

Town of Mount Jackson

Development Review Guidelines And Policies

**Standards for Creating a Quality
Living Environment**

Introduction

The Development Review Guidelines and Policies are intended to elaborate on the policies and laws adopted in the Town's Comprehensive Plan and the Town Code by serving as a set of parameters for the review of present or future land use matters affecting the town and the nearby area. They are intended to promote a carefully planned community by:

- encouraging an equitable distribution of well-designed and efficient land development which reflects appropriate relationships between uses, continuity between neighborhoods, availability of public facilities, and a sensitivity to the natural environment;
- enhancing the natural environment and provide guidance for site development within, and immediately adjacent to, the Town; and
- promoting orderly, quality development and a higher quality of life for the citizens of Mount Jackson and immediately surrounding areas.

These guidelines work in conjunction with the Town Code, the Comprehensive Plan, supplemental overlay districts, the Town Council, the Planning Commission, as well as valued citizen input, and County policies to promote the best possible development for Mount Jackson's future.

PART ONE

TOWN DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

PROCESS

Town Development Review Process

1. Community Input Meetings

These meetings are intended to occur as soon as possible in the development review process. Meetings will not only provide the developer an opportunity to discuss the proposals in general, but they also will provide for very early input from Town residents and nearby neighborhoods. These meetings are normally held as part of the Planning Commission's normal meeting schedule on a case-by-case basis, as the need arises.

• Notification of Potential Development or Redevelopment

Town staff will be responsible for notifying residents of a Community Input Meeting. In addition to notifying the nearby neighbors, Town staff will determine what other interested parties should be notified of a meeting (e.g. potentially affected business owners, homeowners associations, etc.). This will depend on factors such as the nature, size, or type of application and the site's location. The greater the impact of the proposal, the greater will be the extent of staff notification when possible.

• Information to be Shared With the Developer

At a minimum, the appropriate Town documents which may include the Town's Development Review Guidelines, Main Street Guidelines, Comprehensive Plan, Caverns Road Master Plan (or similar area plans), and Town Code. Town staff will also provide information about where copies of applicable County ordinances and regulations may be obtained. Every effort will be made to have Town documents available on the Town Web

Page: www.mountjackson.com. An initial staff analysis of the project will be provided to assist in discussion of town policies and laws.

2. Planning Commission Review

This review serves as a screening mechanism prior to the Town Council’s review. The Commission is a body of residents appointed by the Town Council to review development projects, conduct public hearings and advise the Council on their findings and recommendations. The entire proposal will be summarized in a final staff report and presented at a public hearing along with staff recommendations. Included in this report will be any outstanding issues that have not been resolved at prior meetings

3. Town Council Review

This stage of the process will provide the Town Council the opportunity for final input to ensure the proposal meets all legal requirements and criteria that have been agreed upon in the meetings. The Town Council ultimately is the final decision-making body for zoning cases.

PART TWO TOWN DEVELOPMENT REVIEW GUIDELINES

A. Site Design Guidelines

Site design is the process by which the principles and standards of good planning are put into practice. The bulk of the Town’s development review policies deal with design considerations. It is important to have a balanced, reasonable set of standards to describe what the community wants itself to look like and to guide prospective builders and developers, including builders of public and civic buildings, in site layout and design.

GENERAL SITE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Large Developments are defined as those with more than 75 housing units or more than 5 commercial units.

1. Large development projects shall be designed with a “theme” to unify buildings and facades, and to create a distinctive identity that should be integrated into the surrounding communities.
2. A hierarchy of street types based on a modified grid street network is preferred in large developments.
3. All projects shall be sensitive to the surrounding environment and community, with regard to architecture, scale, and mass.
4. Parking areas shall be designed to be convenient, efficient, safe and attractive. Concrete curbing should be provided around single trees and landscape islands proposed within parking fields. Landscaping should be provided in accordance with the Town Code.

5. Berming shall be designed to project a natural appearance, rather than a man-made feature.
6. Dumpsters shall be screened in accordance with Town Code..
7. Ornamental lighting fixtures in accordance with Town standards, other than Cobra heads, are required.
8. Where possible, safe, and practical, storm water management ponds should be designed as an amenity that does not require fencing. Where fencing is required, six-foot high, vinyl-clad chain link fencing or other solid fence acceptable to the Town Council is required around storm water management facilities. Landscaping should be provided to screen and/or enhance the appearance of storm water management ponds.
9. Drainage systems shall be designed to blend in with streetscape.
10. Streetscape design shall be unified and complementary to adjacent properties.
11. The use of alternate paving (e.g. concrete pavers or stamped decorative concrete or asphalt) is encouraged at building entrances and pedestrian crossings to create a cohesive streetscape design and to highlight areas of pedestrian activity for enhanced safety.
12. Outdoor lighting must use partial cut-off fixtures. Lighting shall not provide glare onto roadways or onto adjacent properties. Full cut-off fixtures that further reduce the amount of glare are encouraged. The lighting system should include timing devices to turn off unneeded lighting during times the project is not in use. Outdoor lighting should be efficient but not excessive and should be designed to enhance safety.
13. Lighting of signs shall be internal.
14. Lane striping and pavement painted arrows delineating vehicular traffic flow shall be provided in parking lots with high traffic volumes.
15. All handicap parking stalls shall be painted blue in their entirety, in addition to the standard pavement painted symbol and signage located at the head of each stall.
16. New construction or renovation of existing structures should be compatible and reflect the prevailing character of the area. In the Main Street corridor such construction must conform to the Main Street Guidelines.
17. Blank walls and large masses should be visually broken by landscaping, architectural features, and varied building materials. Articulated storefronts should be provided on large buildings and should be designed to relate to adjacent streetscape.
18. On multi-building sites, architecture should be designed to relate buildings to one another while maintaining proper proportions of size and scale. New buildings must also be constructed with appropriate setbacks to provide streetscapes in accordance with Town Code and other regulations, e.g. Main Street Guidelines, as applicable.
19. Parking lots should be landscaped, while allowing for safe sight distance for drivers, in order to encourage concealment of parking from street. Generally, parking should be located to the side or rear of buildings, not in front of them. Surplus parking areas containing 20 spaces or more should be constructed with 50/50 pavers to reduce the amount of impervious surface.
20. Any communications tower or other public utility tower shall be incorporated into an existing facility or demonstrate significant “stealth”-type technology to effectively minimize its appearance and visual impact and to blend in with the surrounding landscape/tree line (such as a tree-like design).

21. Porous paving materials (e.g. concrete pavers, grass pavers and porous pavement) are encouraged in parking areas, driveways, sidewalks and trails in order to allow rainwater to permeate through hard surfaces into the ground at the site rather than run off the site.
22. Development plans should include the provision of bike racks at publicly accessible buildings and park facilities.

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Architecture shall be designed to relate single-family attached and multi-family buildings (plexes, condos, apartments) to each other.
2. Proposed units shall be comparable in architecture and size to existing (rather than approved) units in the same project phase or section.
3. On corner lots, or where the chimney is highly visible, the chimney shall be constructed entirely of brick. Where the chimney faces public space, brick is encouraged. All fireplace chimneys and prefabricated inserts shall extend to grade.
4. Units across the street from or next to each other should not have the same front elevation. A compatible variety of different colors, materials, special features shall also be used to ensure that units appear unique, even if adjacent to units with similar front elevations.
5. In site plan review, vehicular access to corner lots shall be provided from streets of lower classification or streets that are anticipated to have less traffic volume
6. Units shall be sited on lots to provide the greatest functional rear yard possible. To accomplish this, dwelling units should be sited at or as close to the front building restriction line so as to provide for the greatest amount of functional rear yard possible.
7. No more than six units should be attached in a townhouse building. Back-to-back townhouses are prohibited.
8. The use of natural materials (e.g. brick, stone, stucco) is encouraged.
9. A minimum of two architectural features shall be provided in a balanced composition on each end wall. Such features may include, but not be limited to, standard windows with shutters, doors, fireplace chimneys. For highly visible units, a minimum of four architectural features (including decorative trim, shutters) is encouraged.
10. On highly visible townhouse units, and selected detached units, the front facade and (visible) end wall shall be constructed of the same material.
11. Townhouse units should be offset a minimum of four feet. Side entry of end townhouse units should be encouraged. Townhouse rooflines should be varied in height. Townhouse roofline pitch should be no less than 8/12.
12. Street lights consistent with Town specifications shall be provided at the entrances to new developments.
13. Accessory structures serving residential neighborhoods, including mailbox clusters and utility boxes, should be sited to be functionally efficient and should be made visually attractive through use of architectural embellishments or landscaping.
14. Residential areas shall be buffered from non-residential uses and activities, while encouraging these areas to be linked via vehicular and/or pedestrian connections.
15. Residential areas shall be connected via a continuous network of open space, hiker/biker trails, sidewalks and roads intended and designed to link those areas together, as well as to link them with recreational and commercial uses.

16. Additions to existing structures should match the existing structure in color, materials, and roofline, and be architecturally compatible with the surrounding community.
17. Windows and/or doors should be placed on additions/garage conversions in balance with the existing structure and immediate neighborhood.
18. To continue to provide a broad range of housing types and styles within the planning area, each builder within a new residential development is encouraged to provide at least one single-story unit type or a model which includes a first floor master bedroom in their architectural portfolio to address the needs of the 55-and-over population and persons with disabilities, and within a large development provide a complete mixture of housing types to accommodate all levels and age groups within the community.
19. Recreational facilities (i.e. tot lots, etc.) and hiker/biker trails and their access points required by an approved Detailed Site Plan or Specific Design Plan shall be completed and useable prior to the issuance of the first Use and Occupancy Permit for the adjacent buildings or residential units the facilities and/or trails are intended to serve.
20. To ensure safe lighting of the street at night, streetlights shall be operational upon completion of the eleventh dwelling unit within any permit phase.
21. To enhance the aesthetics of townhouse communities, parking shall be located to the rear of buildings, and rear load garages are encouraged.
22. Design of townhouse communities should include courtyards and common green spaces in front of townhouse units.

COMMERCIAL, PUBLIC AND CIVIC BUILDING DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Commercial retail uses shall be buffered from residential development by a transition that may consist of higher density housing, office uses, open areas, or a major highway.
2. Consolidated signage shall be encouraged.
3. The use of accent lighting on buildings and in landscaped areas is encouraged, provided such lighting does not create off-site glare or increase light pollution.
4. Commercial lighting must be directed away from residential areas and roadways. As a general rule, the cumulative total height of light poles and mounting base (if any) shall not exceed the height of the building.
5. Streetscape design (e.g. wide sidewalks, textured crosswalks and intersections, street trees, lighting and other street furniture) are encouraged and shall be unified and complementary to adjacent properties.
6. Larger commercial developments shall provide town greens, parks, plazas, or other types of public space as amenities.
7. Although commercial areas must be buffered from residential areas, these areas are encouraged to be linked via vehicular and/or pedestrian connections.
8. Mixed use commercial buildings, such as those with retail on the ground floor and office or housing on upper floors are encouraged.

B. Environmental and Open Space Guidelines

1. New, planned residential neighborhoods shall have landscape plans associated with their monumental entrances.
2. Woodland conservation shall be emphasized. Trees of national or historical significance, including Champion trees, should be high priority for retention.

3. Retention and preservation of a site’s natural landforms, drainage patterns, and sensitive environmental areas must be planned for within the site.

C. Transportation Guidelines

1. Major intersections with pedestrian crossings shall be provided with landscape treatments to alert drivers of a change in the function of the road.
2. Pedestrian movement shall be a priority in any street system design.
3. New and replacement street lighting must be consistent with the town’s specifications.
4. Crosswalks shall be located and lighted where high volumes of pedestrian traffic exist or are anticipated, and where they are warranted by standard engineering practices.
5. Generally, unless there are no feasible alternatives, vehicular access to individual properties having frontage on arterial and collector roads will be restricted.
6. In planned development areas, a modified grid street network is preferred, with the highest rated streets being designed as boulevards and narrower two-lane streets with parallel parking designed as lower order streets.
7. Primary vehicular access to a commercial area shall not be through a residential area.
9. All major roads through the Town should be designed as heavily landscaped boulevards to establish a sense of place and to enhance the appearance of the community.
10. Major roadways providing access to the Town should have attractively landscaped gateway entrance features to the community.
11. Parking bays shall be constructed that no vehicle, when parked, will overhang property lines or travel lanes.
12. Contractor’s equipment and vehicle storage areas in agriculture zones, rural home businesses, landscaping businesses, plant nurseries, and parking areas in floodplains may, by Council action, be exempt from paving requirements.

PART THREE

TOWN DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

DEVELOPING AREAS

Prior to approval of projects of more than ten (10) housing units or five (5) commercial units an area master plan shall be developed to provide community input and conceptual policy guidance for the review of applications.

1. Additional focus should be placed on redevelopment in the Main Street area that promotes this area. Appropriate design standards should be adopted to ultimately achieve a “classic main street section”. Consideration of such standards should include, but not be limited to:
 - Interconnected network of streets onto which buildings front;
 - Properly designed and engineered sidewalks and crosswalks;
 - Intensively landscaped with trees, planters, lights, benches and trash containers;
 - Range of building types;

- Building design standards emphasizing compatibility of design;
 - Parking:
 - Well-landscaped rear parking lots;
 - Signs should be small and include projecting, wall mounted and painted on awnings and windows;
 - Opportunities to expand or enhance existing cultural facilities and attract other new facilities.
5. The historic view shed should be preserved.

SPECIAL DESIGNATION AREAS

1. Commercial and office development should be concentrated in the Route 11 and Caverns Road corridors.
2. A full service nursing home/retirement village/etc is encouraged.
3. Zoning designations should set density and intensity limits related to the Comprehensive Plan ultimate land use and should not be used as the basis for negotiation of higher densities.
4. The Downtown area should contain a range of residential and commercial uses, with a high quality pedestrian experience that incorporates existing natural features and parks as design features.

ENVIRONMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The environment is one of our most precious resources. Without proper guidance and management, development sprawl can overcome and destroy the community's irreplaceable natural assets. Monitoring natural ecosystems, such as 100-year floodplain, steep slopes, wetlands, and critical habitat areas on a watershed-wide basis, creation of a sustainable approach to development, establishment of performance standards, and preservation of significant open space and forested lands through conservation efforts and pollution prevention measures demonstrate a commitment to the long-term protection and enhancement of the natural environment.

1. The local environment comprising the Town of Mount Jackson and surrounding community is worthy of preservation, protection and enhancement for the benefit of current residents and future generations. Key aspects of the community social and cultural history should be retained and integrated into the daily life of the community.
2. The North Fork of the Shenandoah River and Mill Creek are recognized as being a valuable environmental resource within close proximity to the Town of Mount Jackson. These resources have a rich heritage dating back to pre-historic and Colonial times and are worthy of protection efforts from local government, residents and the business community. The network of environmental assets related to these waterways include "Sensitive Areas", such as 100-year floodplain, wetlands, steep slopes, and other natural characteristics.
3. Recognition is given to the value of forested lands and wooded areas in the local environment. Trees play a vital role in the infrastructure of our community, contributing to the scenic beauty, the landscape and the overall quality of the natural as well as built environment. Trees reduce the amount of storm water runoff at a development site and save thousands of dollars that would have been spent on drainage and other solutions.

Trees also play an important role in deadening noise pollution and contribute to overall energy conservation efforts and enhance property values throughout our community. Woodland conservation/tree preservation efforts are encouraged within the planning area.

4. Agricultural preservation in the Planning Area is encouraged through incentive programs such as the Conservation Easements and other policies identified in the Comprehensive Plan.
5. The protection and preservation of open space to protect environmentally sensitive areas is strongly encouraged.
6. The Agriculture (A-1) zone should be used where possible to protect environmentally sensitive areas.
7. The preservation and protection of stream valleys, tracts of land with pristine environmental characteristics and a system of interconnecting greenways is a primary objective.
8. Conservation landscaping methods are encouraged in all new development and renovation/restoration projects. Water conservation techniques that reduce water consumption and re-use harvested rainwater are encouraged.
9. Development of a site should incorporate “whole site design”. Buildings should consist of environmentally conscious, regionally available, building materials and construction waste should be minimized and recycled to the fullest extent possible. Energy efficiency should be maximized and water consumption minimized. Renewable energy technology is encouraged in all site development.
10. Low Impact Development (LID) technology shall be incorporated into parking areas to reduce storm water runoff and non-point pollution. Applicable LID techniques may include porous pavement, bioretention islands, swales, filter strips, weep walls and rain gardens. Plants used in bio-retention cells, rain gardens and swales shall be native and non-invasive.
11. Drainage shall be designed so as to not interfere with pedestrian traffic.
12. When there is an existing building that will be removed as a consequence of site development, “deconstruction” is encouraged rather than demolition in order to reduce the amount of construction waste.

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

The area’s transportation system is one of the most critical elements of infrastructure needed to sustain the Town’s quality of life as well as to accommodate growth and development both within the Town and in the region. The transportation needs of the area are multi-modal. Regional access must be facilitated, but not to the detriment of existing or planned neighborhoods. Overall transportation systems planning and adherence to sound engineering principles shall guide review of development proposals to ensure safe and efficient access and circulation. Any disruptive impacts of future improvements to the existing transportation network and quality of life should be minimized. The integrity of non-highway transportation facilities must be protected and enhanced.

1. The Town supports the study of new ways to fund all modes of transportation on a region-wide basis.

2. Any improvements to the transportation network in and around the Town and its Planning Area should maximize traffic flow and operational efficiency, while minimizing disruptive impacts on the residents of this area. This may best be accomplished by limiting the extent to which a road must be widened, and by locating road improvement projects in the least detrimental location (including the minimal loss of trees).
3. To the greatest extent possible, no new highways should be constructed. Continued highway expansion should not be the sole means of accommodating new growth. The Town supports a system of multi-modal corridors consisting of such alternatives as rail, bikeways, etc. Innovative techniques such as Transportation Systems Management should be used to improve the efficiency of existing and future transportation improvements.
4. Route 292 needs to be reconstructed between I-81 and Route 11 to improve traffic flow and safety in that corridor.
5. An additional North-South parallel route to Route 11 needs to be considered to accommodate emergency overflow and future local traffic growth.
6. Preservation of existing rural and scenic roads will be supported whenever feasible. Scenic roads are an asset to the Planning Area and establish a theme for the manner of contiguous development that must respect this character. Rural and scenic roads should not be designed as main arterials.
7. The overall non-motorized transportation goal of the Town shall be to make it possible for residents to walk or bike anywhere in the Town safely separated from vehicular traffic. The Town will be a pedestrian friendly community. Generally, all new development will be designed as such.
8. Growth should occur in compact locations adjacent to major roads to promote reduced burdens on public infrastructure, conserve farmland, and to preserve existing woodlands and wetlands.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

The Town supports the county proffers formula to assure contributions by new development toward the goal of maintaining adequate public facilities. This formula should also include support for the school system.

Public water and sewer facilities are essential to support new growth, as well as the needs of existing development. The Town operates its own wastewater treatment plant and water system within the Town. The water system has recently been upgraded and the wastewater plant is being upgraded to 700,000 gallons per day capacity.

The Town provides and maintains recreation facilities and parks for its residents. These facilities are in addition to, and not a substitute for, those facilities needed by the region that are provided by the county. Having a wide variety of recreational opportunities for all age groups and providing parkland for passive recreation or open space preservation adds significantly to the quality of life and attractiveness of the Town.

1. All developments shall be staged to coincide with the actual availability of required public facilities (such as schools, roads, libraries, fire and rescue, etc.).
2. No project will be recommended for approval unless the necessary adequate public facilities, including but not limited to roads and related improvements, are either in place or will be constructed simultaneously with the project itself. Funds approved for public

facilities improvements in the later years of an adopted Capital Improvements Program should not be considered to fulfill this requirement.

3. School facilities in excess of 100% of their design capacity should be deemed overcrowded. The County is urged to take the necessary actions to achieve a school system where enrollments do not exceed available capacity.
4. Town-owned recreation facilities are “in addition to and not a substitute for” County facilities.
5. New developments shall provide recreation facilities, including smaller recreational parks for younger children. These facilities shall be located and constructed so that impacts (e.g. traffic circulation, environmental impacts, such as tree and wetland loss) are minimized. Developers shall make connections to the trails network wherever the network abuts any such developer’s property.
6. A program for maintenance of the trails throughout the Town, which identifies the trails to be maintained in current and future fiscal years, shall be established.
7. Additional opportunities for water-related recreation, including creeks, rivers, streamside parks, and a creek/river trail shall be encouraged.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REVITALIZATION

Commercial land uses, including employment uses, are a measure of the economic viability of the community. Both the location of commercial zoning and the way in which these sites develop can greatly influence the image of the Town. Commercial activities shall be convenient, yet unobtrusive. Impacts on neighboring residential properties and the motoring public must be thoroughly assessed and mitigated.

A revitalization plan for Main Street is directing preservation and revitalization efforts in that portion of the Town through the adopted Main Street Corridor Plan.

1. Compatible commercial development, employment uses and mixed-use development, including live-work dwelling units, shall be promoted in designated centers.
2. Auto service centers or related commercial uses shall be directed to highway-oriented sites on the periphery of the community.
3. Strip commercial development, particularly single-use or pad site configuration, shall be discouraged.
4. Commercial development shall be located in planned or designated centers rather than on isolated, scattered sites and redevelopment of older centers is encouraged.
5. Industrial and commercial land uses should be allowed in the planning area only on properties already appropriately zoned for those uses. Development of isolated vacant commercial properties will not be accepted.
6. Existing commercial centers should be preserved, rehabilitated or redeveloped.
7. Continued employment and office development is encouraged at approved locations in accordance with the Town’s Comprehensive Plan.

HOUSING

Residential development makes up the largest single land use category in the Town. As population of the Town becomes more diverse, its housing needs are also changing. It is important to provide a wide range of housing opportunities in the community and to

guarantee that new subdivisions are designed with an identity and can be integrated into the Town's existing neighborhoods. Residential land use policies should not only address the provision of housing, but should also provide guidance on the development of residential projects.

1. Preserve *and enhance* the quality of the residential character of the Town by maintaining a majority of single-family, detached dwelling units throughout the community and balancing it with a choice of housing types, sizes and styles, including live-work dwelling units and housing for residents of all ages and incomes and for population with special needs.
2. The inventory of housing opportunities for senior citizens and for persons with disabilities should be expanded to include Mixed Retirement Communities, Assisted Living Facilities, Nursing Homes and Congregate Care Facilities.
3. Special exception applications that significantly change the character of an undeveloped land parcel in a residential area are to be discouraged.

URBAN DESIGN

General land use policies and guidelines are among the essential tools to guide the physical development of a community. They reflect the intended pattern of development on a planning area-wide scale and are helpful in articulating to developers and the public the Town's desires for location of major land uses and character of development.

1. Growth shall be directed such that Mount Jackson becomes more of a full-service Town.
2. A step-down pattern of densities for residential development throughout the Town should be encouraged. The highest density of residential development should be limited throughout the planning area to areas within the centrally located downtown. Places near the downtown or within and around Local Activity Centers (Caverns Road, etc.) and at major transportation nodes should be designated as areas of medium density residential and/or commercial/retail-office type development.
3. Development shall occur in a pattern where the highest densities and intense commercial uses are concentrated in the vicinity of Downtown and the Route 11 Corridor. The overall Downtown area shall contain a range of uses, with a high quality pedestrian experience that incorporates existing natural features and parks as design features.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic preservation is a valuable component of the development process as opportunities arise to protect or preserve historic properties and resources. Protection of historic resources, preservation of vistas, etc. are possible if they are considered early in the development review process. The Town has a proud history and tradition that is evoked in its conservation of historic buildings such as churches, cemeteries, historic homes, historic commercial structures, the covered bridge and natural vistas. A continuing commitment is necessary to guarantee that the many valuable historic properties in and around our community are respected as the area around them develops.

1. Historic resources shall be preserved or rehabilitated and be considered for adaptive reuse.
2. When possible, historic resources shall be relocated or rehabilitated, rather than demolished.
3. Historic resources shall be surveyed for possible historic significance prior to any proposed demolition.
4. The historic view sheds should be preserved.
5. The Downtown section of the Town shall be considered a historic resource to be enhanced where possible.
6. Historic view sheds should be preserved and complemented by new development.