Hitchcock Design Criteria for Commercial Buildings Located in the Commercial Districts Along U.S. Highway 6

Exhibit A

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Chapter 1: Design Guidelines for Commercial Districts Along U.S. Highway 6

Introduction

In many respects, the commercial districts along U.S. Highway 6 provide the first "street level" view of Hitchcock seen after entering the town from U.S. Highway 6 and FM 2004. Future developments should change the current character by promoting dispersed parking, creating a road edge and developing structures that emphasize the country and historic nature of Hitchcock.

The current character of the commercial districts along U.S. Highway 6 is typical of "strip commercial" areas that are dominated by and cater to the automobile. Many of the services found here are typical to a highway interchange: gas stations, restaurants. Although these uses are typically associated with the automobile that does not necessarily define this area's future character. In order to counter the current "strip commercial" character of the area, new developments will have to be designed very carefully to meet the design goals for the area. In the portion of the area immediately adjacent to residential properties, the mass, size and roof forms of those properties should be considered.

This document provides design policies and guidelines that are applicable to both new construction and alterations of non-historic buildings located in Hitchcock's commercial districts along U.S. Highway 6.

Summary of Key Characteristics
Key design characteristics of this commercial area include the following:

- buildings set back from the street edge
- variety of building styles
- service and parking areas in front of buildings
- free-standing signs
- auto-oriented / dominated
- irregular road edge

Design Goals
As this area continues to develop, it is important to the town that a coordinated image be established. This image should utilize architectural forms from the area's historic period of significance.

The design goals for the commercial districts along U.S. Highway 6 are:

- To change the existing pattern of development
- To establish a coordinated image
- To minimize the impact of the automobile and large trucks, by managing a parking system (e.g., large areas of parking, as seen from the street, are discouraged and parking should be screened with landscaping and broken up into smaller areas)
- To clearly define the road edge and entrances and exits with landscaping (e.g., a limited number of cuts should be allowed in the area)
- To link existing and future developments with other projects and trail systems
- To promote friendly, walkable streets (e.g., projects that support pedestrian activity and contribute to the quality of life are encouraged)
- To provide a safe environment for the pedestrian (e.g., providing walking paths, pocket parks and landscaping along the street edge is encouraged)
- To minimize the amount of light spill from a structure
- Be sympathetic to adjacent residential construction

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1. Mass and Size

A variety of building sizes existed in this area historically.

While contemporary design approaches are encouraged, developments should continue to exhibit a variety in sizes, similar to the buildings seen traditionally.

A. Use Varying Facade Sizes

A variety of sizes is appropriate in new developments.

1. Differentiate a primary facade with significant set backs in the wall plane.
2. Variations in facade treatment may be continued through the structure, including its roof line and front and rear facades to reduce the perceived size of the building.

B. Vary Building Height

Building heights of larger projects should provide variety.

1. A larger development should step down in height towards the street or smaller, surrounding structures.

C. Consider Multiple Buildings on Large Lots

Large lots should be developed with several buildings, rather than a single structure.

1. This will help reduce the perceived size of the project.
2. The area between the buildings should also contribute to the overall positive open space of the site.

D. Maximum Façade Length

A primary building facade should not exceed fifty feet in width, without a significant setback

1. Differentiate a primary facade with significant setbacks in the wall plane. Create positive open space in these setbacks such that they will enhance the streetscape.
2. Variations in facade treatment should be continued through the structure, including its roof line and front and rear facades.

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2. Building and Roof Form

Developments in the commercial districts along U.S. Highway 6 are expected to be quite a bit larger than in the rest of town.

A. Use Traditional Building Forms

Use building forms that are similar to those structures seen traditionally.

1. Buildings should have vertical proportions.
2. Break up a larger building into subordinate elements to reduce its apparent size, especially for buildings on large parcels.

B. Use Traditional Roof Pitches

Roofs should have a pitch similar to those seen historically.

1. Pitched, gable and shed roofs are appropriate.
2. Flat skylights mounted flush with the roof may be considered in areas that minimize their visibility from public ways. Bubbled or domed skylights are not appropriate.
3. Eave depths should be a minimum of two feet.

C. Pitched Roofs

Pitched roofs shall have a minimum slope or pitch of eight (8) feet of rise for every twelve (12) feet of run (8:12).

D. Flat Roofs

Building walls shall extend to parapets that enclose the roof area. Those parapets shall be of sufficient height to fully screen the roof and any mechanical equipment located on the roof.

E. Break-Up Long Roof Ridgelines

Long roof ridgelines parallel to the street shall be broken by dormers, setbacks or in some other fashion.

1. Unbroken ridge lines generally shall not be longer than one and one-half times the height of the building.
2. The maximum unbroken ridge line length is 30 feet.

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3. Building Setbacks

Historically, a wide variety of building types have been found in this commercial area. This variety dictated differing building siting patterns.

New developments should build on this tradition and provide a variety of building setbacks.

A. Coordinate Site Plans with Surrounding Properties

Coordinate site plans with surrounding properties to enhance the sense of open space, building spacing, parking, and service areas.

1. By coordinating site plans certain site functions (e.g., parking, ingress, egress and service areas) may be shared.

B. Vary Building Setbacks

A variety of building setbacks may be considered.

1. This variety should include buildings located both at the front and rear of properties. The majority of the buildings should be closer to the street edge, however.
2. Setbacks to large buildings should be varied and should be treated as positive open space, amenities to be enjoyed by pedestrians.

3. Use landscaping to define the street edge and provide a separation between pedestrian and automobile routes.

C. Proximity to Parking Facilities

Siting a building behind major areas of parking is strongly discouraged.

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4. Exterior Design Standards

The architectural character of the built environment should complement the natural landscape and not dominate it. Building masses shall be broken up to provide, through change in texture and color, horizontal and vertical relief and should relate harmoniously on a pedestrian, human scale.

Vertical proportions which exaggerate building height should be avoided.

The level of detailing and finish of wall facades shall be consistent on all sides of the building. Wall planes visible from any roadway or adjoining properties shall be detailed with architectural elements which provide shadow lines and which provide visual depth unless screened with landscaping.

A. Façade Articulation and Color/Texture Variation

For the purpose of this section, a "break" shall be defined as an interruption of the building wall plane with either a recess or an offset at an angle of between ninety (90) degrees and forty-five (45) degrees to the wall plane.

B. Horizontal Articulation

No building façade shall extend greater than two (2) times the wall's height without having a minimum "break" and color/texture change of 25% of the wall's height, and such "break" and color/texture change shall continue for a minimum distance equal to at least 25% of the maximum length of either adjacent plane. The maximum distance without a break shall not exceed 50 feet.

C. Vertical Articulation

No horizontal wall shall extend for a distance greater than two (2) times the height of the wall without changing height through an articulation, or variation, of the roofline by a minimum of 25% of the wall's height, and such roofline change shall continue for a minimum distance equal to at least 25% of the maximum length of either adjacent plane.

D. Storefronts and Entrances

Street-level storefronts and building entrances should be open and inviting to pedestrians. All in-line buildings shall have a street-to-building zone of at least 25 feet to be used for sidewalks, including a minimum 10 foot landscaped buffer strip and pedestrian spaces including benches and other seating facilities.

E. Entryways

A minimum of 15 square feet of recessed entryway shall be provided for businesses in buildings less than 15,000 square feet. Buildings over 15,000 square feet shall have a minimum of 100 square feet of recessed entryway to help delineate a building's entrance and add variety to the streetscape.

F. Building Façade (Elevation) Plan

Façade offset shall be shown, along with calculations verifying that the building elevations meet the above requirement, on a building façade (elevation) plan, and shall be submitted for Design Review by the Planning and Zoning Board for review and approval along with the site plan.

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5. Pedestrian Systems

Continuity of pedestrian routes is a goal of the town, both in terms of connecting individual projects and town blocks, and also within larger projects that have more than one building.

Pedestrian routes should provide safe, uninterrupted access to all streets and major open spaces.

A. Design Considerations

A project should be designed to provide an attractive street edge and to encourage pedestrian activity.

1. This applies to landscaping and open space, as well as to the primary facade of a building.
2. Projects that support pedestrian activity and contribute to the quality of life are encouraged.
3. Building entrances should be clearly identified and oriented to face the street.
4. Consider the following building elements that help provide an attractive street edge and encourage pedestrian activity:

    - display windows
    - public art or murals

- facade articulation
- landscaping

B. Develop Pedestrian Pathways

Develop four feet wide concrete sidewalks or similar permanent pedestrian pathways that connect with other developments.

1. Such a pathway should lead along the street edge. This will help to clearly identify the road edge.
2. Consider developing focal points along pedestrian routes with special pedestrian amenities. Benches, mini-parks and planters are examples of amenities that are encouraged.
3. Landscaping that identifies pedestrian ways or provides a separation between automobile routes is strongly encouraged.

C. Encourage Pedestrian Access

Consider developing paths within the parcel that encourage pedestrian access.

1. Internal routes within large projects should also be provided which connect to external pedestrian systems.
2. Consider the addition of bike paths to complement pedestrian access.

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6. Positive Open Space

Open space that is planned and designed as an amenity improves the quality of life for the community and should be included in all projects.

This may occur as a garden, courtyard or plaza. It also may be "active," planned for human use, or "passive," designed to be viewed as an amenity only. Undeveloped land that is "left over" after a building is placed on a site is usually insufficient to function as positive open space.

A. Create "Places with Identities"

Create "places" with distinct identities within projects.

1. Include open spaces with special amenities that encourage use, such as benches and sitting areas.
2. Establish visual continuity within these spaces by using similar materials, forms, and street orientations.
3. Where diversity in building setbacks is a part of the context, a varied setback may also help to create open space.
4. Locate open space in sunny areas whenever possible.

B. Leverage Space between Buildings

If several buildings are proposed for a site, the spaces between the buildings should contribute to the overall positive open space of the area.

1. Buildings should be positioned on the site in a manner that minimizes the apparent mass and size and maximizes open space.

C. Connect Open Spaces

Connect open spaces among large projects.

1. Where projects or buildings within a project abut one another, open spaces should be organized in a manner which maximizes their areas.
2. Open spaces also should connect with natural amenities such as the Historical District.

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7. Automobile Circulation and Parking

The commercial districts along U.S. Highway 6 should provide a controlled, organized automobile system which provides a safe pedestrian environment. Streets, sidewalks, and landscaping should define the road edge and encourage walking, sitting and other pedestrian activities.

Projects that can occur in the commercial districts along U.S. Highway 6 also have automobile activity associated with them. This should not, however, make it an unsafe environment for the pedestrian.

Off-street parking facilities, inclusive of parking lots shall be guided by the nature of the properties use, location, and frequency of use.

Automobile circulation patterns, both internal and external, should be clearly identified and should not interfere with pedestrian circulation systems.

A. Automobile Circulation

1. Clearly Identify the Road Edge

Clearly identify the road edge for both automobiles and pedestrians.

2. Identify Entrances

Use landscaping and lighting accents to identify entrances.

3. Minimize the Number of Entrances

Minimize the number of entrances along a street edge. Sharing ingress and egress points with neighboring projects is strongly encouraged.

4. Conceal Parking

Place parking areas to the rear of a site when feasible or disburse throughout the site.

B. Parking

All required or provided off-street parking areas shall be paved and maintained according to City standards and specifications for minor street construction as provided in the City subdivision ordinance and as delineated below in surfacing and marking.

1. Surfacing

(a) All businesses fronting Highway 6 will have surfaced parking. It may be porous concrete, asphalt, seal coat or pavers;
(b) Surfacing Exceptions: Owners of businesses that by their very nature, location, age or environmental concerns desire a parking surface exemption, may petition the Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) with their request. A public hearing will be held and the PZB will send their recommendations to the City Commission for a decision.

2. Marking

(a) All hard surfaced parking will be marked or striped in a manner that clearly depicts parking slots. Handicap parking will be clearly marked;
(b) Parking areas used solely for the display of vehicles for sale or rental are not required to have delineated parking spaces;
(c) Marking Exceptions: Owners of businesses that by their very nature, location, age or environmental concerns desire a parking surface marking exemption, may petition the Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) with their request. A public hearing will be held and the PZB and DRB will send their recommendations to the City Commission for a decision.

8. Service Areas

Since a project designed in this commercial area will be visible from more than one side of the site, there is no clear "rear yard" that service areas should be placed in.

Because of this, it is important that service areas are screened from view on all sides. Designing a service area as an integral part of the building design may also be a consideration.

A. Keep Service Areas Out of Sight

Service areas should not be visible from major pedestrian ways or neighborhood residential areas.

1. Service and trash areas should be screened from view on all sides. Consider using a shed to enclose it.
2. Also consider designing a service area as an integral part of the building design, on interior portions of the building.
3. Provide adequate trash storage capacity such that debris will not overflow the containers.

B. Protect Site Amenities

Service and trash areas should not be located adjacent to site amenities.

9. Corporate and Franchise Designs

One of the concerns in building design is that when national chain companies or their franchises construct buildings in the commercial area that they do so in a way that reinforces the design traditions of Hitchcock.

Some typical issues and negative impacts often associated with a national chain or commercial franchise designs include:

- Bright logo colors are used over large expanses of a building that contrasts too strongly with the established palette of Hitchcock.
- Large blank walls on "big box" buildings are bland and out of scale, and discourage pedestrian activity.
- Buildings are surrounding by parking lots and cars. Primary entrances are typically oriented to these parking lots, rather than to the street.
- Metal panels and large areas of featureless stucco are often used and these are out of character and not of human scale.

A. Stock Building Plans Prohibited

The use of stock building plans or typical corporate or franchise operation designs is not allowed.

B. Maintain the Character of Hitchcock

Building designs or styles should be compatible with the character of Hitchcock.

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10. Architectural Character

Buildings throughout Hitchcock are simple in character.

A new development in the commercial area should therefore not introduce architectural designs that would be inconsistent with the design traditions of town.

A. Draw Upon Characteristics that Work

A new building that draws upon the fundamental characteristics of building in Hitchcock is encouraged.

1. Applying highly ornamental details that were not a part of building in Hitchcock is inappropriate.

B. Address Highway 6

All facades should be given equal design consideration.

1. Because of this commercial area's highly visible location, any development should provide a refined facade to address the street.

Chapter 2: Building Materials Design Guidelines

Introduction

This chapter presents the design policies and guidelines for the rehabilitation or alteration of building materials on an existing commercial structure and materials used for the construction of new buildings in the commercial districts along U.S. Highway 6. The design guidelines are organized into relevant design topics. Within these design, topics are the individual policies and design guidelines upon which the Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) will base its decisions. Finally, the individual design guidelines will imply whether it applies to the rehabilitation of existing structures, new construction or both.

1. Building Materials

Traditionally, a limited palette of building materials - wood, brick, and stone was used in Hitchcock. Accessory structures were often constructed of a limited range of materials that were rustic and utilitarian in character.

The type of materials used should be selected from those used historically in the community and specifically in the commercial area. Also, new materials should have a simple finish, similar to those seen historically.

A. Exterior Walls and Siding

All front and side exterior walls, not counting windows and doors, must be of permitted materials. No front or side wall can be more than 30 percent glass. If the rear of the building can be seen from Highway 6, then it must also be finished in permitted materials.

B. Permitted Materials for Exterior Walls and Siding

- Limestone
- Native stone
- Stucco

- Rustic solid wood
- Granite
- Marble
- Architectural grade cement fiberboard

C. Special Use Permit Required Materials for Exterior Walls and Siding

- Brick
- Painted solid wood
- Stained solid wood
- Unfinished solid wood
- Concrete
- Split-faced concrete masonry units
- Pre-cast concrete panels
- Cast-stone
- Glass, if more than 30 percent of the surface area
- Synthetic materials

D. Prohibited Materials for Exterior Walls and Siding

- Aluminum siding
- Cinder block
- Metal buildings prohibited unless 100 percent of all front and side exterior walls are finished in permitted materials. If the rear of a metal building can be seen from Highway 6, then it must also be finished in permitted materials.
- Mirrored glass
- All forms of non-solid woods
- Slate
- All other material not listed as permitted or special use permit required

E. Paint

Wood is an important special use permit building material used in the commercial districts along U.S. Highway 6. Wood commercial buildings are usually painted to protect the wood. Only sheds and out-buildings are normally left unfinished.

Wood surfaces should be painted and in colors consistent with the town's historic color scheme. To preserve the wood, its painted or stained finish should be routinely maintained.

- The range of paint colors available is limited to neutral, rustic earth tones
- Bright colors like pinks, purples, and those classified as primary colors are expressly prohibited

F. Metals

Metals may be used for a variety of exterior wall and siding applications including columns, window hoods, awnings, and decorative features.

G. Exposed Columns

Exposed structural or decorative columns shall be constructed or clad with a material that is or like or similar material to that of the primary structure. Use of bare natural wood columns requires a special use permit.

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2. Roof Materials

A variety of roof materials exist in the commercial districts along U.S. Highway 6. Today, the use of metal dominates. Roof materials are major elements in the street scene and contribute to the character of individual building styles. However, they are the most susceptible to deterioration, and their replacement may become necessary in time.

Roof materials should be used in a manner similar to that seen historically and chosen based on its compatible appearance to the structure and the commercial area.

A. Permitted Materials for Roof

- Metal
- Composition asphalt shingles limited to neutral, rustic earth tones

B. Special Use Permit Required Materials for Roof

- Corrugated metal
- Painted metal
- Bright colored composition asphalt shingles
- Slate Tiles
- Synthetic wood shingles made of fire-resistant materials
- Tile

C. Prohibited Materials for Roof

- Cedar
- Wood
- Wood shingles
- All other materials for roof not listed as permitted or special use permit required

Chapter 3: Landscaping Design Guidelines

Introduction

This chapter presents the design policies and guidelines for landscaping as part of the construction of new buildings in the commercial districts along U.S. Highway 6.

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1. Landscaping Plan

A Landscaping Plan must be submitted which reflects:

A. Green Space

Green Space, non-paved areas with vegetation and plantings, shall constitute fifteen percent (15%) of the lot area.

Landscaping strips at least ten (10) feet in width are required along adjacent streets except at driveway openings.

B. Trees

Canopy-type trees are required every 300 square feet of the street yard with a minimum of one tree per street yard and an intention of one tree per fifty linear feet to accomplish canopy coverage.

Side and rear yard tree plantings shall be a minimum of one