

## **SANFORD, MAINE**

### **DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES**

#### **SECTION 1.0 BACKGROUND**

The focus of the downtown area has shifted over time, toward an increased emphasis on serving a wider range of commercial activities and an increasing resident population. Sanford Downtown is evolving into a year round destination.

The success of much of Sanford's downtown business district depends on the success of the visitor experience. That is why all aspects of development in the downtown area should be designed for both function and aesthetics.

These Design Guidelines are intended to assist the owner, developer, architect, and other consults to understand the basic design goals set for development of Sanford's downtown area and provide the Council with a yardstick against which new projects can be measured. Applicants are invited to submit creative and imaginative projects which build on these Guidelines and contribute to the overall form and character of Sanford's downtown area.

#### **SECTION 2.0 OBJECTIVES**

Sanford offers visitors a focal point for services aimed at both visitors and residents of the surrounding area. Sanford's Downtown Design Guidelines are intended to promote the characteristic qualities of its historic setting. The following objectives should be considered in all new development:

- 1 . Insist on a high standard of urban design, architecture and landscape architecture set for the downtown area, in order to make it attractive to resident and visitor alike.
2. Respond to the existing and future needs and interests of a broad range of visitors and residents through the four seasons.
3. Preserve where possible and supplement the existing natural landscape. Abundant landscaping and floral displays are particularly important in the summer and fall months.
4. Use design elements that are cohesive with Sanford's natural setting and desired architectural character, yet still express individuality.
5. Create an atmosphere in the downtown area that is open and friendly, that caters to pedestrians by providing open space amenities (outdoor seating areas, activity areas, site features, etc.).

6. Accommodate the New England climatic conditions.
7. Encourage building design and orientations that maximize views and sunlight.
8. Make preserving the historic character of the downtown area a priority.
9. Encourage building design and site planning that ensures logical and functional patterns for the three levels of traffic: pedestrian, automobile, service and delivery.
10. Insist on building design that reflects the community's desire for human scale, in terms of height, proportion, site features, roof shapes and building materials.

The Downtown Design Guidelines are not intended as a “blueprint” for design approval, rather they outline the important design elements and features which should be considered. Note that these Design Guidelines do not negate or overrule Sanford's building codes.

Applicants should review the Design Guidelines and meet with city planning staff at the outset of the design process to discuss the design objectives/issues for each property in Sanford's downtown district. Each design will be reviewed in the context of surrounding development and specific design objectives for the property.

## **SECTION 3.0 SITE PLANNING**

### **3.1 BUILDING SITING**

Preservation of natural features and vegetation is encouraged. Retain existing tree stands and existing terrain where possible.

Building siting should consider adjacent development and:

- Topography
- Geology/soils conditions
- Hydrology, drainage, and flood plain considerations
- Vegetation
- Solar and micro-climatic considerations
- Access and circulation: pedestrian and vehicular
- Seasonal differences

- Snow management (See Section 6)

### **3.2 SERVICING**

Truck access, utilities, storage and garbage concealment must be considered in the design.

1. Service bays and loading docks must be unobtrusive.
2. Locate service bays within the building or parking structure.

If exterior service bays are necessary, locations visible to front entries or commercial businesses should be avoided. Provide permanent visual screening where exterior service bays are located.

3. Provide adequate space for garbage storage and recycling.

Garbage and recycling storage areas must be enclosed and hidden from public view. Containers must be easily accessible to garbage trucks.

Adequate ventilation must be provided.

4. Service bay design must be durable.

Consider wear and tear on these areas.

In order to allow winter garbage pick-up, design service bay areas to prevent ice and snow build-up.

5. If applicable, projects shall include an area for utility services, such as meters and propane tanks.

The area shall be fully screened from the view of the public and adjacent property owners.

Incorporate fire hose connections and utility meters in the building design. Such protrusions are frequently damaged during snow plowing.

Confirm transformer location at an early stage of design process in order to minimize its visual impact, especially with reference to adjacent properties.

6. Sufficient truck storage should be maintained on-site to allow efficient delivery service without conflicts while that service is being performed.

7. Delivery trucks should be able to operate without blocking public rights of way. Pedestrians should be able to access the development from existing pedestrian walkways with little or no traffic conflict.

### **3.3 ACCESS/PARKING/LOADING**

1. Number of spaces must conform to Sanford's Ordinances.
2. Driveways.

Design driveways to a maximum of 8% and ideally less than 6% slope.

The slope on driveway approaches to city streets may be increased above 8% with the use of heat tracing or a roof covering.

3. Service Parking.

Provide adequate areas for snow storage and drainage. These may be combined with islands of planting to break up large areas of paving.

On-site parking areas located to the rear of buildings is strongly encouraged.

Screen surface parking areas by a combination of walls, fences, landscaping, and berms at least 4' in height.

Consider providing separate pedestrian circulation routes within parking areas.

Consider providing separate parking areas for buses and recreational vehicles.

On-site parking should be designed to allow vehicles forward entry and exit from the site.

### **3.4 OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES**

Outdoor activity areas are vital, if the downtown area is to project a vibrant atmosphere.

1. Outdoor activity areas should be created.

Consider the provision of outdoor activity areas accommodating a range of ages and activity levels.

Seating areas and restaurants overlooking pedestrian areas and other prominent viewpoints are encouraged.

Outdoor seating areas are encouraged where appropriate and must conform to the pedestrian right of way requirements in Section 5.2

2. Provide for solar access.

Design should preserve sunlight on neighboring outdoor or indoor spaces (i.e. restaurants). Late afternoon sun is most important for outdoor use/activities.

The building volumetric should create sheltered sunny pockets in public spaces and neighboring properties to encourage winter use.

## **SECTION 4.0 SITE DESIGN**

### **4.1 GENERAL PREFERENCES**

1. Ground level interest.

Variety at ground level contributes interest and vitality. Consideration of walkway detail, scale, and entries is especially important.

2. Street furnishings.

Street furnishing should be placed in areas that do not impede pedestrian movement or building maintenance. Public seating and trash receptacles are encouraged.

Bike racks should be highly visible and accommodate locking mechanisms to reduce the risk of theft.

### **4.2 LANDSCAPING**

1. Landscape Standards.

Design review may require up to 10% of gross site area in landscaped open space in mixed use or commercial zones, up to 20% for residential uses.

2. Coordinate landscape treatment with adjacent areas.

Coordinate the designs of arcades, steps, railings, street lights, and plantings to achieve continuity on the main street sides of the commercial zone.

3. Landscape elements.

All landscape elements adjacent to areas which require snow clearing by machinery must be designed to resist damage by incorporating durable materials, rounded edges, and eliminating unnecessary protrusions.

Site features such as water, public art, flags, banners, and graphics are strongly encouraged provided they conform to Sanford's Ordinances and contain no commercial message.

Planters consistent with the building design are encouraged.

All post construction disturbed areas must be revegetated per landscape guidelines.

#### 4. Plant materials.

Trees and plantings are to be protected from snow clearing operations.

Landscaping should use indigenous or similar hardy material plants.

Plant material located in snow dump areas must be sufficiently durable to survive the effects of snow dump.

Summer floral displays are strongly encouraged.

Grass should be a uniform turf of species hardy to Sanford.

#### 5. Irrigation.

All irrigation systems must provide for on site drainage.

Underground, automatic watering systems are encouraged.

## 4.2 LIGHTING

1. Illumination levels should be of sufficient intensity to provide security but not overpower the nightscape. Illumination should be low level and low glare.
2. Provide exterior lighting for highlighting landscaped areas, feature walls, etc.
3. Consider security lighting where necessary.
4. No flashing, blinking, or colored lighting permitted (except Christmas). Incandescent or other warm colored lighting is preferred.

#### **4.4 SIGNAGE**

1. Comprehensive sign plans required as part of permit application on all new structures.
2. Signage should be low key and coordinated with the architectural features and finishes of each building.
3. Front lighting of signs is encouraged, although some limited back lighting is permitted.
4. Exterior neon is subject to close scrutiny for its relationship to building design. Neon is subject to strict maintenance requirements.
5. Signage must conform to the Sanford Zoning Ordinance.

### **SECTION 5.0 BUILDING DESIGN**

#### **5.1 BUILDING CHARACTER AND SCALE**

1. Façade design must display a consideration of the building's appearance on all sides of the building.
2. The scale of a building should be visually compatible with its site and with its neighborhood.

#### **5.2 WALKWAYS, ENTRIES, AND OVERHANGS**

1. Width of covered walkways must span the sidewalk, if applicable, or be a minimum of 6' wide and 9' high.
2. Snow shed from covered walkways must be considered.
3. All building access must consider access for disabled persons, the elderly, baby carriages, etc. Sidewalks and walkways must be free of barriers.
4. Design walkways to maintain visual continuity of eave lines, materials at base, soffits and fascias and grade at entry locations. Adjoining walkways must be fully coordinated.
5. Design shop facades as individual entities, to strengthen their character and interest to the pedestrian. Continuous linear shop fronts are discouraged.
6. Outdoor display areas must be submitted with building plans with the permit application. Such areas must not interfere with pedestrian circulation.

### **5.3 UPPER FLOOR DESIGN**

Decks, balconies, and porches are strongly encouraged as they provide sunny, useable outdoor space and add life and interest to the street.

### **5.4 ROOF DESIGN**

Roof design is important for snow management and is a major contributor to design character. Roofscapes are important design elements that are viewed from pedestrian level.

Sloped roofs shed accumulated snow in avalanche fashion and can be dangerous to pedestrians below. The design of roofs and pedestrian areas below them is referred to as “snow management”, and is discussed in Section 6.

1. Roof form should be modulated.

Roof form should be broken up with the use of dormers or other architectural features. The ridgeline should not be continuous but should be varied in height or broken with chimneys, cupolas, towers, or other features.

2. Roofs of connected buildings must be fully coordinated.

Consider coordination with adjoining eaves, peaks, gables, and slopes.

Consider the color of neighboring roofs to create a complementary roof palette: avoid selecting strongly contrasting colors.

3. Roof materials.

Consider the effects of climate and snow management in selecting roofing materials.

4. Roof mounted equipment must be concealed.

Satellite dishes, communications antennae and mechanical equipment must be planned as part of the roof so they are concealed from all pedestrian viewpoints and any overlooking development.

5. Eave line.

Eave lines or a major cornice/trim line should be located below the third story to bring the building face down to a pedestrian scale.

## **SECTION 6.0 ARCHITECTURE**

### **6.1 BUILDING MASS, SCALE and HEIGHT**

1. New buildings or additions to existing buildings should not be visibly out of scale with neighboring buildings, or otherwise out of scale with the Downtown area.
- 2 Building heights shall be compatible with adjacent structures.
3. The size or bulk of the building should conform with those nearby; larger buildings should be “broken down” architecturally to match the scale, rhythm and proportion of adjacent structures.
4. The following features should be considered as potential elements to help break down building scale:

Projecting bays, projecting or recessed balconies, and gables and dormers, judiciously utilized to provide interest, individuality, and appropriate scale to new structures.

Distinct and multiple architectural roof forms, clearly pronounced eaves, distinct parapet designs and cornice treatments.

Porches, covered walkways, trellises or architectural awnings that provide varying degrees of shade and sun at ground level.

### **6.2 ARCHITECTURAL STYLE/CHARACTER**

1. Although there is some variation in architectural styles in the Downtown, new development should be compatible.
3. Building designs and treatments that express corporate or franchise (trademark) identity shall not take precedence over these design guidelines; such development shall conform to the historic and architectural considerations in these guidelines. Corporate or franchise developments shall be compatible with the visual character of the Downtown.

### **6.3 ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS**

1. Craftsmanship, ornamentation, and architectural details are strongly encouraged. Architectural details include the design features of such elements as doors, windows, dormers, porches and balconies, and decorative details such as cornices, columns, pediments, and railings, and similar features. Large or small, they play a key role in defining the style and character of a building and so deserve particular attention and respect.

2. Detailing that relates to, and reflects the character of the area is encouraged. Vernacular architectural features help tie together the character of the village.

#### **6.4 ROOFS**

1. The angle of a sloped roof should be typical of traditional New England architecture. A sloped roof with a flattened pitch is generally not appropriate for the Downtown.
2. Dormers are an effective way to break up the mass of a sloped roof and add architectural interest, and are a typical feature of New England architecture. They should be of an appropriate proportion and size relative to the building.
3. Where appropriate in the Downtown, a flat roof may be permissible if the building is multi-story and of traditional Downtown architecture (retail/pedestrian-oriented first floor, differentiated upper façade, articulated parapet and decorative cornice, for example). Existing buildings of this style should be maintained for architectural (and/or historic) integrity.

#### **6.5 STREET FAÇADES**

1. A building's façade, particularly the main entrance, should be oriented to the primary street frontage (e. g. Main Street). If the main entrance cannot be located along the primary street frontage, the front façade must be appropriately designed to contribute to the pedestrian friendly character of the Downtown.
2. For buildings fronting on more than one street (a corner lot), the front façade should be oriented toward the primary street frontage, while a secondary entrance or other appropriate façade treatment is strongly encouraged for the side street.

#### **6.6 ENTRANCES**

1. Principal building entrances shall be accentuated, and easily visible from the street, to contribute to the pedestrian friendly character of the Downtown. This may be achieved through the design of the doorway and doorway architectural treatments, by recessing the entry, or by adding a porch or pediment for the front door providing shelter and enhancing the entrance.
2. Service entrances and loading facilities should be located at the rear or side of structures and screened from public view. Where buildings face more than one public street, service and loading circulation may be located along secondary streets where appropriate. Where no off-street options are available, loading and service entrances located along public streets should occupy the minimum

space necessary and be compatible with the other uses of the street, including pedestrian activities and retail development.

#### **6.7 PROPORTION and SPACING OF OPENINGS (WINDOWS, DOORS)**

1. Blank exterior walls without doors, windows, or other architectural features to break up a building's mass should be avoided. Street façades in particular should not be blank but have an appropriate rhythm of windows and doors.
2. Windows and doors should be appropriately scaled, vertically oriented, and be placed in a regularly spaced pattern. Symmetry of openings on the street façade is traditional, though not essential.
3. Where the interior layout or function of a building does not accommodate or require windows, the addition of false windows or other architectural elements may be an alternative. Also, the use of murals or plantings (trees and shrubs) for large blank facades may be an allowable alternative to adding windows or other architectural elements, however, the quality and subject of the mural should be carefully considered.

#### **6.8 WINDOWS and WINDOW TREATMENTS**

1. The style of window should be consistent throughout the building or addition. Visual unity and harmony are usually achieved when the same window style and scale is used consistently on all visible façades.
2. Awnings should not detract from the form of the building, or obscure its details. Traditional canvas awnings are encouraged, plastic or metal awnings are discouraged.