

The City of Easthampton
Design Standards
Smart Growth Zoning District

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

A. Introduction

These Design Standards are adopted by the Planning Board of the City of Easthampton (“Planning Board”) pursuant to the authority of M.G.L. Chapter 40R “Smart Growth Zoning” and 760 CMR 59.00, and Section 7.3 of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Easthampton. They complement Section 7.3 of the Easthampton Zoning, and establish the site design requirements for development within the Easthampton Smart Growth Overlay District.

This document is organized into subject headings based on the areas of regulation. Several sections include both non-binding Guiding Principals and binding Design Standards.

The Guiding Principals identify the city’s goals for the District as a whole, as well as by each Sub-District, to provide guidance on the project’s planning and design. The Design Standards include specific design requirements that must be met by the applicant.

B. Purpose

The following Design Standards are adopted to ensure that the physical character of Projects within the Smart Growth Zoning District:

- 1) will be complementary to nearby buildings and structures;
- 2) will be consistent with the Comprehensive Housing Plan, the 2008 Master Plan, an area specific plan, or any other plan document adopted by the City; and;
- 3) will provide for high-density quality development consistent with the character of building types, streetscapes, and other community features traditionally found in densely settled areas of the City or in the region of the City, and;
- 4) will provide that non-residential elements of any Mixed-Use Development Project are planned and designed in an integral manner to complement the residential uses, and help foster vibrant, workable, livable, and attractive neighborhoods consistent with the smart growth goals of M.G.L., Chapter 40R.

C. Applicability

The Design Standards contained herein shall apply to Development Projects with the Smart Growth Overlay District that are subject to Plan Approval under the District Ordinance. Where noted, Design Standards may vary among different Sub-Districts. The Applicant shall comply with the Design Standards contained herein, unless an exemption from the Design Standards is specifically authorized in writing by the Planning Board. Such exemption may

be concurrent with the review process.

SECTION II: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A. General

As reflected in the 2008 Master Plan for the City of Easthampton, the residents of this community have a very clear vision of how they would like to see the city develop in the future. Chapter 40R Smart Growth Districts was a key strategy identified throughout many chapters of the master plan, and participants recognized that allowing this type of development would encourage new and infill development to occur where existing infrastructure already exists, and protect valuable undeveloped green space. However, community members would like to see that development that encourages a higher density of development than what is allowed under the current zoning fits into the existing community character in terms of scale, size, and architectural designs.

Three key terms were reflected throughout the 2008 Master Plan: ACCESSIBILITY, DIVERSITY, and SUSTAINABILITY. These three concepts can also be applied to potential Smart Growth Chapter 40R projects throughout the city.

Accessibility:

- Encourage the production of housing accessible to various income levels.
- Create walkable, pedestrian friendly developments.
- Connect to existing commercial areas, open space, and civic uses, where feasible.
- Provide access to public transportation

Diversity:

- Encourage a diversity of housing types, where appropriate.
- Protect valuable areas of open space where a diversity of species resides.
- Encourage mixed use developments that have a commercial and residential component

Sustainability:

- Sustainable green building practices, including LEED certifiable, are encouraged wherever possible.
- Encourage renewable energy technologies, such as solar, geothermal.
- Include bicycle and sidewalk amenities

It is the hope of the city that applicants that are moving forward with a Chapter 40R project in any of the three sub-districts identified in Section 7.3 in the Easthampton Zoning Ordinance and in these design standards, will consider implementing the above building ideas and concepts into the project design.

B. Sub-Districts

Downtown Mixed Use Sub-District

The most historic area of the city, the Downtown Mixed Use Sub-District currently provides a mix of retail, light manufacturing, and residential uses, including three large mill complexes located on Pleasant Street, Cottage Street, and Ferry Street. On Main Street, mixed use buildings, with retail on the street level, and residential units located above, are interspersed with multi-family housing. Cottage Street also provides mixed use buildings with retail on the ground floor, and professional and residential uses on the upper floors.

Excellent views of Mount Tom Range can be seen throughout the sub-district, with a distinct view from Union Street, across Nashawannuck Pond.

One of the guiding principles for this sub-district is to encourage the redevelopment of existing mill and commercial buildings. There are multiple opportunities for mixed use redevelopment of these structures.

This sub-district is also an excellent location for high density housing development that is consistent with the scale and character of the existing neighborhoods. Single family and multi-family homes can be seen throughout the sub-district.

Finally, new development in this sub-district should be consistent with the existing neighborhood character and promote a variety of retail and services uses as part of a mixed use development.

Highway Business Mixed Use Sub-District

This sub-district runs along Route 10, one of the main commercial corridors in Easthampton. Adjacent land uses include a residential neighborhood to the south, and commercial uses to the north, west, and east. One of the goals of this sub-district is to encourage the development of housing as part of new retail uses. By doing this, a new development in this sub-district could integrate residential uses to immediate access to goods and services, a key smart growth strategy. New development in this sub-district should also promote walkability and pedestrian connections to downtown.

Traditional Neighborhood Village Sub-District

This sub-district is located within an existing residential neighborhood, within a 1/2 mile walking distance to downtown Easthampton. New housing development should be consistent with the character of the existing neighborhood, and take into consideration the protection of scenic views to Mount Tom Range. Small, neighborhood businesses can

be considered as part of a mixed use development that fits into the historic character of Franklin Street. New development should also be sensitive to natural features, and consider clustering new development away from Brickyard Brook.

C. Additional Guidelines for Project Design

As stated in the 2008 Master Plan, the residents of Easthampton would like to see any new development be designed in a way that respects the community character and cultural, natural, and historical features evident throughout the community. We encourage applicants to consider the following design principals when proposing a new Chapter 40R development into the city.

Protection of Natural, Cultural, and Historic Features

- All significant natural features, such as large trees, watercourses, scenic points, historic plots, and similar community assets should be preserved.
- Create and link areas of open space throughout the development and to adjacent sites.

Building Placement

- Where possible, preserve the scenic views, specifically views to Mount Tom, from major vantage points within the site, especially from major roads and abutting residential neighborhoods;
- Limit the disturbance of steep slopes (over 25%) and avoid the placement of buildings in areas that require extensive alteration of steep slopes and mature vegetation through road, utilities or building construction;
- To the maximum extend feasible, variations in lot shape and size shall be included to preserve the walkability and spatial character of the neighborhood.
- To compliment and integrate the building into the surrounding neighborhood context, break uninteresting boxlike forms into smaller, varied masses.
- Design accessory structures, such as garages, to be subservient in size, height, and location to overall building.

Green Building and Renewable Energy

- Encourage the use of renewable technologies, such as solar, geothermal, and small-scale hydro.
- Encourage the use of green technologies and techniques, such as Low Impact Development practices for stormwater management.

Parking and Lighting

- Avoid parking layouts that dominate a development. Coordinate siting of parking areas, pedestrian connections and open space to promote easily accessible, centrally located open space;
- Break large parking areas into smaller ones to reduce their visual impact and

- provide easier access for pedestrians.
- Parking and pedestrian light fixtures should be compatible with the building lighting to provide for a contiguous appearance of the project.

SECTION III: DESIGN STANDARDS

A. Building Character & Design

Building design shall be reviewed by the Plan Approval Authority (PAA) with input from City Officials and any review consultant(s) employed by the PAA, and others as appropriate. The following design elements listed in this subsection are to be interpreted as building design standards to be applied by the PAA as appropriate to the situation under review, and other extraordinary site constraints.

1. Building Size, Height and Scale

New buildings in the Traditional Neighborhood Sub-District shall be constructed to a size, scale and height roughly equal to the average size, scale, and height of exiting buildings (of a similar use) within 200 feet from the structure.

New buildings in the Downtown Mixed Use and Highway Business Mixed Use Sub-Districts shall follow the standards listed in Section 7.371 of the Smart Growth Zoning Ordinance.

2. Building Massing

Unbroken building facades longer than 100 feet shall be avoided.

Human-scale features such as porches, patios, walkways and gardens, especially at lower levels within mixed use buildings shall be encouraged.

3. Garages and Driveways

The use of detached garages to the rear of the lot is highly encouraged.

Attached front-entry garages shall be a minimum of 10 feet behind the front main building wall.

Attached garages, not setback from the main building façade, shall be designed to have access from the side or from the rear of the building not visible from the public way.

Minimize the impact of individual garage entrances where they face the street by limiting the curb cut width and visually separating the garage entrance from the street with landscaped areas. Emphasize pedestrian entrances in order to

minimize the garage entrances.

4. Rooflines

The roof design shall provide a variety of building heights and varied roofline articulation within the Highway Business and Traditional Neighborhood Village sub-districts.

5. Energy Efficiency

All buildings shall reflect environmentally responsible design and construction practices as governed by the Energy Star Program.

6. Universal Access

To the greatest extent feasible, all buildings shall conform to the universal access requirements of 521 CMR (The Rules and Regulations of the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board), the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS), as referenced by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the 24 CFR 100.205 – Federal Fair Housing Act (FHA) requirements for Accessible Design and Construction, and Appendix A to 26 CFR Part 36 – ADA Standards for Accessible Design (ADAAG), as referenced in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

B. Circulation

1. Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation

Each neighborhood street shall be designed to encourage pedestrian and bicycle travel by providing short routes to connect residential uses with nearby commercial services, schools, parks, and other neighborhood facilities.

Sidewalks shall be provided to allow access to adjacent properties and between individual businesses within the development.

If the property directly abuts a pedestrian walkway or bikeway right-of-way, a paved access route to the bikeway shall be provided.

2. Access to Public Transportation

The following standards shall apply to projects in the Highway Business Sub-District:

- a) Where appropriate, bus stops and shelters shall be made available and incorporated into the project design.
- b) The applicant shall consult with the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority for the design standards of bus shelters, turning radius for buses, and

vehicle access.

3. Public Streets and Sidewalks

The following standards will apply only in the Highway Business and Traditional Neighborhood Village Sub-Districts:

- a) All public streets and sidewalks shall provide for deed public access, and shall be constructed in conformance with the design and construction standards in the Subdivision Rules and Regulations for the City of Easthampton in effect as of October 17, 1990.
- b) All off site construction of roadways shall comply with the most recent edition of the Massachusetts Highway Design Standards, as applicable.

4. Private Streets

All private roadways shall be allowed in any development provided the way shall be constructed in conformance with the design and construction standards in the Subdivision Rules and Regulations for the City of Easthampton in effect as of October 17, 1990.

All on-site and off-site improvements, which include the installation of utilities, public lighting, sewers, and other public improvements, shall be constructed in accordance with the standards in the Subdivision Rules and Regulations for the City of Easthampton in effect as of October 17, 1990.

C. Parking

1. Shared Parking

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary within, the use of shared parking to fulfill parking demands noted in Section 7.380 of this Ordinance that occur at different times of the day is strongly encouraged. Minimum parking requirements may be reduced by the PAA through the Plan Approval process if the applicant can demonstrate that shared spaces will meet parking demands by using accepted methodologies (e.g. Urban Land Institute Shared Parking Report, or other approved studies).

2. Reduction in Parking Requirements

Notwithstanding anything contrary to herein, any minimum required amount of parking may be reduced by the PAA through the Plan Approval process if the applicant can demonstrate that the lesser amount of parking will not cause excessive congestion, endanger public safety, or that lesser amount of parking will provide positive environmental or other benefits, taking into consideration:

- a) The availability of surplus off street parking in the vicinity of the use

being served and /or the proximity of a bus stop;

- b) The availability of public or commercial parking facilities in the vicinity of the use being served;
- c) Shared use of off street parking spaces serving other uses having peak user demands at different times;
- d) Age or other occupancy restrictions that are likely to result in a lower level of auto usage;
- e) Impact of the parking requirement on the physical environment of the affected lot or adjacent lots including reduction in green space, destruction of significant existing trees and other vegetation, destruction of existing dwelling units, or loss of pedestrian amenities along public ways;

Such other factors as may be considered by the PAA.

3. Location of Parking

To the maximum extent feasible, any surface parking shall:

- a) Locate no more than 25% of the total parking requirements or 10 car spaces, whichever is smaller, along the front yard relative to any principal street, public open space, or pedestrian way;
- b) Limit individual parking areas to no more than 30 parking spaces. Surface parking areas larger than 30 parking stalls may be allowed if they are separated from the street by a minimum 30 foot wide landscaped buffer, and the applicant can demonstrate that a consolidated parking area produces a superior site plan;
- c) Arrange all parking and loading spaces to prevent the backing of automobiles onto any street;

D. Infrastructure

1. Stormwater Management

Proposed developments in the Highway Business and Traditional Neighborhood Village sub-districts are encouraged to use Low Impact Development Standards (LID) drainage systems to closely mimic natural systems that meet the following standards:

- a) All of the stormwater from a 1" NRCS design storm drains into the

ground and does not leave the site. A 1" NRCS design storm is a storm with 1" of rain within a 24 hour period.

- b) Water leaving the road enters grassed swales graded flat enough to avoid erosion and hold and treat water.
- c) Measures to reduce runoff, improve groundwater recharge, and improve stormwater quality, such as rain barrels (barrels at the base of roof gutter leaders that store stormwater and provide water for future lawn and garden use), or rain gardens (rain is captured and retained in depressions carefully planted with native vegetation and allowed to drain into the ground.)
- d) Curbs are only appropriate in narrow defined areas without opportunity for grassed swales or in the Downtown Mixed Use sub-district. In those areas, curbs shall be designed to be consistent with the standards set forth in the Subdivision Rules and Regulations for the City of Easthampton in effect on October 17, 1990.

2. Utilities

All electric, telephone, cable TV, and other such utilizes shall be underground from existing roadway utilities, to the extent feasible.

3. Lighting

In order to encourage pedestrian-scale lighting, all plans shall comply with the following requirements:

- a) Parking lot poles lighting shall not exceed a height of 18 feet.
- b) Lighting along the driveways, pedestrian walkways and sidewalks shall not exceed 12 feet in height.

E. Natural Features

1. Open Space

To the greatest extent possible, such open space shall be left in its undisturbed natural condition or, at the discretion of the PAA, it shall be developed so as to be appropriate, in size, shape, dimension, location, and character to assure access to and its use as a park, recreational area, and visual amenity for the development and its residents.

2. Abutting Conservation Areas

To the extent possible, open space shall be planned as single contiguous areas

and configured contiguously with abutting conservation open areas. The PAA may require a project to provide public access from one or more streets, ways, or public access trails.

3. Permanent Protection

Open space areas left in their natural condition shall be deed restricted in perpetuity through a permanent conservation restriction.

4. Ownership

The open space shall be owned by a non-profit land trust, City of Easthampton, or conservation organization, homeowners' association, and a permanent conservation easement or deed restriction must be conveyed to the City, with City approval, or to a non-profit trust or conservation organization whose principal purpose is to conserve farmland or open space.

In the event that ownership of the land will remain with the homeowners, a non-profit, homeowners' association shall be established. The association shall be responsible for the permanent maintenance of all common lands, protected open space not in public ownership, recreational and thoroughfare facilities, except where such responsibility is assumed by another owner of the common land (land trust or conservation organization).

5. Tree Preservation

The following standards apply to the Highway Business Mixed Use and Traditional Neighborhood Village sub-districts

a) Every effort shall be made through the design, layout, and construction of a project to save as many existing, mature trees as possible. Accordingly, the applicant shall institute alternative site design methods to assure the best chance of tree survival.

b) The applicant shall ensure that at least 35% of the parcel will be shaded, through protection of existing, replacement, and street trees. Plans submitted to the PAA shall show the estimated tree canopies after 15 years of growth, the specific names, sizes and locations of trees to be planted, and the total area of square feet of the area shaded by tree canopies. In determining the shaded area, measure the shaded area assuming that the shaded area is only that area directly under the drip line.

c) The PAA will have the discretion to modify tree shading requirements under power lines and other obstructions which prohibit strict compliance with shading requirements, and to give shading credit for off-site trees and sidewalk tree canopies, where appropriate.

d) Selection of replacement trees in regard to their number, size and species, shall be determined by the PAA upon recommendation of the Tree Warden in consultation with a certified arborist, on the basis of an analysis of tree canopy conditions, soil conditions, and other relevant factors.

e) When possible, a diversity of trees shall be used, with a preference of species native to North America. Please see "List of Recommended Trees" for preferred tree species.

f) Use of exotic and invasive plants is prohibited. Applicant shall refer to the latest version of the "Massachusetts Prohibited Plant List" released by the Department of Agricultural Resources for a full listing of prohibited plant species.

g) The applicant will be liable for all planted street trees as to their erectness and good health for one calendar year after planting as determined by the Tree Warden in consultation with a certified arborist.

F. Landscaping

1. Landscape Buffers

A landscaped buffer strip at least twenty (20') wide, continuous except for approved driveway, shall be established adjacent to any public road to visually separate parking and other uses from the road. The buffer strip shall be planted with grass, medium height shrubs, and shade trees. At all street or driveway intersections, trees and shrubs shall be set back a sufficient distance from such intersections so that they do not present an obstruction to sight lines.

2. Storage Areas

Exposed storage areas, machinery, service areas, truck loading areas, utility buildings and structures and other unsightly uses shall be screened from view from neighboring properties and streets using dense, hardy evergreen plantings, or earthen berms, or wall or tight fence complemented by evergreen plantings.

3. Maintenance

All landscaped areas shall be properly maintained. Shrubs or trees which die shall be replaced within one growing season.

4. Signs

All signs will conform with Section 10.0 of the Easthampton Zoning Ordinance in effect as of January 18, 1995.