

Town of Berwick

Design Guide & Standards Ordinance

November 2023

I. Introduction

Berwick has many desirable aesthetic qualities setting it apart from other communities. These semi-rural, small-town attributes have been closely guarded and nurtured to protect the community's aesthetic qualities, giving a sense of place, and ensuring design excellence. Increasing development pressure for corporate driven design solutions can threaten the essence of what makes Berwick desirable and therefore these guidelines are intended to address exterior elements of design to help promote an overall cohesive design benefiting Berwick.

The top elements for successful, pedestrian-friendly commercial buildings in Berwick are:

1. A modest building scale.
2. An orientation toward the street with maximum frontage on the street.
3. Close proximity to the street.
4. Parking behind the buildings.
5. A place for pedestrian amenities such as plazas and benches.
6. Big windows on the ground floor with no blank walls.
7. Articulated roof-scape.
8. Use of natural materials such as wood, brick or stone.
9. Camouflaged large parking areas, storage areas and mechanical equipment.

Goals:

- Well-designed buildings that reinforce Berwick's unique sense of place.
- Buildings that are designed as permanent, positive additions to the community, constructed of high-quality, long-lasting materials.
- Street corners that are treated as special places.
- Architecture that utilizes energy conservation measures wherever possible.

A. General guidelines

(a) To protect, enhance and perpetuate the town's historic, cultural and architectural heritage and to enhance the town's attraction to residents and visitors and to serve as a support and stimulus to business and industry, construction of a new building or structure or addition to an existing structure should be of such design, form, proportion, mass, configuration, building material, texture, color and location on a lot as to conform with the following guidelines as deemed practicable by the Planning Board.

(b) The Planning Board may request perspectives of the building to illustrate the three- dimensional relationship between the front and side elevations. Elevation and perspective drawings should include all landscape elements (trees, shrubs, lighting, street furnishing, signs, etc.) that will be seen in conjunction with the facade.

B. Applicability

These design guidelines apply to all new buildings and structures in the Town of Berwick with properties in the Village Overlay District and along the major corridors of Route 4, 236 and 9. Developments that conform to the recommendations and standards of this Guide will meet the Performance Standards of Section 9.8.I.1.b,c,h,l,j and p in the Berwick Land Use Ordinance. Developments that do not conform to the recommendations do not meet the Performance Standards of those sections.

(a) New construction or renovations shall be visually appropriate in terms of:

1. Height

(a) See Town of Berwick Land Use Ordinance Dimensional Requirements.

2. Relationship of solids to voids in front facades

(a) The relationship of solids to voids in the front facade of a building should be visually compatible with that of buildings to which it is visually related.

(b) In reviewing a proposed new building or structure or addition to an existing building, respect the recurrent alteration of wall areas with door and window elements in the facade. Also consider the width-to-height ratio of bays in the facade. The placement of openings with respect to the facade's overall composition, symmetry or balanced asymmetry should be studied.

(c) Shutters should be the correct scale to the window and not just decorative elements. A shutter should be half as wide as the window.

3. Spaces of buildings on streets

The space between two buildings should follow the rhythm and scale of spaces between other adjacent buildings, where allowable by zoning regulations and lot constraints.

4. Entrance and/or porch projection (setback).

(a) The relationship of entrance and porch projections to sidewalks and streets should be visually compatible with those of buildings to which it is visually related.

(b) Do not violate the existing setback pattern by placing new buildings in front of or behind the historic facade. Avoid placing buildings at odd angles to the street, unless in an area where diverse siting already exists, even if proper setback is maintained.

(c) When adding a porch or an addition to the front of a building avoid solid, opaque forms that block the view of the original structure.

5. Materials, textures, and colors

(a) The relationship of materials and textures of the facade of a building should be visually compatible with that of the predominant materials used in the buildings to which it is visually related or traditionally used in the area. Materials common to New England, such as brick, stone, wood, clapboard and shingles, are encouraged. Highly reflective materials such as plastic panels, aluminum and metals should not be used. Roofs should be a unified material.

(b) Traditional colors commonly found in New England villages are appropriate for all components of the

building. Facade colors must be low reflectance. The use of high intensity, high reflectance, chrome, metallic, or fluorescent colors or black is discouraged as the primary color.
(c) Where trim is used, it should be painted or stained to complement the building's primary color.

6. Roof shapes.

(a) Relate the roof forms of the new building to those found in the area. Although not entirely necessary, duplication of the existing or traditional roof shape, pitches and materials in new construction is one way of making new structures more visually compatible.
(b) Avoid introducing roof shapes, pitches or materials not traditionally used in the area
(c) Where allowed, 45-foot-tall buildings with three full floors and a flat roof clearly defined in the elevation should have a cornice above the third floor. The fourth floor should step back with the roof pitch not visible from the street.
(c) Encourage visually interesting roofs by providing variations in the roof line and incorporate treatments such as extended eaves and parapet walls with cornice treatments. Flat roofs shall incorporate an architectural feature.

7. Scale of buildings.

(a) The size of the building, the building mass in relationship to open spaces, the windows, door openings, porches and balconies should be visually compatible with those characteristics of buildings and spaces to which it is visually related.
(b) In reviewing a proposed new building or structure, or addition to an existing building, relate the size and proportions of new structures to the scale of neighborhood buildings. Although much larger than its neighbors in terms of square footage, the building shown maintains the same scale and rhythm as the existing buildings.

8. Directional expression of front elevation.

(a) A building should be visually compatible with the building(s), square(s) and place(s) to which it is visually related in its directional character, whether this is vertical character, horizontal character or non-directional character.
(b) In reviewing a proposed new building or structure, or addition to an existing building, relate the vertical, horizontal or non-directional facade of the character of the new buildings to the predominant directional expression of nearby buildings. Horizontal buildings can be made to relate to the more vertical neighboring structures by breaking the facade into smaller masses that conform to the primary expression of the streetscape.
(c) Buildings and additions should be parallel to the street frontage wherever practicable.

9. Commercial structures.

(a) Buildings with multiple storefronts (e.g., strip shopping centers, one-story office buildings) should be visually unified through the use of complementary architectural forms, similar materials and consistent details and a uniform sign-mounting system. The goal is to create an overall sense of design and scale while avoiding nondescript architecture and places.

(b) Variations in setback on linear structures adds visual interest, creates common plaza areas and landscape areas.
(c) Variations in rooflines, gables and building height add visual interest and break down the scale of the building.
(d) Covered walkways and awnings along the front facade provide shelter, help scale the building to the pedestrian and visually unite the structure.
(e) Orient drive-through windows, menu boards, auto repair and car wash openings away from residential areas.
(f) Gabled roofs, wood exterior and large lodge-style windows, Craftsmen, Classical Revival Colonial, Cape Cod, Georgian, Federal, Log Cabin and Victorian styles are prevalent in Berwick and/or are encouraged.

10. Large-scale structures.

(a) The scale of structures over 10,000 square feet shall be broken down using changes in roof lines, gable ends, towers, colonnades, architectural details and landscaping.
(b) Blank walls shall be made more visually interesting by including elements that create shadow lines, changes in setback, material and rooflines and other architectural details consistent with the historic patterns in the area as deemed practicable by the Planning Board.
(c) Parking should be placed to the rear or side of these buildings, and parking lots should be landscaped.

11. Service Areas & Drive-throughs

(a) Pump island canopies, other outdoor covered areas and drive throughs should be architecturally integrated with the building by using similar material, color and detailing.
(b) Gas tank vents shall be an integral part of the building design in terms of form, color and texture.
(c) Digital advertisements or entertainment on video screens, monitors, speakers and any broadcasting of advertising visually or broadcast over speakers is not allowed.
(d) Drive-throughs shall not face the street.
(e) Menu boards shall be shielded from public streets and residential properties.

12. Parking Lots

Parking lots that contain 10 or more spaces shall conform to the following:
(a) Parking lots shall contain one landscaped island for every 10 parking spaces.
(b) A parking lot with more than one landscaped island shall have such islands distributed through the parking lot.
(c) Each landscaped island shall be a minimum of 325 square feet.
(d) Parking lots shall contain at least one tree for every 7 parking spaces.

Impact on Public Views Natural Site Features and Surrounding Environment



Recommended

- Service entrances, loading docks, dumpsters and ground-level mechanical equipment located away from public entrances and screened from public views and scenic views (pictured on right).
- Rooftop mechanical equipment and structures screened and disguised by roof features and set back from roof edges.
- Generous and extensive landscaping, including landscaping within parking areas, include pedestrian walkways where feasible.

Not Recommended





- Services placed with disregard for scenic views, adjacent sites or public places
- "Rooftop clutter": HVAC units, satellite dishes and antennas, and other rooftop structures which are visible from the street or other public places.
- Parking areas without generous and extensive landscaping.



Rooflines & Heights

Recommended

- Pitched roofs, or the appearance of pitched roofs, which overhang the wall plane, unless inconsistent with historic design upon which the building is based.
- Articulation at roof edge: cornices, overhangs, balustrades, bracketed eaves, parapet walls.
- The height of any proposed alteration should be compatible with the style and character of the building, structure or site being altered and that of the surroundings.

Photo Credit: Meredith Design Guidelines





Not Recommended

- Pseudo roof applications
- Simple, straight intersection of roof and wall planes.
- Buildings that are noticeably shorter or taller than surrounding buildings creating a "saw tooth" effect.



Building Orientation and Placement on Site

Recommended

- Buildings oriented to the street respecting both pedestrian and automobile traffic, with front and rear access where possible.



- Buildings that respect and relate to the siting of adjacent structures.
- Front lawns should be maintained in districts where front yards are traditional.

Not Recommended

- On-site vehicular traffic patterns which conflict with pedestrian traffic patterns.
- Buildings sited without regard to the site placement of neighboring buildings.
- Parking in front of buildings with limited landscaping.

Architectural Style, Design Quality, Form and Mass

Recommended

- Designs that respect, reflect reference, adapt and interpret the local commercial, industrial, and governmental architectural styles of the late 1700s to Early 1900s and design themes found around New England





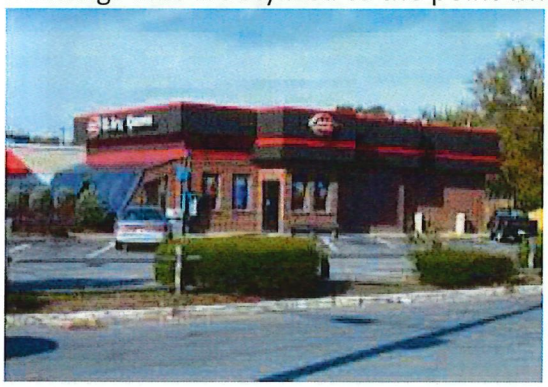
- Design details that are consistent with the overall style and proportion of the building design.
- Franchise Architecture that adapts to local styles and settings

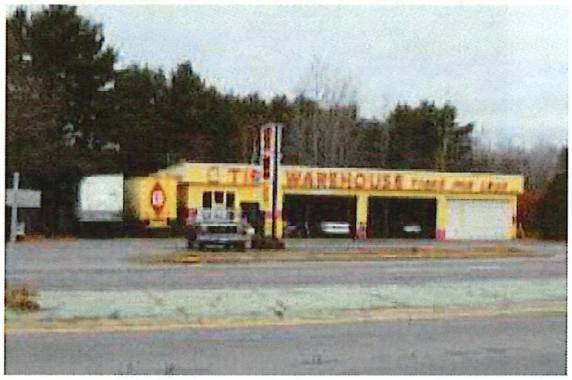


The Planning Board favorite McDonald's in Freeport, ME.

Not Recommended

- Designs which are inappropriate in relation to the traditional regional architectural heritage and character (pictured below, credit: Kittery Design Handbook).
- Building design that derive their image solely from applied treatments that express corporate identity.
- Buildings that are stylized to the point where the structure is a form of advertising.





- Standard "stock plan" buildings
- Design that is inconsistent in terms of size, scale, design motifs, and relationships between buildings, streetscapes, and landscape features.
- Franchise architecture that uses a standard style and site plan regardless of local traditions.
- Inappropriate adaptive reuse of existing buildings that contribute to the traditional development patterns and setting of the district
- Arbitrary changes in materials or embellishments that are not in keeping with the rest of the building are discouraged.

Building Lines, Configuration, Arrangement, Rhythm, Proportion and Fenestration

Recommended

- Building features are in balanced proportion to the building as a whole.
- Large buildings use of interruptions and variety in wall plane. Examples include but are not limited to offsets, recessed entrances, arcades, covered walkways, awnings and canopies, multiple entrances, roof overhangs, shadow lines, courtyards, and balconies.
- A rhythm of door and window openings, which reflects the integrity of architectural design of the building.
- Vertical emphasis in window openings.
- Windows and doors that are consistent with the architectural design. Encourage projecting sills, lintels and/or crowns that define window openings.
- Individual window openings, separated by areas of building wall.
- Any large areas of glass are broken up by vertical design elements such as mullions, columns and framing members.

Not Recommended

- One element or design feature dominates the building design





- Large, uninterrupted expanses of wall surface; long areas of unrelieved, monotonous wall surface adjacent to the street. Flat wall planes, especially for front facades.
- Irregular spaced or randomly placed openings that are primarily related to internal functions rather than exterior design considerations.
- Horizontal windows on lower stories. Horizontal windows on upper stories.
- Reflective or mirrored glass.

Building Facades and Street Level Storefront Design

Recommended

- Permeable facades that promote pedestrian interest.
- First floor facade is differentiated from upper stories and oriented toward pedestrians, with large window areas facing the sidewalk.

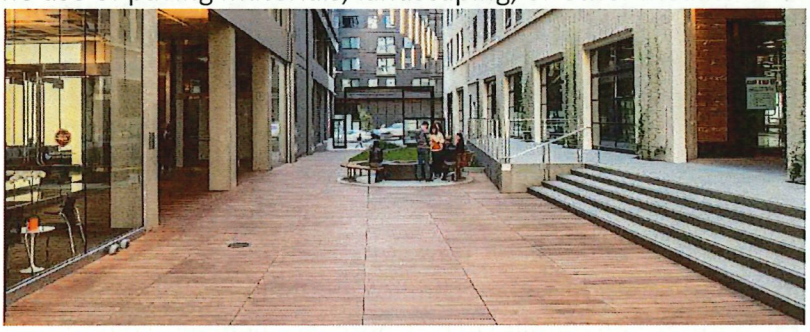
Not Recommended

- Long, blank walls facing the sidewalk.
- First floor undifferentiated from upper stores in terms of height, window size and facade treatments.

Entrances and Orientation

Recommended

- Front entrances as the primary pedestrian and street entrance.
- Rear and side entrances from alleys and parking areas, where rear parking is used.
- Pedestrian areas shall be clearly distinguished from vehicular and bicycle traffic areas through the use of paving materials, landscaping, or other means.



Not Recommended

- Doorways that are not prominent features on the primary side of the building.
- Rear entrances that are located directly adjacent to loading docks, dumpsters, storage; thus, discouraging public use.

Deck, Balconies, Terraces and Porches

Recommended

- Balconies, decks, and porches oriented toward the street or common open space
- Railings made of turned spindles, posts & rails, consistent with the design of the building

Not Recommended

- Balconies, decks, and porches that are inconsistent with building and setting.

- Railing elements (other than square spindles) made of stock dimensional lumber.
- Porches, terraces and decks that are not contributing attributes to the public streetscape and vitality of the district.

Large New Buildings

Recommended

- Use facade divisions, such as building jogs, architectural detailing, and changes in surface materials, colors, textures and roof lines. Uninterrupted facades should not exceed 50% of the building wall, and in no case should exceed 50 feet in length with the exception of clapboard, which may extend for 100 feet. Ground floor facades that face public streets should have arcades, display windows, entry areas, awnings, or other features along no less the 60% of their length. All facades of a building which are visible from public streets should feature characteristics similar to the front facade.



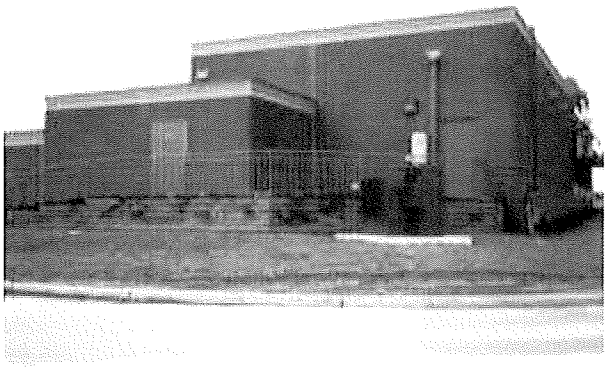
- Expansions or alterations that include renovations that result in a building that more closely embodies the standards for new construction.
- Screen rooftop and ground-level mechanical equipment from public view. Use architectural features and details such as porches, awnings, columns, towers, turrets, skylights and arches, to create interesting buildings.
- Avoid long unbroken expanses of roofs though use of dormers, skylights, chimneys and changes in ridge line.
- Make door and window openings proportional to facade length and height. Create a sense of entry into the site and into major businesses within the site through landscaping, facade treatment and signage.

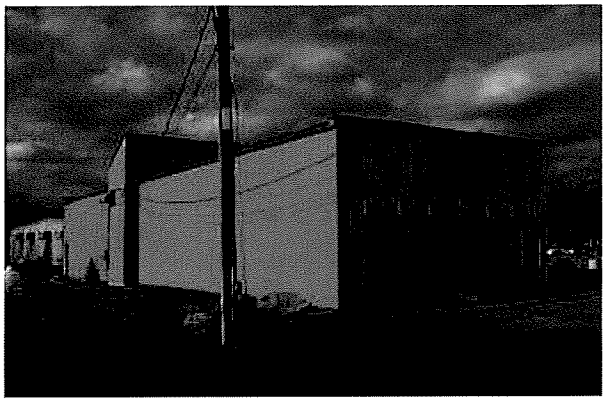


- Screen areas for outdoor storage, truck parking, trash collection, loading and other such uses from view of abutting properties and streets.

Not Recommended

- Long unbroken expanses of walls





- Expansion or alteration of existing structures that do not embody standards for new construction unless compatible with existing structures.
- Little or no architectural features incorporated
- Exposed roof mechanicals
- Poor or limited window placement and openings
- Limited or no screening of service areas.

Materials

Recommended

- Natural materials, including stone, brick, wood, clapboard, cedar shingles, smooth or lightly textured stucco or synthetic materials that present the appearance of these materials
- Building materials differentiating design elements, consistent with the rhythm and proportion of the building design.
- Roof Materials – Architectural grade composition shingles, wood shingles, slate or slate composite, standing seam metal roofs.

Not Recommended

- Synthetic materials that are obvious imitations of natural materials.
- Rustic or crude siding materials such as logs, bark, rough-sawn wood planks, coarse textured stucco, unfinished or split-face concrete blocks, etc.
- Inappropriate mixing for the sake of variety alone; or monotonous use of a single building material.
- Clay tile roofs, corrugated or vertically ribbed metal siding materials or metal roofing installed with exposed fasteners.

Not Recommended (continued)



Reflective metallic siding



Metal panels



Multicolored brick



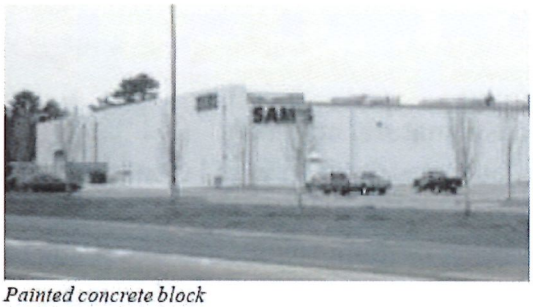
Untreated split face block



Highly reflective glazed tile with bright plastic accents



Textured plywood and arbitrary changes in materials



Painted concrete block

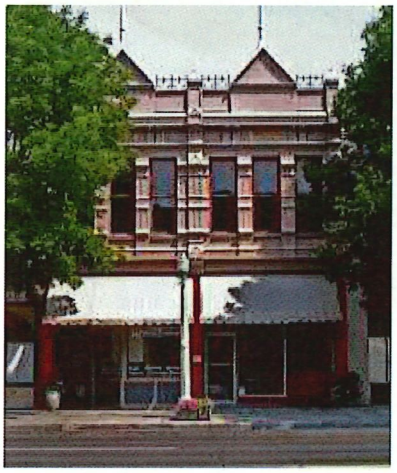


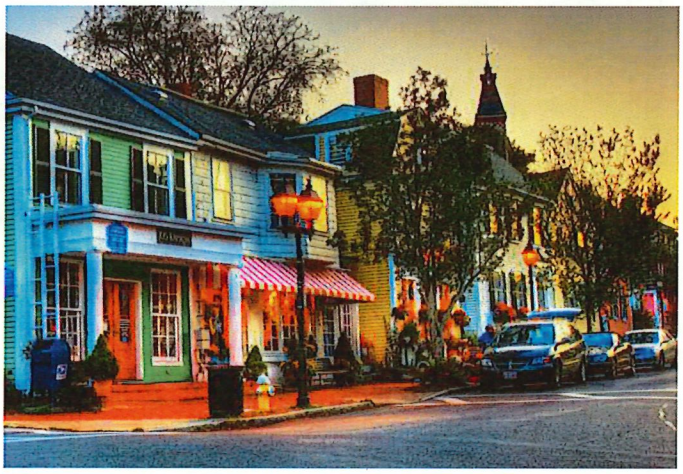
EIFS (exterior insulation and finishing system)

Awnings and Canopies

Recommended

- Fabric awnings scaled and proportioned with building facade elements and functional in providing shade.
- Awnings that are functional for shade and shelter. They should be made of canvass or canvass like-material, should fit the shape and scale of the window or door that they are sheltering and should be designed to be compatible with the building signage and design.



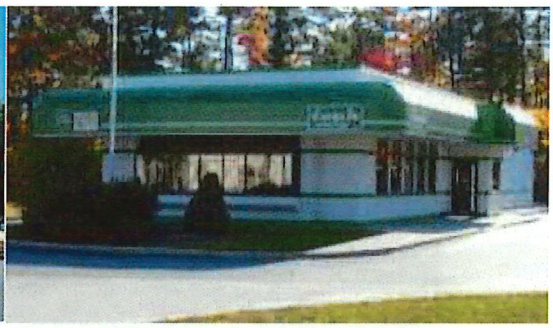


- Arched awnings over the individual windows and as door canopies.
- Signage on Valance of awning.

Not Recommended

- Shiny or plastic awnings.





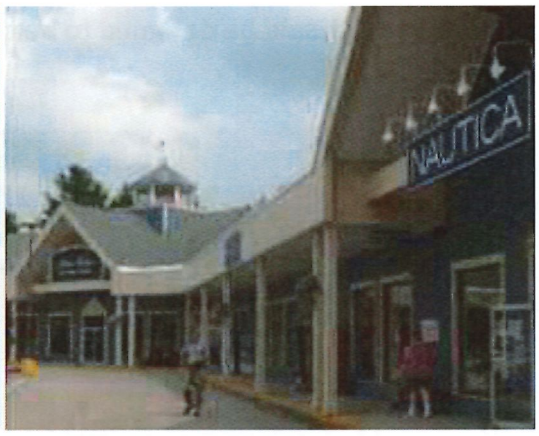
- Backlit (internally) illuminated awnings.
- Arched awnings with a long vertical surface ("waterfall") spanning the facade.
- Gas Station canopies that are not consistent in style and color as the primary building and surrounding area.
- Awnings that are a dominating feature of the building facade.

Signs

Recommended

- Signs that are integrated with the architecture of the building and site on which they are displayed.
- Balance adequate signage for business identification while protecting the visual aesthetic of Berwick.





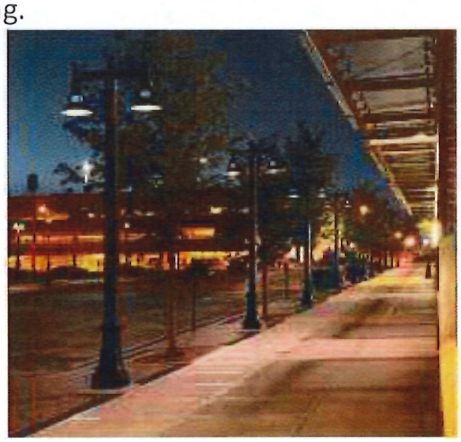
Not Recommended

- Internally illuminated signs, except for individually illuminated channel letters or for properties.
- Inappropriate displays in front of stores that serve as advertisements or signs.
- Signage that covers important design elements of buildings. Uniform signage for individual businesses in the same building.
- Ground mounted monument signs are encouraged over canopy fascia signs.
- Repetitious signage information on the same building frontage.

Lighting

Recommended

- Parking area lighting directed downward and illumination from multiple light sources.
- Light fixtures that are compatible with the architectural style and other features of the building.





Not Recommended

- Harsh or excessively bright lighting, inconsistent with lighting levels along the street and sidewalks and in public parks; or site or building lighting that spill light onto adjacent sites; spotlighting, "hot" or "dark" spots in site lighting.
- Strip accent lighting or florescent tubes used as decorative elements on external building walls; portions of facade that are continuously internally illuminated.
- Blinking or flashing light.

Landscaping and Streetscape Treatments

Recommended

- Incorporate existing and native materials in the landscape design as much as possible.

Not Recommended

- Use of drainage materials or landscaping that is minimal and out of proportion with building and setting.

ATTEST:
A true copy of The Town of Berwick Design Guide and Standards Ordinance, which was approved at the November 7, 2023 Town Referendum.

Patricia Murray
Town Clerk