

Town of North Greenbush

Route 4 Design Guidelines

Final June 2015



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Acknowledgments

The Town of North Greenbush would like to recognize and thank the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee, Town staff, residents, and business owners for providing in the development of these design guidelines.

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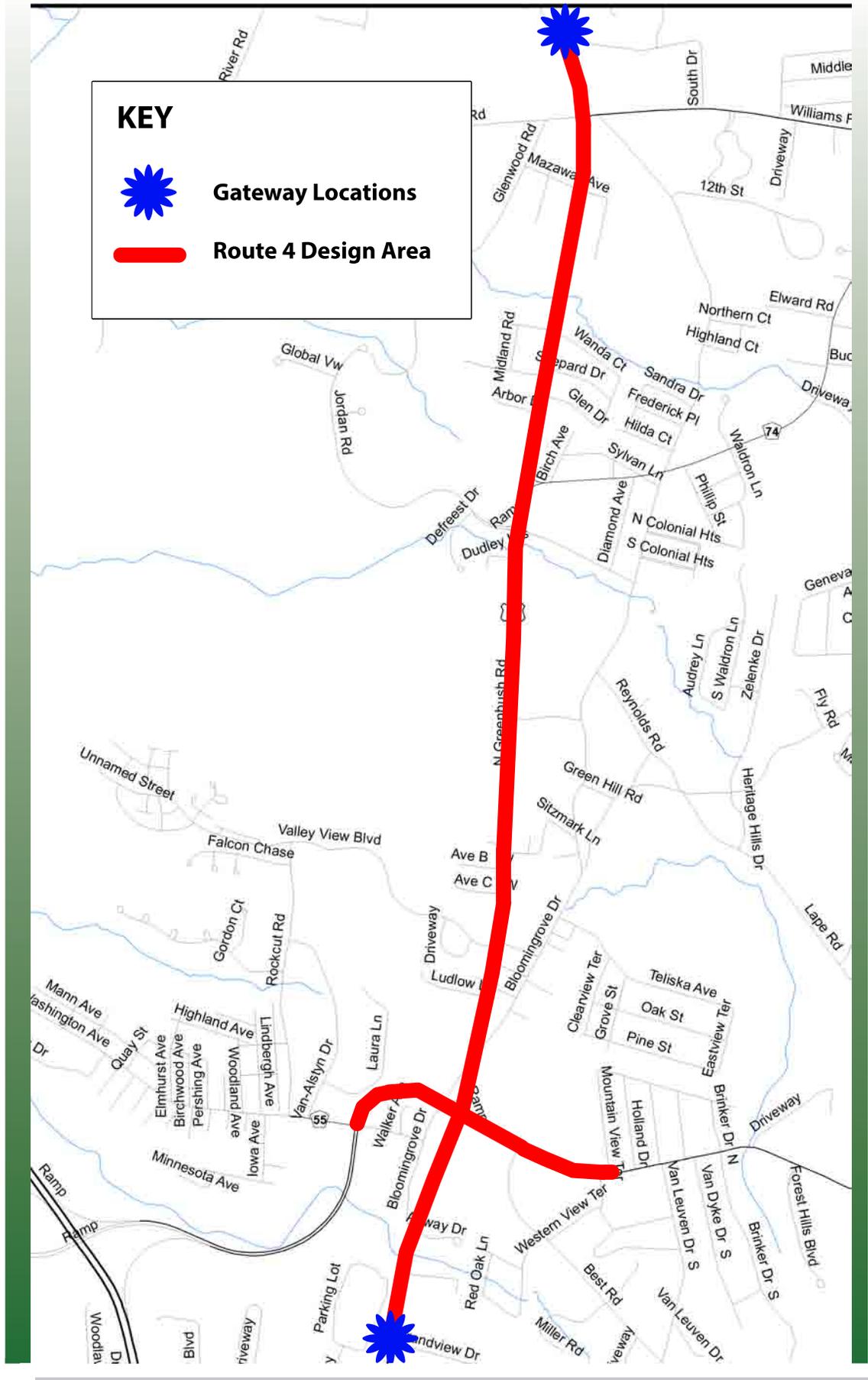
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Route 4 Design Guidelines



Purpose & Location

Purpose

The Route 4 Design Area in North Greenbush is intended to implement the goals and objectives of the Town of North Greenbush Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2009. The Design Guidelines are intended to serve as a template for the application of specified design principles in order to achieve a desired form and appearance of development.

The general design pattern for the Route 4 corridor is to create a walkable, highly integrated, multi-functional public and private spaces, through a network of connected streets, sidewalks, and uses. Structures in the Route 4 Design Area are encouraged to have two to three stories with a vertical mix of uses.

Location

The Route 4 Design Area includes all properties immediately adjacent to Route 4 from its northern boundary with the City of Troy to its southern boundary with the Town of East Greenbush; and includes all properties immediately adjacent to West Sand Lake Road (Route 43) from its intersection with Mountain View Road to its intersection with Washington Avenue. All intersections, as described herein, shall include any and all properties immediately abutting either Route 4 or Route 43.

The Route 4 Design Area excludes the following areas of Route 4:

- All Rensselaer Technology Park properties with the exception of any development seeking direct access to Route 4.
- All properties zoned for Planned Commercial District which are regulated by § 155-6.1 Planned Commercial District Design Guidelines.
- All properties zoned for Professional Office which are regulated by § 155-6.2 Professional Office District Design Guidelines.
- All properties zoned for General Business which are regulated by § 155-6.3 General Business Overlay District Design Guidelines.

The location of the Route 4 Design Area and key gateways are shown on the map entitled “Route 4 Design Area.”

Design Principles

The primary objective of the Route 4 Design Area is to create a mix of small to medium scale commercial uses blended together with single and multi-family residential structures that are of a high-quality design and reflect the unique character of the area. Specifically, the design principles for the Route 4 Design Area are intended to:

- a) Create a moderate-density, mixed-use hamlet atmosphere that is connected to the surrounding neighborhoods through linkages for pedestrians and cyclists where appropriate;
- b) Promote a coordinated image that will enhance the existing mix of uses and encourage attractive infill development;
- c) Incorporate appropriate streetscape and design elements to connect to the surrounding residential neighborhoods;
- d) Recognize the challenges of maintaining a single-family home along Route 4 and encourage their conversion to quality commercial, professional offices, and other mixed-use opportunities that will not compromise the character of the area;
- e) Minimize the visual impact of the automobile by managing the placement of appropriate screening and landscaping;
- f) Encourage the development of shared parking areas between nearby uses to provide access management and to reduce the necessity for additional curb cuts along Route 4;
- g) Protect important natural and agricultural features that are unique to the Route 4 Design Area; and
- h) Bring buildings up towards the sidewalk and build to edge, where appropriate, while accounting for future improvements to Route 4 and other streetscape improvements along the corridor.

Planning Board Review

The design standards are intended to provide guidance to the Planning Board and its applicants during the review and development of projects within the Route 4 Design Area.

The following terms have meanings as follows:

- a) The word “shall” means the standard is mandatory; and
- b) The words “should” or “may” mean the standard is recommended.

The Planning Board is empowered to require a mix of uses in any development project. Further, the Planning Board is empowered to require that a development be phased to ensure the required mix of uses is implemented. Applicants are encouraged to meet with the Planning Board prior to an application to discuss concepts, clarify procedures, and coordinate all applicable zoning and site plan requirements.

The following guidelines shall be followed in reviewing site plans and may only be modified by the Planning Board as set forth below. In certain cases it is recognized that the particular character of individual sites may preclude the application of certain design guidelines. Therefore, the Planning Board may modify the following guidelines where it finds that such modification is warranted. Circumstances that shall warrant modification of the guidelines may include, but not be limited to: physical constraints such as the location of existing buildings or changes in grade between adjacent properties; excessive cost; or failure to obtain an agreement or permit that is required for the implementation of the guidelines.

In reviewing any proposed modification, the Planning Board shall consider whether granting the modification will be consistent with the purposes of this chapter (including the relevant portions of the Zoning Ordinance applicable to this district), locally adopted plans, and the following principals:

- a) The general design and character of the proposal is in harmony with the neighboring properties in the district.
- b) The scale of the proposal in relation to the site and neighboring properties.
- c) The similarity of building materials and their color and texture in relation to those found in the surrounding district.
- d) The visual compatibility of the proposal with surrounding properties, including height, setbacks, roof shape, window and door arrangements, and the orientation of the building in relation to the street.

Design Guidelines

Architecture

All spaces, structures, and related site improvements visible to the public from public roadways shall be designed to add to the visual amenities of the surrounding area in relationship to the proposed development.

The color, size, height, location, roof treatments, building materials, landscaping, and proportion of openings of any proposed new construction, re-construction, or substantial rehabilitation, as well as proposed signage and lighting, shall be evaluated for compatibility with the area's surrounding architecture. The color, size, height, and architectural style of the building shall complement and not compete with other architecturally distinguished buildings in the district.

Appurtenances

- ✓ The use of air conditioners, satellite dishes, and any other accessory object attached to a principal property should be installed as not to detract from the building appearance or cover or damage architectural details.
- ✓ All rooftop mechanical equipment including but not limited to air conditioners and heating units, should be screened from direct public view.
- ✗ The use of appurtenances along the main façade of the property shall be prohibited.

Building Facades

- ✓ Whether the building is modern or traditional architecture it should respect traditional rhythms and the scale of other buildings along the corridor.
- ✓ The building façade should front the public street.
- ✓ Sixty to seventy-five (60-75%) percent of the retail street level façade should be transparent through the use of glass windows and doors.
- ✓ Building surfaces over 60 feet in length should be relieved with changes to the wall plane that provide strong visual interest.
- ✗ Uninterrupted, flat and monotonous building facades shall be prohibited.

Building Lighting

- ✓ Light of an appropriate color quality shall be recommended in order to preserve the natural daytime colors of objects.
- ✓ LED lighting should be encouraged.
- ✗ Industrial lighting shall be prohibited.
- ✗ Low pressure sodium should not be used.
- ✗ Neon lighting is prohibited.



Design Guidelines



Awnings

- ✓ Awnings may be used to breakup a blank stretch of a building facade.
- ✓ Window awnings should only be permitted on upper-story windows when awnings are used on ground floor storefronts.
- ✓ Proportion an awning so that it shall have:
 - A 7-foot clearance to the sidewalk, no closer than 24 inches from the curb.
 - A 4 to 7 foot projection over the sidewalk.
 - A 15 degree to 45 degree slope.
- ✓ Awning colors should reinforce the overall color scheme of the building.
- ✓ Individual awnings for upper-story windows shall be compatible with the design and materials of the ground floor awning and in most cases use the same color and pattern.
- ✗ Obscuring or destroying decorative details, of the façade (e.g. ornamental ironwork, arches or hooks, or storefront cornices) should be discouraged.
- ✗ Posts or columns that will interfere with pedestrians shall be prohibited in supporting an awning.
- ✗ Awnings made of metal, plastic, fiberglass or vinyl shall be prohibited.

Design Guidelines

Building Materials

- ✓ Acceptable materials for the primary building and accents shall include brick, cast stone, stone, cultured stone, hardiplank, wood shingles, wood, high grade plastic, or high grade vinyl siding.
- ✗ Prohibited materials shall include products such as smooth-faced concrete block, aluminum and metal siding, shiny or mirror-like materials, and plywood siding.

Building Setbacks

- ✓ Buildings should be situated closer to the street with parking in the side or rear of the building.

Building Color/Paint

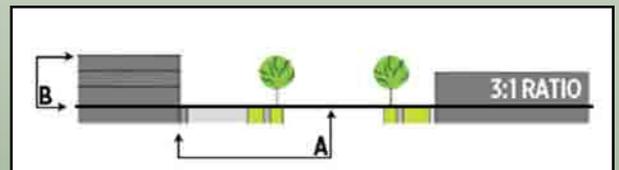
- ✓ A simple color scheme of up to three colors should be recommended.
- ✓ Beige and Earth Tone patterns shall be used.
- ✓ Façade colors should be low-reflectance colors.
- ✓ Building trim and accent areas may feature brighter colors.
- ✗ High intensity colors, metallic colors, black, or fluorescent colors should not be used.
- ✗ Harsh or glaring colors shall be prohibited.

Entrances

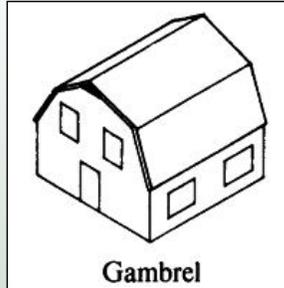
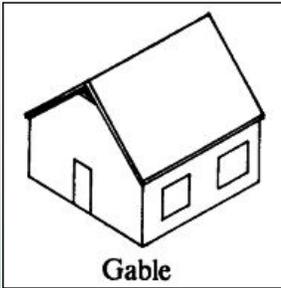
- ✓ Entrances should be attractive to pedestrians. Primary ground floor entrances should front on public streets, while secondary entrances should be located on the side or back of the building.

Massing/Scale

- ✓ New construction should be sized to work within the scale established by adjacent buildings.
- ✓ Most new buildings should be two or three stories tall, but single story buildings shall be permitted.
- ✓ Single story buildings should occupy at least 60% of the build-to zone area.
- ✓ New construction shall be no more than three stories in height.
- ✓ While single story buildings should be permitted, multi-story buildings shall be encouraged.



Design Guidelines



Roofline

- ✓ Single-story commercial buildings should have an artificial façade to raise the height of the building to create an appropriate scale.
- ✓ Gable and gambrel roof styles should be utilized.
- ✗ Flat roofed buildings shall be prohibited unless architecturally screened by an artificial facade.

Windows and Doors

- ✓ Windows and doors should be of a similar size, proportion, spacing, and rhythm for the entire corridor.
- ✓ Windows should look out onto walkways, parking lots, and common areas to further enhance safety and security.
- ✓ Large buildings should have multiple entrances that are thoroughly spaced.
- ✓ Street level windows should allow views into the ground story.
- ✗ The use of Plexiglas shall be prohibited.
- ✗ Windows and doors shall not be blocked or boarded.
- ✗ Dark tinted window glass should be discouraged.

Design Guidelines

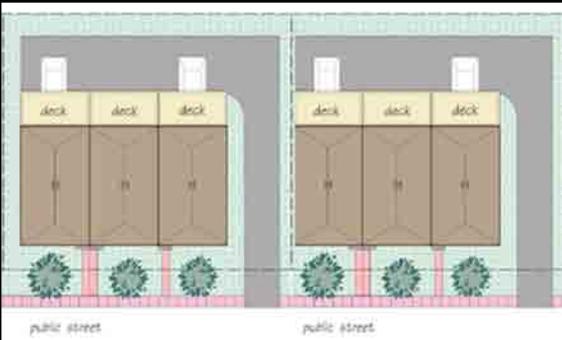
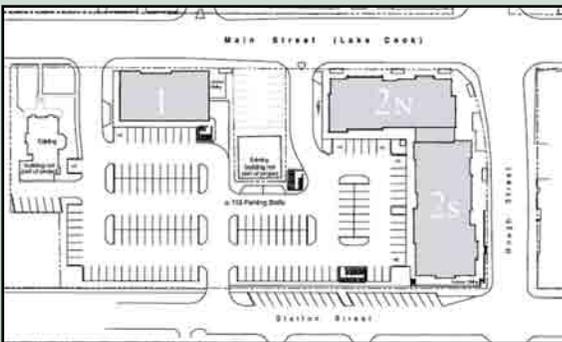
Site Layout

Parking Areas

- ✓ Parking should be located along the side and to the rear of a building rather than in front to reduce its visual effect.
- ✓ When parking exists in front of a building that cannot be reasonably eliminated or relocated, the parking area shall be screened with a landscaped buffer between the parking area and the sidewalk/street.
- ✓ Parking should be shared between two or more uses that have their peak demand for parking at different times of the day or week, or whenever determined feasible.
- ✓ The entrance and exit of a parking lot should be consolidated in a single location with sufficient sight distance to avoid traffic and pedestrian conflicts.
- ✓ Any corner property should have their main exit off the side street when possible.
- ✓ Large expanses of paved surfaces should be landscaped to soften visual impact.
- ✓ Landscaped median islands with sidewalks should be required for larger parking areas with access to multiple uses.
- ✓ Parking areas should clearly delineate pedestrian access with sidewalks and landscaping.
- ✓ Rear parking areas should be connected to the street via a pedestrian access.
- ✓ Large parking areas should consider electric vehicle charging stations.
- ✓ Adjoining lots should share access and provide internal vehicular and pedestrian access between lots whenever possible.
- ✓ Parking lots of neighboring properties should be physically connected whenever possible to reduce curb cuts.



Design Guidelines



Commercial Streets, Drives and Loading Areas

- ✓ All streets, drives, and loading areas shall be paved with asphalt and provide concrete curbing.
- ✓ Loading and delivery areas may be shared between nearby uses and shall be determined by the Planning Board on a case-by-case basis.
- ✓ Site access shall be designed with curbing, landscaping, fencing or other appropriate techniques to limit curb cuts whenever possible.
- ✓ Curb extensions, textured material, and center refuge islands should be incorporated for traffic calming and access management.
- ✓ Pre-existing, uncontrolled access along the frontage should be redesigned with curbing, landscaping, fencing, or other appropriate techniques to limit access to defined curb cuts whenever possible.
- ✗ On-street parking shall not to be permitted along Route 4.
- ✗ Creation of additional curb cuts on Route 4 should be avoided and unnecessary curb cuts eliminated whenever possible.

Residential Driveways, Parking and Garages

- ✓ Garages and accessory structures should be located to the rear of the primary building.
- ✓ The materials and architectural detailing of the garage and/or accessory structures should be similar to that of the primary structure and should be compatible with neighboring structures.
- ✗ Front yards should not appear to be parking areas.
- ✗ A garage should be discouraged from dominating the view from the street.

Design Guidelines

Common Open Space

- ✓ Public open space should provide level lawn areas to accommodate a range of uses and activities.
- ✓ Public open space uses should incorporate a range of ages.
- ✓ Paths and walkways should be provided throughout public and private open spaces.
- ✓ The minimum amount of open space provided should be no less than 25 percent of the site.
- ✗ Plaza, outdoor dining, and other hardscaped features should not count towards open space requirements.

Buffers & Screening

- ✓ Landscaped buffer strips shall be provided separating parking areas, vehicular circulation facilities, or similar improvements from the sidewalk along any public street.
- ✓ An opaque screen for loading and service areas should comprise walls, fences, berms or evergreen plantings, or any combination thereof, and should be provided to conceal loading areas and service areas such as dumpsters where they are visible from the street.
- ✓ New development should maintain or establish a naturally vegetated buffer with adjoining lots, particularly where more intensive uses are adjacent to residential neighborhoods.
- ✓ More intensive land use activities and utilitarian buildings should be screened from the street, preferably by retaining existing natural vegetation or establishing informally landscaped, naturalistic buffers to maintain a corridor that people will feel comfortable traveling through whether by car, bike or foot.
- ✓ Rain gardens, swales, berms, and permeable paving materials should be used to buffer vehicles from people.
- ✓ Street frontage of parking lots should be landscaped to partially screen parked vehicles using plant materials and/or low walls.
- ✓ Painted iron fences or low stone walls should be used in combination with plant materials for screening, where appropriate.
- ✗ Chain link fencing shall be prohibited.



Design Guidelines



Pedestrian Access

- ✓ Clearly defined pedestrian areas and handicapped accessibility shall be provided within parking areas and along the corridor.
- ✓ Sidewalks should connect to residential and commercial areas where appropriate.
- ✓ Pedestrian ways intended for public use and sidewalks should be composed of concrete, brick, or concrete unit pavers.
- ✓ Sidewalks and walkways should be constructed along public right-of-ways, internal parking areas, between pedestrian spaces, and to adjoining land uses.
- ✓ Walkways from sidewalks should connect to pedestrian oriented building entrances.
- ✓ Features such as crosswalks, pedestrian islands, and parking lot medians with sidewalks should be incorporated throughout a site design.
- ✓ All crosswalks and walkways should be distinguished from driving surfaces through the use of textured and painted surfaces.
- ✓ Bicycle racks and transit stop accommodations should be provided where appropriate.
- ✓ Bus stops and drop-off/pick-up points should be considered as integral parts of the site design.
- ✗ Crushed gravel and stone shall not be a suitable material to use for public pedestrian areas.

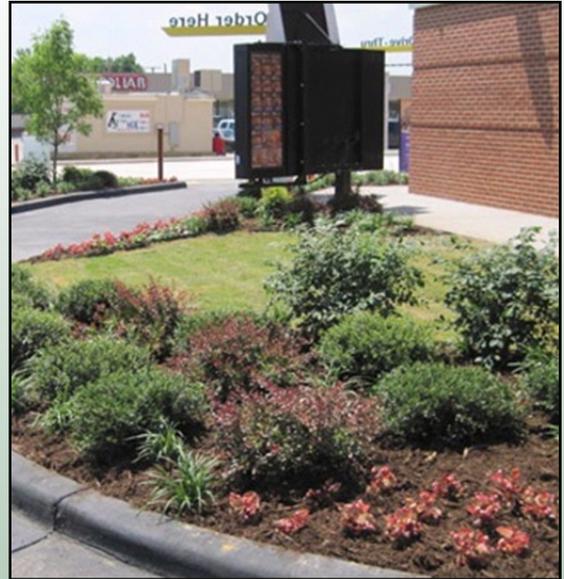
Design Guidelines

Landscaping & Greenspace

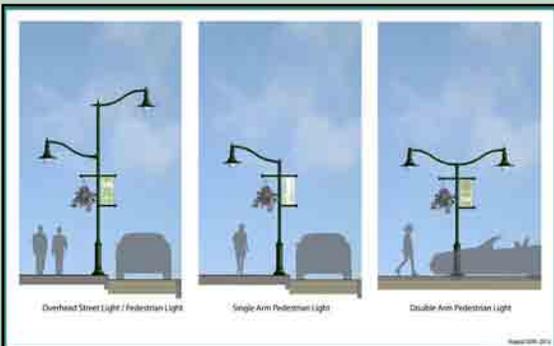
- ✓ Attractive and well planned landscaping and greenspace should be incorporated into site designs.
- ✓ Plant materials should require little maintenance and tolerate conditions in an urban environment especially salt and sand deposited with snow removal.
- ✓ Required landscaping shall be permanently maintained in a healthy growing condition at all times.
- ✓ Plantings should not obscure corridor views or vehicle access points at maturity.
- ✓ Street trees should be provided along the frontage adjacent to the sidewalk.
- ✓ Trees should not block the street view and should maintain a certain amount of openness that will facilitate pedestrian safety.
- ✓ Trees should vary and be suitable for the region.
- ✓ Site design and landscape features should be considered in an effort to address stormwater runoff.
- ✓ Green infrastructure practices should be encouraged and may include green roofs, cisterns and rain barrels, bioretention basins or rain gardens, stormwater planters, and pervious planters.
- ✗ Invasive species shall not be permitted.

Site Furniture

- ✓ All site furniture within an open space shall be consistent and of similar style.
- ✓ Durable, hard surfaces should be incorporated where outdoor furniture including benches, movable chairs and tables can be appropriately installed or used.



Design Guidelines



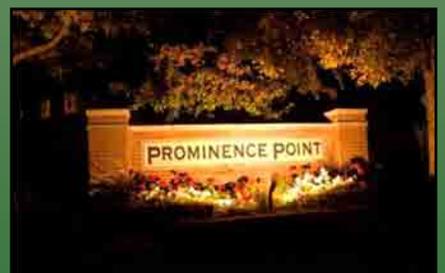
Lighting & Illumination

- ✓ Lighting shall be designed to create a pedestrian friendly environment.
- ✓ Light fixtures should be appropriate to the scale and character of the site and design of the corridor.
- ✓ All areas intended for pedestrian traffic should be appropriately lit with fully-shielded, downward directed light fixtures.
- ✓ Glare should be controlled by using light fixtures with parabolic reflectors to direct light downward rather than outward.
- ✓ Light fixtures can also be an attractive site element and should be selected to complement the architectural style and materials of nearby buildings.
- ✓ Light of an appropriate color quality should be used in order to preserve the natural daytime colors of objects.
- ✓ LED lighting should be recommended.
- ✓ Adequate lighting to side and rear entrances shall be provided for safety and security.
- ✓ All exterior lights shall be designed and located in such a manner as to prevent objectionable light and glare to spill across property lines.
- ✓ Pole lighting that are less than twenty feet in height should be used for general area lighting.
- ✗ Flashing or moving lights shall be prohibited.

Design Guidelines

Signage

- ✓ Signs should not dominate the visual element of the site.
- ✓ New commercial or mixed use buildings should be designed to provide an appropriate space for wall mounted signs.
- ✓ Free standing signs located adjacent to sidewalks should be pedestrian-scaled.
- ✓ Use of monument signs rather than pole signs is encouraged.
- ✓ Use of directory signs at shared entrances is preferred to multiple individual signs.
- ✓ Signs on awnings should exist on the valance only.
- ✓ Attractive logos on the sloped part of the awning, or valance, may not exceed 15% of the sloped area.
- ✓ Banner signs should be constructed of heavyweight cotton or acrylic fabric.
- ✓ Banner signs should hang at least 8 feet above the grade.
- ✓ Façade signs should be located above the top of the first floor storefront openings and below second floor windowsills or below the roofline on a one story building.
- ✓ Lettering on façade signs should occupy no more than sixty-five (65) percent of the sign.
- ✓ Projecting signs should be at minimum of eight (8) feet above the sidewalk and should extend from the building face a maximum of five (5) feet, or 1/3 the width of the sidewalk; whichever is less.
- ✓ A simple color scheme of up to three Neutral and Earth Tone patterns shall be used.
- ✓ Colors should be low-reflectance colors.
- ✓ Exposed lamps used to illuminate signs should be equipped with goose-neck reflectors, or other devices arranged so as to concentrate the illumination upon the area of the sign and prevent glare.
- ✓ Window signs should complement the window display.
- ✓ Vinyl, computer cut letters and logos should be encouraged for window signage.
- ✗ Harsh or glaring colors shall be prohibited.
- ✗ Portable signs including sidewalk signs, A-frame signs, menu and sandwich board signs shall be prohibited.
- ✗ Individual channel letters with neon shall be prohibited.
- ✗ Internally illuminated plastic box signs shall be prohibited.
- ✗ Neon signs within a display window to add color and light to a storefront shall be prohibited.
- ✗ Window signs should not occupy more than twenty (20) percent of the window surface area.





Streetscape

Hanging Baskets and Banners

- ✓ Banners and hanging baskets should be mounted on light poles in a consistent manner.
- ✓ Banners should reflect the character of the corridor and be of a unified or coordinated design.

Landscaping/Street Trees

- ✓ Street tree species should be continuous and in designated locations along any street.
- ✓ Street trees should be tolerant of urban conditions, especially salt and sand deposited with snow removal.
- ✓ Planting intervals for street trees should range from 30 feet to 50 feet on center.
- ✓ Street trees should be installed with tree grates or within raised planting areas.
- ✓ Shrubbery shall be no higher than four feet above existing street grades, nor shall any tree with foliage extend below ten (10) feet above the established street grades.
- ✓ All landscaping (trees, shrubs, planted beds) shall be maintained for the purpose of protecting visibility.

Paving Materials

- ✓ Street paving materials should include asphalt along with decorative pavers and/or markings at crosswalk sections.
- ✓ Concrete or granite should be used for curbing.

Design Guidelines

Pedestrian Access/Ways & Sidewalks

- ✓ Adjacent commercial establishments and surrounding neighborhoods should be connected through the provision of paved sidewalks.
- ✓ Pedestrian pathways that cross vehicular routes should be distinguished by a change in paving material, color, and/or texture.
- ✓ Painted markings or imprinted, colored asphalt using a pattern and color should be encouraged.
- ✓ Sidewalks should be constructed with concrete and with the option of brick pavers for accent material.
- ✓ All sidewalks should be ADA compliant.
- ✓ Restaurants should be permitted to operate outdoor cafes in front of and on public sidewalks as long as at least seven (7) feet remains maintained for pedestrian sidewalk passage.

Public Art

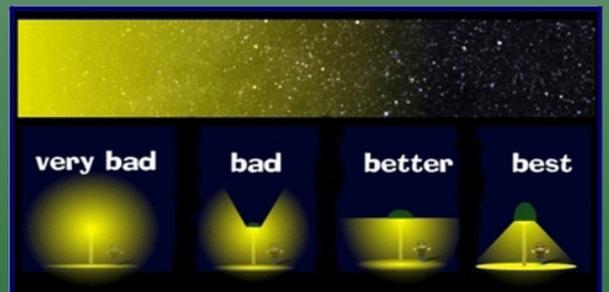
- ✓ Art installations should be of a consistent design and coordinated along the corridor.

Street Furniture

- ✓ Railings, benches, bicycle parking systems, and other elements should be compatible with the surrounding corridors.
- ✓ Benches and their arrangement should meet all ADA standards.

Street Lighting

- ✓ Street lighting fixtures should be consistent and spaced every 50 to 80 feet, staggered on either side of the street.
- ✓ Streetlights should be an appropriate scale and design to enhance the corridor.
- ✓ Lighting should avoid illumination above the horizontal level into the night sky.
- ✓ Streetlight height should be considerate of pedestrians.



Design Guidelines



Gateways

- ✓ Gateways shall be considered a crucial component to strengthen the perception and identity of the Route 4 Design Area.
- ✓ Special design elements and landscaping treatments shall be required at key locations along the corridor to create gateways.
- ✓ Each gateway shall create a sense of identity for the Route 4 corridor that indicates to both drivers and pedestrians that they are entering a unique and special space.
- ✓ Landscaping and signage at gateway locations shall be used to create a focal point. Signage should be designed to complement rather than obstruct or detract from the overall character of the corridor.
- ✓ Property owners in a gateway shall also use special design elements and landscaping to enhance the character of the corridor.