



TOWN OF WATERTOWN
Department of
Community Development and Planning
PLANNING BOARD

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PLANNING BOARD REPORT

This Report provides the Planning Board's recommendation to the Honorable Town Council for the Council's public hearing on proposed Zoning Ordinance text amendments to implement *Design Standards* and to adopt a separate set of *Design Guidelines* which are not part of the Ordinance, that together provide requirements and guidance for new development and redevelopment within Watertown.

ZONING AMENDMENT:	Various Sections of the Ordinance
DATE OF FIRST READING:	February 24, 2015
RECOMMENDATION:	Adoption of Amendments
DATE OF PLANNING BOARD HEARING:	March 31, 2015; continued to April 8, 2015; continued to April 30, 2015
DATE OF PLANNING BOARD REPORT	June 15, 2015

I. PUBLIC NOTICE

As required by the Watertown Zoning Ordinance § 9.22, notice of the Planning Board Hearing was given as follows:

- Published in the newspaper of record (*Watertown Tab*) on March 13, 2015 and March 20, 2015;
- Posted at the Town Administration Building on March 9, 2015 and,
- Mailed to Parties of Interest on March 9, 2015

A. Planning Board Public Notice

"The proposed amendments would modify the following sections of the Ordinance:

- Article II, Definitions; Sections 2.34; 2.42; 2.55
- Article IV, General Use and Dimensional Regulations; Sections 4.10; 4.11(a) and 4.11(b)
- Article V, Tables of District Regulations; Sections 5.03(2); 5.03(7); 5.04; 5.05(f); 5.05(k); 5.04(s) and 5.05(n)
- Article VI; Automotive and Bicycle Parking Requirements; Sections 6.01(b); 6.01(e); 6.01(f); 6.01(g); 6.02(a); 6.02(k) and 6.07(a.1)
- Article VII; Signs and Illumination; Sections 7.01(h); 7.01(j); 7.01(k); 7.03(a.1); 7.03(a.5); 7.03(b.1); 7.03(b.2); 7.03(b.4); 7.03(d.2); 7.03(g.3); 7.06(b) and 7.06(e)
- Article IX, Enforcement and Application Procedures; Sections 9.03(c.7) and 9.08(e)

The proposed amendments would add the following sections to the Ordinance:

- Article IV, General Use and Dimensional Regulations; 4.11(d); 4.11(e) and 4.15
- Article V, Tables of District Regulations; Sections 5.03(12); 5.05(w) and 5.17
- Article VI; Automotive and Bicycle Parking Requirements; 6.01(i) and 6.01(j)
- Article VII; Signs and Illumination; Sections 7.01(e); 7.01(p); 7.01(q); 7.06(h); 7.12 and 7.13
- Article IX, Enforcement and Application Procedures; Sections 9.03(a) and 9.03(d)

The full amendment language is available for review in the Planning Office and website of the Department of Community Development and Planning.”

II. Description

A. Nature of the Request

Over the period of 2008-2013, development pressure resulted in a number of projects being built or proposed on Arsenal Street, in Watertown Square, Coolidge Square, and Pleasant Street corridor. As a result, the Town of Watertown selected Gamble Associates to conduct an expedited process to create *Design Guidelines and Standards*. The project was initiated in September 2014 through a formal vote of the Honorable Town Council to support project funding and award a contract for work to Gamble Associates. The intent of the project was to develop a set of documents that provide clear guidance and requirements for new development and redevelopment within Watertown’s key corridors and squares.

III. Public Input Processes

Gamble Associates in conjunction with the Department of Community Development and Planning and the Planning Board, held three Community Forums (10/15/14; 11/24/14; and 1/22/15) to discuss and take public input on drafts of the *Design Guidelines and Standards*. In addition, questionnaires were available to meeting participants and through a comments portal on the Department of Community Development & Planning (DCDP) website to take further input. Taken together, the Community Forums were attended by several hundred people. Approximately 30 additional comments were received on the questionnaires and through the web portal

In addition to the public input on the draft *Design Standards and Guidelines* as proposed zoning Text Amendments, Gamble Associates worked with a project as a test case, in collaboration with Greystar, the developer who proposed to build a large mixed use project at the corner of Irving Street and Arsenal Street in Watertown. Gamble Associates worked with the developer’s team to apply the Design Guidelines and Standards to the project. Initial concepts were developed for public input at the October 2014 public meeting. A later, more comprehensive site design concept was profiled for public input at the November 2014 Community Forum. Using a test case project allowed the public to better visualize the draft Guidelines and Standards as applied to a real project. It also allowed the DCDP staff and Gamble Associates to refine the proposed zoning Text Amendments.

IV. Planning Board Hearings and Additional Public Input

As noted above, the Planning Board held a public hearing on the draft *Design Guidelines and Standards* on March 31, 2015. At this meeting, the Board considered a written draft of the *Design Guidelines and Standards*, and were provided with a summary of the public comments received at the Community Forums, and via the DCDP comment portal.

DCDP staff, together with Gamble Associates, presented detailed report on the draft Guidelines and Standards. The Planning Board also received testimony. Below is a summary of comments:

- Increase the size and number of trees included in landscaping.
- Require use of larger tree grates and other measures to guarantee the health of the Town's green infrastructure.
- Preserve specimen trees and ones with historical significance.
- Consider how the Design Consultant selection process will happen going forward. Use three firms and rotate the design review among them; promotes discussion that is more open.
- Simplify/explain the definition of Building Height in the *Design Standards*.
- Use a diagram in the zoning text to help explain Building Height.
- Create a more comprehensive review process for the Boylston Properties, and transformation of the Arsenal Project into a vibrant community center.
- Consider *LEED Certification* versus *LEED Certifiable* for certain projects, perhaps by size?
- Consider overlay districts for different areas of Watertown, such as the Watertown Mall, Coolidge Square, etc.
- Consider creation of an Arts District.
- Be sensitive to the proposed exceptions to Building Height, so that buildings do not "creep upwards."
- Consider ways to control/modulate the design of residential buildings.
- Be sensitive to how and when use of permeable pavers is required.
- Limit applicability of new exterior lighting requirements to commercial areas.
- Be sensitive to application of the *Design Standards*.
- Consider solar accessibility in the design of all buildings.
- The proposed 400-foot length of building walls is too great, and should be scaled back.
- Strongly encourage shared parking.
- Include Universal Design concepts for accessibility in the *Design Guidelines and Standards*.
- Screen public views to/from these requirements should not necessarily apply to parking garages.

The Board voted unanimously (4-0) to continue the hearing to the April 8, 2015 Planning Board meeting.

On April 8, 2015, the Board noted the draft *Design Guidelines and Standards* would be discussed again at a Special Meeting on April 30, 2015 at 7:00 PM in the Town Council Chamber.

At the April 30, 2015 Special Meeting/hearing, the DCDP staff summarized the proposed changes to the draft *Design Guidelines and Standards*. A staff summary provided to the Board highlighted 18 proposed changes to the *Design Standards*. Staff also discussed four proposed changes to the draft *Design Guidelines*. The proposed changes took account of the oral and written comments received on the draft *Guidelines and Standards* to date.

The Planning Board also received testimony. Below is a summary of the comments:

- Concern about encouraging unbundling of parking.
- Landscaping should use only non-invasive species.
- Have a sliding fee schedule for the Design Review component?
- Apply the Design Review to medium to smaller projects.
- Ensure the proposed zoning does not inadvertently prohibit live/work spaces for artists.

- Cap the proposed allowances for longer facades at a maximum of 300 feet.
- Apply the formal Design Review to residential projects of four units or more.
- The *Design Standards and Guidelines* should not apply to projects with fewer than 10 residential units.
- Design review is key to smaller projects, including one and two family homes.
- Should require *LEED Certified* for projects of a certain size.
- A façade length maximum of 300 feet with the ability to go longer by Special Permit is integral to the Elan/Greystar project.

The Planning Board discussed the issue of which residential project should be subject to formal Design Review. To resolve this issue, the Planning Board adopted a recommendation from DCDP staff that residential projects of four units or greater must consider the *Design Guidelines*, but that projects of 10 units or greater would be subject to the formal Design Review using the Town's Design Consultant.

V. Analysis and Findings

The Design Standards were updated as of 6/8/15 and incorporates prior text amendments reviewed by the Planning Board. Below is a summary of the substantive Text Changes as approved by the Planning Board and accepted into the 6/8/2015 Draft. Note also that the proposed Text Amendments suggests additional changes based on clarification to the review process and requirements Staff proposed after the Planning Board Hearing.

1. Building Height: Clarify that roof-top HVAC equipment shall be screened, and screening is excluded from calculation of building height
2. Building Height: Clarify that the four specific instances where additional height may be granted by SP if consistent with the adopted Design Guidelines can allow no more than an additional two stories.
3. Building Setbacks: Exceptions: Clarify that bays less than or equal to 20% of the total building façade may intrude into Build-to Line Setbacks by 4 feet by moving it to a separate sentence.
4. Building Setbacks, Front Yard: Specify that sidewalks and multi-use paths are allowed in the Front Yard.
5. Build to Line Exceptions:
 - A. Clarify the application of a Build-to Line to allow for desired amenities and façade offsets (courtyards) suggested within the Design Guidelines.
 - B. Allow a greater Build-to Line to be more in keeping with the adopted Design Guidelines or required façade offsets.
6. Building Transparency: Clarify that *Vertical* Mixed Use shall have a minimum of 50% transparent materials at the ground floor. Also:
 - A. Include that parking areas/structures must be screened.
 - B. Clarify that Commercial Uses can have pedestrian entrances no more than 50 feet apart or from building corner.
7. Notes to Table of Dimensional Regulations: For façade and transparency requirements in the I-3 zone, add that the ZEO determines primary public way
8. Building Length/Offsets: New construction in CB, LB, NB, and I-Districts:
 - A. Modify so the maximum length of contiguous building façade shall be no more than 150 feet long but can allow up to 250 feet by SP in keeping with adopted Design Guidelines.
 - B. Change the maximum linear dimension of building to 300 feet long but allow a longer linear building dimension by SP if in keeping with adopted Design Guidelines.

- C. Clarify that a building pass-through at ground floor must be a minimum of 50 feet across and 20 feet high or an equivalent area for buildings to be considered separate, with the determination completed by the ZEO to allow flexibility in design and implementation.
9. Transition Heights Adjacent to Neighborhoods:
- A. Clarify that the screening in setback can be by a combination of landscaping and/or fencing.
10. Building Setbacks: Notes to the Table of Dimensional Regulations
- A. Clarify that the build-to line is 10 feet for commercial and industrial uses and portions of Mixed-Use with commercial on the first floor and that the build-to line of 15 feet to residential only uses or portions of buildings not located over commercial space as suggested in PSCD.
 - B. Allow an increase up to 30 feet for public amenities such as plazas, square, courtyard, sidewalk, multi-use path, etc.
 - C. Allow the build to line to increase beyond 30 feet to accommodate façade offsets (i.e. landscaping/courtyards) per Section 5.04(f) or 4.11(d)
 - D. For Multiple buildings on a lot, clarify that at least one building will comply with the build-to line, and span a minimum of 25% of the lot frontage at the SPGA determined build-to line.
11. Building Height: Minimum Height is twenty four (24) feet
- A. Require the 24' in the CB, LB, NB, and I-Districts, but remove the PSCD since it already requires a two-story minimum.
12. Zoning Language to Implement Design Guidelines
- A. Acknowledge *Economic Vitality* in Principle #1
 - B. Remove comment about development occurring site by site in Principle #3
 - C. Acknowledge that development comes with an obligation to implement sustainable design, and that stormwater management practices must prevent flooding, and protect the health of the Charles River in Principle #4
13. Automobile and Bicycle Parking
- A. Adjust the amount of off-street parking set aside for car sharing programs
 - B. Increase the Parking Maximum to 2.25 spaces for a 3+ bedroom Multi-Family use to ensure that visitor parking, etc. is included in the requirement.
 - C. Acknowledge the concept of and encourage “unbundling” of parking.
 - D. Modify that permeable paving *or other stormwater techniques should* be used to allow groundwater recharging.
 - E. Each landscaped parking lot island shall include *one* or more shade trees approved by the Tree Warden rather than requiring two in all instances to allow flexibility for proper spacing.
 - F. Add to criterion to maximize shade on vehicles and pavement to reduce “heat island.”
 - G. Modify to requirement to allow only non-invasive species but only consider native plants were appropriate to allow more flexibility in landscape design.
 - H. Add that where feasible, landscaped islands should provide for stormwater/runoff control in parking lots.
 - I. Identify that Ring and Post-style bicycle frame racks in addition to inverted “U” are allowed as suggested in the Town’s Bicycle Rack guidance.
 - J. Clarify that car sharing is required at a threshold of 50 vehicles rather than after 15 vehicles (Post Planning Board Staff Suggestion)

14. Signage

- A. Add definitions for Area, Flood and Up-Lighting.
- B. Clarify that the Exterior Lighting requirements apply only to residential development of four or greater units, and all non-residential and Mixed-Use projects.
- C. Add a maximum height for pole lights on the top of garages: 20 feet.
- D. Add an allowance for decorative on-building fixtures to illuminate balconies and other amenities above 20 feet in height.
- E. Clarify that lights used in residential projects or the residential component of Mixed Use projects do not have to deactivate “2 hours post-closing” but shall deactivate during daylight hours.
- F. Clarify provisions for Identification and Accessory signage on occupancy frontage. (Post Planning Board Staff Suggestion)
- G. Clarify how the calculation for the size of Accessory Signs is to be performed in the CB, LB, NB, I and PSCD Districts

15. Enabling Provisions for Design Review

- A. Clarify that these requirements apply to project with ten or more residential units rather than four units.
- B. Allow 14 instead of seven (7) calendar days for design review report submission to the DCDP to allow enough time for review.
- C. Formal Design Review at 10 residential units; residential projects of 4 units or more must consider the Design Guidelines.

16. Transportation Equity

- A. Developers: Add that special consideration for infrastructure and design to enhance public transit is required within the Site Plan Review criteria.

17. Green Roofs

- A. Include that development should seek to employ passive solar techniques and design to maximize southern exposure when possible.
- B. Clarify that Mixed Use Development in the CB, LB, NB, I-Districts and PSCD must meet LEED *Certifiable* requirements and that documentation to verify the project is in compliance with LEED *Certifiable* requirement is submitted.

18. Special Permit in the I-3

- A. Clarify how a project in the I-3 District obtains a Special Permit. (Post Planning Board Staff Suggestion)

VI. Planning Board Recommendation and Vote

The Planning Board held a public hearing on the proposed zoning Text Amendments on March 31, 2015, which was continued to April 8, 2015. A subsequent public hearing was held on April 30, 2015. At the April 30, 2015 hearing, the Board, with four members in attendance, voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the Watertown *Design Standards and Guidelines*, including leaving applicability of a formal Design Review at 10 residential units, but also that residential projects of 4 units or more must consider the *Design Guidelines*.