

City of Laconia Design Regulations Amendment to Site Plan Regs section 6.6

Final June 3, 2014



Prepared for the City of Laconia by:



City of Laconia Design Overlay District - Introduction

This regulation is composed of a written and illustrated guideline document and an accompanying project evaluation score sheet. The purpose of the evaluation score sheet is two-fold. First, it is a way to make the value system underlying the Planning Board review process transparent, understandable and most of all predictable. It does not add powers to the Board that it does not already have; it removes the mystery from the evaluation process and allows potential project developers to know, prior to spending a lot of time and money, their *likelihood* of success in gaining approval. This is meant to be a boon to development rather than an obstacle. Predictability is development-friendly.

Secondly, the score sheet lays out a wide array of optional components—more than are needed to gain approval of the project. In this way it invites trade-offs and creative substitutions that allow a developer to adapt the regulation to their particular site and circumstances while still promoting design that benefits the character of Laconia and protects the value of existing properties. Flexibility is development-friendly.

Filing out the score sheet is a prerequisite to the approvals process. As mentioned, it is a strong predictor to the outcome of the Planning Board process. Nonetheless it is not a guarantee one way or the other. The Planning Board will reserve its authority to use its judgment to either allow projects that do not strictly meet the numeric guideline due to extenuating circumstances. The Board may also require further improvements to a proposal that meets the pure number requirement but does not meet the spirit of the regulation. It is expected that as the regulation is implemented and fine-tuned over time these sorts of exceptions will become more and more rare.

OVERALL ARCHITECTURAL GOALS

- Well-designed buildings that reinforce Laconia's unique sense of place.
- Good neighborhood buildings that thoughtfully consider scale, form, orientation, height, setback, massing, materials, and architectural features and their impact on their neighbors.
- Buildings that present a 'front door' to the street and community and make a positive contribution to the streetscape.
- Buildings that are designed to human scale that address the comfort, enjoyment, and safety of the users and enhance the walkability of our streets.
- Buildings that are designed as permanent, positive additions to the community, constructed of high quality, long lasting materials.
- Street intersections that are treated as special places.
- Older buildings that are restored and/or adaptively reused to maintain the integrity of Laconia's historic heritage.
- Most importantly, these design standards are intended to encourage buildings that contribute in a positive way to the visual character of the street and the immediate abutting structures.
- Above average design and site treatment at high visibility intersections. Designated by on the Design Overlay District maps shown above.

A. Authority

Under the authority granted by RSA 674:44 the City of Laconia has created Architectural Design regulations as part of its Site Plan Regulations for the purpose of building and streetscape design. Laconia's characteristic buildings reflect an historic past that is closely linked to its Lakes Region heritage. These design regulations are intended for new or renovated buildings that will complement this tradition. The standards are not intended to dictate building styles. They provide a guide to illustrate Laconia's vision for its future. These Standards are intended to supplement, illustrate, and amplify various sections of the city's existing ordinances. The provisions of the guidelines vary from district to district. Be careful to check the applicable section of the guideline for specific requirements.

A **design review sub-committee of the Planning Board** shall be established to work with applicants on the Design regulations. The subcommittee will review the appropriateness of each design element in relation to the overall design and the community character of the neighborhood. Their review and recommendations on development projects shall be forwarded to the full Planning Board for consideration in issuing a site plan approval. The Planning Board shall make the final determination as to the applicability of these standards when they issue a site Plan approval.

If any provision of these Standards is found to be invalid through subsequent court action only that portion shall be deemed separate and independent and such court decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions herein.

B. Purpose

The intent of the Design Regulations is to promote better building, site design and street landscaping and give the Planning Board greater flexibility in site design, creative use of landscaping and open space, and provide more flexibility in the provision of parking. These standards shall apply to all developments except one and two family residential that lie within the City boundaries.

The following design elements will be incorporated into the design standards:

Site Design: The placement of buildings and their architectural form and detailing shall be designed to fit the specific characteristics of their site including proximity to the street, recognition of the surrounding public realm and character changes in topography, pedestrian travel patterns, community nodes and important public vistas. The architecture will be influenced by traditional building forms and town-making patterns, the specific needs of the intended users, the nature of the intended use, and other site-specific factors. New buildings should reinforce the positive aspects of the surrounding neighborhood.

Building Form and Details: The primary architectural styles found in Laconia include late nineteenth and early 20th century residential, commercial and manufacturing vernacular realized in wood, brick and stone. Contemporary architecture and buildings that are influenced by several

styles may be appropriate, provided they meet these standards. Proposals that demonstrate understanding of the local context will be viewed as more positive. Buildings and site elements should be designed to human scale. The forms, massing, and openings of buildings should be proportional to the size of a human figure. Many architectural elements can add scale to a building, as in the listed examples, provided they are designed as integral parts of the overall structure.

Materials: The primary building materials traditionally found in Laconia include “natural” materials such as stone and brick in the Downtown core and wood in Lakeport and the Weirs area. Synthetic materials, including vinyl or aluminum siding, or utility grade masonry, including concrete block, are not preferred materials in any neighborhood. Proposals that are sympathetic to the traditional building type and materials will be viewed as more appropriate for their neighborhoods. Newer composite materials, including cement board, synthetic roofing tiles, etc, will be evaluated by the design review sub-committee, and as with all other features, are site-dependent.

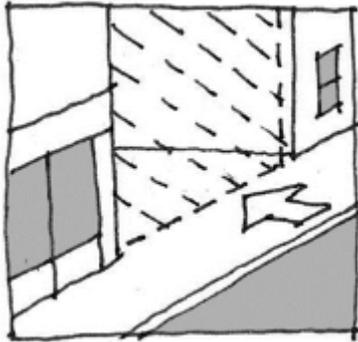
OBJECTIVES

The purpose of these guidelines is to encourage architecture that draws inspiration from traditional local examples. Building design should be developed to a human scale through careful consideration of architectural forms, massing, detailing, number and use of materials, and color. Applicants are required to meet a minimum of 50 points in the overall site design and building form and details.

DESIGN REGULATIONS:

1. Site Design – preferred arrangements of the building and features on the lot.

1.1 Building Placement: The placement of the building on the site is a key component to a comprehensive, well-designed project. The setback of the main building should be in keeping with the neighborhood character. For example, a setback closer to the street and neighboring buildings in the Downtown and Weirs core and other commercial areas helps to create a more urban, in-town feel to the area. Setbacks do not need to match exactly, as some variation adds important interest and character to a streetscape. Plus or minus 5 feet may be used as a general rule in neighborhoods where buildings are set closer together.

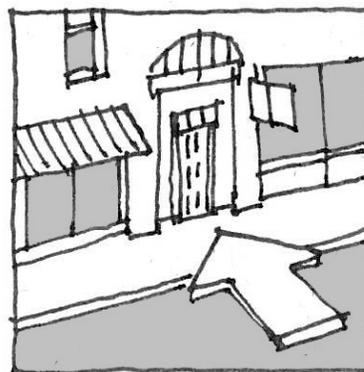
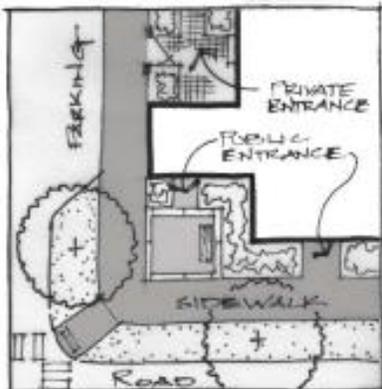


a. The setback of the main building is in keeping with the neighborhood character. Provide 10 examples of neighboring buildings that exemplify the positive neighborhood character.

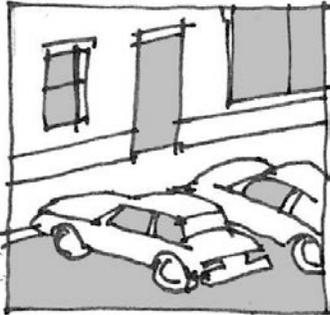
b. Uneven setbacks interrupt the rhythm of the street and should be avoided.

1.2 Primary Entry Façade On Street Front: The primary frontage of the building should face the street to forge a positive or “friendly connection” with the street. In a well-designed entry there is a seamless transition between the public sidewalk and the entry to the building. Private entrances to upper floor residences are treated in a more refined fashion than the front entrance to a retail store.

a. Primary entry façade faces the street to forge a positive connection with the street.



1.3 Parking Arrangement: Visibility of cars from the street should match the degree of urbanization of the area. Even in highly urbanized areas a buffer between parking is encouraged. Parked cars should be at best a secondary presence and not offer the first impression of a site or business.



a. **Least preferable option:** Parking lots visible from the street in front of building.

b. **Neutral option:** Parking lot in side yard in view of street.

c. **Best option:** parking lot behind building: Appropriate signage and entry design can make parking in the back a viable option for customers as well as residents, deliveries.

1.4 Service Arrangement: Thoughtfully designed site plans will include consideration of proper siting and screening of service areas.

a. **Location:** Service areas are placed behind buildings: this includes the appropriate location of, stockpile, waste receptacles and other unsightly infrastructure needs.

b. **Screening:** Service areas are screened from travel routes and abutting properties to the greatest extent possible through the provision of architectural screening, evergreen landscaping, and fencing.

c. **Direct Access:** Access to service areas are as direct a route as possible, minimizing truck maneuvering within parking areas.

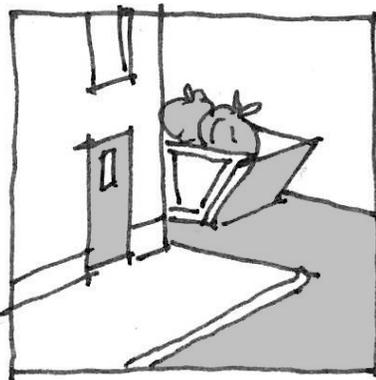
d. **Pedestrian:** Service and Loading Areas are designed so the need for truck delivery routes does not intersect with interior pedestrian routes.

e. **Consolidation:** Service areas are consolidated to serve multiple uses where possible.

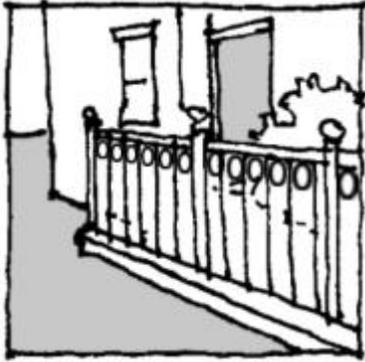
f. **Interior Storage:** Waste receptacles are best option and are kept interior to the structure or in a shed or other accessory building.

g. **Schedule** of deliveries has been provided and designed to cause the least disruption to exterior street traffic/interior site movement.

h. **Noise:** Dumpsters and other waste containers have gaskets and other means to help alleviate noise from lids slamming or banging.



1.5 Lot Buffers: provide buffer plantings or fence to abutter: Overall site design minimizes impacts to adjacent properties by providing a raised buffer with year-round, vegetated screening and other site planning features or a fence. Screening should be designed to minimize both visual and audible impacts. Lot buffers may not be appropriate on lots where the building is immediately adjacent to the property line in the center downtown or the center area of Weirs.



a. **Fences** provide privacy, help differentiate private from public space and add to the pedestrian scale of the streetscape.

b. **Fence** type is appropriate given the nature of the use behind the fence in mind. They may divide a semi-public space from the public realm. The “transparency” of a fence should be determined by the privacy of the use behind it.

i. Best option: Ornamental metal fencing, decorative wood fencing, or masonry construction a minimum of 3-FT high.

ii. Neutral option: Stockade fences, concrete walls

iii. Least Preferred option: chain link fences

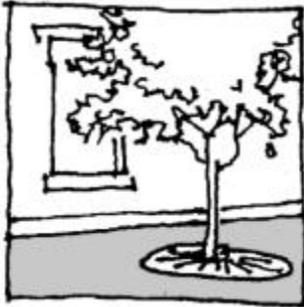
c. **Fences** are constructed two sided or with best side facing the abutter.

d. **Buffer plantings** may be used in combination with fences or stand alone as a visual screening buffer.

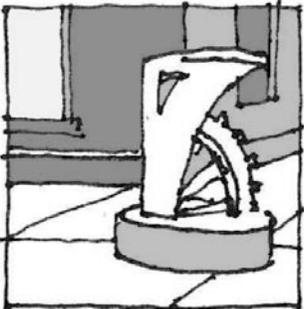
e. **Buffer plantings** should be properly selected, based on the property use and desired aesthetic character thought has been put for growth and maturity space. A professional landscape architect prepared or reviewed the plan.

f. **Buffer planting** species chosen should be thoughtfully selected to meet siting requirements maintenance budget and growing environment for the plant species used with possible preference for hardier species, that are salt and drought tolerant; A professional landscape architect prepared or reviewed the plan.

1.6 Front Yard Landscape: The areas of the site that abut public streets should be treated as opportunities to enhance the property and the streetscape and provide welcoming features to the public.

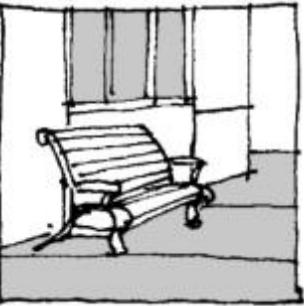


a. **Accessory Features** such as window box/barrels are included in the site design.



b. **Plant materials:** appropriate selections are paramount for a properly functioning and appealing city environment. A professional landscape architect prepared or reviewed the plan.

c. **Selection of trees:** consider the mature shape of the tree crown and its mature height to prevent the tree canopy from growing into the building wall or overhead utilities and potentially requiring severe pruning over time.



d. **Hardscape Features** other than sidewalk are included in the front yard such as deck, paved patio, masonry landscape wall, water feature, sculpture, etc

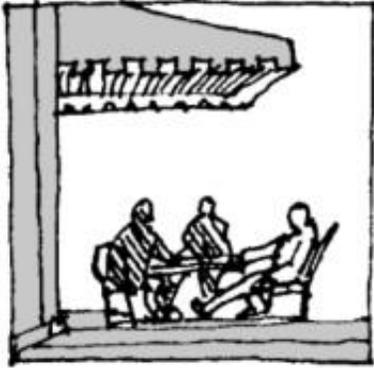
e. **Public Use Features** are included in the front yard such as benches, seating areas, bike racks, bus shelters, public art, trash receptacles, clocks, etc. Sidewalk furniture should be located throughout the neighborhood and, where provided, shall be complementary to one another in color and style.



f. **Public Use Green Park Areas** are included in the site plan, including greenspaces for placement of public use features (picnic tables, seating, etc).

1.7 Pedestrian Access should be limited to clearly defined paths, and design elements should be included that limit the possibility for cut-through pedestrian access on unintended routes.

1.8 Sidewalks are required and shall follow the DPW specifications and be at least 5 feet wide.

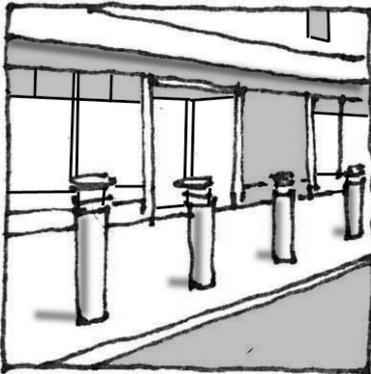


a. **Width:** Additional width provided for use as outdoor seating areas or gathering spaces, etc is encouraged.

i. Neutral option: minimum sidewalk width of 5 feet, per DPW specifications.

ii. Better option: width of sidewalk extends 5 ½ feet to 8 feet, can accommodate street furniture and other features.

iii. Best option: width of sidewalk extends more than 8 feet to accommodate street furniture, sitting areas, outdoor cafes, or multimodal transportation.

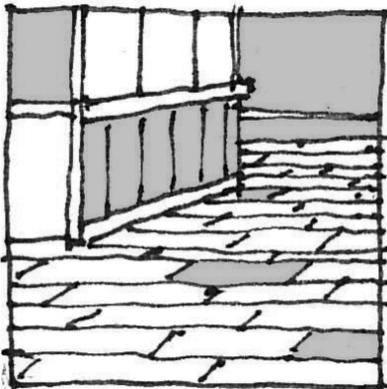


b. **Location:** Sidewalk locations should be explored to facilitate the appropriate location of privately funded plazas, sitting areas, outdoor cafes, etc.

c. **Separation:** A separation is provided between the sidewalk or public gathering space and the roadway such as raised planter beds or aesthetically pleasing bollards.

d. **Safety:** Where a sidewalk crosses a larger road, bump-outs may be used to reduce the length of pedestrian crossing, improve pedestrian safety, provide additional landscaping and act as a traffic calming measure.

e. **Materials:** Materials shall be compatible with abutting public sidewalks and meet the approved City standard.



i. Least preferable option: Asphalt. However, pervious asphalt, with underdrain system and interpretive signage would be considered best option.

ii. Neutral option: Stamped and/or colored concrete

iii. Best option: Unit pavers (brick, stone,): The most visually important sidewalks and adjacent seating areas should be constructed with an appropriate unit paver. Selections should consider universal accessibility.. Pervious asphalt, with underdrain system.

1.9 Lighting: Outdoor lighting is designed to ensure safety, functionality while conserving energy and limiting the visibility of the lighting off the property.

a. **Fixture style**

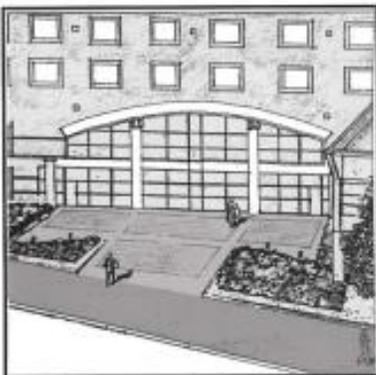


- i. Best option: Lighting fixtures are architecturally high quality and may have with flags/banners or planters
- ii. Neutral option: Lighting option is basic in shape and form
- iii. Least preferred option: lighting is institutional in nature and includes cobra head and shoe box style fixture

b. **Cohesive Lighting Design:** Building light fixtures and bulbs form a unified lighting design together with any parking lot, walkway, or other site lighting in color and style.

1.10 Riverfront and Lakefront on the major water ways, including the Winnepesaukee River, Paugus Bay, Lake Winnepesaukee, Lake Opechee, or Lake Winnisquam: Preservation of this key natural and city-wide recreational and financial resource should be utmost in any development effort.

a. **Easements:** Provide public easement to and along the water's edge: development has provided public access, to the maximum extent feasible or has worked to improve existing public access. The intent is to provide improved public access, with a view of the water for both residents and visitors. This is most directly accomplished by a riverwalk or sidewalk along the water's edge.



b. **Waterside Façade:** Building is cited and designed with a second "front" facing the water and public access. This includes a door for residents or employees to access the public walkway outside and possible water side "front porch" or patio.

c. **Public Use Features:** Public access, walkway, patio etc includes other features such as public seating, benches, etc and appropriate site lighting.

d. **Screening:** Visual screening of parking and service from water: Recreation on the waterways is a vital asset for the community. All

development should keep this in mind when making changes apparent from the perspective of the water.

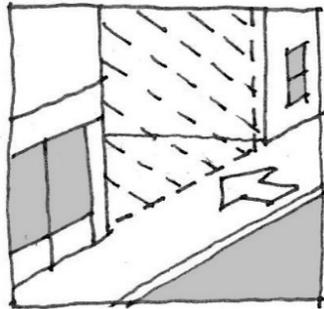
2. Building Form: the size and shape of your structure

2.1 Building Height: the consistent height of buildings along a street can help build a cohesive neighborhood. The match need not be exact and it does not need to be absolutely uniform to create this benefit. Deviations to the rule should be rare exceptions include community buildings such as schools, courthouses or churches. New projects emulate their neighbors on either side within 5 feet in height.



a. When a building is more than a story taller than its neighbors, it can break up the unity of the street frontage and this should be discouraged.

b. Similarly, a one story infill building in a three story neighborhood is detrimental to the street.



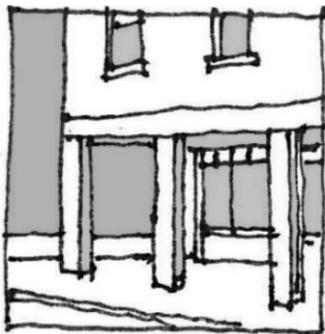
2.2 Primary Façade: The form and design of the primary façade plays an important part in enhancing a streetscape and neighborhood. Buildings may have more than one primary façade.

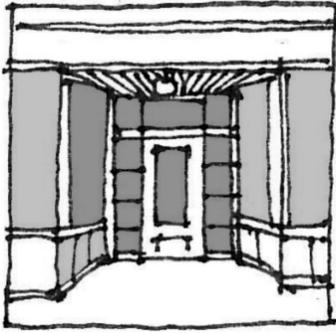
a. **Frontage:** In the Downtown and Weirs Center when the street is lined with building fronts that span the entire lot frontage, that is a strong aspect of the neighborhood character. In other areas, the neighborhood character lends itself to different siting opportunities.

b. **Features:** The form of buildings along the street can encourage a friendly walking environment. The project has provided cover from the weather with recessed walkways and awnings.

c. **Fenestration:** New buildings should reflect the proportion of window openings of the neighborhood on their primary facades.

d. **Design Complexity:** The project includes the same sort of complexity to enhance the building design in the vertical dimension with the inclusion of roof overhangs, set-backs, balconies and so on.



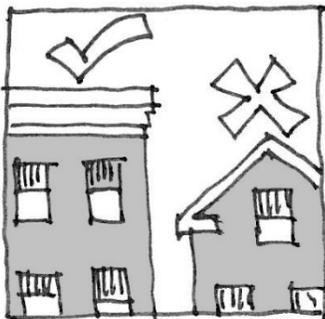
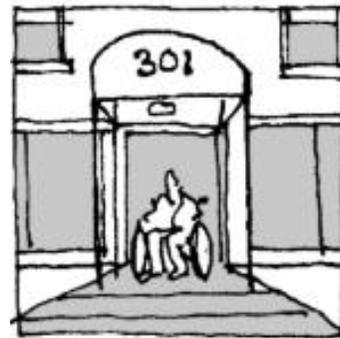
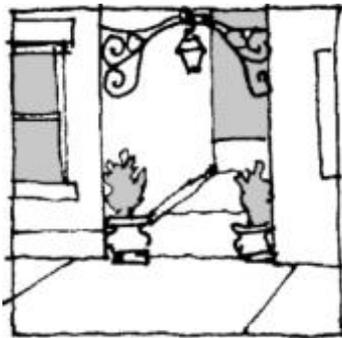


e. **Excessive repetition** of identical building elements such as roof overhangs, set-backs, balconies, etc. on a larger building expresses a lack of concern for the impact on the public. Excessive repetition is discouraged. For larger, multi-unit projects, repetition of one design is recommended to repeat no more than every 5 units.

f. **Blank Walls:** Walls that don't feature windows or design elements of any kind on the primary façade are unwelcoming; blank wall syndrome should be avoided.

g. **Entry:** The proposal should include a welcoming, lit, covered entry to set the tone for the street.

h. **Entry Enhancements** can be strong indicators of positive energy in the neighborhood. Examples of entry enhancements: recessed entry doors (+3 feet), small landscaped entry courtyards, decorative pavement, decorative wall lighting, awnings, canopies, pediments, unique signage, leaded or stained glass windows on the door, etc.

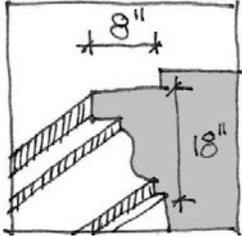


2.3 Roof Form: the shape of the roof is another part of neighborhood character whether it is all flat, all pitched or a mixture of both.

a. **Flat or Pitched roofs** should be chosen depending on the character of the neighborhood. For example, flat roofs are most commonly found in the Downtown core, whereas a majority of the rest of the City traditionally features pitched roofs.

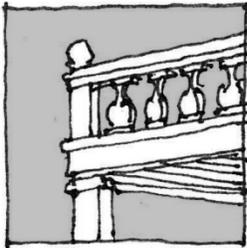
b. **Roof Plane Interest:** If a peaked roof is proposed, peaks and valleys are encouraged. Dormers, and cross gables are appropriate design features for these areas.

c. **Large, blank, unbroken roof planes** are the least preferred option.



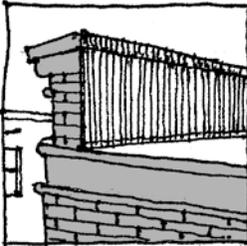
3.0 Building Details: smaller parts add up to an interesting, attractive environment

3.1 Roof Details: Roof details can add a lot of character to the building and the neighborhood.

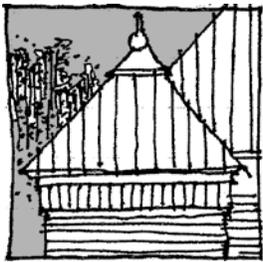


a. **Roof Edges**, where the building meets the sky, can add a lot to the character of the street. The project should include a cornice taking into consideration vertical height, complexity of shape and projection over the wall to increase the effectiveness of the cornice.

b. **Roof Rails** otherwise known as balustrades are another way to enhance the human scale of the building and have been included in the design.

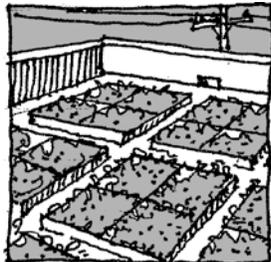


c. **Rooftop Screening:** Air systems or other utilities located on the roof should be hidden by a shed, a façade, a parapet or pediment that harmonizes with the main building in terms of color, design details and materials. Exposed air systems on the roof or other utilities are discouraged.



d. **Rooftop Noise Suppression:** Air systems or other utilities located on the roof should have a noise suppression system designed with the best available technology appropriately integrated into them so there is no nuisance to the public or the abutters.

e. **Copper Elements:** The use of copper or a high quality equivalent in roofing, awnings and decorative cornices and caps is encouraged.

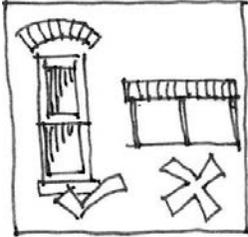


f. Heat Island Reduction

i. Buildings designed to support **green roofs** use plant material to reduce the downtown "heat island" effect, reduce run-off and enhance the urban environment. This has been appropriately integrated into the project design.

ii. Buildings designed with **white membrane roofs**, such as

TPO, do not absorb precipitation but are effective in reducing solar gain and summer operating costs.



3.1 Windows: Proper window placement and type are critical in good building design, both for function and for character.



a. **Window Proportions:** Many older buildings are characterized by vertical proportions of their windows. This proportioning can subtly reinforce the familiar feel of the neighborhood. Long horizontal openings can be jarring along a traditional street. The proposal has taken this into consideration and provided at least 3/5 horizontal/vertical ratio on all upper story windows.



b. **Visual Interest:** Windows have features such as lintels or transoms, if those features are part of the historic design of the neighborhood.

c. **Shutters:** Windows have appropriately sized shutters if those features are part of the historic design of the neighborhood. Shutters should be proportional to the size of the windows.



d. **Pedestrian-Scaled Commercial Display Windows** –appropriate sizing for commercial display windows is encouraged they should be scaled to the pedestrian and enhanced with traditional store-front elements such as trim and canopies.

e. **Bay windows or window hoods** are other examples of human-scaled elements that help enrich the streetscape when they have been appropriately integrated into the project design.



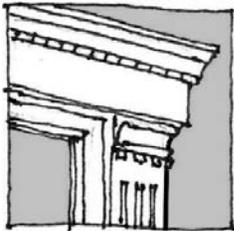
3.2 Assorted Elements: Other architectural elements, where appropriate, can enhance the building design and the neighborhood



a. **Substantial Trim**, in general, can indicate caring, and has a positive effect. The project has taken into account the amount and scale of the trim. It is important to use a thicker trim as thinly applied trim does little to set a positive tone.

b. **Decorative Woodwork** is associated with wooden porches and other design elements in Laconia, especially in the Weirs beach area. They have been appropriately integrated into the project design.

c. **Doors** present an opportunity to upgrade the appearance of the entire building. It is a point of contact with visitors and passers-by. Higher quality entry doors are encouraged.



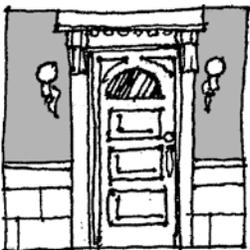
d. **Overhanging Marquees** mark important entries and provide signs of activity. They illuminate the sidewalk below to enhance a nighttime sense of security on the street.



e. **Masonry Design Elements:** Corbels are supporting brackets usually associated with masonry buildings. They add visual interest and allow for more complex and interesting forms along the front wall plane. They are commonly seen at the height of the cornice in older buildings. Other masonry design elements can also be creatively incorporated into a design to provide visual interest. These have been appropriately integrated into the project design.



f. **Horizontal Elements:** String courses, sign bands, and other horizontal elements are encouraged to help make a transition between first floor commercial show windows and upper story residential-scaled openings. This has been appropriately integrated into the project design.



g. A **frieze** is a decorative horizontal band usually found below the cornice at the top of a flat-roofed building. They have been appropriately integrated into the project design.

h. When an **accessory building** such as a storage building or garage is included in the project, it should harmonize with the main building in terms of design details and materials.



i. **Sign**, size, color, material and placement are provided to the Planning Board as part of the site plan process allowing discussion and input on their fit with the overall sight design.



j. **Excessive repetition** of identical building elements on a larger building expresses a lack of concern for the impact on the public. Windows are a good example. Even the old mills varied the design of windows from floor to floor while repeating the same opening in long lines. Excessive repetition is discouraged. For larger, multi-unit projects, repetition of one design is recommended to repeat no more than every 5 units.



k. **Variation in design elements** provide visual interest and reflect a desire to be part of a larger community character fabric. The project has different design elements across the large building face.

l. **Cohesive Theme**: The use of items in this Section show a cohesive theme and are not just a conglomeration of items to maximize points.

4. Materials: selection of appropriate materials enhances the neighborhood environment.

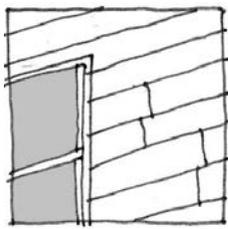
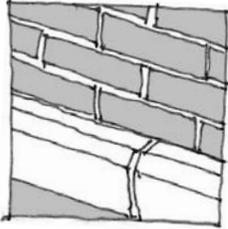
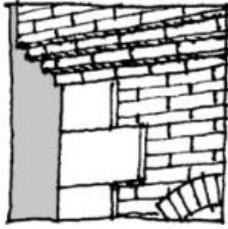
4.1 General Materials Preference: The materials used in the building construction should be found in many of the historic buildings throughout the neighborhood: Specifically brick, and stone in the Downtown and wood clapboard, cedar shingles in the Weirs

a. **Quality & Neighborhood Character:** In general, the materials used in cladding, roofing, etc are high in quality in character and common to the neighborhood - cite 6 examples of positive neighboring buildings.

b. **Authenticity:** The best option is the use of "real materials", as opposed to materials simulating others. This is independent of what those material may be.

4.2 Siding Materials: The material used in siding a structure reflects the use and nature of that structure and can affect the overall streetscape and neighborhood character.

a. **Preferred Options** - Natural Materials: The majority of traditional siding materials used throughout Laconia are masonry and wood.



i. **Masonry** (e.g. brick and stone; excluding utility-grade masonry, such as concrete block) is used where they are most commonly found, such as in the Downtown core.

ii. **Wood** is used as siding material where it is most commonly found, such as in the Weirs or Lakeport neighborhoods.

iii. **Mixed Materials:** A mix of real masonry and wood materials is used in areas where such a mix is commonly found, such as the Union Avenue corridor and other areas.

b. **Neutral Options-** Simulated natural materials such as fiberglass and cement board, etc. are neutral.

c. **Least Preferred Options:** The least preferred options include utility grade masonry, such as concrete blocks, used as a building finish, large areas of formed concrete wall without texture, vinyl clapboards, faux brick façades.

4.3 Roof Materials: The materials used in the building's roof construction should be found in many of the historic buildings throughout the neighborhood. Roof material selection can affect the overall streetscape and neighborhood character.

a. **Preferred Options:** Traditional roofing materials are found throughout Laconia and should be the default option when roofing.

i. **Slate roofing** is a premium, long lasting solution.

ii. Pitched, standard (earth tone) colored **metal roofing**, regardless of material or construction (e.g. standing seam copper roof) is also a preferred option.

iii. Real wood **shake** roofing shingles can also provide a sense of character.

c. **Neutral Options:** Enhanced asphalt shingles, so-called "architectural shingles" have a thicker profile and more variation in shape and color. This upgrade is ranked above the basic rectangular, uniform three-tab shingle.

d. **Least preferred option:** Three tab shingles are the baseline pitched roof and are neither encouraged nor discouraged.