

Village of Colonie Design Guidelines



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Colonie by Synthesis, LLC
2006

Design Guidelines

Village of Colonie

Acknowledgments

Village of Colonie

Mayor Frank Leak

Study Advisory Committee

Thomas Tobin - Village Trustee

Chris Dennis - Village Planning Commission Chairperson

Ann Krause - Village Planning Commission Member

Ron Laberge, Jr. - Village of Colonie Engineer

Kevin Novak - New York State Department of Transportation Region 1 Planning and Program Management

Anne Benware - Capital District Transportation Committee

Study Consultants

Synthesis, LLP

162 Jay Street

Schenectady, New York 12305

Richard A. Eats, ASLA

Louise Lowe, Associate AIA (Posthumously)

William Sprengnether

In memory of Louise Lowe, her passion for quality design will be greatly missed.

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INTRODUCTION

The Village of Colonie and the Capital District Transportation Committee's Linkage Planning Program have partnered to commission these Design Guidelines to steer future commercial development in the Village of Colonie along the Route 5 Corridor and other commercial properties within the Village of Colonie except those located in the Commercial D Zone. Design guidelines will help to guide the business image of the Village, and improve the quality of life, aesthetics and safety along the corridor. They are a tool used to enhance economic development and vitality in dynamic communities across the country. The quality of the physical environment has a direct bearing on its livability and prosperity. These guidelines aim to protect and improve the status of the Village of Colonie as a quality location to live and conduct business. Providing a tool for businesses, property owners, developers, designers & the Village Planning Commission, these Design Guidelines will aid in the design and review of new developments and proposed renovations of commercial properties. The intent of these guidelines and the review process will help ensure all future commercial developments will reflect the best character of the Village. These design guidelines will guide site design, architectural character, and signage appearance. The changes will be gradual, one property at a time. Application of these guidelines will continue to move the Village toward the vision for its commercial corridors articulated in both its recent Master Plan Update and the Route 5 Corridor Study in which the Village seeks to create visually appealing and pedestrian friendly places while supporting economic activity along

its commercial corridors. By creating a design aesthetic that encourages high quality design and uses durable and attractive materials while providing pedestrian scale amenities the design guidelines will be a tool that informs village officials, residents, business owners, and potential developers of the intention and direction the village wishes to grow.

APPLICABILITY AND REQUIRED APPROVALS

Prior to being granted a building permit or any other approval required from the Village before any change of use, exterior alteration (including windows, light fixtures, signs, awnings, sidewalks, fences, steps, paving or other exterior elements visible from a public street), restoration, reconstruction, or new construction on a commercial property in the Village of Colonie the applicant for approval must present applicable proposed designs for streetscape, site, building and/or sign designs to a Village of Colonie Design Advisory Committee (DAG) to ensure compliance with these recommended design guidelines. The DAG will be selected by the chairman of the Planning Commission for each new project application from the serving members of the Planning Commission as well as the legal counsel from the Zoning Board and the legal counsel from the Sign Review Board. A recommendation from this committee will be submitted to the Planning Commission to accompany a building permit request. In addition, in the case of demolition, notification to the Planning Commission and acknowledgement of receipt must be made prior to beginning a demolition project along the Route 5 corridor.

ADHERENCE AND CONFORMITY WITH APPLICABLE VILLAGE REGULATIONS

These guidelines are meant to supplement and enhance existing codes, ordinances and laws. All existing local and state laws will still apply to work undertaken on commercial properties within the Village. Signage must follow all current codes of the Village of Colonie. Recommendations contained in these Guidelines are in addition to regulations of the underlying zoning district. Where provisions of these guidelines conflict with those of the underlying zoning district, other provisions of the Zoning or Sign Ordinance, the New York State Building Code, or any other applicable laws or ordinances, the stricter provision shall apply. The intent is to allow good quality design and creative innovation.



An example of a typical upstate strip mall (Rome, NY). Negligible site improvements or attempts at creating beautiful neighborhood character have been made.



This artistic rendering gives an impression of what the Rome strip may become if simple landscaped improvements where installed and more consideration was given to the facade and building design.



A possible design alternative for new developments which moves structures close to the corridor, provides controlled access points, shared parking, pedestrian space & addresses the adjoining neighborhoods.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following design guidelines apply to the Village of Colonie. The goal of these guidelines is to provide guidance to the Village of Colonie, property owners and developers who propose new commercial development or redevelopment within the Village. Colonie and especially its primary commercial area along the Route 5 Corridor should have a high level of aesthetics and convey a positive attitude. The following framework is provided for consideration whenever new commercial site development or rehabilitation occurs.

Pedestrian Connections

To enhance the pedestrian quality of the district, provide connection between and within sites:

- Create a sense of community by providing pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular links from the corridor to nearby neighborhoods, parks, schools and other public destinations.
- Create a comprehensive pedestrian pathway system within a site and between adjacent sites, linking all buildings, parking areas and green spaces. Ensure that this network connects to any nearby pedestrian pathways.
- Consider providing designated walkways within and through large parking lots, with accented crosswalks provided as necessary for pedestrian safety when crossing traffic and at building entrances.
- Provide passageways within large building masses to allow pedestrians to pass through, particularly through shopping centers. These areas also provide for the creation of public common areas to act as plazas and provide locations for outdoor seating.

Sidewalks

Continuous sidewalks shall be provided along the full length of the property line to encourage pedestrian travel along the corridor, sidewalks should be separated from Central Avenue with a landscape buffer.

- Sidewalks should be uniformly constructed of reinforced concrete 5 feet wide by 6 inches thick.
- New sidewalks in the corridor should link smoothly into existing walks when necessary.
- Heavy duty, reinforced concrete sidewalks should be installed, continuously parallel to Central Avenue, where the sidewalk crosses driveways.

- Where driveways and sidewalks intersect, the sidewalk should be a different material, color or texture than the driveway.
- The landscaped buffer between the sidewalk edge and the road curb should be a minimum of five (5) feet from the curb edge.
- Sidewalk material should be consistent throughout the corridor.

Driveways

Limit the number of access points along the corridor, create a safe vehicular and pedestrian circulation system, and provide clearly defined points of entry and exit into a site.

- Sidewalks should continue through driveways uninterrupted.
- The number of access drives per parcel should preferably be limited to one (1) and is subject to review by the Village of Colonie Planning Commission through Site Plan Review. The exception to this may occur for gas stations or if a parcel has physical limitations requiring two points of access/egress.
- Driveways should be the minimum width required by NYSDOT regulations. Large undistinguished curb cuts should be discouraged.
- Access/egress drives will be located to maximize the distance to the nearest street intersection. Encourage shared drives between developments.
- Parking lots and driveways for adjacent parcels should be shared whenever possible.

Tree Lawns *The strip of land between the road and the sidewalk.*

Site designs for new development or redevelopment should include a landscaped buffer between the sidewalk and the edge of curb.

- Tree lawns should be a minimum of five (5) feet wide.
- Tree lawns should be continuous along the full length of the property.
- Grass should be established continuously for the full extent of the tree lawn, with mulch rings or planting beds around new and existing trees.



Central Avenue development with ample landscaping, screened parking and controlled access point.



Sidewalks should be marked with paint or a change in pavement when they intersect driveways.



In front of new developments a landscaped buffer (tree lawn) should be provided between the edge of the curb and sidewalk.



A residential property that has been appropriately transformed into commercial use. The parking is located at the back of the property and the large valuable trees were left to thrive in the front yard.



Large parking lots should include adequately sized landscaped beds.

Landscaping

Site designs should provide ample landscaping that shades and cools the corridor and provides visual enhancement for the Village of Colonie.

- Zoning requires twenty percent (20%) of a site be reserved as “green space” for landscaped areas.
- Excluding the tree lawn and drainage structures (retention/detention basins, etc...), a minimum of ten percent (10%) of the site should be dedicated to landscaped area distributed equally within the parking area and around the building.
- Retention/detention basins and other drainage structures that collect water above ground should be located behind or to the sides of structures whenever practical and possible.
- Landscaped buffers shall be used to define the edge and mitigate the impact of commercial uses along the corridor and adjacent residential neighborhoods north and south of the corridor.
- All mulch within landscaped beds should be of a natural color. Dyed or painted mulches create a cheap and artificial appearance.
- Parking lots shall be planned to include landscaped islands and landscaped strips between parking aisles whenever feasible to include them.
- Mechanical, service, and trash facilities shall be well screened with plants, appealing stockade fencing or decorative walls while allowing necessary access.
- Existing large trees should be incorporated into the design of new developments or redevelopments whenever possible.
- Small remnant patches of landscape area should not be indiscriminately paved to avoid maintenance; rather these areas should be planted with low maintenance landscape material.

Street Trees

Site design should include adequate tree installation to improve the visual aesthetic of the corridor and shade heat generating parking lots.

- Trees planted in the tree lawn should be centered between the sidewalk and the curb edge.
- Tree species should be selected for their ability to thrive along the Route 5 corridor. Selected

species should be known as not being exotic invasive plants. A list of recommended street trees is attached in Appendix A.

- Trees should be located to provide shading and improve visual appeal without reducing visibility and without compromising vehicular safety along the corridor.

Parking Requirements

New development and redevelopments shall provide adequate parking but should strive to minimize the total paved surface.

- Parking spaces shall be calculated as per Section 242-8 of the Village of Colonie Zoning Code. However, the parking standards should be applied with flexibility considering shared parking, and banked parking options.
- Parking should be designed to provide easy, safe access to buildings for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles.
- All parking, loading, and unloading areas should be sufficient to serve the commercial and office uses within each development parcel.
- Reduce scale of parking lots by breaking up large lots with landscape strips and landscape islands.
- Parking lots located along roadways should be screened with low fences, walls or hedges.
- Parking areas should generally provide for 90 degree parking, utilizing parking spaces that are dimensioned minimally at nine (9) feet by eighteen (18) feet with twenty-four (24) foot wide two-way travel lanes.
- Wherever possible, travel lanes in parking lots should be double loaded to create the most efficient parking layout. Parking areas should be constructed with granite or concrete curbs to separate vehicular and pedestrian traffic and to define corners and traffic islands (asphalt curbing is not acceptable).
- Parking areas should concentrate vehicles in the side yard or rear yard wherever possible.



Modern neighborhood center developments should contain pedestrian scale lighting, street trees, adequate parking and other pedestrian amenities.



This bank facility employs quality landscaping and sensitively designed lighting in order to create a quality establishment that will blend into a residential or neighborhood zone adjacent to it.



This parking lot is designed with greenspace, granite curbing and an ornamental wall. All these features create an aesthetically appealing parking area.



Consider adding to the quality of life of the district through site and architectural design.



Setbacks should be used to create special amenities such as cafe seating, plazas, or gardens.

Site Lighting

New developments and redevelopments should include a lighting plan to serve multiple purposes, including good vehicular and pedestrian visibility, safety and security, illumination of activity area, and accent lighting for architectural features and landscaping. Glare and spillage of light into adjacent properties should be avoided.

- All new developments and redevelopments should submit professionally prepared lighting plans that show cut-off fixtures that shield adjacent residential neighborhoods and control the direction of light.
- The light source is encouraged to be metal halide.
- Low noise level lights should be used, especially adjacent to residential areas.
- Pedestrian level lighting should be provided along the corridor as well as along pedestrian walkways and links.
- The light source for all luminaires should not be visible.
- Wall packs mounted on buildings should down-light and/or be used as a wall wash only. Incorporate shields so that lamping for wall packs is not visible. Floodlights and spotlights shall not be used for general lighting purposes.
- All wiring for new site lighting should be underground.
- Maximum illuminance shall not exceed 0 foot candles (as measured on a vertical plan) at the property line between new commercial or multi-family development or redevelopments and residential properties. At the property line between new commercial or multi-family developments or redevelopments and existing commercial properties or multi-family developments the illumination shall not exceed .5 foot candles as measured on a vertical plan. New lighting shall avoid nuisance to neighborhood properties and shall not have adverse effect on the character of the area.

Front Yard Setbacks

The siting and immediate setting around buildings should create a pedestrian friendly area and an attractive street front.

- New buildings and additions should respect the setbacks of buildings in the immediate vicinity where appropriate.
- Setbacks and building fronts should provide features to enhance the pedestrian nature of the district, including flowers, benches, and café seating areas. Setbacks should be pleasing and attractive for visitors to the area as well as to local users.
- Setback areas should be used for landscaping and small commercial uses designed primarily to enhance the pedestrian nature of the district.

Particularly in areas with front parking lots, low walls or well maintained hedges are appropriate to screen cars from the sidewalk. Traditional low brick walls and fences no more than three (3) feet in height and no more than sixty percent (60%) solid, preferably backed by trees or fronted by landscaping, should be used to define pedestrian areas. Landscaping, or other features, which block views to the street, should be prohibited.

Prohibited Materials

- a. Chain link fences
- b. Split rail and rough sawn lumber fences
- c. Vinyl or PVC fencing
- d. Asphalt curbing

The minimum recommend setback is 25 feet and the maximum recommended setback is 100 feet.

Corner Buildings

On corner lots building mass should be focused at the corner to anchor the building and promote the corner as a gateway along the corridor. Consider limiting setback of new buildings at gateways so that the architecture can help define the area.

Gas Stations and Drive-thru's

Gas stations and similar buildings should be constructed up close to the front of the lots. The associated pumps, canopies and parking can be placed on the side and rear to be screened from view as much as possible. Drive-thru windows and menu boards should be located at the sides or rear of businesses.

Public Spaces

Design every project site for maximum utility of open space for ventilation, sunlight, recreation, and views for both new and existing buildings. Open space areas may include benches, art, landscape,



Consider lighting for comfortable evening use.



This ornamental wall screens the parking lot and creates a street edge. Trees are used to define the roadway and provide protection for pedestrians.



Design guidelines should not preclude the use of contemporary design styles. A high level of transparency at the 1st floor is beneficial to pedestrian comfort.

water, and hardscape features. Common open space areas shall be usable by the public for various outdoor activities and leisure.

Building Design

Note: For any of the historic buildings within the district, including the movie theater near New Karner Road, the standards from the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation shall apply.

As described above, the busy commercial corridor contrasts with the quiet nature of the neighborhoods within the Village of Colonie. New buildings and building improvements along the corridor should enhance the pedestrian nature of the district, in scale, interest, detailing, and amenities to be a positive aesthetic addition to the area. Design for buildings in the Commercial District should provide quality design, durable materials, pedestrian comfort and quality of life, with connections to the neighborhoods.

- Include interest in the building massing and detailing to create pedestrian comfort, human scale and to provide an asset to the Village and the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Additions to existing structures should take into account the entire building to create a cohesive building design that enhances the most significant architectural features of the building.
- Consider including architectural detailing to complement the significant surrounding buildings and neighborhoods.
- Include details that increase building interest and create light and shadow, such as piers, storefront windows, upper windows, columns, arcades, porticos, trellises, porches, balconies, dormers, awnings and brise soleils, with attention to trim and eaves. Consider including a change in wall plane at transitions between materials.
- Consider orientation of the sun and natural light in building design. Brise soleils, opaque awnings, porticos or trellises may enhance south facing windows or walls. North facing windows may benefit from glass awnings, to allow north light to penetrate building, while adding rain protection. Allow for plazas, outdoor courtyards or seating areas oriented toward the sun adequately shaded.
- Repeat design and decorative building elements in all elevations, not just the front façade.
- Avoid long expanses of blank walls.
- Encourage a diversity of architectural materials, forms and styles that respect the traditions of architecture within the Village, including gable or hipped roof forms, standing seam metal roofing, brick and wood siding (not vinyl).

- Modern architectural styles should not be avoided. However, buildings of moderns style should follow the design guidelines recommended in this document.
- The architectural character of individual and groups of buildings should be coordinated to create a locally distinctive character, identity and sense of place.

Building Scale, Massing and Height

- Building massing should reflect traditional lot widths and create a composition with a human scale. This will help reduce the perceived mass of larger buildings.
- Consider breaking up the front of a larger building by dividing it into individual bays or blocks of twenty (20) to forty (40) feet wide.
- Use variation in textures, materials, patterns, colors, building plane and details to break down the mass and scale of the building. Consider using articulation of the building to express base, water tables, string courses, cornices, and fenestration to reduce the apparent size of a large building.
- Use transparency in design to open the façade to pedestrians, including storefront or large display windows, porticoes, overhangs, and partially enclosed terraces.
- The height of buildings should be within that allowable by the zoning ordinance. Multiple story buildings are encouraged.



This shopping center within the District attempts to relate to a neighborhood scale and traditional lot widths, employs brick, a good, historical, durable, modular material, and has an interesting roofline.



Seating and landscaping provide for human comfort and can make visitors want to return.



This regional shopping center provides outdoor seating, uses durable, quality materials and detailing to provide a human scale.



The center of the Community Center facade projects, and has a raised roofline to break up the massing and accentuate the entrance.



Consider the shape of a building, its massing, roofline and siting in its design.



Use massing and detailing to create human scale and an asset to the Village. The detailing of these buildings provides pedestrian interest and human scale.



Rooftlines

Rooftlines have functional purposes, such as to direct water away from the building and to allow for shading of the window below. In addition, roof design provides opportunities to create an interesting building profile, to enhance the building mass, and to effect the overall composition of the building design.

- The top of the facade should be terminated in a way that complements and enhances the character of the building and the surrounding Commercial District.
- Rooflines should be designed in proportion to the overall height and mass of the proposed building, creating a distinction between the top of the building and the lower floors.
- Overhangs on pitched roofs should be sufficient to keep water off the face of the building, and to allow for architectural articulation.
- Flat roofed commercial buildings may have a parapet to raise the height of the façade to create an appropriate scale. The parapet or roof should be detailed to create an attractive, balanced facade.
- Long horizontal roof or parapet lines are not acceptable. Interrupt rooflines with architectural treatment and features. The maximum acceptable unbroken roofline is thirty (30) feet.
- Distinctive roof forms, profiles, and cornices should be maintained. Alterations, which are neither consistent with the original design nor significant in their own right, should be discouraged and or removed.
- Roofs shall be an integral part of building design. False mansard roofs are not acceptable in new developments or redevelopments.

Entrances

The entrance to the building is the introduction to the interior, and arguably the most important design element of the structure. Entrances should be attractive to vehicular passersby and to pedestrians.

- Whatever the building's architectural style, define and celebrate building entries by use of human scale architectural details and elements such as arches, posts, awnings, transoms, extensive use of glass and first floor transparency, attractive doors and hardware, etc.
- Orient main entries toward the primary direction of access. Secondary entries from street, facing a public space in the case of a grouping of buildings around a public plaza, or from the interior of a block or parking lot should be designed to complement the overall design of the building.
- The building facade, which faces the primary street should be open and inviting.

- Safe, comfortable and adequate pedestrian access should be provided to the primary entrance from the parking area and from the sidewalk along the primary roadway.
- Rear entrances should be developed as necessary to provide access to Commercial District businesses and maintained to support the overall appearance and convenience of the District.

Building Facades

The cumulative effect of the building façades creates the overall character of the commercial areas. The care in their design, detailing and maintenance can enhance or deter the community image of the Village. Facades also project an image for the businesses they house, and can provide a sense of care and community pride for their inhabitants.

- Whether the building is an example of modern or traditional architecture, it should respect traditional rhythms and the scale of other buildings in the area; it should also work to enhance the overall character of the area through quality materials, building details and craftsmanship.
- Building facades should provide a high standard of construction and appearance.
- Architectural detailing should be designed to enhance the human scale of the buildings. Building facades can be articulated with architectural features such as piers and columns, porticos, pitched roofs with details such as detailed fascias, or flat roofs with interesting cornices, recessed and projecting bays, and three-dimensional elements of architectural details, balconies, signs, trellises, porticoes and awnings to create a high quality design. Large expanses of unarticulated blank wall should be avoided.
- Where existing development does not provide appropriate examples, new development should strive to implement the intended vision with quality design rather than repeat existing patterns.
- Building detailing and architectural elements and features, such as signs, lighting, and awnings should enhance the individual character of the building or grouping of buildings, and should complement the colors and features of adjacent buildings.
- At corner sites, facades facing side streets should be designed to transition gracefully from the front façade, and improve the overall character of the area. Side and rear facades visible from the street, parking or from lots by pedestrians should be designed to be neat and attractive.
- Chain businesses should be designed to fit into and enhance the Village commercial corridors, and complement the surrounding neighborhoods. Design each project specifically with regard to its own site to enhance the environment and improve the life of the corridors.



This building breaks the traditional corporate mold, has a neighborhood scale, and massing, and uses traditional facade materials, details, roof and window treatments.



This shopping center provides comfortable outdoor seating, uses durable materials, and has some interest, but the large expanses of blank wall are beyond human scale.



This regional mall uses architectural design to create transition spaces and pedestrian scaled architecture.



This entrance catches the attention of passersby and is attractive to shoppers.



Building entry should be inviting. Orient main entries toward public streets.



Well designed entrance canopy.



Building facades with base, middle and top, varied massing and attention to light and shadow.

- Where making transitions between developments, avoid jarring contrasts in building scale, forms, materials or colors.
- Use a proportion of openings vertical and horizontal that is generally consistent with the style of the building. More traditionally designed openings are typically vertically proportioned.
- Storefronts should use large display windows at the street level.

Storefronts and First Floor Office Design

Storefronts provide an opportunity to present an establishment's character, and project a business image. They are an invitation into the building. A neat and attractive showcase for appealing product or service displays enhances the image of a business and improves the pedestrian nature of the district. Quality storefront design, restoration and renovation can go a long way towards enhancing the apparent economic success of an area, and create a place where visitors will want to return. Typical strip development has nearly done away with storefront displays, and reserves all display of goods to the interior. This is typical of automobile oriented versus pedestrian friendly environments.

Storefronts and ground floor offices should have a character that will enhance the human or pedestrian character of the commercial area, rather than be designed as "big box" style architecture, with little to no detail.

- Consider using a pattern of solids and voids for openings that relate to a more traditional building design in the corridor, even in "modern" construction. Storefronts should reflect the significant storefront rhythms and proportions found throughout attractive pedestrian commercial districts.
- New storefronts or ground floor offices and alterations should complement or enhance the overall design of the applicant's building, and should be compatible with and complement the scale, massing and character or other significant details of their own building facades. They should enhance the district with appropriate colors, high quality material, well designed details and thoughtful door locations. Storefronts should relate to the rest of the buildings and the site's design.
- Street level facades, should be differentiated from the upper floors to create a visual base for the building and a pedestrian friendly scale. This can be achieved by architectural treatment and materials selection.
- Sixty to seventy-five percent of the storefront, other retail, or commercial office building street level facade should be transparent through the use of glass windows, doors and window displays. The intent is to maximize the transparency of the storefront in order to enhance the pedestrian nature of the street, and invite entry to the business. This may be partially offset by the use of pergolas,

porticoes, landscaping or other pedestrian friendly enhancements.

- Attractive storefront displays are an important feature for the pedestrian experience. Storefront display areas should be well thought out and constructed using quality materials and craftsmanship to create attractive changeable displays. Attention should be paid also to enhancing the permanent display floor, casework, shelving, display platforms, background, and interior storefront lighting. (See Building Lighting).

Windows and Doors

Windows and doors should be part of an overall composition of solid and void of the building. They should be of a quality and composition to enhance the overall façade while serving the practical purposes of protecting the building's interior from the elements and providing daylight, air, passage and security. They also provide an opportunity to allow for window displays, to enhance the character of the building they occupy, and to provide transparency and an inviting character at the entry.

- A high percentage of glass in the entrance doors and proximate to the entrance is generally recommended for creating welcoming commercial facades.
- When refurbishing an existing building window replacements should match, to the greatest extent practical, original window size, style and configuration.
- For upper story windows, necessary repair or replacement work should match the original window in material and style, sash configurations, and size.
- As a rule, a deep sash profile and window depth behind the face of the building adds aesthetic interest to the façade, and should be sought in window selection. (Wood windows and doors are preferred, but high quality metal or clad is acceptable.)
- Only clear colorless glass (no tinted glass) should be used for display windows. Translucent or colored glass may be used for design details.
- For storefronts at the sidewalk level, storefront windowsills should be located 16 inches to 24 inches with a maximum of thirty (30) inches above the finished floor.

Building Materials, Textures and Historic Details

The choice of materials and texture has a great impact on the perception of the property and the district. The objective is to create an attractive area that evokes economic prosperity with visual interest and pedestrian comforts to encourage repeat visits and a high degree of visitor comfort. In addition,



Inviting modern storefront with integral signage.



Successful transition of residence to commercial storefront.



Attractive transparent storefront, signage and display.



These high quality red doors add interest and transparency to the storefront, and the building facade addresses both front and side streets successfully.



The first floor "windows" are actually doors that pivot and slide, opening the first floor completely to outdoor seating.

traditional materials, natural materials, and quality materials for construction should be used.

- Choose high quality materials and paint to prevent degradation and for ease of maintenance. Route 5 in the Village of Colonie has a mix of architectural styles. Façade improvements should be composed of materials that should be equal to or exceed the quality of appearance of traditional materials. They can encompass a wide range of materials from brick, stone, and wood to metal panels, ironwork and glass. Masonry should be encouraged, as it is a durable, low maintenance material that provides texture.
- Use materials to provide visual interest. Encourage materials that offer texture.
- Use quality materials consistently on all visible sides of commercial, office and multi-family residential buildings.
- Uncover, retain and restore any significant original building elements that still exist, such as cornices, window trim and roof brackets. Historic building materials and details should not be covered over. Building alterations that are neither consistent with the original design nor significant in their own right should be removed.
- In cases where improvements are to be made to commercial properties with prior additions that contrast in style, attempts should be made to bring any significant character of the older structure into the improvements, in order to consider the overall design in the total building composition and detailing. If unable to rehabilitate original materials and/or details, replacement materials and design should match or exceed the quality of the original.

Prohibited or Questionable Materials:

- a. Artificial products such as plastics, vinyl, aluminum siding, plywood siding and T1-11.
- b. Rough hewn lumber.
- c. Artificial stucco products are not prohibited but are not recommended. If they are to be used, a sufficient amount of detail should be included to mimic the interest of traditional buildings.
- d. In most cases, modular cultured stone units and plain concrete clock should not be used, unless specific approval is granted.

Color

Color is an intrinsic part of the overall character and composition of architecture and site design, and can enhance the appearance of the districts . Colors should be carefully chosen. Brick, concrete and stone have an inherent color. Other surfaces have applied color from paint or enamel. Awnings, lighting and signs provide another opportunity for color.

- A coordinated palette of colors should be composed for each development.
- Colors should be selected to enhance the overall character and composition of the building, be harmonious with the overall streetscape, and improve the district's appearance.
- Generally use of natural tints of materials such as reds, browns, tans, grays and greens are best as primary colors. Save bright accent colors for awnings and signs on commercial buildings.
- A simple color scheme is generally suited to a quality storefront. Generally, there is a wall color, trim color, accent color and roof color.
- The quality of preparation for painting as well as the quality of the paint can go a long way toward extending the life of the paint job. Use paint manufacturer's top quality line colors.
- Color variation can give visual interest to a building.
- Do not use strong colors that produce the impression that the entire building is a sign.

Building Lighting

Lighting presents an opportunity to enhance a façade and the surrounding area. The lighting fixtures chosen can add to the character of the storefront, improve the business image, and enliven the street. Picturesque, articulated evening lighting creates an appealing district to attract evening visitors.

- The fixtures chosen and their illumination qualities should complement the architectural character of the building and district.
- Lighting of storefronts and of storefront displays until 11:00 PM should be encouraged to enhance the overall appearance of the district in the evening.
- Building lighting should be used to illuminate main signs, streetside storefront displays, and the building's architectural features, as well as to enhance outside seating areas.
- Lighting should not call attention to itself (such as blinking lights) or cause light spillage to pedestrians, adjacent buildings or to the sky, temporary holiday lights excluded.
- Awnings should not be internally illuminated to avoid overemphasizing the storefront at the expense of the rest of the building's facade.
- Building lighting when combined with existing street lighting should be a maximum of five (5) foot candles measured at a point approximately five (5) feet out from the center of the building's main street façade.



Façade articulation, a canopy, abundant windows and a transparent door create a welcoming storefront.



Traditional materials and detailed façade articulation are appropriate in this district.



Lighting adds character to a facade.



Natural materials also are part of a facade's color palette.



Fiber optic lighting in outdoor pavers can provide interest.



The use of stone on this facade adds texture, is durable and is low maintenance.

Prohibited Items:

- a. Industrial lighting is prohibited.
- b. Low pressure sodium should not be used.

Awnings and Canopies

Awnings and canopies can be used to reinforce the design characteristics of the building's architecture, provide an opportunity for a design accent, and also serve practical functions. They can shield pedestrians from rain, and can shade them and merchandise from the sun. Generally, they are not appropriate on the north side of buildings that will get little to no sun, unless transparent for weather protection and aesthetic appeal.

For the purposes of these guidelines, the definition of an awning is a protective sloped projection over the door, window or storefront of a building, generally supported by a frame attached to the building. A canopy is a horizontal, ornamental and protective flat projection from a building façade, generally cantilevered out from a building that may be supported by cables from the building wall above.

- Design awnings and canopies with pedestrian comfort, solar and rain protection, as well as good building aesthetics in mind.
- Coordinate the choice of awning and canopy designs, proportions, colors and materials as part of an overall building design scheme. Note: they should not be the primary design element of the building.
- Place awnings and canopies within and in relation to the structural frame of the storefront, window or doorway; generally, this means within a window frame or within the frame formed by the storefront cornice or sign panel above and by vertical piers or columns on either side. Alternatively, they may be mounted between a transom and display windows to allow light into a business.
- The frame of the awning or canopy should be a minimum of eight (8) feet, six (6) inches above the pavement. The bottom of an awning or canopy valance should be a minimum of eight (8) feet above the pavement.
- Valances should extend a maximum of twelve (12) inches.
- Generally, canopies should have thin visual profiles so as to obscure as little of the building and storefront as possible.
- Color and style of any awnings for upper story windows should coordinate with any street level awnings.
- Good quality cotton or acrylic awning canvas, such as Sunbrella fabric is acceptable. Well-designed

canopies or awnings of glass and steel, or standing seam metal are permitted to enhance the overall building design. Other materials are subject to approval.

Items to be discouraged

- a. *Backlit awnings are prohibited, but quality down lighting is permitted to illuminate the sidewalk and storefront.*
- b. *Materials such as vinyl, plastic, aluminum (except for awning frames) and fiberglass are prohibited for awnings since they generally detract from the character of the commercial district.*
- c. *Bubble awnings.*
- d. *Awnings may not project across multiple buildings, but should enhance the individual nature of their building.*

Air Conditioners, Satellite Dishes, and Roof Mounted Equipment and Mechanicals and Other Appurtenances

- Air conditioners should not project beyond the building face. For permanently installed units, openings should be trimmed to provide a finished opening around unit.
- Satellite dishes and cable wiring should not be visible from across the street of the principle building façade.
- Appurtenances should be installed as to not detract from the building appearance or cover or damage architectural details.
- Roof-mounted equipment and mechanicals shall not be visible from any ground angle. Their masking should be an integral part of overall architectural design with regard to form, materials and color.

Façade Maintenance and Building Stabilization

Well-maintained buildings show pride and care in the village and will enhance its economic viability and quality of life. In addition, general building and façade stabilization is important to preserve the architectural integrity and longevity of the building. Facades should be maintained in a state of general cleanliness to give a sense of economic success and a sense of pride in the community, and to impart the desire of visitors to return. It is the responsibility of the building and business owners to maintain their buildings in good repair. Cracked windows, peeling paint, and burnt out lamps all diminish the professional image and pedestrian nature of the Village's commercial areas.



Though this is effective signage, is this the image the Village wants to portray ?



Coordinated colors and quality site lighting, building lighting, and significant glazing create a complete and appealing architectural.



An original take on custom awnings.



Colors, signs, details, and awnings are well coordinated on this facade in Mystic, Connecticut.

All work needs to conform to state building code requirements, per the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and per good trade practices for good quality construction and rehabilitation. Work should include but not be limited to:

- Masonry repair and repointing which should follow the National Park Service Historic Preservations Briefs.
- Cornice flashing and repair.
- Window flashing and repair.
- Building detail repair including wood and metals.

SIGNS

Signs are the flagship of the quality and character of the commercial district. They present a vital design opportunity, as well as identify the name of the establishment. Their design can show the flair of a business, relay the nature of the business and present an image of the quality of the business. Signs should be harmonious with the architectural style of the property and enhance the character of the surrounding district. Signs provide an opportunity to add color, interest, detail, and depth to the façade.

Sign designs must be included along with the building permit application to relay the overall building design, and sign design approval must be obtained from the Village Sign Review Board. Signage must conform with the Code of the Village of Colonie, Chapter 181, Signs (Village of Colonie Sign Law). Please review this code prior to the design, erection, construction, alteration, rebuilding, enlargement or relocation of any sign within the Village of Colonie.

General Guidelines

- All signs should be of professional quality.
- The sign design should be clear and easy to read, and balance a positive image for the business it represents, and the overall district appearance.
- Sign design and colors should be part of an attractive and uncluttered design of the storefront and building as a whole. Signs should be placed so that they do not obstruct architectural details and elements of the building.
- Consider creating signs that are not flat, but three-dimensional through depth, materials, and construction. Attention can also be given to create interest with the sign profile.

- The use of trade images within sign design, such as bread for a market, a coffee cup for a café or a bagel for a bagelry provides easy trade recognition and understanding for visitors and passersby and can add character and color to the storefront and the district.
- Sign copy should be limited to the name, address, function, and logo of the establishment.
- Signs are permitted only to refer to the establishments located within the buildings where the signs are located, and not off-premise businesses.
- Attractive sign lighting should be designed in conjunction with sign design.
- Historically significant signs should be retained if possible. Significant signs painted on masonry walls on buildings like the former/ historic movie theater, for example, should be retained if possible, even if the business is no longer in existence.
- Be considerate in sign placement to not obstruct the visibility of adjacent properties of businesses.
- Separate number signs of the street address with twelve (12) inch letters in Arabic numerals shall be affixed to the building per the Village of Colonie Code.
- Additional signs allowed in the Code of the Village of Colonie not listed below, including temporary signs, drive thru signs, signs on parked vehicles, on-site advisory signs, and signs in residential districts shall be crafted with attention to quality design and fabrication to make the signs attractive, balancing visibility with overall enhancement of the district. These signs shall not detract from the aesthetics of the district, nor the intent of these guidelines.

Sign Types

Awning and Canopy Signs. Awning and canopy signs are visual messages incorporated into the valance of an awning, or affixed to a canopy.

- Signs on awnings should be well designed to enhance the facade and district while still advertising the business.
- A maximum of eight (8) inch letters should be provided on the valance of an awning, or twelve (12) inch letters on a structural canopy.
- Awnings may incorporate attractive professionally created logos or type on the sloped portion of the awning, or valance, which may not exceed fifteen percent (15%) of the sloped area.
- Signage should hang no lower than eight (8) feet above grade.
- Appropriately designed quality metal letters are generally appropriate for structural canopies. Freestanding metal channel letters with neon can also be acceptable.



Air conditioners should not project over sidewalks.



Signs should not cover historic detailing of upper facade. Overall untidy designs and lack of maintenance detract from a building's professional appearance.
Courtesy of National Trust for Historic Preservation.



Building should be maintained in a good state of repair.



The oldest and arguably the most majestic building along the corridor has unfortunately fallen into a state of deep disrepair and neglect.

Banner Signs. Banner signs are not permitted in the Village of Colonie.

Freestanding Signs. Freestanding signs are not attached to or part of any building but separate and permanently affixed in or upon the ground; may not exceed 6 feet in height above the ground on which they are affixed. Included are pole signs, pylon signs, and monument signs.

- They must follow Chapter 181, Signs, of the Village of Colonie Code.
- Should show quality craftsmanship and design
- They must be a minimum of fifteen (15) feet from any property line, and a minimum twenty-five (25) feet from the street curb line of the property upon which it is erected.

Portable Signs. Portable signs are not structurally attached to the ground, a building, a structure, or another sign. Portable signs include sidewalk signs, A-frame signs, and menu and sandwich board signs. Portable signs are not currently allowed in the Village of Colonie.

- Portable signs should not exceed ten (10) square feet per sign face, and neither exceed four (4) feet in height nor exceed thirty (30) inches width.
- Portable signs should not impede pedestrian or vehicular traffic, and must be placed in the immediate vicinity of the advertised establishment.
- Portable signs should not be permanently affixed to anything and should be removed when the premises advertised is closed.
- One portable sign maybe appropriate per business establishment.
- The sign may not include any moving parts.
- All exposed surfaces, including edges of sign should be finished with trim.

Projecting Signs. Projecting signs provide visibility of the establishments name from the side approach. This type of sign is not currently allowed in the Village of Colonie (Chapter 181-10E, H and Chapter 181-9 B, C) but can be especially suited to the desired “Village” nature of the commercial areas, particularly if they abut pedestrian areas. Projecting signs should be used to complement or replace the principal wall sign and are especially suitable for displaying symbols and logos. Projecting signs extend horizontally more than nine (12) inches from the face of a building. (There is a provision in the zoning for special exceptions and modifications to the code to allow for and encourage excellence in planning and design of signs. See Chapter 181-16A.)

- Projecting signs should be located above storefront display windows and below second story windowsills. In the case of a single story building, projecting signs should be located above storefront display windows and below the roofline.
- A projecting sign should be mounted with its lowest point a minimum of nine (9) feet above the sidewalk and should extend from the building face a maximum of five (5) feet, and all parts must be a minimum of five (5) feet from any sidewalk area.
- The size and location of a projecting sign should complement neighboring signs and the building to which it is attached, but may not be any larger than ten (10) square feet per face.
- Projecting signs that overhang the Village right of way may require a special revocable permit from the Village of Colonie.

Roof Signs or Parapet Signs. Roof signs are not allowed in the Village of Colonie, and require a special exemption sign permit, which may only be granted for an exceptionally high level of design.

- Individual or script channel letters with neon are acceptable.
- Individual freestanding metal letters are acceptable.

Shopping Center Signs. A shopping center consists of three or more contiguous businesses sharing landlord, owner, person or entity with shared parking, access from outside and as defined in the Code of the Village Of Colonie, Chapter 181.

Wall Signs. Wall signs are the most common sign type. They are painted on or attached to the outside of wall of a building with the face of the sign in the plane parallel to such wall, and extending a maximum of twelve (12) inches from the face of such wall to face of sign.

- Wall signs should be coordinated with the architectural features of the building, and should not obscure architectural detail.
- Wall signs should be located within a traditional sign band location. For buildings without a sign band, wall signs should be located above the top of first floor storefront openings and below second floor windowsills or below the roofline on a one-story building.
- Wall signs should be a maximum of two (2) feet, six (6) inches high.
- Wall signs should fit within the architectural framework of the storefront.



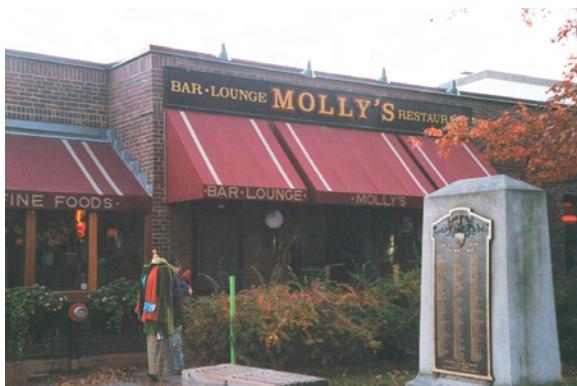
Metal letters are an alternative sign style.



This sign in a traditional sign band location has recessed letters in cast stone, for a clean, quality look.



Signs can add character to the district, and should be part of an overall facade design.



Wall sign, and signage can be added to the valance of an awning.

- Lettering on wall signs should be an average of twelve (12) inches high and a maximum of eighteen (18) inches high and occupy about sixty-five percent (65%) of the sign.

Window Signs. Window signs painted or permanently affixed on glass windows may provide an attractive & affordable touch to the storefront.

- Window signs should complement the window display.
- Window signs should not occupy more than twenty percent (20%) of the window surface.
- Window signs should not obscure the display area.
- Window signs are generally placed one third of the window height down from the top of the window.
- Text is often successful if horizontally aligned within twelve (12) to eighteen (18) inches of the base of the storefront window, can be successful, as can text, with or without logos, centrally designed within storefront windows, or door.
- The color of the letters should contrast with the display background.
- Typically, vinyl computer cut letters and logos of professional quality and permanently affixed to glass are preferred.
- Window signs affixed to the glass may only include the name of the establishment, a very brief description of the service offered, a logo, and/or building address number.
- Window signs within storefront displays, if used at all, should only briefly provide more detailed or changeable information about the business such as the phone number, hours of operation, or services offered.

Sign Lighting. Lighting for signage presents an opportunity to enhance the district in evening hours, and attractive light fixtures can enhance the overall appearance of the building. All lighting devices and wiring shall conform with Chapter 181-7 of the Village of Colonie Sign Law.

- Lights should be chosen to be integral to and to enhance the character of the building.
- Individual lighting fixtures should be positioned to provide even lighting.
- Internally lit signs should have an opaque background to allow the illumination of letters only.



Trade images provide easy trade recognition, and can add color and character to the storefront and the district.



This freestanding sign is simple and high quality.

- When exposed lamps are used to illuminate signs, they should be equipped with gooseneck reflectors, or other devices arranged so as to concentrate the illumination upon the area of the sign and prevent glare. Special attention should be given to illumination so as to avoid glare to pedestrians, motor vehicles, or adjacent properties.
- Each outside lighting installation and each illuminated sign should be controlled by a 24-hour timer by Intermatic or equivalent.
- Allowable lighting types are listed under building lighting.

Sign Maintenance. To provide a quality, economically vibrant image to the district, signage must be maintained in a condition to enhance rather than detract from the district appearance. All shall conform with Chapter 181-8 of the Village of Colonie Sign Law.

- Signs should be maintained regularly. Broken, faded, worn signs and empty supports suggest vacant or inactive businesses.
- Unused sign elements such as boxes and supports should be removed.
- Historic signs shall be allowed or encouraged to renew by special approval

CONCLUSION

These design guidelines have been prepared following the recommendation of both the CDTC sponsored Route 5 Corridor Study and the Village of Colonie Master Plan.

These design guidelines are intended to direct the future commercial development of the Village of Colonie toward a vision, which integrates commercial corridors including NY Route 5/Central Avenue with the surrounding neighborhoods by improving the visual appeal and accessibility of businesses along the corridor while minimizing effects to adjacent neighborhoods.

By creating a design aesthetic that encourages high quality design and uses durable and attractive materials while providing pedestrian scale amenities the design guidelines will be a tool that informs Village officials, residents, business owners, and potential developers of the intention and direction the Village wishes to grow.



Any text on the sloping portion of an awning should be attractive and professionally designed.



This roof sign is part of an overall facade composition.



Portable signs can be an attractive addition to the streetscape. They should have smooth edges, and not impede pedestrian or vehicular traffic.



This shopping center sign is well designed and constructed of quality materials.

These guidelines contain recommendations on the following subjects:

- Pedestrian connections, sidewalks, and sidewalk placement and design.
- Landscaping, street trees, and lighting.
- Building massing, setbacks, and heights.
- Building placement on a site, and location of entrances.
- Facade design, detailing, building accents, materials, windows, doors, and lighting.
- Signage and sign types.

Application of these guidelines will continue to move the Village toward the vision for its commercial corridors articulated in both its recent Master Plan Update and the Route 5 Corridor Study in which the Village seeks to create visually appealing and pedestrian friendly places while supporting economic activity along these heavily traveled routes.



Roof Signs can add character to the district.