

Winchester Design Standards  
Specific Site: Washington Street at Swanton Street

### Design Review Development Process

Design review standards help ensure that new developments adhere to high standards of site and building design that enhance the quality of life for residents and the communities in which they reside.

The process allows flexibility in building siting, mixtures of housing types and land uses, private and public opens spaces, and the preservation and enhancement of significant natural features. Following the guidance of the standards, a development team may gain additional height and density if their proposal meets the intended town design quality set by the Design Standards.

Winchester's Permit Process includes the following requirements:

**A. Project Related Public Improvements:** The town requires developers of any Special Permit project to provide project-related, public-oriented improvements. These include on-site water retention, brick- trimmed concrete sidewalks, roadwork, open space, street lighting, and landscaping as per the town plan. Since town public funds continue to be scarce, the town will look to developer financing for such improvements.

**B. Environmental Analysis:** Each development project is required to do appropriate studies, present the findings, and suggest solutions to problem during preliminary design stage. In addition, the development team and contractor must show how they will limit negative side effects caused by their project on nearby residential and commercial properties. Impacts to be analyzed include, but are not limited to, flooding, noise, air quality, traffic, and street maintenance.

Each project may need to submit for review must be accompanied by a traffic study which show project impacts on the area's circulation system, particularly with regard to the effect on abutting residential neighborhoods. A capacity analysis must be made at the site's access/egress points as well as at all major street intersections, using area development projections in the expected year of project opening.

**C. Consultation:** Section 7.3.15.2 number 4 in the Zoning Code states, "The SPGA (Board of Zoning Appeal) may consult with any other boards, commissions and departments to ensure complete site plan and design review. The SPGA may utilize MGL Chapter 44 53G peer review consultants." Any costs will be the responsibility of the development team. The fees will depend on the project size and complexity, and the degree to which the design standards are incorporated into the proposed project.

**D. Materials' Test Wall:** Prior to Zoning Board of Appeal's final approval of proposed building materials, the development team will build a test wall of materials, which reflect selected design conditions for town review and approval. A design sketch of conditions and submitted building materials must be approved for completeness before test wall construction can begin.

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### Site Intent

The goal of the Washington at Swanton Streets Infill Strategy is to develop a mixed-income residential building with ground floor neighborhood retail primarily on Washington Street based on the design standards outlined below.

### Neighborhood Design Principles

Winchester and the neighborhood seek infill development that consists of handsome background architecture that focuses on and enriches the adjoining public streets and adjacent homes. New structures must be compatible with Winchester's architectural character and sense of place. The town seeks new buildings that are timeless, subtle, and elegant structures that will always feel comfortable and inviting to the general public. This will be achieved in part through the design of properly scaled windows, masonry and wood articulation, setbacks, animated silhouettes, and use of finish materials/colors that are warm, inviting, and supportive of the neighborhood.

The town will not support isolated, individual architectural statements that relate only to themselves. The town does support projects that are positive additions to the community.

Development in the public and private realms should be integrated in as positive, secure and elegant a manner as possible. Any part of the perimeter of new development which fronts on an existing street should be designed to complement and harmonize with adjacent, existing or planned land uses with respect to use, scale, density, setback, height, landscaping, and screening. Finally, each individual project should be carefully conceived and executed to the mutual benefit of its immediate neighbors.

New development will inevitably affect the existing adjacent residential neighborhoods. Therefore, new public spaces with attractive and inviting connections to and from adjacent neighborhoods are essential.

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Infrastructure

**A. Open Space** Accessible open space, ranging from a minimum of 10 to 20% of the land, not including required setbacks, shall consist of parks, and pervious landscape areas open to the sky at the ground level.

Public sidewalks shall be widened to encourage communal gathering spaces/outdoor dining at retail restaurant locations or for optimizing the planting of streets trees.

[Interior resident courtyard at 10% of site, 70 by 70 = 5,000 sf]

Given 40B projects are larger in size than existing neighboring structures, a minimum fifteen-foot tree-planted buffer should be provided where the site borders existing lower-scaled residences at the shared property-line.

**B. Roadway & Service Networks** Modifications due to new private development are expected. Existing town roads will expand sidewalk widths at key pedestrian locations, at retail frontage and necessary screening.

Entrances to parking and service areas must be coordinated with and not negatively impact adjacent development. In addition, vehicle entries need to be as far from intersections as possible and integrated into the building forms to minimize visual impact. All service bays must be out of public view.

**C. Pedestrian Circulation** All development must include an integrated pedestrian circulation system with particularly strong connections to the public way and between adjacent residential neighborhoods. Existing narrow sidewalks should be increased in width wherever possible to be safer and inviting, and create room for outdoor dining, retailing, and celebration.

Building lobbies should be directly located on public streets and within public view and, in the case of a mixed-use building, need to be clearly separated from each other.

**D. Utilities** The town will review engineering impacts on infrastructure as part of its review process. Each development is responsible for its own building and land water runoff, which must be handled on site. Architectural related impacts must be gracefully handled to create harmonious conditions along the public domain. The town strongly suggests including on-site retention utilizing landscape and pervious materials.

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Mix of Land Uses

Unless indicated otherwise, each development is highly desirable to include a mixture of uses highlighted below.

**A. Retail** In general, retail/restaurant uses shall focus on and enliven existing streets. Retail presence is greatly strengthened by contiguous frontage - ideally not separated by more than fifty (50) feet - on both sides of the same street. Ground floors must be designed to easily accommodate such uses, regardless of whether the first floors are actually used for retail/restaurant space in the first years of occupancy or not. Minimum open retail depth is forty-five (45) feet, ideally sixty (60) feet.

Planned open spaces including plazas, parks, new courtyards and select widened sidewalks will provide unique opportunities that are expected to encourage outdoor dining and more inviting walking and communal opportunities.

**B. Housing** Winchester and neighborhood residents envision the development of a new housing on underutilized sites.

**C. Parking** All on-grade and enclosed parking shall be screened to the satisfaction of the town from public view and adjacent private development. Parking facilities shall be incorporated into development projects in a manner that maximizes opportunities for ground level retail along Washington Street and to limit inactive, unsecured areas.

Given the site's change in grade of nine feet along Swanton, lower level of the building could incorporate approximately 20-22 covered parking spaces with a relatively easy access point utilizing approximately half of the building basement.

**D. Open Space** In addition to designing wider sidewalks as mentioned above, the 120 -150 residents will require a pervious landscape area open to the sky at the ground level at the back of the building adjacent to the main lobby.

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Elements of Form

Introduction: The thrust of the development standards is to maximize design quality and integrate all projects into the neighborhood and streetscape. An exception to the standards will be entertained only if that exception will more effectively achieve the overall architectural and town design goals as determined by the Planning Board, Board of Zoning Appeal and Town Planning staff.

**A. Height**

Height and bulk of buildings should be configured to minimize their visual dominance above the traditional neighborhood height of 2-3 stories, the extent of cast shadows, and undesirable alterations of air currents affecting the public street and open space system, bordering neighborhoods and adjacent new or planned development. Mitigate top floor height by incorporating sloped roofs/upper floor setback into the newer building.

No building element may project vertically beyond the maximum height allowed, unless a coordinated system of expressive building tops becomes an integral part of the development's design concept. An expressive building roofline appropriately celebrates the building's union with the sky. In general, chimneys, water towers, air conditioning equipment, elevator bulkheads, skylights, ventilators and other necessary features appurtenant to structures which are usually carried over roofs should not extend beyond the maximum building height requirements for each district. However, if those features are designed in a coordinated, distinctive manner in concert with the upper floors of the building and, if the design is approved by the town as creating an architecturally and neighborhood-sensitive roof to the development, the same non-occupied features may project beyond the maximum height limit.

**B. Scale/Proportion of Elements**

Projects must relate to human dimensions and provide a sense of intimacy in all aspects of design from building concept development to construction details. Of particular importance are the treatment of the ground plane and other parts of the projects, which can be seen and experienced directly by the public.

Although each style of architecture has unique characteristics, successful town architecture incorporates a relatively similar scale of building elements: size, rhythm and depth of windows; materials; cornices; dormers; projecting bay windows; expressed structural bays; entry points, signage; etc. It is expected that development teams will design new structures that are harmonious with and enhance the town's historic character.

**C. Massing**

Regardless of any preconceived development configuration for any particular use, new development is expected to reinforce the neighborhood's existing street patterns; break down any building type's typical massing to relate to the historic mass and character of the town; and prevent a monolithic appearance.

Buildings should be of a tripartite architectural configuration consisting of base, middle and expressive top.

Properties must create a harmonious, architecturally integrated building form that enriches the public domain.

New projects adjacent to lower-scaled homes shall mitigate their building mass by incorporating sloped roofs/upper floor setbacks, and sensitively incorporating similar materials and architectural rhythm, bay size and scale of the historic structure into the new structure.

#### **D. Street-Walls & Setbacks**

Maintenance of existing or planned street-walls is generally required by the town. This may be accomplished by principal front wall plane setbacks and cornice lines, which are consistent with existing buildings on the same block or neighboring blocks unless specified otherwise in a Special Permit conditions by the Planning Board or Board of Zoning Appeal.

Specific areas immediately bordering the Washington and Swanton require 5-foot setbacks. Permissible street-wall exceptions, subject to design review, include bay windows beginning at the second floor, entrance canopies, at-grade open space amenities.

#### **E. Corners**

Key architectural corners, especially those located at important key road intersections including Washington at Swanton are unique character-building opportunities highlighted for special architectural expression. This includes projecting bay windows, curved corners, turrets and towers.

#### **F. Open Space**

To be included in any open space calculation, the actual space must measure a minimum of 15 feet in both directions.

#### **G. Details**

Development bordering the public domain must pay special attention to the ground plane and silhouette, and convincingly incorporate residential imagery. Overall form and individual elevations must be designed to emphasize human scale and presence through the use of properly proportioned features, including but not limited to punched windows, lateral-arm awnings at retail locations, integral balconies, setbacks, sloped roofs, etc.

**Materials:** The first floor and any exposed lower level of new buildings should be faced with an authentic New England brick, limited stonework with wood clapboard and trim on upper levels, or equivalent approved by the Planning Board/Board of Zoning Appeal as part of the permit process. Quality materials must be used at the pedestrian level of all buildings.

New building facades facing and immediately adjacent (within 50-feet of property-line) to lower-density and height residences must be broken down in scale, height (reducing to maximum 2.5 stories) and character to reflect neighboring homes.

**Facade Articulation:** Elegant highlights and subtle embellishments are needed to create a desirable community of buildings. Key locations for residential articulation are at building's first floor, entries, corners, top floor and silhouette.

#### **Silhouette/Top Floor**

As buildings increase in height (above 2-3 stories depending on location), they should be shaped to be increasingly slender and broken down in scale toward the top. Buildings must provide silhouettes that enliven views from nearby neighborhood homes, and thoroughfares.

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This greater articulation should be an integral part and emphasis of the overall building massing and facade concepts. Top floor elements shall include a coordinated design of sloped roofs, gables, dormers, and/or setback balcony with planted pergolas.

**Awnings:** Where appropriate, awnings should be lateral-arm awnings, color coordinated with adjacent development, at all retail frontages overlooking streets to encourage protected, outdoor dining. The awnings will assist in offering an active, vital marketplace image, while at the same time creating a means of protection for shoppers, residents and office workers during inclement weather.

**Transparency of Ground Floor Spaces:** All new buildings should maximize visibility and transparency through ground floor retail, restaurant, lobbies or possible future public use space as determined by the Town. Winchester realizes that future additions of storage rooms, toilets and restaurant kitchens will limit transparency, but it is the Town's objective to locate these areas to maximize visibility and transparency where it is desirable. All tenant improvements visible from public open spaces and thoroughfares are subject to the same standard.

**Balconies:** New buildings should provide human-scaled balconies at appropriate locations projecting no more than 2'-4" from the adjacent face of the building. The balconies must be detailed so that they are inviting, highly usable and relate directly to the building character and, where appropriate, adjoining open space. All balcony railings are to be painted metal and easily incorporate planting boxes for hanging flowering plants.

**Penthouses:** All mechanical penthouses and other projections should be architecturally integrated within the overall form and individual elevations of the building. The penthouse must be faced with similar building materials as the principal facade and enhance, not detract from, the overall building appearance and balance. Extended sloped roofs are encouraged to shield mechanical equipment.

**Color:** The town encourages the subtle use of warm and inviting color in all new buildings. The selection of colors must be sympathetic to the general historic palette.

**Windows:** For reasons of public health, esthetics and future energy concerns, the town desires operable windows to be used throughout. Strip windows are not acceptable. Traditional masonry and wood openings and articulated fenestrations are expected. No solid panes of glass are encouraged, except at first floor retail/restaurant storefronts.

**Art:** Individual works of art and their respective settings must work together in a harmonious, subtle way. The town encourages artists to work on basic architectural elements of the building instead of individual freestanding objects.

**Signs:** All signage is subject to design review. In general, signs should be designed to fit well on the buildings, to be legible but not overpowering, and to complement other elements applied to buildings, such as awnings, canopies, or artwork.

**Sustainability:** All new structures within a Final Development Plan shall be planned, designed and constructed to be eligible to achieve at least the Silver level using the applicable LEED Rating System of the United States Green Building Council in effect on January 1, 2009. An applicant shall provide to the Planning Board a completed LEED scorecard, with supporting documentation, demonstrating that the new building will meet the requirements of this section.

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**Site-specific Standards:** An individual project may have particular site requirements not specifically covered in the Design Standards. Therefore, upon developer interest and review of the surrounding situation, the Board of Zoning Appeal may add site-specific guidance to the development team prior to design development phase.