



TOWN OF BELMONT PLANNING BOARD

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES (Approved May 13, 2009)

Section 1 Principles and Standards

The design review principles and standards described in this section are intended to guide the applicant in the development of site and building design and the Planning Board in its review of proposed actions. These principles and standards shall not be regarded as inflexible requirements, and they are not intended to discourage creativity, invention or innovation.

For structures more than 75 years old every reasonable effort shall be made to preserve the distinguishing original qualities of the building. The removal or alteration of any historic material or architectural features shall be avoided when possible.

The design of alterations and additions shall, where reasonable and appropriate, strive to improve the quality, appearance and usability, of existing buildings, structures, and sites. Architecture of additions shall be harmonious with the existing structure such that the addition appears as part of the existing structure.

Section 2 General

Design review shall be limited to the scope of the project. To the extent that additional standards have been developed elsewhere, those standards shall take priority over the standards herein.

Buildings: Exterior architectural appearance shall be defined as the architectural character and general composition of the exterior of a building, including but not limited to the kind, color, and texture of building materials, including finish and paint color, and the type, design and character of all windows, doors, light fixtures, signs, awnings, utility and ventilation structures and all other appurtenant elements.

Site: The appearance of a site shall be defined as the character, layout and general composition of the site, including but not limited to the kind, color, and texture of such materials as plantings, paving, site furnishings, site lighting, free-standing signs, utility structures and all other appurtenant elements.

Section 3 Design Criteria

A. Infrastructure

1. Building and site design should be adequate to achieve compliance with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) criteria.

2. To the extent possible, new utilities shall be located underground. To the maximum extent feasible, all dumpsters, utilities, mechanical equipment, storage and service areas shall be screened from view from adjacent streets and from structures on neighboring lots in existence at the time of Site Plan Approval with plantings and/or landscape structures. In no cases shall dumpsters be permitted to be located within the required Front Setback.
3. Storm Water Management. Storm water management systems shall not increase the volume, rate, or further degrade the quality of existing discharges/runoff. Post-development peak runoff shall be maintained at or below pre-development peak runoff rates. The use of permeable paving surfaces is encouraged.

B. Buildings

1. Exposed foundation walls should be minimized, softened by landscaping and architectural design.
2. All utilities on and around buildings shall be located discreetly and screened appropriately. All roof top utilities are required to be screened.
3. Architectural details include all exterior trim, decorative features, and shutter elements.
4. Roof trim should have depth and consistency of lines. Dental molding, shown below the roofline, is an example of a good detail.
5. Molding and trim should be used to decorate or finish the surfaces of buildings and doors.
6. Siding shall be wooden clapboard, wood shingle, stone or brick. Faux materials which imitate the look and appearance may be considered.
7. Roofs shall be clad in architectural grade shingles, wood shingles, metal, or slate. Faux materials which imitate the look and appearance may be considered.
8. Colors should be used to enhance the design of the structure, and be compatible with or complement the neighborhood context. Neon colors and bold colors shall not be used.
9. Sloped roofs are preferred. Roof shapes may be simple gable, mansard, gambrel, saltbox, and hip.
10. Roofs which mimic a full sloped roof to a peak may be considered.
11. Windows and doors shall be constructed of durable material such as wood, steel, and aluminum that require minimal future maintenance, and meet the minimal thermal resistance requirements of the Massachusetts State Building Code.
12. Single pane windows may be appropriate for the first and second stories. Multi-paned (divided lite) windows are preferred above the ground floor. Snap on mullions are not preferred.
13. The pane size in the window shall be proportionate and harmonious with the scale of the structure.
14. Renovation and additions: The following features should harmonize with the existing building:

- Eave Lines -Eave lines should align with the original structure.
- Building Width, Depth and Height-(referred to as ‘Massing’) -A proper addition is not overwhelming. Its width, height and depth are similar in scale to the original structure.
- Roof Configuration -A roof is one of a building's most prominent features and a key element in defining its style. Roof types include gable, hipped, mansard, shed and flat. Sloped roofs may have a shallow or steep pitch and a deep overhang or none. The rafter tails on sloped roofs may be exposed or they may be enclosed in a soffit. Proposed additions should match or harmonize with the roof style and details of the existing building.

C. Site Design

1. Where feasible, parking away from pedestrian areas should be considered. Service vehicle access to buildings shall be away from the primary face of buildings.
2. The overall massing objectives are to stimulate a concentrated use of space in the commercial centers of the Town. The Town’s Centers should stress pedestrian, including handicapped access, be domestic in scale, encourage shopping, and create pockets of space in front of buildings for seasonal plantings, shaded seating areas, and outdoor dining.
3. Buildings should acknowledge the uniqueness of their location, their building neighbors, their proximity to adjoining residential neighborhoods, and the natural setting. Adjoining buildings may use courtyards or plantings to relate to each other. Where appropriate, natural features such as existing trees and vegetation, streams, or wetlands, should be utilized in the site design.
4. Buildings in the Town’s Commercial Centers shall maintain a wide sidewalk with space for circulation. Where a building is placed further back on a lot, consideration should be made for seating and plantings to enhance use.
5. The use of fencing to separate public and private space, to mark property lines, or to protect plantings from traffic, should be chosen to harmonize with nearby structures. Picket fences and stonewalls are suggested over concrete walls, chain link fences, and stockade fences, as the latter do not enhance the visual effect and are not appropriate to routes of pedestrian or vehicular travel. Stockade and lattice topped fences are appropriate for screening of dumpsters and similar waste receptacles, HVAC and mechanical support systems, service entrances, and related areas.
6. Sidewalks should provide a uniform travel service for people who use wheelchairs, carriages, walkers, bicycles or scooters.
7. All curbing onsite shall be vertical granite, except in areas where wildlife may be impacted. All sidewalks shall be cement concrete.
8. One of the following streetscape elements is required per 30 feet of frontage, in the absence of other approved landscaping.
 - Street Tree (3 inch caliper minimum)

- Bench (6 feet long per guideline selections)
 - Planter w/shrubs (6 feet long per guideline selections–3 shrubs minimum)
9. Pedestrian scale lamps should be traditional and consistent with each commercial center’s approved streetscape furnishings (see guideline selections). All efforts to harmonize the style and spacing of lighting throughout a commercial center shall be considered.
 10. Understanding that safety and security are important elements, lighting should be recessed and discrete fixtures that do not glare onto abutting properties or adjoining public or private streets (house shields, cut-offs, dark sky shields, etc.).

D. Landscaping

1. Landscaping in the Town should build upon the “natural beauty of the location”.
2. Abundant, well chosen, and well maintained plantings and landscaping should become a notable theme to be reinforced through the Town Center. Outdoor gathering places close to open spaces, shops, and residences should provide benches, and plantings that reflect the natural surroundings.
3. It is recommended that structures include window boxes or plant shelves for lower floor windows and facades. Flower baskets hung from lighting posts should also be considered.
4. Landscaping should be used to strengthen or buffer the visual relationship with the surrounding area. Existing natural features should be assessed for incorporation within open space areas.
5. Landscaping should be designed with consideration of nearby building, walkways, and parking areas. Walkways should be located to account for most probable access routes. Parking lots should be designed with landscaped islands within them, and islands between buildings, roads, and walkways should be abundantly planted to create a strong horticultural character throughout the year.
6. Planting scheme should add to the attractiveness of the environment and demonstrate civic pride. All landscaping shall respond to and enhance the neighborhood context.
7. Where heavy pedestrian traffic is anticipated, the landscaped surfaces should have durable surfaces: brick, pavers, slate, cobblestone or textured concrete (patterned or giving the appearance of other listed materials). Asphalt sidewalks shall not be permitted. All dedicated pedestrian ways shall meet the requirements of the Americans with Disability Act and the standards of the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board.
8. All landscaping shall be properly maintained in a healthy condition in perpetuity.

E. Off-Street Parking

1. Parking areas shall be set back from street lines and property lines a minimum of ten feet (10'). Parking layouts should minimize nuisance from car headlights that beam into residential dwellings through the use of visual screening by use of plantings or fencing. Alleys are permissible to provide multi-purpose parking areas.

2. Parking spaces shall be a minimum of nine (9) feet by eighteen (18) feet in size, in addition to one hundred (100) square feet of maneuvering area per parking space.
3. Design and construction of shared parking facilities is strongly encouraged in order to minimize both vehicular curb cuts on public streets and the need for vehicular travel lanes within the Lots.