

Town of Montague
Draft Design Standards
Smart Growth Zoning District

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

A. Introduction

These Design Standards are adopted by the Planning Board of the Town of Montague (“Planning Board”) pursuant to the authority of M.G.L. Chapter 40R “Smart Growth Zoning” and 760 CMR 59.00, and Section 10 of the Zoning Bylaw of the Town of Montague. They complement Section 10 of the Montague Zoning Bylaw, and establish the site design requirements for development within the Montague Smart Growth Overlay District.

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

The Guiding Principles identify the Town’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 current Montague Housing Plan and Montague Comprehensive Plan, an area specific plan, or any other plan document adopted by the Town; 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 Town or in the region of the Town, 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 within the Smart Growth Overlay District that are subject to Plan Approval pursuant under Section 10 of the Montague Zoning Bylaw. 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. Sub-Districts

Sub-District A: (Griswold Mill)

Sub-District A comprises of approximately 3.02 acres. It consists of a former mill known as the Griswold Cotton Mill. The mill was removed in 2022. Only a brick warehouse remains. The property is located in the Canal District of Turners Falls. It is within 5- 7 minute walking distance to a grocery store, library, post office, pharmacy. It is adjacent to the Canalside Rail Trail and the Connecticut River.

Sub-District B (First Street)

Sub-district B comprises of approximately 1.16 acres. It consists of open, underutilized land adjacent to an established, walkable, dense residential neighborhood. The sub-district is serviced by an alleyway. Across the street is a riverfront park and the Canalside Rail Trail. The district is less than 5 minute walk to the downtown core. The sub-district formerly hosted tenement housing for factory workers.

B. Guidelines for Project Design

The Town of Montague 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. The Town encourages applicants to consider the following design principals when proposing a new Chapter 40R development into the town. Projects with multi-family units are encouraged to be designed to meet the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) Multifamily Design Standards¹ to the maximum extent possible.

Protection of Natural, Cultural, and Historic Features

- All significant natural features, such as large trees, watercourses, scenic points, unique/rare habitats/ecological systems, historic plots, and similar community assets should be assessed for preservation.

Building Placement:

- Limit disturbance of previously undeveloped areas by reducing tree/vegetation removal where possible and placement of buildings as far from any wetland resource areas as is practicable.
- To the maximum extent feasible, variations in lot shape and size shall be included to preserve the walkability and spatial character of the neighborhood.
- To complement and integrate the building into the surrounding neighborhood context, break uninteresting boxlike forms of building facades of 100 feet or more 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 energy technologies, such as:

¹ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/multifamily-new-construction-design-requirements-guideline-for-special-bhcd-initiatives/download>

- Small scale, building or ground mounted solar installations. Solar canopies over parking lots or other pervious surfaces. “Behind-the-Meter” systems which directly supply power to the associated structure are preferred.
 - Other renewable energy sources at appropriate scales such as wind power, geothermal systems, and small-scale hydroelectric generation.
- Encourage the use of sustainable and energy efficient technologies and techniques such as:
 - Efficient lighting, windows, materials, insulation, and heating/ventilation/air conditioning systems.
- Encourage designs focused on long-term Climate Change resiliency, such as:
 - Low Impact Development practices for stormwater management including rain gardens, “green” roofs, bio-swales, pervious pavers, rain barrels/cisterns, etc.
- Encourage designs focused on promoting native vegetation and wildlife support, such as:
 - Landscape design which seeks to support pollinator species through habitat establishment and long-term management following local guidelines and best practices.
 - Landscape design which only incorporates native, non-invasive plants species with a management plan that prevents the spread of invasive species and minimizes the use of pesticides, herbicides, and/or fungicides.

Parking and Lighting

- In sub-district A (Griswold), 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 Town Officials and any review consultant(s) employed by the PAA, and others as appropriate. All projects located within Sub-District A (Griswold Mill) or Sub-district B (First Street) shall meet Section 10.6 Dimensional and Density Requirements under the Zoning Bylaw. 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

Sub-District A (Griswold Mill) - New buildings in the Sub-District A (Griswold Mill) shall be constructed to a size, scale and height roughly equal to the average size, scale, and height of existing historic buildings with 500 feet of the sub-district boundary line.

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

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 are encouraged in both sub-districts.

In sub-district B (First Street) front porches oriented toward first street are highly 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.

Driveways to Sub-district B (First Street) are encouraged to utilize alleyway access.

4) Rooflines

In Sub-district A (Griswold Mill), proposals are encouraged to have a roof design that provides a variety of building heights and varied roofline articulation.

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 building proposals with multi-family units 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

In Sub-District A (Griswold Mill), 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.

In Sub-District A (Griswold Mill), sidewalks shall be provided to allow access to adjacent properties and between individual businesses within the development.

2) Access to Public Transportation

The following standards shall apply to projects in Sub-District A (Griswold Mill):

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

3) Public Streets and Sidewalks

The following standards shall apply to projects in Sub-District A (Griswold Mill):

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 Regulations for the Town of Montague in effect as of June 27, 2017.

All off-site construction of roadways shall comply with the most recent edition of the Massachusetts Highway Design Standards, as applicable.

4) Private Streets

The following standards shall apply to projects in Sub-District A (Griswold Mill):

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 Regulations for the Town of Montague in effect as of June 27, 2017.

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 Regulations for the Town of Montague in effect as of June 27, 2017.

C. Parking

1) Shared Parking

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary within, the use of shared parking to fulfill parking demands noted in Section 10.7.2 of the Zoning Bylaw 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 if 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

- a. Proposed developments shall meet the Planning Board's Stormwater System Policy². Proposed developments are encouraged to use Low Impact Development Standards (LID) drainage systems to closely mimic natural systems.

2) Utilities

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

3) Lighting

² https://montague-ma.gov/files/Planning_Board_Stormwater_Policy.pdf

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

- a. All exterior lighting shall be designed and installed so as to be shielded or downcast, and to avoid light trespass onto adjacent properties.
- b. Parking lot poles lighting shall not exceed a height of 18 feet.
- c. Lighting along the driveways, pedestrian walkways and sidewalks shall not exceed 12 feet in height.

Section III: Design Standards

E. Natural Features

1) Open Space

Pursuant to Section 10.6.3 of the Zoning Bylaw, all proposed developments shall provide a minimum of 20 percent of the total Project area shall be open space. For the purpose of this subsection, "open space" shall be defined as yards, playgrounds, walkways and other areas not covered by parking and driveways; such open space need not be accessible to the public. This minimum percentage may be reduced by the PAA through the Plan Approval process only if the Project provides for direct access or enjoyment of the Connecticut River.

2) Tree Preservation

The following standards apply to the Sub-District A (Griswold Mill):

- 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.

- 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

The following standards apply to the Sub-District A (Griswold Mill):

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 shall meet the sign requirements under Section 7.1 of the Zoning Bylaw.