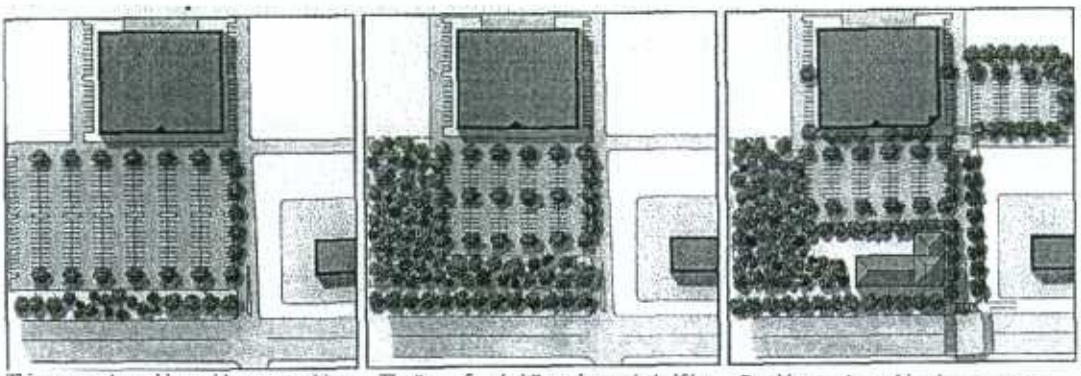
Town of Montgomery
Non-residential Design Guidelines

Addressing Retail, Service, Light Industrial, and Office Development

ACCESS AND PARKING

Off-Street Parking

Parking lots, with their expanse of asphalt and clutter of cars, can be an eyesore. Locating parking lots behind buildings is strongly encouraged. If parking lots cannot be located behind buildings, they may be located to the side of buildings, but only if they are buffered from roadway corridors with berms, stone walls, hedges, shade trees and other landscaping. With appropriate buffering, the view of parking lots as seen from the road can be softened. Large parking areas can be divided into smaller, separate lots dispersed throughout the site to reduce the impact of a "sea of asphalt" and provide more room for landscaping.



This proposal would provide more parking spaces than is necessary, based on outmoded standards.

The "sea of asphalt" can be cut in half by adhering to Montgomery's updated standards, which are based on National Parking Association recommendations.

Breaking up the parking into two areas further conceals parking while allowing room for smaller uses along the frontage to screen the parking.

Parking lots should be generously landscaped with shade trees. In the interior of lots, parking aisles should be divided with planting strips and tree islands, averaging a tree every 8 spaces. Grass block should be used for overflow parking areas to reduce stormwater runoff. Brick, pavers or textured surfaces should be used to break up the monotonous effect of the blacktop and emphasize walkways for pedestrians from the parking lot to stores.

Diamond shaped tree islands, such as those used at Woodbury Commons, provide additional shade trees without losing a single parking space.

Curb Cuts and Cross Access

Unrestricted access with multiple driveways along major roadways leads to traffic tie-ups, accidents caused by constant turning movements, and the demand for expensive highway improvements to correct safety and congestion problems. Access drives should be limited to one per parcel unless a traffic impact analysis or unique circumstances fully justifies additional curb cuts. One-way driveways should be avoided. "Do not enter" and "one-way" signs often confuse the motoring public and add to the clutter of the streetscape. More often than not, one-way driveways are the result of poorly designed or over-developed sites.

1) Minimizing curb cuts to a site:

- → keeps the flow of traffic moving slowly
- → increases safety
- → improves the visual appearance from the roadway
- → avoids unnecessary and costly

Adjacent parcels should share a single driveway whenever feasible. New access drives should be placed at the edges of the property so that entrances can be conveniently shared with future adjacent uses. Commercial uses should be clustered and developed in depth around a shared access point, rather than strung along the road with multiple drives.

Excess entrances should be closed and overly wide curb openings should be narrowed, especially during any subsequent site plan review process.

Break up, conceal, and buffer parking areas

Parking should be placed at the rear or side of buildings rather than in the front. In hamlets and community centers, buildings should be placed near the road to further conceal the parking and to link the site to the streetfront and sidewalk systems.

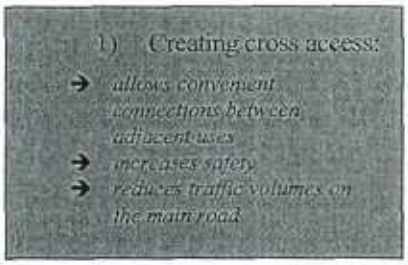
The perimeter and interior of the parking lot should be generously landscaped. Include the area within the parking fields in the landscape plan as well, with the planting distributed among islands of shrubs and shade-giving trees.

For large developments, postpone full construction of parking lots until demand is evident. A performance bond may be necessary to ensure proper compliance should it be needed. Parking generation rates should be the latest from the National Parking Association or the Institute of Transportation Engineers. Parking should fit the normal need, not the worst case scenario. Alternative parking areas, paved with paving blocks or just grassed fields, can be used for peak holiday volumes.

Joint Parking

Joint parking between uses reduces impervious surface area and is more economical to install and maintain. Particularly in cases where adjacent uses have different hours of operations (such as a retail business and a movie theatre, or an office building and a church), joint parking makes ecological and economic sense.

When joint parking is not feasible, parking lots between adjacent parcels should be connected through service or marginal access roads (preferable to the rear). Rear service roads that permit internal circulation between adjacent uses reduces the amount of traffic on the main road and alleviates safety and congestion problems. Temporary stub roads can be provided to connect commercial projects to adjacent parcels when developed.



Create mass plantings, retain natural vegetation, and provide road buffers along the frontage of non-residential properties

A road buffer is critical for softening the impact of large buildings along highways. The loss of vegetation and other features of the natural landscape significantly undermines the character of an area and, if permitted, will change a rural environment to a suburban environment. The width of the buffer should vary according to the setback of buildings. For example, in a hamlet setting where buildings are close to the street, businesses enjoy the visibility from the street and a buffer is not appropriate. Along a highway corridor, a buffer should be planted. Parking and stormwater management should not be placed in the buffers.

Public Spaces

Public spaces bring social and leisurely activities back into our daily lives. Community gathering places, such as village greens or small "pocket" parks, should be incorporated into developments wherever possible. Whether people are shopping, working, or conducting business, it is important to be able to socialize with others. Providing for this type of activity humanizes the site and often increases surrounding property values.

In commercial areas, the first floor of buildings should be oriented to pedestrians by providing visible entrances, awnings for shade and weather protection, and colorful, attractive window displays. A commercial streetscape can often be considered a room or space in its own right. Successful commercial areas are better suited to draw patrons and tourists when this outdoor room is inviting and stimulating. This becomes critically important as main streets struggle to compete with highway shopping malls.

Shopping and business areas should include amenities that allow for social activities.

ARCHITECTURE

Architecture should fit with local styles

Architecture is the most visible expression of local history, and a new building can make a striking contribution to its community. Yet new structures often clash with their older neighbors, sometimes because designers want to make a personal statement or because tight budgets produce bland, boxy buildings.

The Town of Montgomery's earliest settlements occurred centuries ago. Many of the buildings constructed during this period still remain. The architecture has historically been English and German in nature, but there are Dutch influences in the architecture of the Town as well, as can be seen by historic barns across the Town. As new development occurs in the Town, every effort should be made to blend with the old, rather than stand in bold opposition to it. It is not the intention of these Guidelines to inhibit new and innovative architecture, but it is important that new and old designs be compatible.

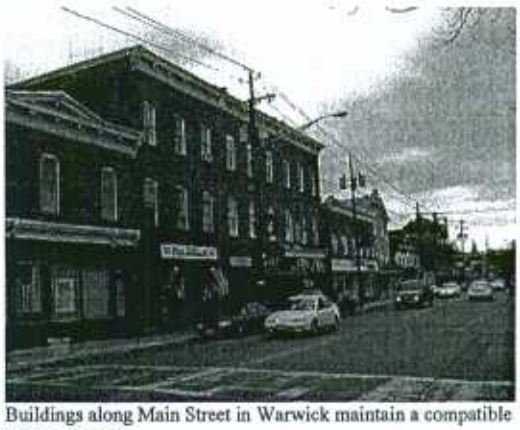
This building in Rhinebeck, NY is on the National Register of Historic Places.

An auto dealer constructed a new showroom, a few buildings away, with compatible architecture.

New buildings should include architectural elements of the vernacular, such as gabled roof lines, multi-paned windows and natural building materials. The size and "massing" of new buildings should be similar to surrounding buildings. Buildings should also include a variety of detailed features and patterns that provide visual interest from the perspective of both the pedestrian and the motoring public. If designed correctly, the built landscape can be pleasing to the eye and provide a positive community image. The following guidelines spell out some of the basic characteristics of the local architectural vernacular and preferred building designs.

Building Form

New development should reflect the character of surrounding architecture in scale, mass and building form. New buildings should be designed using a human scale. The human scale means that the size of the building relates to the approximate dimensions of the human body. Windows and architectural features are designed so that they are not much larger than a person. By using the human scale, a building appears more modest in size, does not dwarf or intimidate its residents, and is more compatible with Montgomery's vernacular architecture.



Buildings along Main Street in Warwick maintain a compatible mass and scale.

Commercial and office buildings with multiple uses or tenants should be designed with a complex massing that includes varying roof lines, projections or recesses, smaller additions to the main building, and/or separate, smaller structures. Large box like structures are not indigenous to Montgomery and should not be used except in the industrial park and distribution center areas. New buildings for either single use or multiple tenants should be designed to break up the "box" through the use of various design tools. A complex massing makes the building more visually appealing and emphasizes the distinction between different uses or tenants.

Site amenities in new commercial development should be provided, such as benches, planters, and attractive human-scale lighting. Whether a site is conducive to outdoor lunch breaks or merely for resting between errands, outdoor areas should be designed with people in mind. By providing landscaped sitting areas, the utility of these areas is maximized.

Building Height

The height of new buildings should be consistent with that of neighboring buildings. In commercial areas, one-story structures are discouraged. Through the use of variations in building height, roof line and grade definition, the perceived height of the building can be effectively reduced.

Roof Design

The style of roof lines is important because roofs are a predominant visual element of a building. As such, the roofs should be designed similar to the vernacular architecture, typically front and side gables. Gable roofs may vary in pitch from 7:12 to 14:12. Roof pitches below 8:12 on main roofs are discouraged. Mansard roofs should be avoided. Shed roofs are acceptable as secondary roofs but discouraged as main roofs. The minimum pitch of shed roofs should be 3:12. For very large buildings a system of complex roofs should be used.

Simple roofs consist of a single roof type. More complex roofs consist of a main roof type that is dominant, with attached secondary roof types that are similar and lower than the main roof ridge line. Although simple roof types are encouraged on small buildings, roofs of larger buildings should be more complex and should combine a main roof with lower, intersecting secondary roof types. This will create the additive assemblage of building elements that is characteristic of larger buildings in rural communities. It may also help to reduce the appearance of the building's mass.

Roof features such as cupolas, belfries, towers or similar structures can occupy a maximum of 10 percent of the roof area, where such features are historically accurate architectural elements. Dormers may take gable, hip or shed form, should consist primarily of windows, and should cumulatively not exceed 1/3 of the overall roof length. Cornices, brackets, and overhanging eaves are encouraged if appropriate to the style of the proposed design.

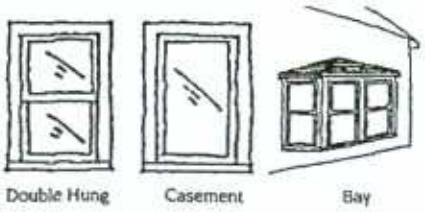
Where visible, roofs should be covered in shingle (slate, asphalt, or wood), or standing seam metal, as appropriate to the design and character of the building.

Rhythm of Openings

Long uninterrupted walls are monotonous and should be modulated or broken up with architectural features such as windows, doors and columns. Windows and doors should be placed at regular intervals across the building façade. Though literal symmetry is not necessary, a general balance between façade elements is harmonious to the eye.

Windows should be vertical, in proportions ranging from a 1:2 to a 3:5 ratio of width to height. Multiple panes divided by muntins are encouraged, in accordance with the style of the building (small panes for colonial, large panes for Victorian, etc.). Single cased windows are encouraged; multiple ganged windows are acceptable. Windows wider than 3 feet are strongly discouraged except on the entry levels of commercial uses, where a maximum width of 6

feet is acceptable. Three window styles are encouraged: double hung, casement and bay. The window style should be consistent across the entire exterior of a building. Clear glass is preferred; smoked or reflective glass is discouraged.



Doors should have raised or recessed panels, be of vertical tongue and groove board style, or be glazed. The size, proportion and detail should be appropriate to the character of the building.

Building Materials

Traditional building materials should be used whenever possible for new construction. These include wood (clapboard, shiplap, board and batten, and shingle), brick, fieldstone, or stucco. Vinyl, aluminum and other synthetic siding materials are discouraged. The predominance of these synthetic building materials did not occur until the mid-twentieth century. Although there are certain synthetic products that closely resemble traditional materials, most synthetics are difficult to integrate into the natural landscape or into older communities where traditional materials predominate. Furthermore, they are not as durable as traditional materials.

This large building is visually mitigated by the use of setbacks, projections, varying roof lines. Traditional building materials and architectural features like dormers and overhangs makes it visually interesting.

While materials such as concrete block may be more economic, they give a cold, warehouse appearance. These materials are only suitable for buildings over 100,000 square feet. Similarly, glass office buildings give a high-tech appearance. These building materials are also not suitable for a rural area such as Montgomery.

Windows and doors should be framed with wood or any other building material used in the façade with a minimum width of four inches. Window and door openings are an important element of a building, providing sunlight, fresh air,

and the entry and exit to a building. Framing these openings emphasizes their importance and avoids a "hole in the wall" look.

Building Alignment

Consistent setbacks from the street are strongly encouraged. New buildings on a street should conform to the dominant setback. Build-to lines should be designated on new streets.

Two new buildings of the same size: one breaks up the facade into complementary roof lines and window shapes; the incompatible example has a bulky mass, conflicting roof and window forms, and front yard parking.

When buildings line up along a street they create a defined edge to the public space, which contributes to the area's traditional character. The building alignment with the street edge can combine with sidewalks and rows of trees to create a canopied corridor. Infill buildings should fill space defined by adjacent buildings, harmonize with surrounding character, and maintain façade rhythms and street lines.

Gas Stations

It is commonly believed that gas stations must have their pumps at the front of the site. But why should unappealing pumps and the canopy over them be highlighted instead of the building? Parking and pumps can easily be placed unobtrusively to the rear of the main building at gas stations as shown in the following example:

Typical highway business layout emphasizes wide entrance and exits, standard pole sign, the canopy and gas pumps out front. The view from the road is of asphalt and utilitarian equipment with the building set back.

In this alternative example, the building is set closer to the road highlighting the architecture and providing a direct walkable connection to adjoining sites. The canopy is in the back but still provides a view of the pumps from the road.

This Mobil station was constructed on US Route 9 in Rhinebeck, NY with the pumps at the rear of the building.

Mechanical Equipment

Mechanical equipment can be unsightly and should be concealed from public view. Utility boxes should be fully screened by using fencing, walls or vegetation, by locating them in the rear of a building lot, or by housing them in structures resembling outbuildings. Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning equipment typically mounted on the roof should be situated behind sloped roofs so that it is beyond the sight lines as viewed from the ground and is adequately screened from all public spaces.

LANDCSAPING

Design and protect the open space system

If appropriate, link the natural open space system to the on-site landscaping plan by using native species and low maintenance plants

as much as possible. Arrange on-site open space so that it works as part of the system rather than only as a percentage of lot size. Open space can provide a social and leisurely setting for shopping activities, which can help to bring in more customers.

Parking and Interior Site Trees

Street trees along a main commercial street are perhaps the single most effective physical addition to make sidewalks seem more welcoming and more walkable. Trees should be placed between the sidewalk and curb to form a protective row that makes walkers feel safely separated from traffic. Trees should be spaced close together: 20 – 30 feet in areas with slow speed limits and farther apart (30 – 40 feet) and slightly back from the road in higher speed situations.

Trees to be utilized within a parking area or to landscape the interior of a site should be hardy varieties, salt and drought resistant, free of droppings that mar sidewalks and cars, and tall enough to frame parking areas and not block the view of storefronts. Good choices, that are known to be suitable for use in Southeastern New York State, include but are not limited to: Chinese Elm, Pin Oak, Red Oak, Red Maple, Sugar Maple, Green Ash, Ginko Biloba, Thornless Honey Locust, Sergeants Cherry, Caleryanna Pear, London Plane Tree and other indigenous species approved by the Town's Landscape Architect.

Drainage and Erosion Control

The design of drainage features, such as catch basins, swales, and collection ponds, should be treated as elements of the site's landscape plan and modeled upon the characteristics of naturally occurring ponds and streams found throughout the Town. Too often, the size and shape of drainage basins create the look of a large hole that bears no resemblance to the environment around them and effectively scars the landscape. If stormwater basins must be located along road frontage or in view of public places, they should be designed to resemble the look of farm ponds, with extensive landscaping and/or fencing placed around them. Native plant materials suited to pond and stream bank environments should be used to control erosion and create a natural appearance.

SIGNAGE

An integral component of attractive site design is the manner in which a business is identified. The sign itself, the relationship to the business it represents and its compatibility with adjacent businesses or sites are key factors

in establishing an identity for a business. Good signs enhance the success of businesses. They also create business districts that are more appealing to shoppers. Communities with good signs are more distinctive and attractive places to live, shop, and work, and are therefore more economically viable.

A good sign:

- → *conveys its message clearly and quickly*
- → *is compatible with the structure and its surroundings*
- → *promotes the visual image of the entire community*

Clarity and compatibility are the key elements of an effective sign. A sign should be easy to read and appealing to shoppers. It should be compatible with its surroundings, complement the architecture of the building, and contribute to the character of the shopping district as a whole.

Types of Signs

The first step in designing a sign is to choose the type of sign that is most appropriate to the building and the business district. In the Town of Montgomery, the rural character of the commercial districts provides the opportunity to create attractive settings for signs and set the scene for the historic nature of the villages and hamlets.

Commercial business districts and non-residential businesses in residential areas require special small-scale signage. Since most historic commercial facades were designed to include a sign board, wall-mounted signs are often the most ideal sign type. Wall signs are generally one of the least intrusive forms of signs. This is particularly the case when they are designed in a style that is compatible with building architecture. Wall signs should be placed without obscuring the building's architectural design or details. The best location for a wall sign is between the first and second story windows. Wall signs should compliment the architecture of the building on which they are mounted.

Projecting signs can be used if the building does not have a flat continuous surface conducive to a wall sign. Small projecting signs hung from narrow metal bars are characteristic of historic villages. The position of projecting signs should be staggered so they do not block the signs of neighboring businesses. Variety in shape and color helps to distinguish each sign.

Location and Size

Building signs, including wall and window signs, projecting signs, and awning signs, should be subordinate to the structure. Too often, signs overwhelm the structure and obscure architectural details. When architecture and signs work in a complementary arrangement, the entire building becomes a sign of quality.

Freestanding signs are only needed when a building is set back too far from the road for it to be seen. Otherwise, building signs are sufficient and separate freestanding signs should be avoided. If freestanding signs are used, they should be designed as low four to seven foot high monument signs and integrated into the landscaping. At this height, monument signs can also be seen directly from the eye level of drivers and are less likely to obstruct views of neighboring properties or the sky.

Color

Color affects a sign's visual appeal as well as its legibility. Signs with dark backgrounds and light lettering are much easier to read. Because dark colors recede while light colors stand out, our eyes perceive light on dark better than the other way around. Traditional dark background colors include black, navy blue, forest or emerald green, chocolate brown, burgundy red, and charcoal. Traditional colors for lettering include white, ivory, and gold.

The most legible signs are those with a dark background and light lettering.

Too many colors can be visually confusing. The ideal is a maximum of three colors, one for the background, one for the lettering, and one for accents and highlights. Subdued, rather than garish or florescent colors are most appropriate for a rural community like Montgomery. Sign color should complement the building and storefront colors and be compatible with neighboring signs and buildings.

Lettering

Lettering style and size are vital ingredients of a sign's legibility. If lettering is not used effectively, it will defeat a sign's purpose to communicate its message quickly and easily. The following guidelines will contribute to a legible and attractive sign:

Shorter messages offer better recognition.

→ Signs should be limited to a maximum of 5 words, combined with a symbol or logo for quick recognition or 26 syllables as described in the zoning law.

→ Copy written in upper and lower case letters is easier to read than copy using all upper case letters.

→ Simple lettering is easier to read than more ornate or unusual styles.

→ Signs are more legible when they use only one or two different letter styles.

→ Lettering style can create an image for a business. Classic serif styles have a traditional, timeless appeal, while sans serif letters look more modern.

Materials

Natural looking materials are most appropriate to Montgomery's historic character. Wood and metal were the standard materials of traditional sign makers, and these materials, along with stone, masonry, or landscaped bases, are preferred.

Directional Signs

Information and direction signs, containing no advertising, can be used to direct traffic flow, indicate parking space, points of interest, or provide other essential information to guide vehicular or pedestrian traffic flow. Such signs should be no larger than eight (8) square foot in size, shall not exceed ten (10) feet in height and uniform in color.

Lighting Signs

Detailed regulations are provided in the Zoning Law. The following describes reasons for limiting light sources. Sign illumination can significantly impact traffic safety as well as community character If lighting is necessary, low, external lights in which the source of illumination is shielded from the eyes of pedestrians and motorists is recommended. Lighting should be top-mounted on the sign, and should focus on the sign only and not spill over onto the building or the site. Incandescent bulbs provide warm, bright light that enhances a sign's colors. More intense light sources, such as sodium vapor and mercury vapor, are not well suited to illuminating signs.

LIGHTING

Much outdoor lighting wastes energy because it is not well designed. Poorly designed lighting can cause glare that hampers the vision of pedestrians, cyclists and drivers, creating a hazard rather than increasing safety. Poor outdoor lighting can also shine directly onto neighboring properties and into bedroom windows, reducing privacy, interfering with sleep and creating an unattractive appearance for the area. Moreover, a large amount of poor lighting

shines upwards, creating the skyglow that washes out our view of the starry night sky, damaging an important natural resource in a rural environment.

Street and commercial lighting should be distinctive and human-scale while preventing excessive glare or wasted light into the night sky. Good lighting will extend the viability of shopping areas, make public areas feel more secure and promote entertainment activities after the primary workday.

Lighting Guidelines

→ Do not over-light. People begin to feel comfortable at 0.1 to 1 foot-candle. 2-5 foot-candles are only needed in high security areas. More than 5 foot-candles are usually a waste of energy and a source of glare.

→ Provide full shielding that eliminates glare, especially off-site. Fully shielded means that all light is projected downward. The use of fully shielded lighting fixtures controls the light output in order to keep the light in the intended area.

→ Lighting fixtures should be installed to maximize their effectiveness on the targeted property, and minimize their adverse impact beyond the property borders.

→ Main street and pedestrian area lighting should be human-scale (10-18 feet high). Parking lot lights can not exceed 35 feet.

→ Fixtures should be spaced apart approximately four times the height.

→ Outdoor signs should be lit from the top.

→ Metal halide is preferred for commercial and pedestrian areas to give better color quality. Incandescent bulbs can be used for low wattage (under 150) accent or specialty lights.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE CIRCULATION

Almost every shopper must be a pedestrian first, even if it is just walking from the parking lot to the store. Unless a community provides an adequate sidewalk and bicycle system, every trip, even short ones, requires a car. Over dependence on automobiles leads to traffic congestion, air quality problems, and an all-too-expensive spiral of road building projects. A balanced approach to transportation, featuring a compact development pattern connected by convenient pedestrian and bicycle routes, provides alternatives to those who

choose to walk or bike for exercise, as well as the 25 – 30 percent of the population who cannot drive because of age, income, or disability.

Give pedestrians priority

We are all pedestrians and should receive priority over vehicles. All Planning Board actions that may affect traffic and circulation should be guided by this basic principle. Every application reviewed by the Planning Board should include an examination of alternatives to the automobile with an emphasis on pedestrians. Include walkways in all non-residential site plans; use them to link parking lots, transit stops (if applicable), and buildings on-site and with adjacent properties. Provide connections to nearby residential, recreational, and institutional uses as well. Provide benches, shade and human scale lighting to make pedestrians feel more welcome.

Pedestrian Walkways and Bicycle Circulation

Every public project, site plan and subdivision should be reviewed for its pedestrian or bicycle potential, including the need for sidewalks or bike racks. Compact residential and commercial development, instead of scattered or strip forms, creates more walkable and bikable distances. Adjacent commercial uses should always be connected by sidewalks along the frontage.

Sidewalks should be wide enough to comfortably accommodate walkers, joggers and bicyclists. In commercial areas, the ideal width is six feet or more to allow for more pedestrian activity, stopping to look in storefront windows and even outdoor displays or street cafes. Sidewalks should comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

To increase pedestrian safety, a planting strip of approximately 4 – 6 feet should be located between the sidewalk and the street. This area can be planted with street trees to provide shade and further enhance the sense of protection. The planting strip also provides space for snow storage off the sidewalk in the winter and prevents driveway ramps from tilting the sidewalk.

Bicycle Parking

Bicycle parking should be considered in both new development and redevelopment activities. All new development should include designated bicycle parking areas and racks in high use areas.