

HATFIELD DESIGN GUIDELINES HANDBOOK

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Goals

It shall be the goal of the Hatfield Planning Board to assess existing and proposed land uses fairly and objectively, to maintain and enhance Hatfield's rural character and aesthetic appeal.

These design guidelines have been adopted by the Planning Board as criteria by which new development and significant reconstruction of industrial, commercial, large-scale residential, and other non-residential uses may be adjudicated.

The Planning Board shall prioritize the location, structural and landscape design, and overall impact of use on a given site, as equally important aspects of office, commercial, industrial, and large-scale residential development.

Objectives

The following objectives shall be used as general criteria in adjudicating any retail, service, office or industrial development.

Maintain established "small-town" architecture, scale, and character.

The Planning Board encourages development that will maintain, support, enhance and protect the small-town and rural character of Hatfield through:

- development of a broad mix of businesses and services, residential units and employment, in appropriate neighborhoods and on appropriate sites.
- the use of traditional construction methods and materials in site development and structural design.
- a high level of design and construction quality through classical architectural design principles consistent with what is existing in town.
- appropriate site selection for business and industry, based on scale, employee base, level of activity, access to regional resources, value to local residents and support for local master plan initiatives and priorities.
- encouragement of new structures, renovation or alterations of existing structures, and additions to existing structures that complement the town, zoning district, and neighborhood, through correspondence in scale, size, design, lighting, materials, and placement.
- preserving Hatfield's small-town and historic character by protecting existing structures and promoting appropriate historical designs for new development.

Incorporate mixed-use development within existing neighborhoods.

The Planning Board encourages and supports development and expansion of mixed-use structures and sites that provide office, retail and service uses within existing neighborhoods. Mixed use development should incorporate

- a mixture of neighborhood-scale retail, service, and residential units.

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- development that reflects and supports the architectural style, level of activity, and character of the immediate neighborhood.
- flexible spaces for small and emerging businesses.
- pedestrian-oriented streetscapes,
- opportunities for casual social engagement and community connection.
- sites and structures at a scale that serve the immediate neighborhood, the town, and the region as a whole.
- useful commercial neighborhood connections that are alternatives to vehicular traffic on public ways

Support equitable, resilient, and sustainable social and economic growth.

The Planning Board supports and encourages development that is equitable in placement, resilient to changes in climate and economy, and sustainable in design and operation, by encouraging

- growth of a resilient tax base to ensure long-term municipal economic stability.
- expansion of real property values through appropriate scale and design of new development
- development that is responsive to current and future economies
- opportunities for the development of affordable housing
- new community and recreation spaces adjacent to new residential, mixed-use, and commercial development
- pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, pedestrian connections between neighborhoods, and (where possible) support and maintain accessible walking / cycling connections to surrounding communities.

Design Criteria

The Planning Board supports and encourages a wide variety of development in the Town of Hatfield.

Based on the developer, the intention, and the site, development projects may take a variety of sizes and designs, and may include a variety of different uses, including without limitation: agricultural uses, including greenhouse and food processing facilities; multi-unit residential structures and neighborhoods; “pocket” neighborhoods; retail stores and shops; large commercial developments; office structures and office parks; industrial structures and industrial uses of various sizes; mixed-use structures and mixed-use sites.

In order to ensure that new development proposals do not conflict with existing structures and uses, development shall be designed and sited to comport with and complement the site and neighborhood in its placement, siting, landscape, architectural design, presentation and operation.

The Planning Board shall use the following categories of criteria to adjudicate newly proposed uses and structures, and significant additions or renovations to existing uses and structures.

Site Design

The Planning Board shall consider proposed uses on a site within the context of the abutting properties, the immediate neighborhood, and the town as a whole.

Site design should respond to the natural and physical characteristics of the site and the surrounding environment, including but not limited to: topography, existing vegetation, drainage patterns, and the surrounding built environment.

The following criteria shall be considered:

Natural Environment

The Planning Board encourages and supports development that honors and respects the agrarian history and traditions of the Town of Hatfield.

The following criteria shall be used:

- Proposed development will maintain to the greatest extent possible existing farming activity on the lot.
- Proposed development will permanently conserve to the greatest extent possible the majority of existing or historic farmland on the lot.
- Minimal change is proposed to existing site grades and the natural landscape.
- Proposed development will preserve to the largest extent possible existing large vegetation (trees of greater than 6” caliper,¹ old-growth native shrubs and hedges).
- Appropriate and effective stormwater management will be implemented on the site.

¹ When used in this section, the term “caliper” refers to the diameter of a tree, shrub or planting at breast height, which is roughly five feet from mean natural grade.

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- Rain gardens and similar structures are incorporated wherever possible.
- Proposed development will use impervious surfaces when feasible.

Public Ways and Public Vistas

The Planning Board seeks to protect and support existing public ways, and to expand safe and useful pedestrian access along public ways through structural design, landscape design, expansion and connection of public sidewalks onto private commercial and retail sites, and judicious use of natural landscape elements to support and reinforce a rural or small-town character of neighborhoods.

Applications that comply with the following criteria shall be considered more advantageous to the Town:

- Front facades and entrances close to public ways preserve, protect and expand pedestrian and bicycle access.
- Retail and service sites incorporate side and rear parking, instead of front parking areas. Front parking areas if any are only for ADA spaces, and only where necessary.
- Shared driveways and curb cuts that allow access to multiple retail or office locations.
- Shared access to service or refuse areas for multiple developments.
- Development that creates back-lot connections for pedestrians and bicycles, and shared parking for customers and clients of adjacent business and residences.
- Development that proposes continuity of landscape design and/or features consistent with adjacent lots or development.
- The use of natural landscape elements (existing or new trees, bushes, etc.) complement constructed landscape elements (benches, fences, etc.)
- Parking areas that are interspersed with a variety of native shrubs, bushes, and trees, to provide natural screening from public ways.

Transportation, Pedestrian Access, and Public Spaces

The Planning Board supports and encourages Complete Streets² and Universal Design³ principles in development of new structures and sites, and significant renovation of existing structures and sites. The Planning Board also encourages vehicular ways that do not impede on-site stormwater management and filtration through the use of impervious surfaces.

Adherence to the following criteria shall be deemed more advantageous to the town:

- New commercial or office development that includes publicly accessible pedestrian systems and pedestrian spaces.
- Parking areas that are appropriately sized for the proposed use.
- Parking areas that make use of impervious surface paving.
- Parking that is shared with other uses in the immediate area.
- Parking that does not exceed what is required under zoning.

² Ref: <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/what-are-complete-streets/>

³ Ref: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/employment-supports/universal-design/resources>

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- Publicly available EV charging stations.
- Circulation systems that support safe pedestrian access.
- Preservation of pedestrian spaces and public sight lines through setback distances that correspond to other adjacent and nearby properties.
- Pedestrian and vehicular accesses with adequate areas for snow removal activities, without limiting vehicle or pedestrian access to and from the site.
- Granite curbs or wheel stops to prevent cars from overrunning planting areas or crossing into pedestrian accesses.

Service Areas

The Planning Board recognizes the need for development to have and maintain areas for solid-waste and materials recycling collection and storage, loading docks and doors for loading and unloading of goods and supplies, exterior or “dry” storage facilities, fueling areas and vehicle service and maintenance areas (“Service Areas”). Service Areas are critical in order for the efficient and complete operation of retail, office and manufacturing facilities.

Service Areas are carefully considered and integral to the overall design on the site. Service Areas are sited in such a way so as to reduce nuisance to any adjacent lot, and to allow for ease of access, cleanliness and service.

The following criteria shall be used:

- Service Areas shall be at the side or rear of the principal building, or otherwise out of sight of the public way.
- Service Areas are screened to minimize visibility from public and private ways, main entrances, abutting neighborhoods, public open spaces and walkways.
- Service Area screening uses a combination of built structures, such as fences, and natural landscape elements, such as evergreen trees, shrubs and earth berms.
- Chain link fencing, where required for safety, is painted or coated in black and landscaped to screen from view.
- Service Area screening is integrated into and complements the overall design of the building.
- Architectural screening or fencing is protected with granite posts or concrete filled steel bollards that will prevent damage from service vehicles.
- Except where necessary for the provision of services to the general public, overhead doors or other vehicle entrances or exits are not located on any façade that faces a public street or residential neighborhood.
- Service Areas shall be sized to fit the specific needs of the building’s intended use. The smallest size necessary to meet the building’s present and future needs is encouraged.
- Service Areas that are shared among two or more separate uses on a single parcel or on adjacent parcels are highly desirable.

Public Areas

The Planning Board supports and encourages the development of privately owned exterior spaces to which the general public has access (“Public Spaces”). Public Spaces serve as informal

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gathering places, and provide opportunities for social engagement, which is deemed a benefit to the Town.

The following criteria shall be used:

- Public Spaces are incorporated in site designs of commercial and neighborhood shopping areas.
- Public Spaces are defined by a combination of landscaping and architectural features.
- Public Spaces that provide for outdoor dining, particularly when associated with a restaurant, are placed to reduce noise and light pollution on adjacent lots.
- Public Spaces do not negatively impact public or private vehicle and pedestrian ways.
- Public Space placement considers solar orientation and incorporates both landscaping and architectural elements to provide shade for the public.
- Building design is oriented toward and intended to be accessed from adjacent Public Spaces.
- Public Spaces are separated from vehicular traffic with landscaping, grade changes and other site features.
- Public Spaces located within structures or collections of structures, or near corners of buildings are easily accessible to the public.
- Public Spaces, when incorporated as part of a manufacturing or office use, feature shaded seating areas at staging (pick up) areas and break/lunch areas.

Pedestrian/Bicycle Circulation

The Planning Board encourages the development and support for pedestrians and bicyclists. Pedestrian pathways and spaces between buildings and parking areas allow for more walkable commercial and retail sites, and encourage local pedestrian access to local offices, shops and stores. Careful and considered bicycle and pedestrian features are well defined, and provide for safe lighting, attractive landscape design, and hardscaping.

The following criteria shall be used:

- Wherever applicable, bicycle parking is provided at locations that are easily identifiable, visible, and convenient to customers/users.
- Pedestrian walkways link site features, and incorporate landscaping and architectural shading.
- Safe pedestrian and bicycle connections are maintained between abutting land uses.
- Foot and bicycle traffic is encouraged, in order to minimize vehicular traffic.
- Options are provided to facilitate future connections to abutting undeveloped properties that are similarly zoned for similar uses.
- For all driveways greater than 28 ft wide, a 6 ft minimum width pedestrian island shall be installed at the crosswalk for pedestrian refuge.

Landscaping

Planted trees and shrubs together with natural wooded areas and open spaces are an attractive way to blend commercial and business development with natural surroundings. Landscaping can also be used to define pedestrian spaces and soften the visual impact of suite improvements.

The following landscaping elements shall be taken into consideration:

- The landscape plan is comprehensive and considers the entire disturbance area on the lot.
- The landscape plan preserves pre-existing healthy trees and shrubs on the site.⁴
- The landscape plan supports the uses and structures on the site.
- The landscape plan complements and supports surrounding uses and structures.
- The landscape plan incorporates native and indigenous plant and tree species. No invasive species are proposed.
- The landscape plan incorporates a variety of plant and tree species to create interest in the landscaping during all seasons of the year.
- Landscape adjacent to vehicular or pedestrian ways incorporates natural elements (trees, flowering shrubs, etc.), structures such as fencing or stone walls, and other elements.
- Where office, commercial, or industrial uses are proposed adjacent to residential uses or areas, a vegetative buffer of at least 20' in depth along the side and rear facing edges of the disturbed area ("Buffer") is proposed to provide visual and sound screening.
- Mature trees greater than 3" caliper are used to identify and accentuate the Buffer.
- The Landscaping Plan provides at least a three-year maintenance and replacement schedule in case of plant failures.
- A variety of plant and tree material are utilized to create interest in the landscaping during all seasons of the year.
- The landscape plan uses rain gardens and tree box filters where appropriate.
- The landscape plan provides for stormwater retention and infiltration on the lot.

Signage

The Planning Board supports a diversity of individualized signage coincident with retail and commercial development.

The following criteria are used:

- Signs meet all requirements of the Hatfield Zoning Bylaw.
- Signs complement the architecture of the proposed structure and use, and adjacent structures and uses.
- Signs are appropriately sized for the immediate neighborhood, and do not overpower adjacent retail or office uses.
- Signs are in scale with the respective use and in character with the immediate area.
- Signs are lit from above, or with "halo" lighting.

⁴ The transplant of pre-existing trees and shrubs on the site is acceptable method of 'preservation', provided that the Landscape Plan includes a three-year maintenance and replacement schedule in case of failed transplants.

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- Sign lighting is shielded to prevent glare into neighboring windows or into the public vehicular or pedestrian ways.
- Signs do not interrupt sightlines of public ways, nor approach public ways or pedestrian walkways any closer than signs of adjacent properties.
- Signs do not obscure architectural details or signs of adjacent properties.
- Signs attached to or displayed in windows do not exceed 20% of the window area. (This shall not apply to traditional window displays containing objects or examples of specific products.)
- Signs do not feature interior electronic reader boards or flashing or moving messages.
- If the front façade of the building presents eaves, Signs shall not exceed the height of the eaves of the building.
- If the front façade of the building is a gable end, sign shall not exceed the height of the ridge of the gable end.

Lighting

The Planning Board supports Dark Skies⁵ principles and encourages conservation of light and reduction of light pollution wherever possible.

The following criteria shall be used:

- New area lighting fixtures on poles shall be ‘low mast’, and not more than 14 feet in height.
- Where necessary, multiple short lighting fixtures are used, instead of a single taller fixture.
- Where necessary, multiple lower-lumen fixtures are used, instead of a single higher-lumen fixture.
- All fixtures are fully shielded, downward facing, sited to reduce glare and spillover into adjoining areas.
- Wherever possible, “warm” color temperatures (below 4000K) are used.

Structural Design

The Planning Board encourages structural and site designs that are designed, scaled, and constructed to complement existing structures and uses in the immediate neighborhood and in Hatfield as a whole.

Architectural Design, Appearance and Presentation

The Planning Board supports and encourages the use of materials, design, scale, colors, and fenestration that are evident within the immediate neighborhood.

The following criteria shall be used:

- Buildings and site elements are designed at “human scale”.
- Buildings are consistent in size, height, breadth, form, scale, appearance, presentation, and character so as to complement the character of the neighborhood.

⁵ Ref.: <https://darksky.org/what-we-do/advancing-responsible-outdoor-lighting/>

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- Design elements reflect residential-scale construction in façade, layout arrangement, roof-line, fenestration, materials, and access.
- Larger buildings have architectural design elements that interrupt or ‘break’ the visual appearance of the structure, so as to avoid a ‘monolithic’ appearance.
- Service features such as ATMs are incorporated into the overall structure, and preserve a rural or residential appearance from the public way.
- Storage and vending locations for shopping carts, vending machines, and newspaper racks are incorporated within the structure or within landscape elements designed to screen them from public ways.
- Necessary utility structures (transformers, cabinets, etc.) are placed so as to be screened from view from the public ways.
- Secondary structures are subordinate to and architecturally complementary with the principal structure; secondary structures should support and maintain the character of the neighborhood.
- Structures complement the character of adjacent structures in scale, size and placement.
- Structures have architectural features and patterns that reflect or complement local character.
- Structures are designed to express individuality of the structure, or each unit within the structure.
- Structures use colors, textures, materials, and other design details that are representative of and complement existing buildings within the neighborhood.
- Design elements are integral parts of the design of the structure, and not superficially applied trim or graphics, or paint.
- Proposed structures complement the character of adjacent structures in architectural style and design.
- Proposed structures complement the character of adjacent structures in appearance, fenestration, and outward presentation as other adjacent buildings.

Additions to or Renovations of Existing Structures

- New construction is consistent in style and design with principal existing buildings.
- New structures, additions, and uses are subordinate to the principal structure and uses on the lot.

Large Residential, Retail, Service, or Industrial Structures

The Planning Board encourages the appropriate siting and development of large-scale structures on appropriate sites. In this context, “large-scale” refers to structures with a gross footprint of greater than 20,000 square feet, or proposed development with a total area of disturbance of greater than 60,000 square feet on the lot.

In addition to all other sections, the following criteria shall be used:

- Proposed structures present variations in roof height, design or structure so as to reduce the visual impact of the mass of the structure.

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- Proposed structures incorporate details such as colonnades, pilasters, gable ends, canopies, display windows, and light fixtures, so to add interest and reinforce the scale and mass of existing structures in the neighborhood.
- Outdoor pedestrian areas are provided on the site, and include shaded or canopied seating areas, shaded walking areas, lawns, or outdoor landscape features.
- Front facades with a plane of greater than 60 feet in length include variations in design so as to break up the visual appearance of the structure, and suggest or present the appearance of multiple smaller structures.

Multi-unit residential, commercial or office structures

The Planning Board supports the use of multi-unit structures, particularly when mixed use (e.g., residential and commercial) is proposed.

The following criteria shall be used:

- Each separate unit in the structure is set off with variations in color, detail, and secondary design elements, etc., in order to suggest small individual stores or offices.
- The structure incorporates variations in roof line, use of false gables, and variations of depth, and other strategies in order to present the appearance of multiple separate structures.
- The structure shows some consistent design elements (e.g., signage, color schema, fenestration, landscaping, means of access) to suggest an intentionally comprehensive design, or a single ownership of the structure as a whole.

National Chains

The Planning Board supports and encourages national chain retail, and local or regional franchises thereof to seek appropriate sites for local outlets.

The following criteria shall be used:

- Structure design should reflect traditional New England residential structures in their form, detailing and material.
- Structures make use of awnings, accent bands, parapet details, decorative roofing, etc., where consistent with traditional New England residential or small-commercial design, or consistent with other structures within the neighborhood.

Undesirable Site or Architectural Design

The following criteria shall be deemed detrimental to any application:

Site Criteria

- Proposals to ‘strip cut’ or significantly deforest undeveloped land.
- Development that requires significant earth removal or buildup.
- Developments that propose significant conversion of farmland.
- Development that encroaches on or restricts pedestrian and bicycle access.

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- Development that restrict sightlines along public ways, or established pedestrian and bicycle paths.
- Retail and service sites that require a large number of front parking areas.
- Landscape that severely reduces greenspace.
- Use of fences to separate or restrict pre-existing pedestrian or bicycle access, whether planned or coincidental.
- Landscape design that significantly contrasts with multiple abutting properties or the immediate neighborhood in general.
- Broad stretches of paved surfaces.
- Parking areas that are unscreened from public ways, or screened only with fencing.
- Screening consisting partially or exclusively of chain-link fences with privacy inserts.⁶

General Design Criteria

- Monolithic structures with no variation in design, color, fenestration, or features.
- Structures that feature monolithic or unbroken facades, and broad expanses of steel or glass.
- Exaggerated level heights, or oversize doors or windows.
- Design elements that are jarringly unique, or that incorporate unusual or abstract designs, colors, or features.
- Structures that precisely mimic or duplicate designs of adjacent or surrounding buildings.⁷
- Proposals to develop structures that are out of scale, or radically differ in design from existing structures.
- Structures that are stylized to the point of being a form of advertisement.
- Additions that result in drastic variations in height or bulk from the original structure.

Lighting

- Use of upward facing, unfocused, or unshielded lighting.
- Lighting that emits “cold” color temperatures (higher than 5000K).
- Unnecessarily tall or high light fixtures.
- Light fixtures with sodium vapor, mercury vapor, florescent, or halogen lamps.
- Excessive use of landscape lighting.

Signs

- Generic or temporary signboards with visible raceways for individual letters.
- Backlighting of a transparent or translucent sign, or any self-illuminated sign
- The use of florescent lamps to illuminate any sign.

⁶ This provision is not intended to restrict or limit the use of chain link fences where needed for safety or security purposes.

⁷ Similar Design of multiple structures within a single development or on a single lot may be deemed acceptable, and shall be determined by the Planning Board on a case-by-case basis.

Multi-Unit Structures

- Structures that (a) do not use variation in façade or (b) only have minimal differentiation between separate units.

National Chains

- Structural design elements that act as a sign, or otherwise clearly identify a business or corporate identity.
- Structures that derive their image principally or wholly from applied treatments that express corporate identity.

Exemptions

The Planning Board may provide relief from any specific criteria on a case by case basis,

1. IF it determines that such relief will not significantly detract from the overall development, the neighborhood or the town AND
2. that such relief can be granted without significant detriment to the intent of the Zoning Bylaws of Hatfield, AND
3. that such findings are included as part of any adjudicatory proceeding and recorded in the records of said proceedings.

The Planning Board shall waive, on a case-by-case basis, any specific criteria if it is found to conflict with any superseding law, code or statute.

Severability

If any provision of this document is found to be illegal, or in conflict with any superseding statute, rule, bylaw or law, so as to be unenforceable, such illegality or unenforceability shall not affect any other provision of this document, and such other provisions shall continue in full force and effect.