massing : The shapes, sizes, and arrangement of the three dimensional forms that compose a building.

Medallion: An ornamental plaque applied to a wall.

Modern architecture: A style characterized by largely undecorated and simple building forms with relatively large windows and a horizontal emphasis.

Molding: Architectural detailing applied around a window or door or to the surface of a wall.

Mullion: Vertical element separating windows or doors set in a series.

Muntin: Dividers between panes of glass within an individual window.

Neoclassical: A formal style of design evoking ancient Greek or Roman architectural forms.

Oriel window: A bay window projecting from a building's upper floor.

Panel: A decorative recessed rectangular portion of a wall.

Parapet: A low wall or railing extending above and in the front of a roof.

Pecky shingles: Irregular wood shingles, frequently untreated or stained rather than painted, with various curves and splits that give an appearance of peeling off an exterior surface (such as one might see at a "Fish Shack Restaurant").

Pediment: Triangular front end of a roof, comparable to a gable except a pediment always has an articulated horizontal side.

Pergola: The unenclosed structure with a open wood framed roof, often latticed.

Piazza: An open space oriented to pedestrians, usually rectangular in shape, defined by a building or buildings on two or more sides.

Pier: A freestanding upright support element, usually rectangular in cross section, and wider and more squat than a column.

Pilaster: A column or pier affixed to a wall surface (rectangular in cross section).

Plan: The layout of a building drawn in the horizontal plane.

Porthole window: A circular window (also called a bull's eye window).

Portico: A covered space usually supported by columns surrounding an entrance and forming the centerpiece of the facade.

Proportion: The relation of one dimension to another, such as the height of a window compared to its width. Proportion affects visual order through coordination of such elements as height, width, depth, and spacing.

Quoins: Corner stones or other material made to resemble stones, at a corner or edge of a building.

Rhythm: The use of recurring patterns to organize a series of like forms or spaces.

Ridge: The linear intersection of two sloping roof planes.

Sash: A single window section within its frame that opens in some manner.

Scale: The perception of the size of a building or building element relative to the human body or other buildings or objects in the vicinity.

Sense of enclosure: An outdoor area where the height and continuity of adjacent or surrounding buildings or other structures loosely establishes the feeling of a three dimensional space.

Shed roof: A roof composed simply of one sloping plane.

Sill: The horizontal bottom element of a window or door frame.

Soffit: The underside of any building part, such as under an eave, arch, or lintel.

Symmetry: The balanced distribution of equivalent forms and spaces about a common line (axis) or point.

Skin: The outer clothing or membrane of a building - clapboard, brick, steel, etc.

Steeple: The combined tower and spire of a church

Surround: An ornamental device used to enframe all or part of a window or door.

Texture: The quality of finish on a wall or roof surface being smooth, rough, bumpy, etc.

Tower: A distinctly vertical structure, which may be freestanding or attached to another structure.

Traditional: Sensitive to, evocative of, or harmonious with any particular style of architecture established prior to 1950 or to the prevailing patterns, forms, or styles of architecture dating from the original settlement of the United States up to 1950.

Turret: A small, slender tower usually at the corner of a building.

Universal Design Principles: Rules and guidelines that are generally recognized and respected among design professionals

Victorian: Term used to cover all of the various styles of architecture during the reign of Queen Victoria - 1837 to 1901, including Second Empire, Italianate, Gothic Revival, Colonial Revival, Queen Anne, Renaissance Revival, and others. (Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival styles predate the Victorian era.)

Water table: A thickened and frequently adorned part of the foundation of a building originally designed to make the foundation less permeable to stormwater.