

## Chapter 22

### Design Review

This chapter establishes a design review overlay district and some broadly applicable standards for architectural and site design in that overlay. Additional, more specific architectural and site design standards also apply in many zoning districts. Landscape design is addressed in Chapter 23.

#### 22.1 Purpose

**22.1.1 What is the purpose of the design review districts and standards adopted in this chapter?**

Design review is intended to help ensure that new buildings and major additions to existing buildings along Williston's major roads make a positive contribution to the visual character of the community, and thus to its continued success as a place to live, learn, play, work, and conduct business.

**22.1.2 Does the town have the authority to regulate design?** Yes. 24 V.S.A. 4414(1)(E) authorizes Vermont municipalities to create design review districts and require a detailed review of the design features of development within those districts. Policy 4.2 of the *Town Plan* states:

The Town of Williston will continue to promote commercial site planning and architectural design that responds to the vision stated in Chapter 2. This will be accomplished via the existing design review process, with some additions and revisions.

**22.1.3 Isn't design just a matter of preference or taste?** No. While most design review standards cannot be made quantitative like the dimensional standards adopted in this bylaw, the standards adopted here address definite, easily identified elements of proposed developments and call for levels of performance with which compliance can be assessed in a way that is consistent and fair.

#### 22.2 Design Review District

**22.2.1 What are the boundaries of the design review district?** The design review district that is established in this chapter is not a separate zoning district (the zoning established in Chapters 31-42 of this bylaw applies everywhere in Williston). It is an overlay that includes the BPZD, GZDS, GZDN, GZDW<sub>1</sub>, MUCZD, MURZD, and TCZD, and all lots in the IZDW that abut Marshall Avenue or Route 2.

<p><b>Isn't there also design review in the Village?</b> Yes, but the VZD is a separate zoning district, in which design review is established under a different authority in Chapter 42 of this bylaw.</p>
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**22.2.2 Is all development in the design review district subject to the standards adopted here?** No. The design review standards adopted in this chapter apply broadly: all new commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings and multiple-family dwellings, and major additions to those buildings are covered. The design review standards adopted in this chapter do not apply to one and two family dwellings or to accessory structures that are not visible from a public way.

**22.2.3 If these standards only say "should," do I really have to comply?** Yes, to the extent feasible. The use of 'should' and similar formulations of standards in this chapter does not exempt anyone from compliance. This language is, instead, an acknowledgement of the wide range of building and

site types, and contexts, and of the difficulty of writing design review standards that can address this diversity. ‘Should’ provides some flexibility for the DRB to accept practical solutions that are in the spirit of the *Town Plan* and these standards.

**22.3 Architectural Design: Form, Color and Materials.** The form (shape), colors, and materials used in the surrounding buildings are, after signs, the most noticeable feature of a streetscape. How well they are designed will be a major determinant of the success – both commercially and as a part of the community – of a development.

**22.3.1 Respect the Context.** The choice of building form, colors, and materials should be compatible with the surrounding landscape and built environment. It is especially important that the bulk and proportions (height, width, depth) not be a radical departure from the context, except in redeveloping areas where larger buildings are consistent with the *Town Plan* or an applicable specific plan.

**22.3.2 Form Should Follow Function.** Building facades should reflect true building form or to say it another way, the building’s functions. False fronts are generally inappropriate.

**22.3.3 Provide Enclosure.** Streets and outdoor spaces like urban parks (greens, plazas, squares, whatever you call them) function best if the surrounding buildings are tall enough to provide a sense of enclosure. Construction of multiple story buildings is strongly encouraged in some zoning districts (BPZD, MUCZD, MURZD, TCZD), but this principle applies everywhere.

**22.3.4 Size Outdoor Spaces Properly.** Urban parks (the generic term for greens, plazas, squares, and similar outdoor spaces) are not comfortable for users if they are too large. These spaces should be sized appropriately so that a sense of enclosure is provided by the surrounding buildings and landscaping.

**How Big is Too Big?** A rule-of thumb is that the width of an urban park (the distance between the surrounding buildings, including sidewalks and streets, if any are present, as well as the urban park should be no more than about twice (2X) the height of the surrounding buildings. So, the maximum width of an urban park where there is a 36-foot height limit should not be much more than 72 feet. The performance standard adopted above provides designers and the DRB with some flexibility by not stating a number.

**22.3.5 Use a Variety of Colors and Materials, but With Restraint.** A variety of colors and materials with different textures should be used to create visual interest in buildings, but the variation in color and materials should not be simply for variety’s sake. It should reflect the functions that must be served. For example, the sign band on a building or group of buildings could be used to introduce a different color and material. Likewise, different materials could be used to mark entrances, as required by WDB 22.4.1.

**22.3.6 Avoid Dead Walls.** Dead walls are prohibited in the most pedestrian-oriented zoning districts (MUCZD, MURZD, TCZD), but should be avoided in many other situations. At the least architectural features, including doors, windows, and detailing should offer some horizontal and/or vertical relief from monotonous walls.

**22.3.7 Do Not Use Reflective Materials.** Designers should choose building materials that do not generate glare. The DRB may require that roof, wall, or other materials be non-reflective. The DRB may also limit the glass area presented by a building to minimize glare. WDB 31.9.8.3 provides additional authority to limit the use of reflective materials in the ARZD and GZDS.

**22.4 Architectural Design: Doors and Windows.** Doors and windows connect a building to the community. How they are placed and spaced is an important element of the streetscape.

**22.4.1 Mark Building Entrances**

22.4.1.1 Entrances and Architecture. Principal building entrances should be marked by architectural features that make their location readily visible from the parking areas, pedestrian ways, and streets that serve the building.

22.4.1.2 Entrances and the Site Plan. Way-finding to the principal entrances of the building should be reinforced by the site plan, including the placement of sidewalks, landscaping, outdoor lighting, signage, and the location of functional outdoor areas, which may relate to, but not obscure the entrance.

22.4.1.3 Relationship to the Street. A strong, direct relationship between principal building entrances and the street is required in some zoning districts. See the BPZD, MUCZD, MURZD, and TCZD.

**22.4.2 Protect Building Entrances**

22.4.2.1 From the Climate. Principal building entrances must be provided with permanent overhead protection from the elements, including ice and snow falling from the roof.

22.4.2.2 From Conflicts. Service areas, including dumpster and utility enclosures, must be separated from principal building entrances.

<p><b>Isn't that obvious?</b> Williston actually has some particularly egregious violations of this standard. People who want to dine at the Ponderosa walk right by the dumpster enclosure. Depending on where they park, office workers in Building C of Maple Tree Place must pass between dumpsters and loading doors.</p>
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**22.4.3 Provide Airlocks.** Principal entrances to buildings must incorporate an airlock. This standard does not apply to entrances for vehicles, to loading doors, or to emergency exits used for that purpose only. The DRB may permit other exceptions to this standard for minor entrances.

**22.4.4 Use Doors and Windows to Provide a Strong, but Compatible Visual Pattern or Rhythm.** The placement and spacing of doors and windows should create a consistent rhythm and the size and design of doors and windows must be compatible with the building's overall size and bulk, and with the pattern of entrances and fenestration of neighboring buildings.

**22.4.5 Shield Light Spill from Windows.** Where the terrain does not provide it, landscaping shall be used to screen and diffuse the light emanating from large banks of windows. Compliance with this standard is especially important for proposed buildings on slopes. For the application of this standard in the GZDS see WDB 34.8.5.5.

**22.5 Architectural Design: Roofs**

**22.5.1 Use Pitched Roofs.** Pitched roofs are preferred over flat, but it is acknowledged that a flat roof may be most practical for some types of building, especially in the IZDW. Pitched roofs are required wherever a height incentive is claimed under WDB 37.5.4, 38.5.4, or 41.5.4.

**22.5.2 Consider Sliding Ice and Snow.** Building entrances (see WDB 22.4.2.1), parking areas, and pedestrian ways must be protected from ice and snow sliding off roofs. This may be accomplished by a roof plan that directs ice and snow away from these areas and/or by structural protection.

**22.5.3 Use Compatible Colors, Forms, and Materials.** Roof colors, forms, and materials should be compatible with the colors, detailing, and materials used on the building and on neighboring buildings. Variations in roof form should reflect the building's function, reinforce the architectural detailing (for example, roof form could be used to help mark entrances, as required by WDB 22.4.1.1), and not be overly complicated.

**22.5.4 Hide Roof Drains.** Roof drains must be integrated into the design of the facade on which they are mounted, not added as an afterthought.

**22.5.5 Consider the View from Above.** There are a few places in Williston's design review district where a roof may be viewed from above. New development in those places must provide a rendering of the view of the roof in its application for a discretionary permit and the DRB may require modifications of the plans submitted (switching from roof-mounted to ground-mounted mechanical equipment for example) to minimize the impact on the view.

**22.6 Mixed Use Buildings.** Williston's *Town Plan* encourages mixed-use development, with the goal of making it possible for people to live near commercial services and places of employment. There is, however, a higher potential for conflict among uses are mixed, and especially where they are mixed in the same building.

**22.6.1 What must mixed-use developments do to ensure compatibility?** First, the plans submitted for a proposed mixed-use development must clearly demonstrate compliance with the standards adopted in this chapter. In particular, the applicant should anticipate the need for sound-proofing and show how that has been provided in compliance with Chapter 18 of this bylaw.

**22.6.2 Are there additional standards for buildings that house both residential and commercial uses?** Yes.

#### 22.6.2.1 Entrances

- Different uses may share an entrance, but the principal entrance/s to the dwellings shall not pass directly by solid waste containers or other equipment or installations that must be screened or located away from neighboring uses, as required by Chapter 23 of this bylaw.
- The principal entrance to the dwellings should be from/through a pedestrian-scale space, not directly from a parking lot that is also used for commercial purposes. This could mean entry from a pedestrian-friendly commercial streetscape or entry via a private courtyard or similar space.

#### 22.6.2.2 Hours of Operation

- As provided in Chapter 18 of this bylaw, the DRB may impose limits on the hours of operation of businesses in mixed-use developments to help maintain use compatibility.

- The DRB may also impose limits on the hours during which deliveries may be accepted and/or trash collection may be scheduled.

22.6.2.3 Outdoor Space. Residents of mixed-use buildings shall have reasonable access to an outdoor space. This could be in the form of a private courtyard or door yard garden, but can also be in the form of an urban or neighborhood park that is within a five-minute walk.

22.6.2.4 Signs and Lighting. The location and design of signs and outdoor lighting is even more important than usual in mixed-use developments. The DRB may impose limits on signs and outdoor lighting that are more stringent than those established elsewhere in this bylaw to ensure use compatibility in mixed-use developments.

22.6.2.5 Soundproofing. The DRB will require applicants to demonstrate that night-time interior sound levels in the residential portions of proposed mixed-use developments will not exceed 40 dBA<sub>L10</sub>.

22.6.2.6 Views. Dwellings in proposed mixed-use buildings must be designed to provide their residents with views to the mountains, nearby open spaces, or attractive streetscapes. Designs that feature views primarily of rooftops, parking areas, or service spaces will be rejected.

**22.7 Outdoor Lighting.** Chapter 24 of this bylaw regulates the intensity and type of outdoor illumination that may be provided. Beyond those standards, design review will consider the choice of luminaires, pole, pole bases, and other elements of the outdoor lighting system, which should complement and be compatible with the other design features of the building and the site.

**22.8 Signs.** Architectural and site design must anticipate the need for signs as required by Chapter 25 of this bylaw.

**22.9 Site Planning.** The functional aspects of site planning are covered in other chapters of this bylaw and additional site design standards apply in many zoning districts.

**22.9.1 Respect the Terrain.** Consistent with the watershed protection standards of Chapter 29 and the specific standards adopted in some districts, buildings, parking areas, and other site improvements should fit the terrain, rather than the land being fit to the building.

**22.9.2 Build a Strong Street Line, as Appropriate for the Area.** Buildings, not parking areas, should dominate streetscapes in the commercial and mixed use zoning districts, while an ample green planting strip and buffer should be provided in the industrial zoning districts.

**22.9.3 Leave Front Yards Open.** Front yard (along the street) fencing is generally not permitted for commercial, industrial, institutional, or multi-family developments. The DRB may allow an exception to this standard for industrial developments where it finds that the presence of hazards or need for security outweigh the aesthetic value of an open streetscape.

**22.9.4 Fencing and Screening.** Where fencing is provided, it shall be of a type that is compatible with the surrounding landscape and uses. Traditional fencing patterns, like stone walls or picket fences, will be preferred. The DRB may permit security fencing of side and back yards where it is necessary to prevent public access.