

APPL. 208-40 – Text Change, Stamford Zoning Board, Village Commercial District, to adopt a new zoning district, Article III, Section 4-AA-11, entitled Village Commercial District.

11. V-C VILLAGE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

11.1 Purpose.

The Village Commercial District (VC District) is adopted pursuant to Section 8-2 and 8-2j of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended, and is intended to implement the policies, goals and urban design principles articulated in the Master Plan of the City of Stamford, calling for preservation and development of a sustainable, transit oriented and pedestrian friendly “Main Street” character for the neighborhood centers of Glenbrook and Springdale, including the development of new structures and uses with appropriate architectural designs and the conservation and enhancement of the character of existing buildings, sites, streetscapes and pedestrian environments. These regulations serve to encourage development that reflects and/or retains valuable elements of the City’s cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history and the promotion of a vibrant commercial environment providing a broad array of amenities, services, and resources essential to the neighborhood and community shopping needs of the City of Stamford, with design controls to insure a compatible relationship to adjacent residential neighborhoods, and assurance that infrastructure impacts will be mitigated. This is accomplished by the establishment of design and use standards that apply to new and existing architectural facades, sites and buildings, and review procedures which serve to preserve, restore and enhance these resources, improve property values, promote and support a vibrant business and residential environment, and enhance the architectural character and amenity of these areas as the retailing, business, civic and cultural centers of the City’s neighborhoods.

11.2 Authorized Uses.

In the VC District, a lot or building may be altered, arranged, designed, erected or used for any use permitted within the C-N Neighborhood Commercial District, including C-N special exception uses, but specifically excluding Dwelling – Single Family; Dwelling – Two Family; Boarding House, Rooming House; Auto Service Station; Laundry, Cleaning & Dyeing Agency; and Restaurant, Drive-In. In addition, "Theatre" and “Ice Skating Rink, Indoor” shall be permitted uses, and "Café, excluding entertainment" shall be a use permitted by special exception provided that the provisions of Section 14 of these Regulations shall not apply to any “Café” within the VC District. Special exception uses shall be subject to determination and approval by the Zoning Board.

11.3 Development Standards.

The following standards shall apply to the development of property within the VC District:

- a. Minimum Lot Size: 5,000 sq. ft.
- b. Minimum Frontage: 50 feet
- c. Minimum Yards: Front - 0 feet; Rear – 20 feet; Side – None required, but if provided must be at least four (4) feet

- d. **Maximum Building Height:**
Springdale Neighborhood: 4 stories and 45 feet, subject to an additional twelve (12) foot setback of the building façade above a height of 32 feet, measured from the minimum front setback of the building. (see Figure 8.1.)
Glenbrook Neighborhood: 3 stories and 35 feet.
- e. **Minimum Building Height:** Fourteen (14) feet to the top of the front wall
- f. **Maximum Building Coverage: 50%** Parking structures with roof or upper deck not more than five (5) feet above average finished grade, measured at the perimeter of the parking structure, suitably enclosed and/or landscaped to the satisfaction of the Board, may be excluded from the calculation of building coverage.
- g. **Floor Area Ratio:** Building floor area shall not exceed a ratio of 1.50, defined as the total gross floor area of all uses including dwelling unit area contained within buildings, divided by the area of the lot, but excluding from such calculation portions of a building housing mechanical equipment and the gross floor area of parking structures below-grade or fully enclosed within the building behind solid facades, or with roof or upper-deck not more than five (5) feet above average finished grade measured at the perimeter of the parking structure, suitably enclosed and/or landscaped to the satisfaction of the Board.
- h. **Residential Density:** Residential density shall be determined by the maximum floor area permitted, provided that the average floor area of dwelling units shall be not less than five hundred (500) square feet.
- i. **Below Market Rate Housing:** Proposed development establishing ten (10) or more dwelling units shall provide not less than ten percent (10%) of the total number of dwelling units as Below Market Rate (BMR) units, affordable to households earning not more than fifty percent (50%) of the Stamford SMSA Median income, in accordance with the standards, definitions and procedures contained within Article III, Section 7.4 of these Regulations; provided however, that BMR units provided on-site shall be comparable in average size to the average size of market rate units.
- j. **Parking, Loading and Vehicle Access:** The amount, location and dimensions of parking and loading and dimensions of driveways shall comply with the standards of Section 12 of these Regulations, as modified by the following special standards applicable to development within the VC District.

(1) Parking for residential dwelling units shall be provided at the following minimum rates: one (1.0) space for every studio unit, one and one-quarter (1.25) spaces for every one-bedroom unit, one and one-half (1.5) spaces for every two-bedroom unit, and one and two-thirds (1 2/3) spaces for every three-bedroom unit.

(2) Parking for retail and/or personal service establishments shall be provided at the minimum rate of three (3.0) spaces for each one thousand (1,000) square feet of gross floor area, provided that there shall be no parking requirement for the initial 3,500 square feet of retail business floor area for each parcel.

(3) Parking for non-residential uses may be reduced by one (1.0) space for every twenty-five (25) feet of lot frontage on a public street right-of-way having a width of not less than fifty (50) feet.

(4) Parking spaces shall be provided at a point not more than 500 feet distant in a direct line from the nearest part of any commercial use served, and at a point not more than 1,000 feet distant in a direct line from the nearest part of any residential use served.

(5) Shared Parking: The shared use of parking may be permitted, subject to Special Exception approval by the Zoning Board, where a finding is made by the Zoning Board that individual uses such as residential, office, and retail will experience peak parking demand at different times. In such cases, the Zoning Board may authorize a reduction in parking by recognizing the opportunity to share common parking spaces, including off-street public parking facilities, in accordance with the general methodology entitled "Shared Parking", published by the Urban Land Institute in 1983, as amended and updated. Shared parking may be considered for multiple uses on individual parcels as well between two or more parcels, subject to Zoning Board approval of a suitable parking management plan and legal agreement, recorded on the land records, assuring the continued availability of the shared parking spaces on the affected properties for the life of the proposed development or use.

(6) When the total amount of parking required by these Regulations is in excess of ten (10) spaces, the access driveways or roadways provided for access to a required off-street parking area shall be not less than eighteen feet (18') and not more than twenty feet (20') in width between curbs for two-way operation and not less than ten feet (10') and not more than twelve feet (12') in width for one-way operation, provided further that in no case shall parking be permitted within the required minimum width of any such driveway. Access to parking areas serving ten (10) or fewer spaces shall be not less than ten feet (10') and not more than twelve feet (12') in width for either one-way or two-way operation.

(7) The Zoning Board, by issuance of a special exception, may reduce or waive the standards of Sections 12-A, 12-B and 12-C of these Regulations regarding

parking dimensional standards and the setback of parking spaces from property lines and buildings.

- k. Signage: Signage within the VC District shall be governed by the definitions of these Regulations and by standards of the C-N District and the design criteria and additional signage rights permitted in the ARD District, provided that the aggregate total area of all wall signs placed on the street front wall of a building, exclusive of window signs and blade signs as herein defined, shall not exceed an area of two (2) square feet for each lineal foot of building frontage.

11.4 Application and Review Procedure.

- a. Application shall be made on forms provided by the Zoning Board and shall contain the information required under Section 7.2 and Section 19-3 of these Regulations, and scaled drawings and architectural design information indicating location, specification of materials, dimensions, colors, manner of fabrication and installation, and such other additional supporting facts and information as required by the Zoning Board or the Land Use Bureau Chief to fully review the proposal. Presentation of actual samples of the exterior architectural materials and colors is encouraged.
- b. Where approval is required pursuant to this Section, no zoning permit shall be issued by the Zoning Enforcement Officer and no building permit shall be issued by the Building Department except upon Site Plan and Special Exception approval by the Zoning Board or issuance of Site Plan approval by the Land Use Bureau Chief, or designee, as defined in subsection 11.4-f.
- c. Any Special Exception and/or Site Plan approval, for which a full building permit has not been issued within one (1) year from the approval date, shall become null and void unless the reviewing authority, upon timely application and good cause shown, grants not more than three one-year extensions of the expiration date.
- d. The Zoning Board and/or Land Use Bureau Chief may seek the recommendations of any town or regional agency or outside specialist with which it consults, including, but not limited to, the regional planning agency, the municipality's historical society, the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and The University of Connecticut College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Any reports or recommendations from such agencies or organizations shall be entered into the public hearing record.
- e. All applications for new construction and substantial reconstruction in view from public roadways shall be subject to review and recommendation by an architect or architectural firm, landscape architect, or planner who is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners, and designated by the Zoning Board as the district consultant for such application. Alternatively, the Board may designate as the district consultant for such application an architectural review advisory committee, consisting of not less than three (3) individuals, including at least one architect, landscape architect or

planner who is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners. Committee members shall be selected by the Land Use Bureau Chief after consultation with the Zoning Board and shall possess sufficient expertise and qualifications to review architecture and building design. The district consultant shall review an application and report to the Board and/or Land Use Bureau Chief within thirty-five days of receipt of the application.

f. Reviewing Authority.

(1) The Zoning Board shall review and determine compliance with the standards of the VC District, by issuance of Special Exception and Site Plan approval, for all substantial new construction, and reconstruction projects, and changes of use defined as follows:

i. Establishment of a Special Exception use of buildings and/or property, as defined in subsection 11.2 above.

ii. Construction of buildings, structures, and accessory structures, including additions and alterations to existing buildings and structures, resulting in an increase in gross building floor area of more than one-thousand (1,000) square feet or an increase in building area coverage of more than five hundred (500) square feet.

iii. Construction, reconstruction or alteration of a building façade, including signage, that exceeds thirty percent (30%) of the vertical plane area of any individual façade or portion of façade visible from within the VC District from any public street, roadway, public pedestrian walkway or park.

iv. Construction of new or modification of existing driveways, parking areas, outside storage, signage, lighting, landscaping, fences, walls, pedestrian walks and terraces, and related site features, that exceeds two thousand (2,000) square feet or thirty percent (30%) of site area.

(2) The Land Use Bureau Chief, or designee, shall review and determine compliance with the standards of the VC District for all other non-exempt projects, by issuance of Site Plan approval.

g. Exemptions.

The following projects and activities shall be exempt from review under this Section:

(1) Minor repairs and/or minor alterations, maintenance or replacement of portions of an existing building, structure, sign, utility service or other minor structures and site features that would result in no significant impact on the

design, function, architectural character or visual appearance of the building, structure or property.

(2) Exterior architectural modifications that do not substantially alter the existing height, bulk or facade of an existing building or structure and do not increase building floor area.

(3) New signage not exceeding five (5) square feet in area.

(4) Changes in use of a building or structure to a permitted VC District use, requiring no change to the building exterior or site not otherwise exempt.

(5) Interior modifications that do not result in a change in use of the building.

11.5 Site Design and Architectural Criteria.

Development within the VC District shall conform to the standards of Section 7.2 and Section 19-3 of these Regulations, and the following additional design standards and criteria:

SITE DESIGN

a. When property within the VC District adjoins residentially zoned property, the standards of Section 7-K of these Regulations shall not apply, provided that the reviewing authority, as defined in subsection 11.4-f, may require any adjoining side yard to satisfy the side yard requirement of the residential district and/or the provision of a combination of fencing, walls and/or landscaping to provide an appropriate transition and buffer.

b. Buildings shall be constructed at zero setback distance from the front property line or street line to maintain a continuous building wall along the sidewalk, with minimum interruptions only for permitted driveways (see Figures 7.1, 9.1). The reviewing authority, as defined in subsection 11.4-f, may authorize an increased setback from the street line where necessary to align the building with existing buildings on adjoining properties, to accommodate an irregular property line condition, to accommodate an existing unique landscaping feature, to provide for an adequate sidewalk width, or when these setbacks will create publicly accessible open spaces or allow for active sidewalk uses associated with retail and/or restaurants located within the buildings. (see Figure 14.1)

c. Surface parking shall be located to the rear of the principal building, with suitable landscaped islands and perimeter landscaped screening. Large surface parking lots shall be divided with rows of landscaping no less than six feet (6') in width, to create parking "fields" of no more than 50 spaces each. Limited parking may be permitted along the side of the principal building, provided that no parking or access aisles shall be located in advance of any front building façade on the lot or on an adjoining parcel, and a dense landscaped buffer shall be provided with a minimum width of ten feet (10') and with plant materials maintained at a height of three (3') to four (4') feet, interrupted only by

permitted driveways and walkways. Where a screening wall with a height of three (3') to four (4') feet is provided, the buffer width requirement may be reduced to five feet (5'). Parking spaces on street corners are discouraged. (see Figures 19.1, 19.2, 19.3, 19.4, 15.2, 10.3, 10.4, 11.3)

d. The number and width of curb cuts to off-street parking and loading areas shall be minimized to enhance pedestrian safety, to maintain an active street wall and to preserve the opportunity for on-street parking. The consolidation and sharing of driveways and curb cuts between adjacent properties and interior connections between parking lots and/or the use of shared parking facilities is strongly encouraged. (see Figures 18.1, 18.2)

e. Exterior lighting, averaging not less than one-half (0.5) foot candles, shall be provided to insure adequate and safe lighting of all pedestrian sidewalks, walkways and parking areas within the site and along the property frontage to the curb line. Lighting fixtures shall be appropriately shielded to prevent trespass lighting onto adjoining private property, unless specifically waived by the adjoining property owner.

f. All loading and service areas, trash receptacles and mechanical equipment shall be located away from streets and/or suitably screened by means of solid fencing or landscaping, or a combination of both. Landscape screening materials should be maintained at a minimum height of four (4') feet.

g. Fencing materials along public street rights-of-way shall be limited to tubular steel or wrought-iron-type milled steel pickets. Fencing along side or rear yards or within a lot may be wood, steel pickets or any other approved fence type. Chain link fencing shall not be permitted.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

a. The architectural design of new buildings or substantial reconstruction projects, as defined in subsection 11.4-f, shall be coordinated and compatible with the architectural context of the site and prevailing character of the surrounding VC District. Design compatibility includes complementary building style, form, size, colors and materials. Multiple buildings on the same site shall be designed to create a cohesive visual relationship between the buildings. (see Figure 13.1)

b. Buildings shall be designed to have a clear base, middle and top, with horizontal elements separating each. (see Figures 23.1, 23.2)

c. Coordination of the height of new buildings or substantial reconstruction projects, as defined in subsection 11.4-f, with the actual and apparent height of adjacent structures is encouraged, especially where buildings will adjoin or be close to each other. Coordination of building height can often be achieved by adjusting the height of a wall, cornice or parapet line to match that of the adjacent building. Similar design linkages can be achieved to adjust apparent height by placing window lines, belt courses, and other horizontal elements in a pattern that reflects the same elements on neighboring buildings. (see Figure 20.1)

d. Buildings shall be designed to reduce their perceived height and bulk by dividing the building mass into smaller-scale components. On larger buildings, the rooflines of buildings can follow the variation in bay massing so as to appear as a series of side-by-side buildings or bays. Rooflines shall be emphasized, for example with gabled or other pitched roof forms, parapets, balustrades, and/or cornices. (see Figure 21.1)

e. Changes in primary wall material from lower to upper levels shall occur along a horizontal line, with the visually-heavier material below the visually-lighter material. Paneling materials applied to one façade only, such as brick paneling, shall be extended around building corners to a logical break in plane, so as to look substantial rather than “pasted-on.”

f. Building facades shall be articulated by using color, arrangement, or change in materials to emphasize the façade elements. The planes of the exterior walls may be varied in height, depth or direction. Long building facades are encouraged to be broken up into lengths of approximately thirty feet (30') with sufficient building articulation and architectural features such as reveals and piers and, and landscaping in limited instances, to avoid a monotonous or overpowering institutional appearance. Large scale retail stores with building frontages exceeding thirty feet (30') are encouraged to include architectural details and design elements to create the appearance of multiple storefronts.

g. Parking structures shall be situated below grade, integrated into the principal building behind active uses or located to the rear of the principal building and suitably screened from sensitive pedestrian views and adjacent residential buildings, with all exposed exterior walls faced with finished materials such as brick or masonry.

h. Rooftop mechanical equipment shall be integrated into the design of the building and set back at least ten feet (10') from all upper-level building facades, and effectively screened from view from street level.

i. The principal building entrance and front building façade shall face the street frontage and sidewalk, and not be oriented toward a parking lot. A building on a corner lot shall have its principal entrance facing the primary street. Where parking is located to the side or rear of a building, a secondary entrance may be provided for direct access to the parking area or a walkway should lead to the primary entrance at the street. All entries should be well lit and shall include architectural treatment that heightens their visibility. (see Figures 15.1, 15.2, 15.3)

j. Storefronts and architectural facades shall serve to enliven the street and provide a continuous “border of interest” by maintaining storefronts and window displays close to the outermost edge of the building façade and by avoiding deep setbacks and dark alcoves. Storefront windows shall be kept as large as reasonably possible and glazing shall be of clear vision glass only. Tinted glass is discouraged and reflective glass shall not be permitted. Storefront windows are encouraged to have a minimum height of six feet (6') with a window sill of not more than three feet (3') above grade, and to occupy seventy-five percent (75%) or more of the building frontage on the street. Where

storefronts do not open to the street, building facades should be highly articulated with projections, recessions, windows, and other design elements to avoid blank, featureless areas.

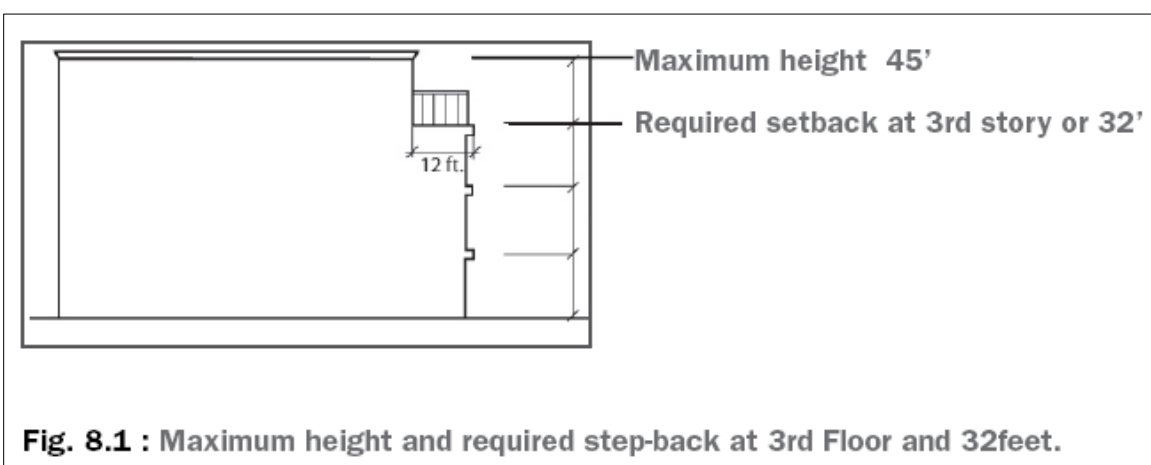
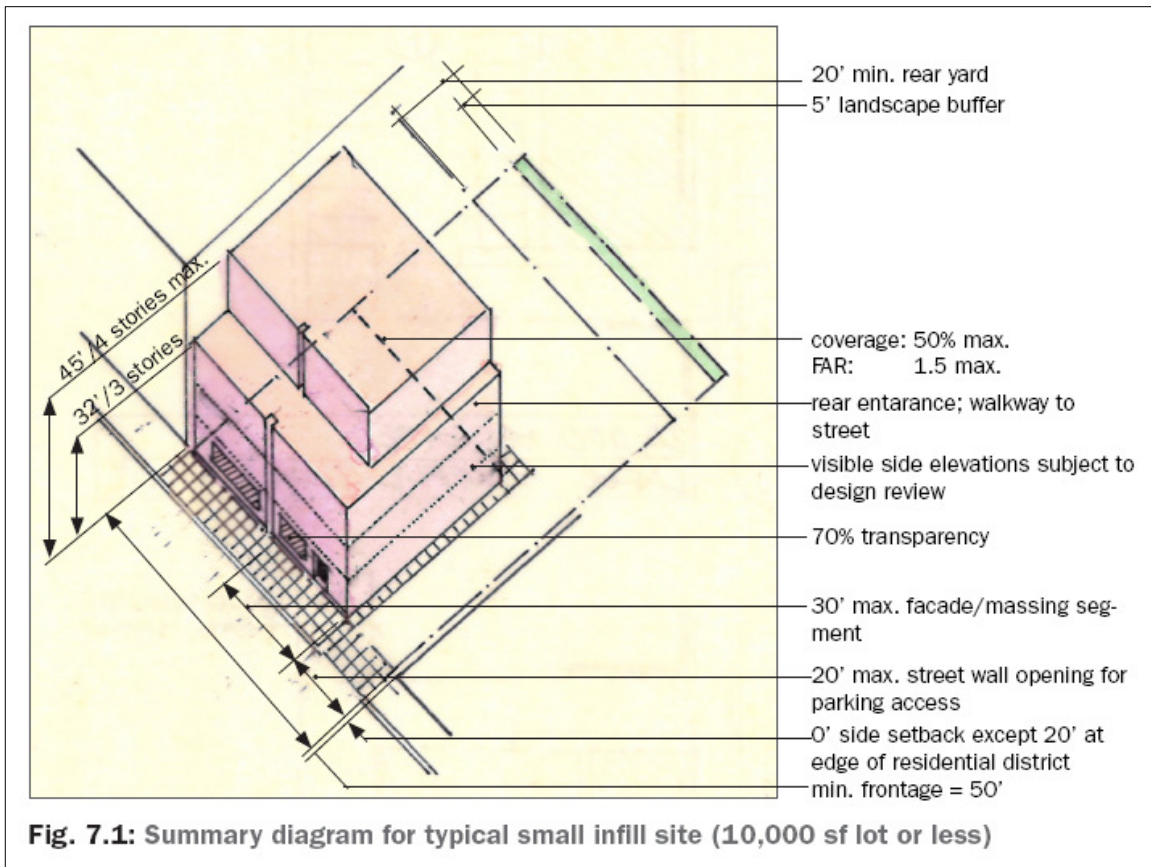
k. Building facades and site improvements significantly exposed to public view shall be constructed with high quality, durable exterior materials. Use of lesser quality materials, such as, but not limited to, masonite paneling, sheet tile, simulated brick, pegboard, vinyl and aluminum siding, external insulation and finish systems, plastic laminate and canopies and awnings made of vinyl is discouraged. This paragraph is not intended to discourage the use of high quality, durable and innovative materials.

l. Windows on upper floors shall be residentially-scaled double-hung, casement or other multi-paned styles. Fixed glass windows should not be used on the upper levels, nor shall painting over or otherwise obscure upper-story windows. (see Figures 7.1, 9.1)

m. Buildings shall have varied roof lines and materials. Peaked, mansard and other sloping roof types are encouraged. Flat roofs should be topped with cornices or decorative parapets.

n. Preferred security systems are glass shock or breaker sensors or electronic alarms. Open grill gates when used shall be mounted within the store interior behind the window display with the gate housing hidden from view. Solid slat rolling gates or shutters, barbed wire and razor wire are prohibited.

Appendix of Figures: Village Commercial District



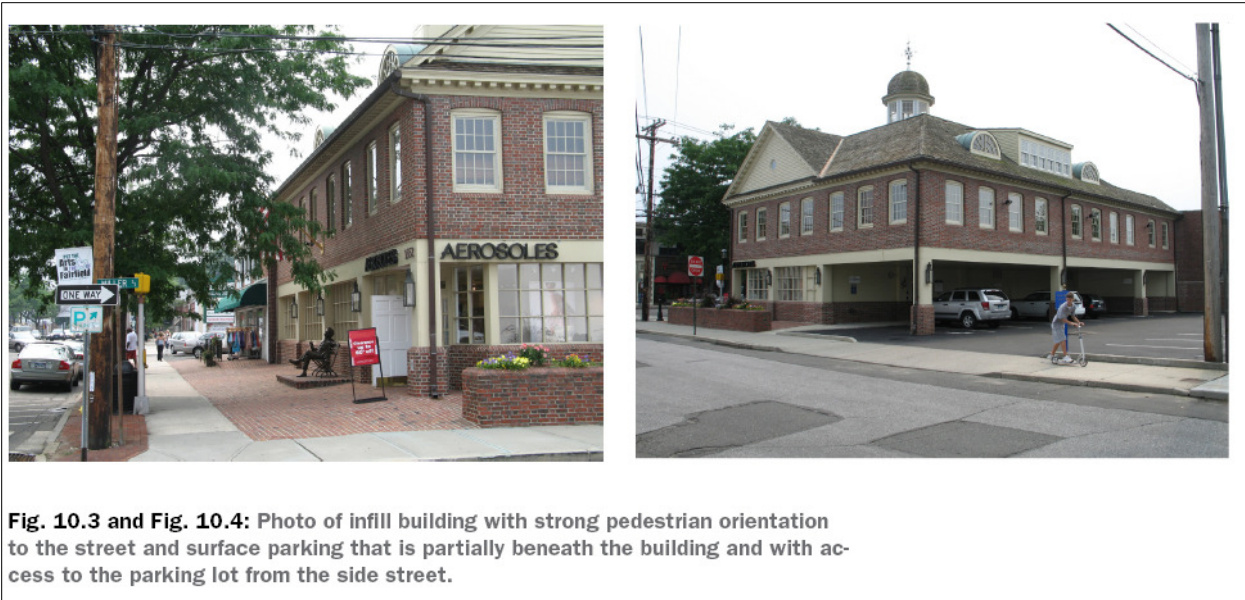
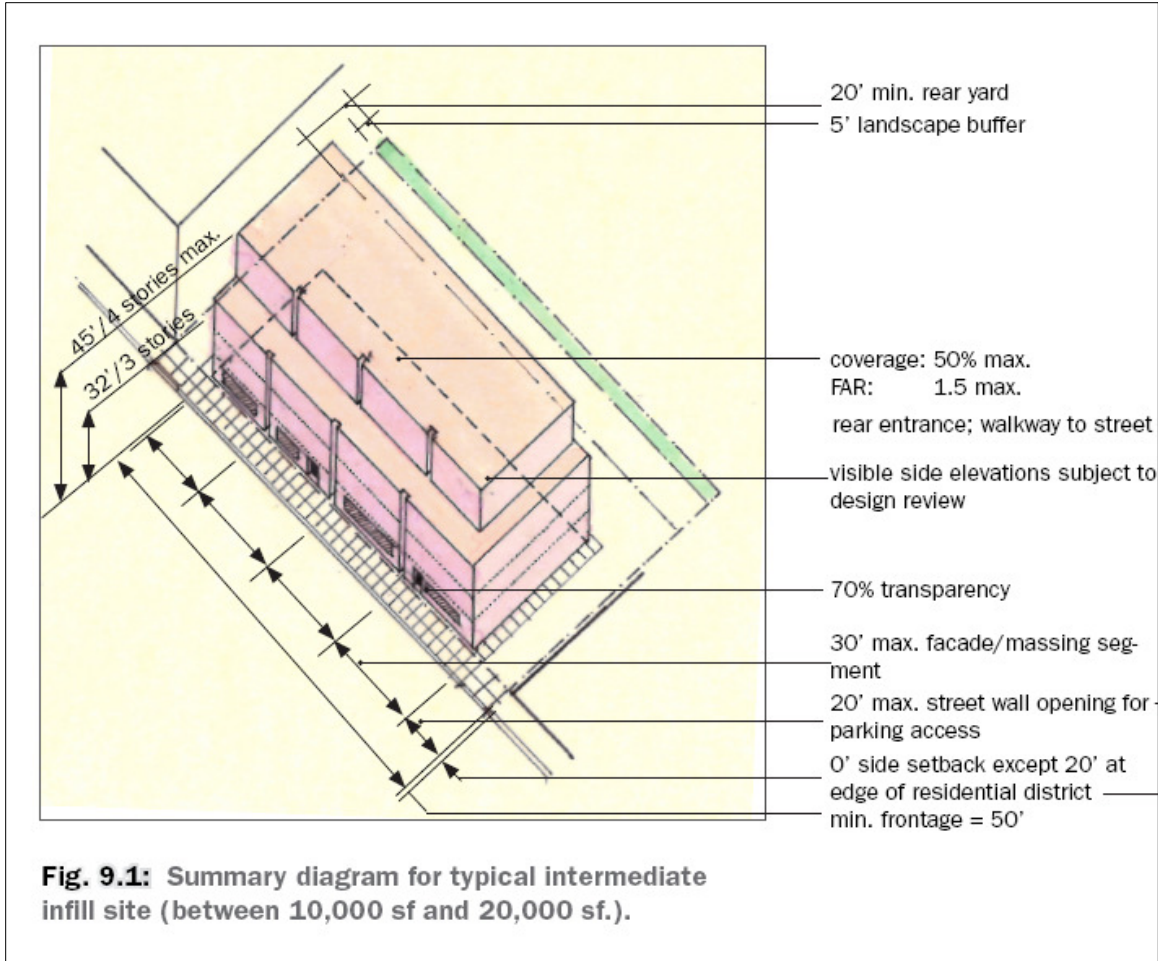




Fig. 11.3: These street-oriented mixed-use buildings obscure the parking structure behind.

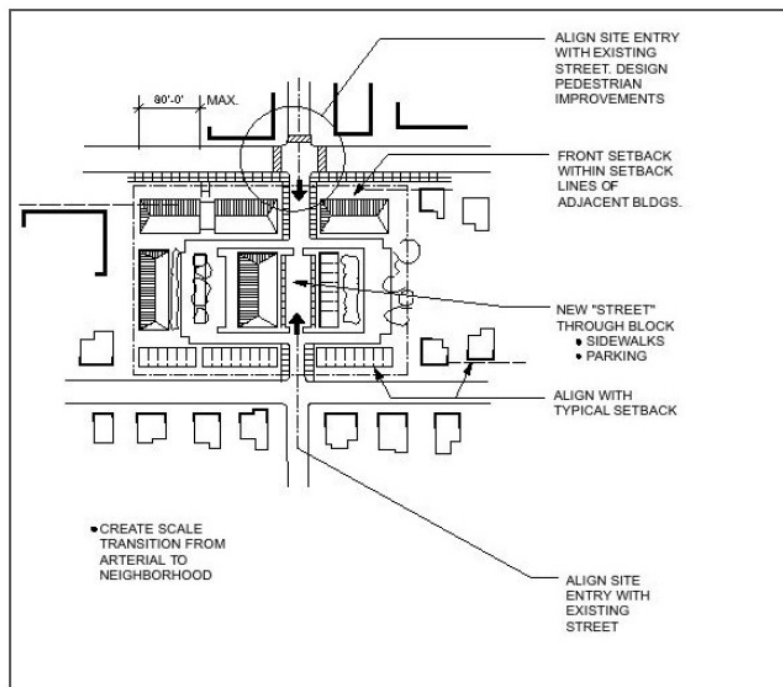


Fig. 13.1: Site plan for larger site development.

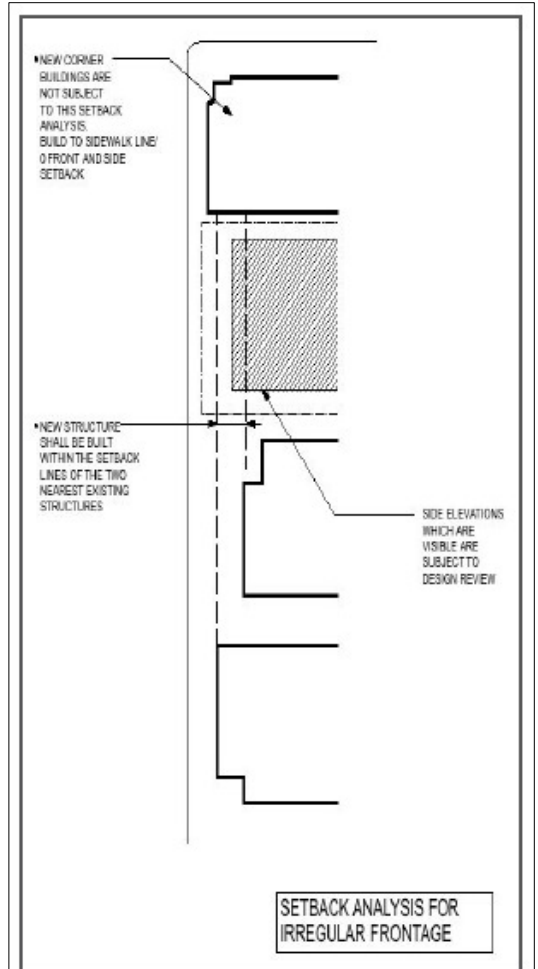
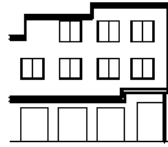


Fig. 14.1: Set back analysis for irregular frontage.

Buildings on Corner Lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.



Turret



Accentuated Roof Line



Sculpture



Balconies

Fig. 15.1: Strategies for articulating the corner of a building with two frontages.

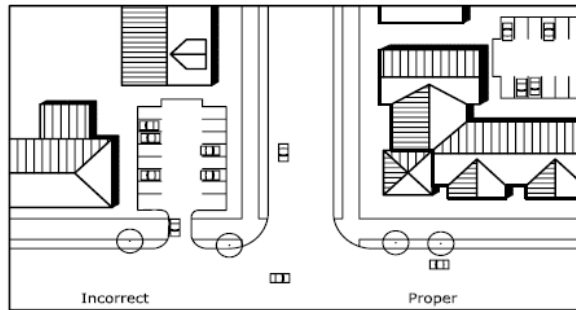


Fig. 15.2: Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

A residential project on a corner lot that relates to both street fronts and provides visual and physical access to the project from the corner.



Fig. 15.3: The massing of a building should reflect the importance of a corner site and relate to both street frontages.



Fig. 18.2 Additional on-street parking through streetscape and access management.

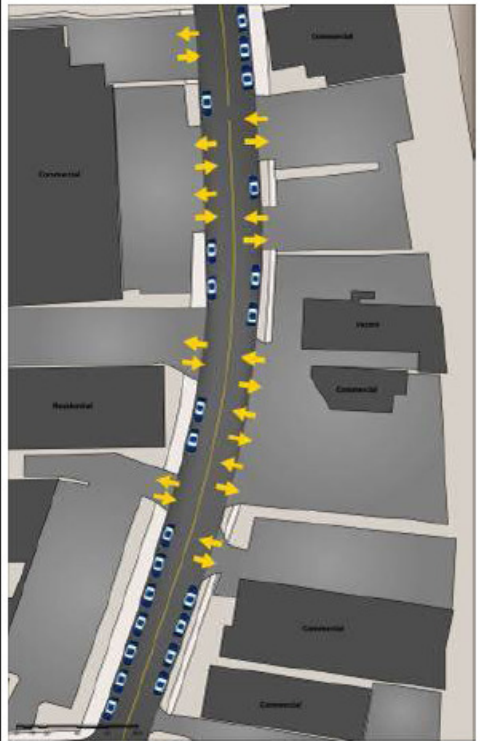


Fig. 18.1 Existing inefficient parking and access conditions on a portion of Glenbrook Road

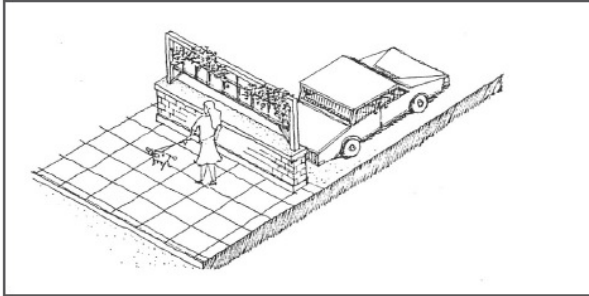


Fig. 19.1: Surface parking screened by an architectural wall and trellis.

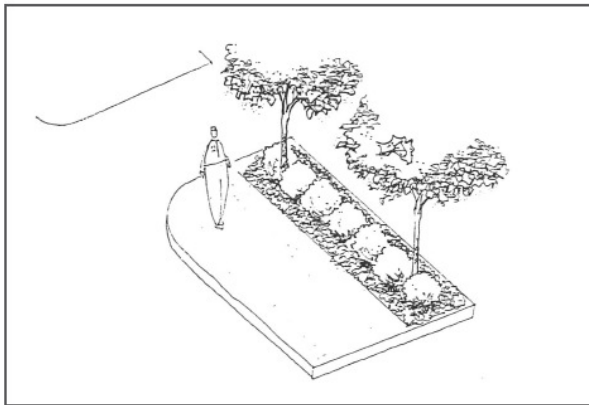
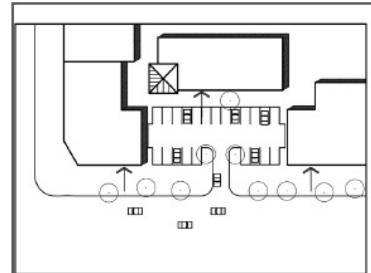


Fig. 19.2: Surface parking screened by hedges and trees

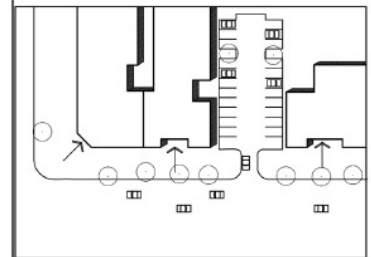


Fig. 19.3: Photo of surface parking screened by hedges and trees.

Not acceptable:
large lot between
the street and the
storefront



Acceptable:
Limited storefront
parking lot



Preferred:
Parking behind
retail frontage

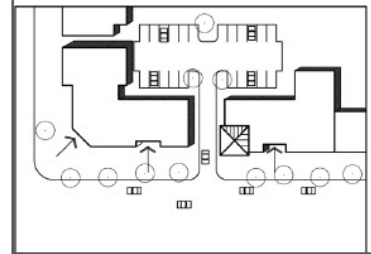
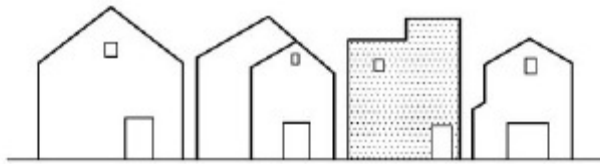
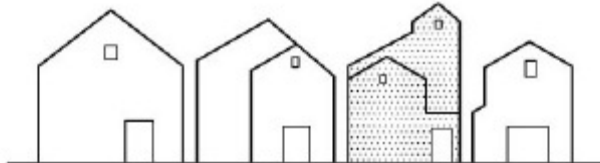


Fig. 19.4: Acceptable and unacceptable parking configuration.

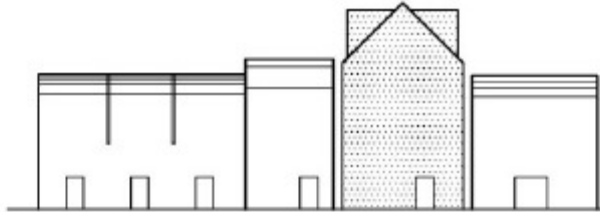
unacceptable



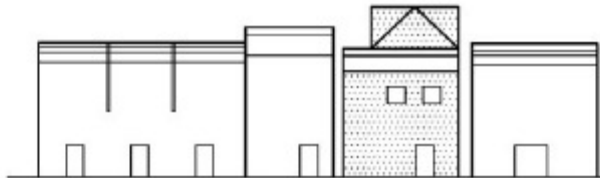
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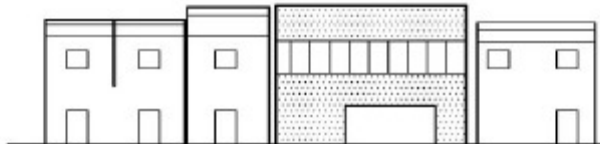
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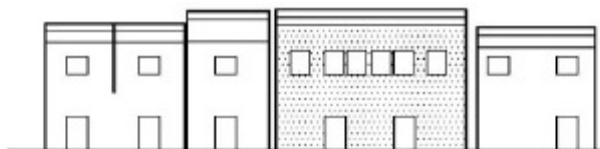


Fig. 20.1: Acceptable and unacceptable façade designs for infill contexts in terms of a) roof form; b) massing and; c) window opening types and rhythm.

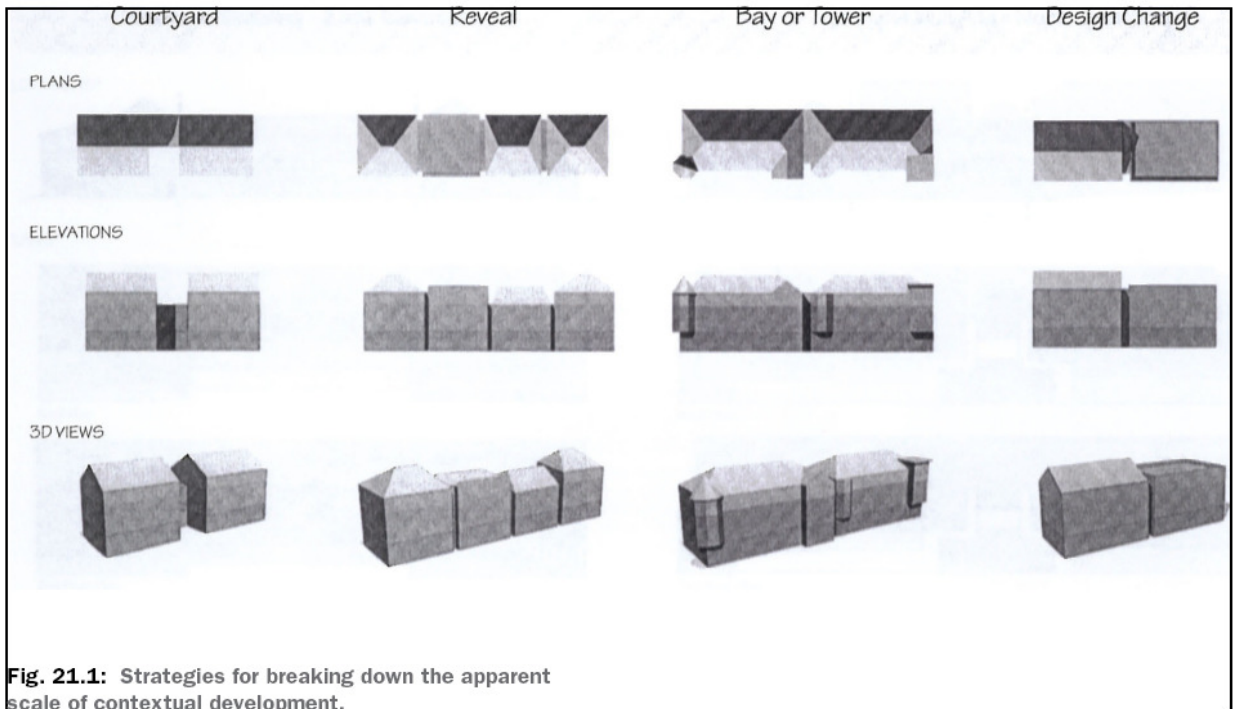


Fig. 21.1: Strategies for breaking down the apparent scale of contextual development.

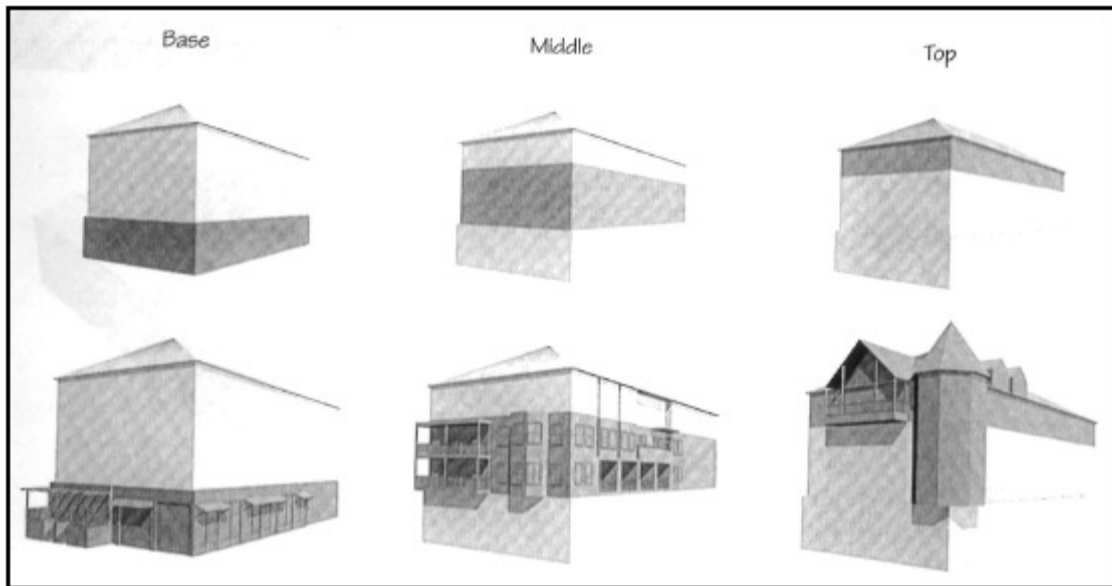


Fig.23.1: Strategies for articulating the massing and façade of a building to express a base, middle and top.



Fig. 23.2: Photo of contextual elevations which express a base, middle and top.