

Welcome to the Design Review Process

Town of Canton, CT



❖ *Introduction*

When the town of Canton was incorporated in 1806, it consisted of four distinct village centers. These focal points have defined the character of the Town for more than 200 years. “Canton Village” was the commercial area along the Old Albany Turnpike east and west of the village green; today, Canton Village and the Route 44 corridor still comprise the economic heart of the town. “South Canton,” renamed Collinsville, was the industrial center of town; although the manufacturing is gone, Collinsville is valued for its charming, historic character and is one of few entire villages on the National Register of Historic Places. “North Canton” and “Canton Center” were the agricultural areas and have retained their rural character. Individually and collectively, these areas continue to define Canton’s character today.

The retention of this character is important to the citizens of Canton. New development needs to be directed toward maintaining that character. This means that new developments must be designed to be compatible with the historic architecture and sense of place while addressing the needs of the times.

The existing historic structures throughout the town consist of commercial, industrial, institutional and residential dating from the late eighteenth century. The building styles vary from simple to traditional forms such as Colonial, Federal, Greek Revival, Victorian, Bungalow and Modern. The best of these structures demonstrate good design and craftsmanship, attention to detail and the use of natural materials in their construction. The best of the newer structures show the same good design, craftsmanship and attention to detail, and utilize natural materials in their construction as well.

❖ *Purpose*

The goal of the Design Review Team (DRT) is to assist businesses with the design aspects of the zoning approval process in advance of the public hearing, potentially saving applicants time and money. Design Review provides a mechanism for designs to be developed with Town input. This is accomplished through early review of building and site design, prior to filing an application for site plan approval and before much design money has been spent. The DRT collaborates with applicants to help them avoid problems and expensive reworking of the design by assuring that the designs submitted for site plan approval are consistent with the Town’s standards and expectations, based on section 8800 of the Canton Zoning Regulations.

This brochure provides a simple understanding of the design review process. Please refer to section 8800 of the Canton Zoning Regulations for full details, applicability and requirements.

Design Review Team & Process

The Design Review Team (DRT) consists of five members:

- ♦ One Architect, qualified by license in the State of Connecticut.
- ♦ One Landscape Architect, qualified by license in the State of Connecticut.
- ♦ Two members who have education, training or experience in a design oriented field.
- ♦ One member of the Canton Zoning Commission to provide continuity to the land use application process.

Through successive meetings, the DRT and the applicant work collaboratively to resolve issues, fine-tune designs and build a consensus as to the design that will be submitted to Zoning. The DRT meets on monthly basis and can make itself available for special meetings. The meetings follow statutory protocols but are more interactive and informal than traditional Land Use meetings. The process involves the following steps:

1) Preliminary Review Meeting

At the first meeting, the applicant will present the design proposal in its early stages. The DRT will gain an understanding of the applicant's ideas and objectives, make initial comments and begin the dialogue. Meeting minutes will be provided.

Required Information

(Please refer to section 8800 of the zoning Regulations for details)

Rough Sketches - rough concept or schematic of:

- Building Plans
- Elevations
- Site Improvements

Photographs - site, character of surrounding area, streetscape:

- Existing site conditions
- The site from all streets or public ways
- Properties within 500 feet (or more as appropriate), streetscapes and adjacent structures

Proposed Materials and Colors - if known at this stage

Statement of Context to Surround Area - demonstrating an understanding of the design in context to the character of the surrounding area and streetscape

2) Follow-up Meetings

Additional meetings will be scheduled as needed to discuss the designs as they continue to be refined. After each meeting, the DRT will post meeting minutes within 7 days of the meeting.

Required Information Prior to Zoning Referral:

Final Plans - addressing issues raised by the DRT - minimum scale 1/8" = 1'-0"
(or per DRT):

- Building Plans
- Roof plans
- Exterior elevations
- Any additional items requested by the DRT at previous meeting(s)

- Site Development Plans** - including signage, lighting, parking and landscaping, and relationship to adjacent properties—minimum scale 1" = 40'

- Utilities, Mechanical Systems, Service Areas** - location, appearance and size if visible

- Building and Site Materials** - literature and/or samples

Additional materials may be requested at the discretion of the DRT, depending on the complexity of the proposal. For example, computer or hand generated perspective sketches of the site may be requested

3) Final Meeting

The final DRT meeting will include a last review of the plans the applicant intends to submit to Zoning. The DRT will use the Design Guidelines Checklist to make sure the plans have addressed every aspect of design considered by the Zoning Commission and determine how these details fit with the Town's guidelines. The DRT will formulate its recommendation to Zoning.

4) Recommendation to Zoning

Based on consistency with the Town's Design Guidelines, the DRT will vote to:

- a) recommend Zoning approval of the design as submitted;
- b) recommend approval with adjustments;
- c) recommend denial and resubmission with adjustments; or
- d) recommend approval of an exception to the Design Guidelines based on extenuating circumstances.

The recommendation is advisory only and applies solely to the design; final approval rests with the Zoning Commission.

5) Application to the Zoning Commission

The best time to file an application for Site Plan Approval is when the final design is ready, or nearly complete. The public hearing will be smoother when the design plans submitted to Zoning are complete and match the final drawings reviewed by the DRT.

6) Report to Zoning

The DRT will submit a recommendation to the Zoning Commission that includes a summary concerning compatibility with the Town's guidelines and a copy of the completed Design Guidelines Checklist.

The Checklist

The DRT uses a checklist version of the regulations as a tool in the design review process. The checklist contains all the design elements of a project that the DRT will want to discuss. Later in the process, the checklist is used to evaluate the specific ways a project addresses the Town's design criteria. This tool brings consistency to the process.

The Design Guidelines Checklist is based on section 8800 of the Canton Zoning Regulations:

- Compatibility Objectives
- Design Guidelines

Applicants are encouraged to become familiar with the Design Guidelines and use the checklist to achieve compatibility with the Town's standards and expectations. A copy of the Design Guidelines Checklist is included in this brochure. Additional copies are available in the Land Use Office.

Contact

An initial meeting with the Design Review Team (DRT) can be arranged through the Canton Land Use Office. Please call if you have any questions or would like to schedule a meeting.

Town Planner 860-693-7891
Land Use Coordinator 860-693-7856

Canton Land Use Office
4 Market Street
Collinsville, CT 06022

❖ *Message from the Design Review Team*

Thank you for considering the Town of Canton in your business plans. We look forward to working with you on the design of your project. The earlier you begin to discuss your ideas with us, the better we can guide you through the site approval process. We share your goal to get through the process with as little time, expense and rework as possible. As a Town resource and sounding board for your ideas, we can help you interpret the Town's design standards as they apply to your project.

Canton Design Guidelines – Checklist

Project: _____

Drawing Date: _____

Pre-application File #: _____

These Design Guidelines are based on Sections 8800 of the Canton Zoning Regulations. They are set up as a checklist for identifying how a project addresses Canton’s design criteria.

There are two sections:

- I. Compatibility Objectives**
 - II. Design Guidelines**
-

I. Compatibility Objectives – All development in Canton shall be designed to achieve the following objectives for compatibility:

- 1. The buildings, layout of buildings and site improvements shall reinforce or improve upon existing building and streetscape patterns. Placement of buildings and proposed site improvements shall ensure there is no adverse impact on the surrounding areas;
- 2. The scale, proportions, massing and detailing of any proposed building shall be in proportion to the scale, proportion, massing and detailing in the surrounding area.
- 3. Open spaces within the proposed development shall reinforce open space patterns of the surrounding area, in form and siting;
- 4. Landscape design shall complement the surrounding area's landscape patterns. Gross modification to topography without sensitivity to the surrounding area is strongly discouraged.
- 5. Locally significant features of the site such as distinctive buildings or sight lines of vistas from within the surrounding area, should be integrated into the site design.
- 6. Exterior signs, site lighting and accessory structures shall support a uniform architectural theme, if such a theme exists, and be compatible with their surroundings;
- 7. Proposed streets shall be connected to the existing district road network, wherever possible.
- 8. Primary entrances for buildings that are surrounded by parking lots shall be oriented toward the street rather than toward the side/rear yards.

Canton Design Guidelines - Checklist

II. Design Guidelines

1. **Character**

- Project is appropriate to the existing community character which surrounds it.
- Design enhances the overall character of the town.
- Project exhibits quality of design.

2. **Harmony**

- Project reflects consistency and unity of form and detail, regardless of style and building type.

3. **Site Context**

- Proposal is compatible to its surroundings relative to:
 - setbacks;
 - heights;
 - harmony and character of the streetscape.

4. **Architecture** (Architectural style is not restricted.)

- Ingenuity and creativity are reflected in the design.
- Expanses of flat, blank, bland walls are avoided.
- Commercial “franchise”, “logo” or “brand name” prototype architecture is avoided.
- Building façades that are visible from a public way have an attractive appearance.

5. **Commercial Branding**

- Use of bright logo colors that strongly contrast with the established palette of Canton is avoided over large expanses of the building.

6. **Scale**

- Scale of the building and the site elements are designed to relate to the human form.
- Building scale relates well to other buildings in the surrounding area.
- Building size and scale relates to the site it occupies and to surrounding properties.
- Scale is compatible and harmonious within the composition of the entire building.

7. **Height**

- Building has a compatible height relationship to that of surrounding properties.

8. **Massing**

- Massing of buildings arranged in a manner that is appropriate to the size and shape of the site.
- Massing of this project is compatible with the massing of adjacent buildings.

Canton Design Guidelines - Checklist

9. **Proportion**

- Proportions and relationships between windows, doors, signs, and other architectural elements are compatible with the architectural style and character of the building and its surroundings.
- Proportions preserve and enhance the character of the surrounding area.

10. **Roofs**

- Proposed roof shapes and pitches are compatible with those of surrounding structures.
- Roof design helps maintain the balance, setbacks and visual lines of the building streetscape.
- Roof design takes into consideration the views from all sides, not just the street side, so as to have a pleasing appearance from all points of public view.

11. **Windows and Doors**

- Patterns and rhythms of windows and doors maintain a balance, either symmetrical or asymmetrical, which conveys a sense of continuity and unity, and which strengthens the rhythm of existing fenestration along the building streetscape.
- Fenestration design takes into consideration the views from all sides, not just the street side, so as to have a pleasing appearance from all points of public view.

12. **Materials**

- Exterior building skin, roof, windows, doors, and architectural trim are compatible with the predominately natural materials used in much of the community.
- Materials are of durable quality.
- Buildings utilize the same or architecturally harmonious materials for all building walls and other exterior building components on all sides so as to have a pleasing appearance from all points of public view.

13. **Color**

- Colors of surface materials are harmonious with compatible accents and are compatible with surrounding architecture.
- Large expanses of bright “logo” colors that are not harmonious with surrounding architecture are avoided.

14. **Mechanical Equipment and Utility Devices**

- All mechanical equipment is screened from all points of public view.
- Materials used for screening are compatible and complimentary with the building materials.
- Screening is made of durable materials.

Canton Design Guidelines - Checklist

15. Site Design

- Plans relate to existing grades and features.
- Natural or existing topographic patterns that contribute to the beauty and utility of the development are preserved and enhanced.
- Natural elements of the site such as outcrops and mature vegetation are identified and utilized as part of the design.
- The site is planned to accomplish a compatible transition with the streetscape.
- The site design provides for safe pedestrian and vehicular movement, as well as safe and attractive parking areas.
- Grades of walks, parking spaces, terraces and other paved areas are reasonably flat to provide a stable surface for walking.
- Retaining walls are kept to the minimal height necessary for safety.
- Stepped or terraced walls are used in lieu of high single walls.
- If the building is surrounded by parking lots, the primary entrance is oriented toward the street.
- Parking areas are broken down by anticipated levels of use, employee parking, etc., so as to avoid large expanses of paving concentrated in one area near the building.
- Islands with plantings are used to break up large areas of paving.
- Plantings are used along the publicly visible sides of the building and pedestrian ways to soften the structure.
- Newly installed utility services and service revisions necessitated by exterior alterations are located underground wherever possible.

16. Landscape Design - (Landscape elements consist of all forms of planting and vegetation, paving surfaces, ground forms, rock groupings, water and all visible site construction.)

- Variety of materials for walks is used to provide aesthetic interest and durability.
- Landscape treatment enhances architectural features, strengthens vistas and important axis, enhances continuity of the streetscape and provides shade.
- Wherever possible, existing trees 4" dbh (diameter at breast height) or greater calipers are incorporated into the site plan.
- Unity of design has been achieved by thoughtful selection of certain plant varieties and other materials and by correlation with adjacent developments.
- Variety of plant material has been selected with consideration for its hardiness, structure, texture, color and its ultimate growth.
- In locations where plants may be susceptible to injury by pedestrian or motor traffic, they are protected utilizing appropriate curbs, tree guards, or other devices.
- Parking areas and traffic ways are enhanced with landscaped spaces.

(Landscape Design continued on next page)

Canton Design Guidelines - Checklist

- Screening of service yards and other places that tend to be unsightly is accomplished by use of walls, fencing, planting, or combinations of these, and the screening is equally effective throughout the year.
- In areas where most plants will not survive, other landscape elements such as fences, walls or paving surfaces consisting of wood, brick, stone, gravel and cobbles are used. Carefully selected plants are combined with such materials where possible.

17. **Lighting**

- Design and size of site lighting fixtures, whether pole mounted or building-mounted, are compatible with the building, adjacent areas and the streetscape as a whole.
- Lighting design enhances the overall composition of the site.

18. **Signs**

- Design of signs reflects the scale and character of the structure or site and its surroundings.
- Signs are designed as an integral architectural element of the building and site.
- Signs simply and clearly identify individual establishments, buildings, locations and uses, while remaining subordinate to the architecture and larger streetscape.
- Size, materials, color, method of illumination, character and symbolic representation on signs is compatible with the architectural design style of the structure or site. Colors, materials, and lighting of every sign are restrained.
- Signs comply with the Canton Zoning Regulations for signage.

19. **Miscellaneous Structures and Site Hardware**

- Miscellaneous structures and site hardware such as flagpoles, clocks, benches, etc., are compatible with the design concept.

20. **Maintenance**

- Design includes provisions for washing and cleaning of buildings and structures, and removal of refuse.
- Configurations that tend to catch and accumulate debris, leaves, trash, dirt and rubbish are avoided.

NOTES





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