

# ***TOWN OF NEW BOSTON COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES***



Adopted by the Town of New Boston Planning Board  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

| SECTION  | PAGE # |
|--|--------|
| Table of Contents                                      | i      |
| Acknowledgements                                       | ii     |
| Purpose of these Guidelines                            | 1      |
| -Site design, layout, and accessories                  |        |
| -Site layout, streetscape, & context                   | 2      |
| -Parking   | 4      |
| -Landscaping   | 5      |
| -Site Lighting   | 6      |
| -Signage   | 8      |
| -Other factors   | 9      |
| - Views  |        |
| - Accessibility  |        |
| - Utilities and Service                                |        |
| - Stormwater Management                                |        |
| - Drinking Water/Groundwater Quality                   |        |
| - Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation                   |        |
| -Building design                                       |        |
| -Scale and massing                                     | 10     |
| -Roof design   | 11     |
| -Building types  | 13     |
| -Architectural features, Façade Treatment and Openings | 15     |
| -Material and Colors                                   | 18     |

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# **Design Guidelines for Commercial Districts New Boston, NH**

## **Purpose of these Guidelines**

In 2006 New Boston revised its master plan. The goal of this master plan was to guide future development in ways that reflected the views of the majority of its citizens. Major objectives that were listed as important to the people of New Boston were maintaining the traditional character of New Boston, and conserving the town's natural, historical, cultural, and environmental resources.

In regards to commercial development, the master plan expressed a desire to promote new development as long as it could be done in keeping with the major objectives listed above. Specifically the master plan states under Commercial Development Objectives that the town should make regulations "proactive regarding site design aesthetics for future commercial development in town".

This document is intended as a resource for property owners, developers, consultants, and other professionals to better understand how their projects can be designed as an asset to the town of New Boston, and to assist in working towards the goals expressed by its citizens in the master plan. Developers of commercial projects in New Boston are encouraged by these guidelines to provide development that is in keeping with the characteristics of the existing architecture of the neighborhood and the town.

The provisions of these guidelines apply to any commercial additions, exterior remodel, relocation, or new construction requiring a building permit in the town of New Boston. The guidelines will be used during the Planning Board's site plan review process to encourage the highest level of design quality, while at the same time providing flexibility in their application to specific projects. Projects will be evaluated on the degree to which they demonstrate substantial compliance with the intent of the design guidelines, leading to a recommendation of project approval or denial. Applicants are responsible for explaining how their design meets each of the Guidelines.

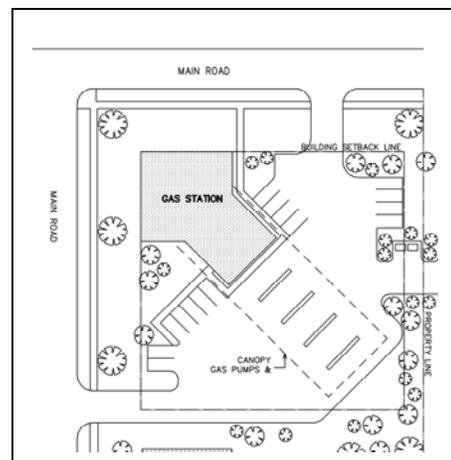
Each section of these guidelines contains an opening statement of the standard that projects should meet in reference to the subject of that section. Bullet points and illustrations follow to provide more specific direction on how to meet that standard.

These guidelines do not supersede the Zoning Ordinance or other applicable regulations. Recommendations contained in these guidelines are in addition to all applicable rules and regulations.

# Site Layout, Streetscape and Context

The worst of modern sprawl occurs when each site is developed with no thought to its neighbors and no reference to those things that are around it or have come before it. In areas like the village where there is an existing fabric of buildings, new construction should be used to reinforce this context. In areas of new development, buildings should be sited in order to establish a streetscape and set a tone that other adjacent development can later use to weave a new context.

- Buildings should be oriented towards the street, presenting an active front to the community. Place a majority of the building mass close to the road to help define the street edge.
- Buildings should be located at a distance from the street that relates to the setback distances of other buildings in the area. This creates a more unified view from the public way. Building placement is encouraged at or near the 50' setback.
- Parking and Service entrances should be located at the rear of the building. Any parking located at the side of a building will need additional design elements to preserve the integrity of the streetscape, and integrate the site with its neighbors.
- The property should have an edge that delineates its boundaries. Clearly defined entrance/exit locations should indicate where pedestrian and vehicular traffic crosses this edge from the public way. However, circulation routes are encouraged to connect different properties to help integrate the area.



By placing the building close to the street, this example has reinforced the street edge, made the store more pedestrian friendly, and delineated clear entrances and exits. It has also screened the more unattractive elements from view.



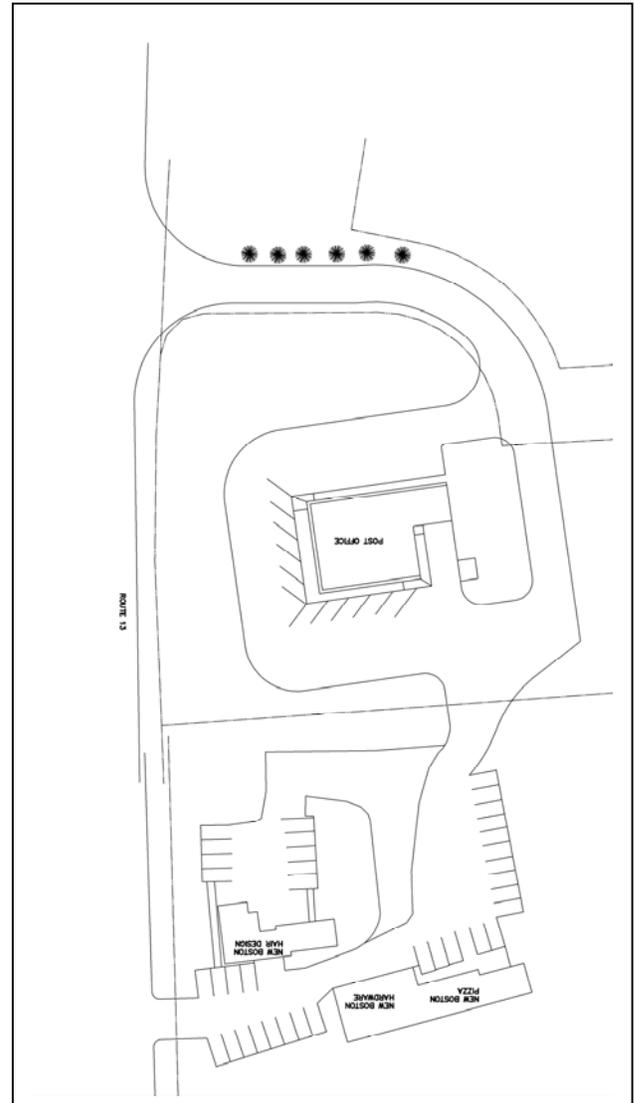
In contrast to the above example, the entrance/ exit of this business is nearly impossible to differentiate from the roadway.

## Site Layout, Streetscape and Context, cont.

- Open spaces should be located in sunny locations to make them more welcoming throughout most of the year.
- Where possible, curb cuts should be shared and parking lots should interconnect with those on adjacent properties; this minimizes turns to and from the public way. This can be implemented through cross access easements.
- Materials used on site should reflect those used in the general area, and complement those on adjacent properties.
- Drive through elements, where allowed for banks and pharmacies, should be incorporated into the overall building concept and not visible from the main roadway.



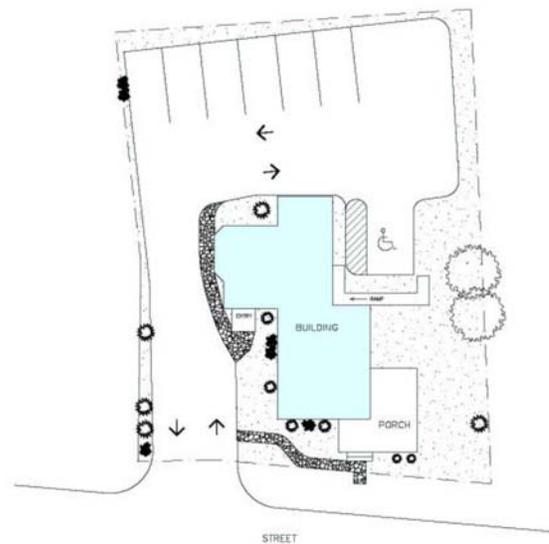
This drive through bank facility has been designed so that it is part of the building. It is not visible from the main road.



# Parking

New Boston's zoning regulations specify minimum numbers of parking spaces for various commercial uses. These numbers aim to ensure that there is adequate parking available for both employees and patrons. An applicant should address the layout and appearance of parking spaces in order to minimize their visual impact, present a clear and safe indication of traffic flow, and minimize congestion and other impacts on public roadways.

- By their location and design, parking lots should not be perceived as a dominant visual element of a site as seen from the public roadways. To this end parking at the rear of buildings is strongly encouraged.
- If parking must be located at the side of a building all efforts should be made to both screen the visual impact of cars and maintain the street edge created by neighboring buildings.
- Entrances and exits should be easily seen and recognized. For this purpose curbing (ideally granite) should be installed at the cut from the street, as well as clear and visible signage. Curbing should extend to the main parking area or 50 feet back from the road.
- Provisions in the parking design should be made for snow storage, removal, and draining of melting snow.
- See the lighting section of these guidelines as well as applicable state and local regulation for parking lot lighting.
- State codes covering ADA compliance will give requirements for the number and location of accessible parking spaces. Please remember to check the section on signage and accessible routes into the buildings as well as the number of spaces.



The parking lot in this site plan is located to the rear of the property behind the building. This allows the building to remain the dominant visual element of the site.

- Use of porous cement and pavement is encouraged for all new and renovated parking lots to reduce the need for winter salt maintenance.

# Landscaping

Landscaping incorporates existing vegetation retained on the site, as well as, new plantings and their associated hardscape elements. These elements should be used to reinforce the architectural and site design, to hide or diminish unsightly architectural or natural features, and to tie the site into its neighbors and the overall context of New Boston. Low Impact Development techniques such as raingardens, and bio-retention facilities are strongly encouraged.

- An initial site survey of existing vegetation and natural features is encouraged. This survey will indicate which areas of the site contain healthy and native plants.
- Where feasible the preservation of existing non-invasive native vegetation and mature shade trees is encouraged. Using existing plants reduces waste and ties the site to the surrounding landscape.
- The use of native species, whether existing or new plantings, helps ensure that plants are well adapted to climate and site conditions.
- Plantings should be selected for longevity, low maintenance, screening ability, and in order not to create debris that will need to be removed.
- Planting vegetation in clusters rather than evenly spaced will create greater visual impact than single plantings spaced evenly.
- Plantings near roads or parking lots should be salt resistant.
- The character of plantings should relate to those on adjacent sites wherever possible.



The island in this parking lot shows good attention to landscaping. Although this is a new site the plantings are a good size and the trees will flourish into good size specimens. Clustering ground shrubs together provides visual impact.



This site has used low plantings for landscaping that still allow a view of the nicely constructed retaining wall.

- Plantings should be of a quantity and type that will have a significant impact within the early years of the project, and yet avoid a condition where the mature plantings will create dangerous or unattractive conditions.

# Site Lighting

Site Lighting is intended to provide for visibility, safety, and security. It should accent and enhance the overall design when viewed at night and also allow for a level of visibility for the night sky that is consistent with New Boston's rural character.

- Lighting spillover onto adjacent properties should be avoided and the creation of spillover and glare onto adjacent public ways should be minimized. Lighting should be directed downward to avoid spillover.
- Light originating from inside a building should also be controlled to minimize glare and spillover.
- Pole height should be 20 foot (20') maximum.
- Parking lot and pedestrian way lighting should be of sufficient intensity and quality to ensure safety and security of those using those facilities at night.
- Buffers, screen walls, fencing, and other elements of the site plan should be designed in conjunction with the lighting plan in order to eliminate dark spots and possible hiding places.
- The location, design, and aesthetic appearance of lighting should complement the site design, building architecture, and other elements of the site plan.
- The use of energy efficient fixtures and lighting methods is encouraged by the town.



This lamppost provides interest with the decorative scroll work at the top. The lighting is directed downward from this fixture. The post is not too high so the light is directed to the area it is needed.



By contrast this modern light, among the clutter of wires on the telephone pole, is too high and casts its light over too wide an area.

## Site Lighting, cont.

- Site lighting should be minimized during hours that the business is not open and lights turned off as is practical while still attending to safety and security.
- Specific lighting requirements for sign and façade lighting can be found in the town's Zoning Ordinance.
- The town encourages the use of additional lighting during the holiday season of November through January. Such lighting should also be designed not to cause spillover onto adjacent residential properties or to create excessive glare or spillover onto public ways.



The festive yet subdued holiday lighting on the common creates an atmosphere that is welcoming and intimate rather than glaring and intimidating. Area businesses are encouraged to follow this example.

# Site Signage

Signs can be detrimental to the architectural aesthetic when applied as an afterthought. These guidelines are intended to recognize the legitimate advertising needs of businesses while encouraging legible signs that can be read easily and safely, and avoiding visual clutter.

- Preferred materials for signs are wood, metal and granite. Plastic is discouraged as a signage material, but a plastic sign that maintains a more traditional texture will be preferred to a sign of another material that presents a “plastic” texture.
- Signs should be in scale and proportion to the primary building façade and should not dominate its appearance.
- Maximum size for signage is listed in the town's Zoning Ordinance. Keep in mind, however, that it is not always appropriate to use a sign of the maximum size.
- Use no more than two fonts per sign. These should be easy to read and use logos when possible. Keep signs simple and clear, they are meant to be read quickly.
- Colors that work best in New Boston are traditional colonial and Victorian colors.
- For information on lighting for signs see the lighting section of these guidelines and the Zoning Ordinance for New Boston.



Mixed use of fonts, colors and sizes make this sign difficult to read. Cluttered or confusing signs may create a safety hazard if they can't be read quickly while driving.



The sign to the left uses a clear font, and demonstrates good use of color and materials.

The signs below are in proportion to the building and show good use of color in keeping with the town's traditional character.



# Other Factors

## **Views**

Due to the topological nature of New Boston, all angles of possible view into a new development site need to be considered. Steps should be taken to limit the negative impact of the development on these views. Advantage should also be taken of any natural views from the site.

## **Accessibility**

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 it is a civil rights violation to fail to provide barrier-free access to commercial facilities including stores and offices. The State of New Hampshire uses International Building Code Chapter 11, and the American National Standards Institute Section A117.1 as standards used to judge compliance with this federal law.

Developers should remember to include proper signage and to integrate features required for accessibility into the overall design, rather than as an afterthought.

## **Utilities and Service**

All structures for this purpose (utility structures, utility accessways, trash and recyclables storage, delivery drops, etc.) should relate to the main structure through their design and materials. Any impact in noise and/or odor on adjacent properties should be avoided. Such areas and structures should be designed to function year round and should not be adversely impacted in their appearance or function due to accumulating snow.

## **Stormwater Management**

Consideration should be given to innovative methods of retaining stormwater onsite with raingardens, infiltration mechanisms, porous

concrete and pavements, and so on. Post stormwater runoff shall be controlled on site and runoff should be minimized to the maximum extent possible. See the Stormwater Management Regulations contained in the Town of New Boston Subdivision Regulations.

## **Drinking Water/Groundwater Quality**

New Boston is currently dependent upon groundwater for drinking water supply and businesses and residences obtain their drinking water from private wells. Care should be taken to prevent improper storage, handling and spillage of petroleum products, chemicals, pesticides, fertilizers, road salt, and other materials which have the potential for groundwater contamination.

## **Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation**

The places where we live, work and play should be built with people in mind as well as on a vehicular scale. Benches outside businesses, bicycle racks in accessible places, street crossings at appropriate locations, inviting walkways and entrances to stores and other buildings will all enhance the pedestrian and bicycle experience while providing safe access to the commercial enterprises in town.

# Building Design

## Scale and Massing

Massing refers to the number of different building blocks or basic forms that a building's overall shape is made up of. Scale refers to how we perceive the size of a building or portion of a building based on familiar or repeated elements in the vicinity. A building that feels comfortable in its surroundings should reference the scale of other buildings in the area, even if it is very different in actual size. This can be accomplished by manipulating the massing or the scale of building elements.

- Consider the scale and proportion of surrounding buildings. Attempt to reference or reflect the height of adjacent buildings. Keep in mind that your building should complement neighboring buildings, yet be distinct.
- All renovations should maintain the scale and proportion of the original building elements including roof shape and height, structural framework, window size and symmetry, and decorative elements.
- New construction should appear similar in mass and scale to historic structures found traditionally in the neighborhood and in similar areas throughout the town. This does not preclude the use of large buildings. There are existing structures in New Boston that would allow for larger scale new construction to fit in if attention is paid to massing and detailing.



Although this building is large it is a very good example of appropriate massing. The changes in axis of various parts of the building, along with changes in roof lines and the covered porch areas all contribute to the traditional look and human scale of this multi-use structure.

# Roof Design

New buildings should have basic roof forms that are similar to the historic roof forms of the area in order to maintain the traditional character of New Boston. Similar, repeated roof forms contribute to a sense of visual continuity. Ideally, every building should have a visible roof and the design plan should point to one other building in the area that has a similar form.

- The roof of the building should be in keeping with the scale of the structure itself.
- Sloped roof structures are encouraged to maintain a pitch between 6:12 minimum and 12:12 maximum on all primary roof areas. (Not including dormers, entry canopies or similar elements.) Mansard and shed roof designs are discouraged for the main roof area. Sloped roof surfaces should be visible from most building perimeter locations.
- Subtle breaks and fluctuations in the roofline are encouraged to highlight important areas of the building (such as the entry) and break up longer runs of façade and roof area.
- Air handling units, condensers, satellite dishes and other equipment placed on the roof should not be visible from the street, and instead should be screened by building elements so they are shielded from sight. Roof mounted equipment should be visually minimized with painted colors and finishes that are complementary to the overall building design.
- The roof of a structure should be designed so as to divert the fall of rain and snow away from pedestrian areas such as walkways and doors. The use of canopies, porches, or overhangs as protective elements is encouraged at entry locations.



This is a good example of a roof line using fluctuations to break up longer runs of the building façade and roof area.

## Roof Design, cont.

- Preferred materials for visible roofing include asphalt shingles, standing-seam non-glare metal, copper, fiberglass, or other natural materials.
- Roof colors should be muted earth tones **or** a color that is darker than the façade. Garish roof colors are discouraged.



This roof not only ignores traditional New England roof forms but is also painted in colors that are not in keeping with the character of the town or region.

# Building Types

Successful commercial development in New Boston should bear a close resemblance to those building types that are already part of the local landscape. The most common of these are barns, houses and sheds. A new design that draws upon the fundamental similarities among historic buildings in the community without copying them is preferred. This will allow them to be seen as products of their own time yet compatible with their historic neighbors.

- Larger office parks, retail establishments, or other commercial developments are encouraged to suggest clusters of the building types common to New Boston.
- The use of corporate 'chain' architecture detracts from the unique character of New Boston and is strongly discouraged. Corporate tenants should design the buildings to fit the scale and character of the town. New development should express its own uniqueness of location, tenant, or structure, and should be designed especially for the particular building site and not as a copy of a generic building type that might be used anywhere.
- Freestanding structures should be designed as attractive pieces of commercial architecture: expressive of their use, responsive to their site, and respectful of their immediate neighbors.



This cluster of stores, coffee shops, banks and offices are designed in a house or barn style and fit within the surrounding neighborhood.



Although this commercial building is large it has been designed to resemble a large barn which suits the residential-agricultural neighborhood in which it is situated. The windows and doors add a human scale to the large building. The cupolas add to the barn style and break up the large roof expanse.

## Building Types, cont.

- When renovating or reusing a residential building for commercial use, make every effort to maintain the building's residential characteristics.
- New buildings outside of the immediate village area should contain characteristics of residential or agricultural structures.



The commercial reuse of this residential building has been attentive to its residential characteristics. These include the size and proportion of the windows, porches and railing details, and a free standing sign.

# Architectural Features, Façade Treatment, and Openings

Architectural features and details such as cornices, columns, corner trim, doorways, entrances, windows/trim, awnings, dormers, porches, etc., can provide or enhance visual interest, provide a pedestrian scale and help mitigate effects of building mass. Architectural features and details should be considered in every building design. Traditional features and details associated with the local architectural heritage are strongly encouraged.

- Projecting elements, such as dormers, bays, stairs, chimneys and cornices, help to provide visual interest to a building and can influence its perceived scale. These features should be compatible in size, shape and type with those found in historic buildings and should be treated as an integral part of the building design.
- Articulations in the plane of the façade are encouraged to create an interesting design, reinforce rhythms and cast shadows. Very flat façade designs are discouraged.
- The design of building walls must take into account various viewing distances: Up-close for pedestrians and other passersby, mid-range for views from several hundred yards, and long distance for views from nearby hills or other vantage points.
- Main entrances to buildings should be emphasized by detailing, massing, changes in materials, or other architectural devices. It is important that the main entrance to a building be clearly identifiable and unique. It is the primary point of arrival and should be treated as such.



The porches, dormers, stairs, and changes in the orientation of the building create interest and help diminish the perceived size of this building. The landscaping and parking lot located in back of the building complete the attractive aspect of this commercial property.



This entrance way is highlighted by recessing it slightly, and by a change in color and material. This makes it clearly defined and inviting.

## Architectural Features, Façade Treatments and Openings, cont.

- Entrances are encouraged to incorporate a transitional space or element. This could be a recessed entrance, a porch, or a courtyard. Entrances should be proportional to the scale of the building.
- Primary entrances should be oriented toward the street as much as possible.
- The use of covered porches or a recessed front entry area is encouraged to help create a more human scale and appearance to the building. These also help to draw attention to the point of entry and provide shelter from rain and snow. A porch should be of substantial size to function as more than an entry landing. However, porch areas should not be used for outdoor merchandise display, unless specifically designed for this purpose and approved by the planning board.
- Traditionally, buildings of the same type had common window-to-wall proportions. This helped contribute to the sense of continuity in the neighborhood. This ratio of open surfaces (windows and doors) to enclosed surfaces (walls and roofs) of the building exterior should be similar to that seen in other structures in New Boston and in other regional examples of the building type.
- The ratio of the height-to-width of door and window openings also should be compatible with buildings found traditionally in the area
- If shutters are used, they should be sized to fit the window openings and provided for all windows that are part of a given grouping or architectural element.



The materials, roof line, steps and windows create a very welcoming entrance to this local restaurant.



The addition of the porch on the front of this building adds a human scale and appearance to the building. The scale of the façade could have been improved even more if the decorative shutters had been properly proportioned to the windows.

## Architectural Features, Façade Treatments and Openings, cont.

- Any side of the building that is visible from a street or sidewalk should have windows. A blank wall creates an unfriendly façade.
- The materials, proportions, and color of entrances and windows should complement the full building façade. This is especially true where drive through windows are allowed. These should resemble the other windows of the building and be an integral part of the building design. Avoid elements that looked to be “tacked on” by continuing architectural details around the entire building.
- When renovating, respect size, placement, materials, and detailing of the building; especially if the building has historical or cultural value. For instance, try not to replace large windows with small ones; look at neighboring buildings for additional clues; use decorative trim to set your windows apart, but be consistent across the whole building. Dark or heavily tinted windows are discouraged.
- Openings in masonry buildings should express a structural lintel or arch to suggest how it is carrying the weight above. Likewise, door and window frames can also use a wider trim at the head than is used on the sides to achieve the same visual effect.



This blank and unarticulated façade in a single material creates an unfriendly atmosphere and de-emphasizes the entrance.



The renovation of this building has paid particular attention to decorative detailing and the traditional color scheme. The resulting building fits perfectly into a pedestrian scale and the streetscape of the surrounding town.

# Materials and Colors

Buildings should be constructed to last. Durable materials and high quality craftsmanship is the best investment. A good indicator of those materials that will last in a New England climate are those used traditionally in the area. Recycled or salvaged materials are encouraged, as are other products that help preserve the environment and create healthier and more comfortable workspaces.

- The following materials are not recommended for use in New Boston: multi-colored brick, imitation brick siding, stacked bond pattern in brick or block, asphalt siding, mirrored glass. Other materials that may be used, but should not cover more than 50% of the exterior surface of a building are plain bare CMU's, corrugated metal siding, Exterior Insulation Finish Systems.
- The main color theme should typically be of a natural, muted shade. Brighter, more vibrant colors should generally be reserved for accents and highlights only, and should be used sparingly.
- Highly reflective materials (e.g. plastic panels, brushed aluminum, bronzed glass) are inappropriate.
- The use of traditional colors commonly found in New England is appropriate for all components of the building. The selection of colors must consider how the building will relate to other nearby structures.
- Aim to maintain the existing range of exterior wall materials found throughout the town.



This functional metal building benefits from the addition of a wooden office structure which adds texture to the structure. The overall appearance could have been further improved if detailed trim from the wooden office had been brought over to the metal structure.

## Materials and Colors, cont.

- New substitute materials may be considered, if they appear similar in character and detailing to those used traditionally in the area for the relevant building type. Applicants are encouraged to check with the Planning Board regarding the acceptance of new, substitute materials.
- Select colors from a traditional palette of colors. For additional assistance in color selection, refer to historical color paint palettes, such as the one produced by Benjamin Moore. Use a single color scheme across all stores within a building. Use color to set off decorative details from the base tone of the building. Bright colors should only be used as accents.
- Garish building colors are strongly discouraged.



Looking at historical structures in town gives a good starting point for determining a traditional color palette for your commercial building. This is the Town's Historical Building.