From its early seaport beginnings, Smithfield evolved through the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a human-scaled residential community bisected by a commercial Main Street. Throughout the twentieth century, development has occurred along transportation corridors leading away from the historic core, and often buildings have taken the form and style popular at the time of their construction. These guidelines represent the community's vision to ensure that the design of new buildings are based on the architecture of the region and are constructed of traditional materials. Although new commercial and retail structures will often exceed the size of their historical counterparts, techniques will be illustrated in the following pages that will reduce the scale and mass of these new structures and provide the human-scale sought by the Town.

Smithfield Station recalls Smithfield's seafaring tradition through the use a tower that is reminiscent of a lighthouse, while wrap-around porches reduce the overall scale of the building.

The design of the Smithfield Center references local historic traditions including gable and clipped gable roof forms, heavy dentilated wood cornice, and brick laid in the Felmish bond pattern.

A. Architectural Themes

1. A distinctive identity for each corridor should be created through a common palette of materials, forms and features that create a coordinated and inviting mix of buildings and spaces.
2. Encourage a diversity of architectural materials, forms and styles that respect the traditions of architecture in the Hampton Roads area including gable or hipped roof forms, standing seam metal roofing, brick, and wood siding.
3. When making transitions between developments, avoid jarring contrasts in building scale, forms, materials or styles.
4. Where existing developments do not provide appropriate examples, new development should strive to implement the intended vision rather than repeat existing patterns.
5. New development should respect the Town's existing historic buildings.
6. Existing development should be upgraded as opportunities arise.
7. Architectural transplants from other regions and pasting Colonial details on generic architectural forms are examples of building designs that are neither appropriate nor desirable.

The buildings of this large regional shopping center repeat the same architectural theme throughout the complex, including fast food establishments and gas stations.

Note the contrasting color and pattern of the roof shingles.

The gas station uses the same lighter colored masonry to accent the brickwork.

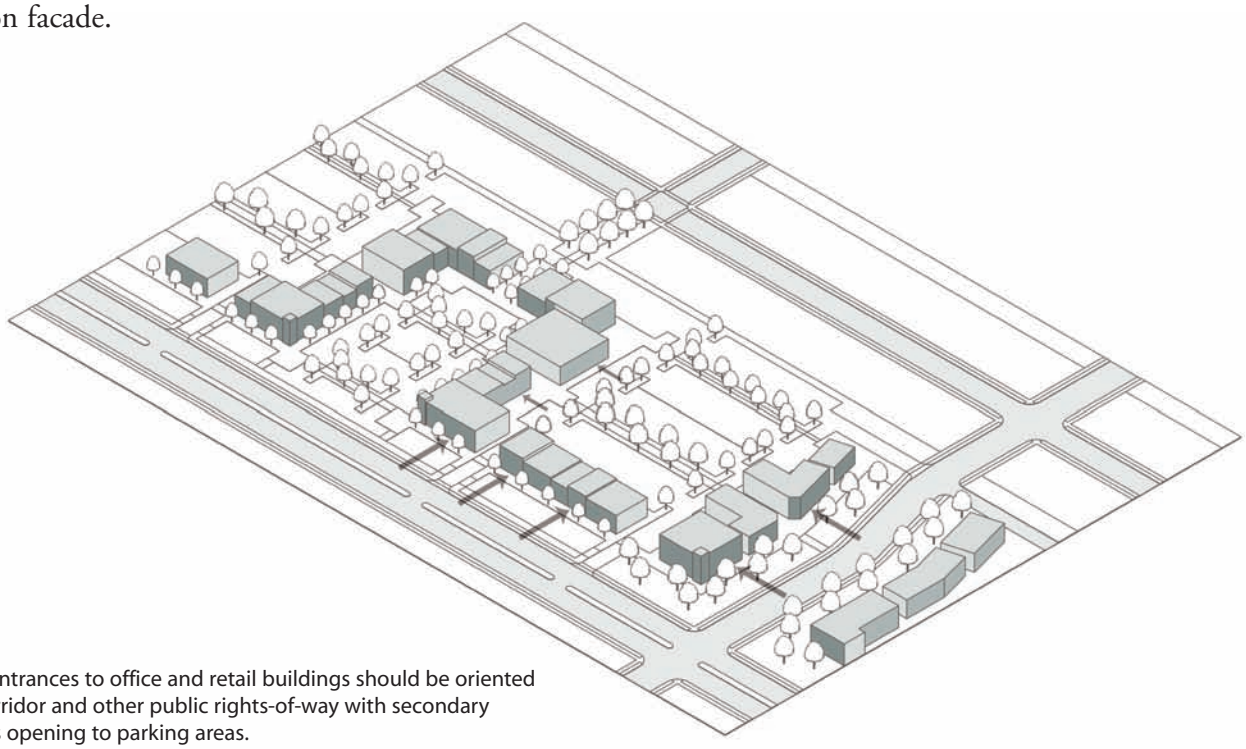
B. Entrance Orientation

Entrance orientation refers to the direction of prominent entrances and "front" facades of a building. Generally, the entrance facade will be the most prominent elevation of a building.

1. Orient primary entrances on building facades to the corridor.
2. Use a hierarchy of entry design on any structure or complex. If the building has more than one orientation, focus main entry on street/corridor facade.
3. Secondary entries may be created to allow convenient access from secondary streets, adjacent buildings, sidewalks, parking, and bicycle paths.
4. If a shopping center adjoins a neighborhood, provide an entrance to the complex on the common facade.

A change in the the main roofline and a projecting gable-roofed entry clearly communicate the entrance to this office building.

This facade gives a street-facing identity to a self-storage facility.



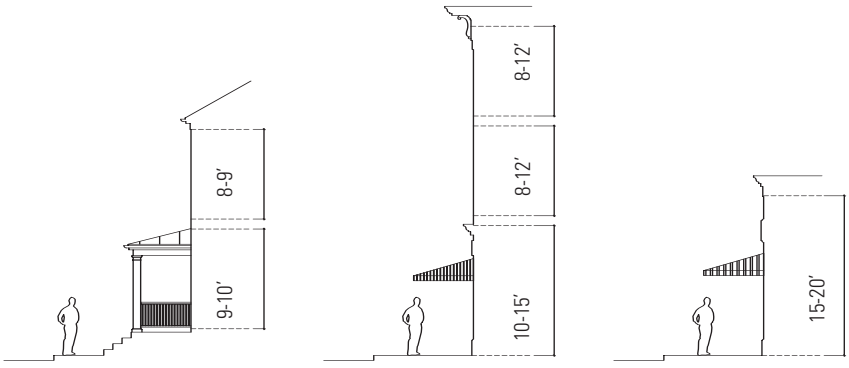
Primary entrances to office and retail buildings should be oriented to the corridor and other public rights-of-way with secondary entrances opening to parking areas.

C. Building Mass, Scale, and Height

Historically, many of Smithfield's buildings were small and pedestrian scaled. More recent developments on several of the commercial corridors are more massive with large stores and expansive parking areas. These developments do not reflect the human scale of the community.

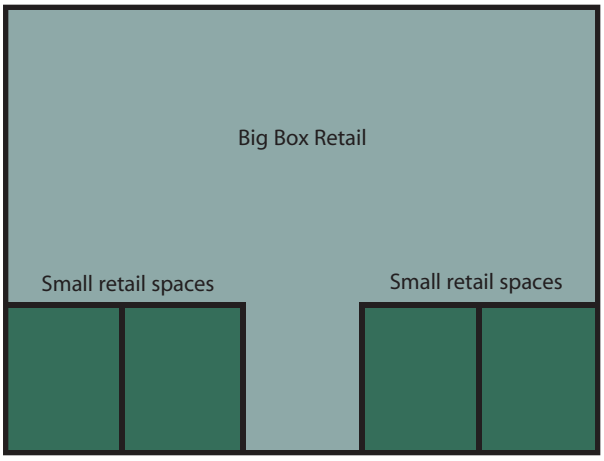
Many techniques suggested in these guidelines provide tools for allowing large development while reducing their perceived massiveness. While the footprint of new commercial development may remain large, massing and organization of building forms can help to retain the human scale of Smithfield.

1. Use techniques to reduce the perceived mass of large buildings including articulated bases, water-tables, string courses, cornices, material changes and patterns, and fenestration to reduce the apparent height of a large building.
2. Fake windows and similar details are not appropriate articulation.
3. Floor-to-floor heights of a building can have an impact on the mass of a building. For instance, typical ceiling heights in a residence are 8-9 feet. First floors of office buildings or retail shops can range from 10-15 feet. Upper floors that include residential or office are generally 8-12 feet in height. When actual or implied floor-to-floor heights exceed 15-20 feet on the exterior, then a building may begin to read as more massive than human-scaled. When articulating large buildings, keep these dimensions in mind.
4. Break up the front of a large building by dividing it into individual bays 25 to 40 feet wide.
5. Use variation in materials, textures, patterns, colors and details to break down the mass and scale of the building.
6. Use building mass appropriate to the site. Place buildings of the greatest footprint, massing, and height in the core of commercial or office developments where the impact on adjacent uses is the least.
7. When making transitions to lower density areas, modulate the mass of the building to relate to smaller buildings. Heights can be greater if the mass is modulated and other scale techniques are adopted. Reduce height near lower density uses.
8. Use buildings to define edges and provide a human scale.



Maintain human scale by the use of traditional floor-to-floor heights in all new construction.

Take design cues from Smithfield's historic downtown.



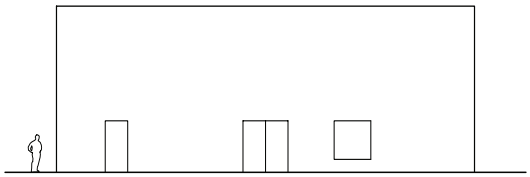
Place smaller stores on the front elevation of larger retailers to reduce a structure's perceived mass.

Articulated bays and differentiation of materials gives this small structure a dignified presence

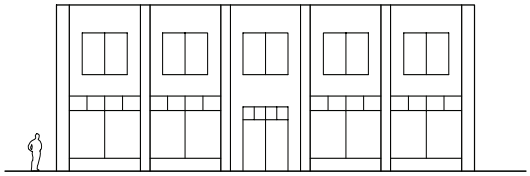
Minimally staggered setbacks and a variety of construction materials help to create human scale in this development.

D. Facade Organization

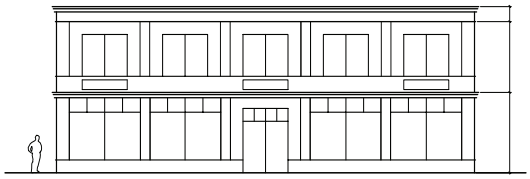
1. Provide detailed facade treatments on any elevation that is visible from streets/corridors or from any primary elevations of adjoining developments.
3. Avoid use of unadorned blank walls on elevation facing corridors.
4. For retail commercial structures, consider using the traditional three-part facade of cornice, pattern of upper story windows and a storefront with articulated base when designing a new building or when renovating an existing structure.
5. Strive for designs that reflect the architectural traditions of the region.
6. Use storefronts or large display windows at the street level.



An unarticulated facade.



Bay divisions and window placement provide horizontal articulation.



Horizontal elements such as cornices, sign bands and a continuous base reduce the perceived height.

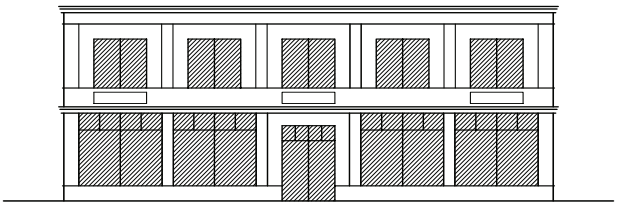
One-story buildings should have a clearly defined base, middle and top.

These storefronts uses a traditional design of articulated base and storefront windows shaded by awnings.

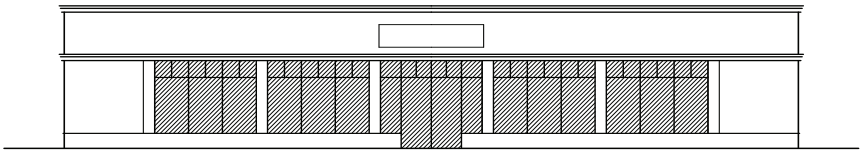
E. Openings

The relationship of solids (walls) to voids (openings) as well as the number and size of openings in a wall has an effect on how well a building relates to the user. Aside from allowing natural ventilation and light, windows provide a great deal of design character and warmth to a building. Vertical windows give a more traditional feel, while horizontal windows lend a contemporary look. Generally, retail buildings have a greater area of openings (storefronts and entrances) on the ground floor with solid parapets above.

1. Use a regular pattern of solids and voids for openings that relate to more traditional building design in the corridor.
2. Use a proportion of openings (vertical or horizontal) that generally is consistent with the context of the building. More traditional designed openings are typically vertically proportioned.
3. Orient primary entrances on a building facade to a street or corridor.
4. Large work area doors or open bays opening toward or facing the corridor are discouraged.



Mixed-use commercial buildings should have larger openings on the ground level and smaller openings above.



Break up long facades by using patterns of openings traditionally associated with commercial buildings.

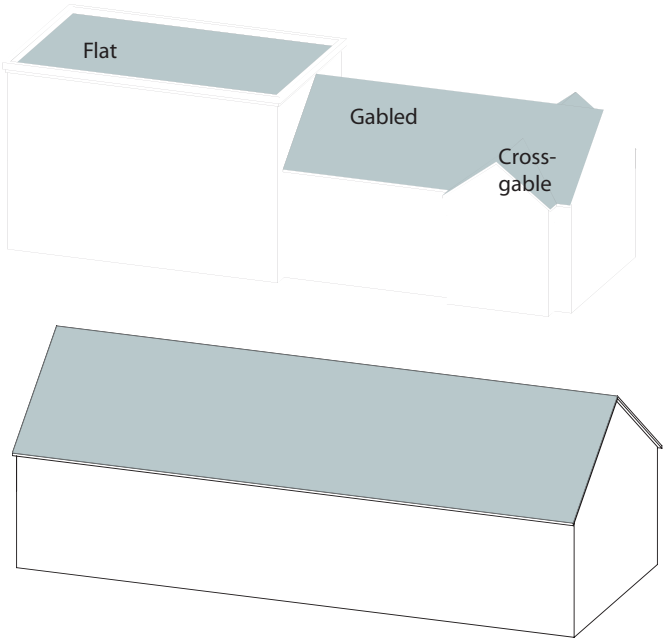
Large openings at street level engage pedestrians.

F. Roof Forms and Materials

The importance of roof materials depends on the roof's form. Certain roof types result in very visible roof materials. While larger commercial projects may have roofs hidden behind parapet walls, smaller commercial buildings, office parks and multi-family residential developments often have very visible roofs.

1. Use roof forms that complement the building design and contribute to a human scale. Avoid tall roof areas that overwhelm the height of the building's wall. Common Smithfield roof forms include hipped, gable, shed, and gambrel.
2. If a shed roof or flat roof design is used, add a parapet wall to screen the roof.
3. Avoid a visible monolithic expanse of roof on large-scale buildings. Break the roof mass with elements such as gables, dormers, or parapets. Scale these features to the scale of the building.
4. Consider using a special roof feature on buildings located at a gateway, a prominent corner or to highlight entry bays on larger structures.
5. Steeper roof forms are associated with more traditional designs and can be appropriate when the development adjoins nearby neighborhoods.
6. On roofs that are visible such as gable, hipped or shed designs, use quality materials such as metal or textured asphalt shingles.
7. Any equipment located on a roof should be screened from public view.

Cross-gables and cupolas break the monotony of a long side-gabled roof.



Long expanses of the same roof form should be avoided.

G. Materials and Textures

The choice of materials and texture has great visual significance. Coordinating materials within a development can tie together buildings of different sizes, uses, and forms while contrasting materials or textures within a large building may add visual interest and reduce its apparent scale. Modern construction materials offer choices that can provide many different looks and textures.

1. Use material changes to help reduce mass and provide visual interest.
2. Choose materials that offer texture and avoid monotonous surfaces. For example, use wood, brick, stone, stucco, or new synthetic materials that approximate the look and dimension of these materials.
3. Use quality materials consistently on all visible sides of commercial, office and multi-family residential buildings.
4. In Smithfield, masonry is the most appropriate material for commercial buildings. Common building materials are brick, wood siding, and standing-seam metal roofs.
5. Avoid the use of aluminum or vinyl siding and plain concrete block, and corrugated or sheet metal.
6. Clear glass windows are preferred.
7. In respect to individual buildings on a single parcel, avoid monotony by the use of similar forms, and coordinated materials and colors, rather than duplication of same.

The variety of materials and texture found in Smithfield's historic district provide a palette for new development.

The newly built franchise restaurant uses brick construction on all elevations and textured roof shingles.

H. Color

Color is an integral element of the overall design. Brick, concrete, and stone will have an inherent color, created by nature or during the manufacturing process. Other surfaces will get their color from applied materials such as paint. Awnings provide another opportunity for color.

1. A coordinated palette of colors should be created for each development. This palette should be compatible with adjacent developments.
2. Set the color theme by choosing the color for the material with the most area. If there is more roof than wall area in a development, roof color will be the most important color choice and will set the tone for the rest of the colors.
3. Limit the number of color choices. Generally there is a wall color, trim color, accent color, and roof color.
4. Use natural tints of materials such as reds, browns, tans, grays, and greens as primary colors. Save bright accent colors for awnings and signs on commercial buildings.
5. Use color variation to break up the mass of a building and provide visual interest.
6. Do not use strong color turns the entire building into a logo/sign effect.

A variety of brick colors are used to provide contrasting horizontal color bands on this office building.

A darker brick color is used for contrast while the roof color is repeated as an accent color throughout the shopping center.

I. Details

Architectural details are important tools to create human scale and architectural character. Techniques include highlighting foundations, lintels, sills and cornices with contrasting materials and breaking up the mass of the building with bands at floor levels or projections at entries. These techniques are only a few of the ways to transform a massive building into one of human scale. Consider the facade design of all buildings - even service buildings can have attractive facades.

1. Use articulated elements such as cornices, belt courses, water tables, bay divisions, variations in wall plane and roof features to create designs of interest.
2. Include human-scaled elements such as columns, pilasters and cornices, particularly at street level and on facades with a pedestrian focus.
3. Avoid large expanses of blank walls that are visible from the public right of way or neighboring developments.
4. Avoid oversized decorative elements.
5. Avoid decorative elements that do not relate to the architecture but serve to turn the whole building into a sign.

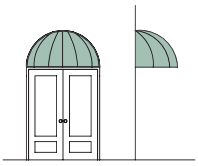
Detailed brickwork is used to define the cornice and sign band on this retail building.

New traditional construction in the region uses historically inspired wood trim surrounding openings, a recessed brick niche, molded brick cornice and rubbed brick around second floor windows.

J. Awnings

1. Encourage the use of awnings at the storefront level to shield displays and entry and to add visual interest.
2. Coordinate the choice of colors, as part of an overall color scheme. Solid colors, wide stripes and narrow stripes should be considered as appropriate, but not in an alternating manner.
3. Awning forms may be angled or curved.
4. Awnings should not serve as a primary element of a building's architectural design.
5. Use of a canopy as an illuminated sign is not appropriate.
6. Awning materials should be appropriate to the overall design of the building. Traditional cloth fabric, as well as standing-seam metal or newer rigid materials may be considered.

Awnings (pictured above and below), whether traditional and contemporary, can add visual interest, reduce scale and shelter shops from intense sunlight.



Curved Fabric Awnings

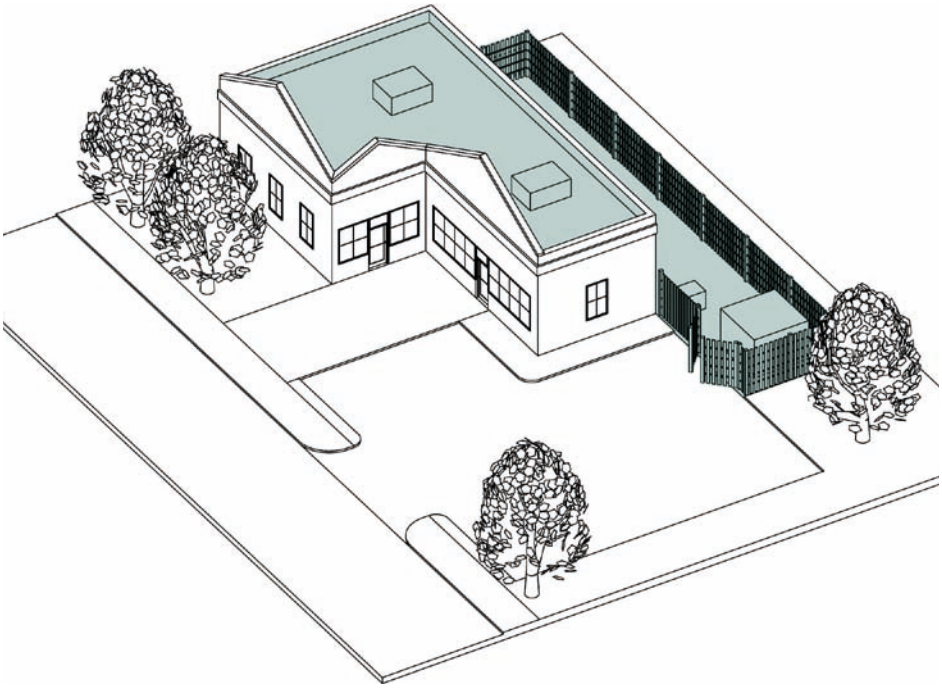
Standard Sloped Awning

K. Appurtenances

Appurtenances refer to all of the miscellaneous equipment and elements that is necessary for the building to function in its appropriate use. These items when not properly located or screened can detract from the overall appearance of an otherwise well-designed building.

1. Building service, loading, and utility areas should not be visible from public streets, adjacent developments or from access drives within large developments. Such service areas should be located behind the main structure in the least visible location possible.
2. Mechanical equipment on roofs or sides of buildings should not be visible from streets.
3. When the mechanical equipment vents, meters, satellite dishes and similar equipment is ground mounted, screening should include either an opaque fence or wall made of the same material as the building or an evergreen hedge that screens objectionable views.
4. Items such as roof ladders, railings, roll-up doors and service doors should be located on building elevations that are the least visible from public streets/corridors, adjacent developments or from access drives within large developments. Their colors should be coordinated among all these elements and with the rest of the building.

A pierced brick wall and low hedge obscure mechanical equipment from view.



Parapet walls are an effective means of screening mechanical equipment placed on rooftops.

L. Canopies

1. Canopies should repeat the materials and forms used on the adjoining building to integrate the service structure rather than define it as a separate element on the site.
2. Use a complementary scale that relates to the building the canopy serves.
3. Do not illuminate the canopy cornice.
4. Use fully shielded lighting fixtures with the bottom of the lens flush with the canopy.
5. Use a single color on the canopy cornice that repeats a primary color on the adjoining building.
6. Minimize number of logos displayed on the canopy.

The roof of this freestanding gas canopy repeats the form used on the associated building and the brick piers echo the building's horizontal banding.

A complex form standing-seam roof covers this traditionally designed service station with an integrated gas canopy.

Brick piers with articulated bases and an elongated clipped gable roof with a classical cornice relate this canopy to the bank it serves.

M. Franchise Design

In recent years national retail chains have developed more options in their standardized designs. They also will create customized designs in a targeted community if local regulations require it.

1. Franchise design or corporate signature buildings should not reflect "Anywhere, USA" designs but should follow the same guidelines applicable to other buildings.

A contrasting base, belt course and cornice add interest to this service station.

A wood-shingled hipped-roof and brick chimneys highlight this design.

A pergola and contrasting color bands bring human scale to this large retailer.

N. Civic and Institutional Buildings

The symbolism and function of city halls, courthouses, libraries, schools, churches and other civic and institutional buildings usually result in distinctive designs. These structures are the visual landmarks scattered throughout the community. They usually have a larger surrounding site and their architectural design reflects their importance in the life of the community.

Affiliated with the University of Virginia, the design of this large office building references classical precedents.

A distinctive design incorporating several types of masonry, a metal roof and decorative millwork, graces this fire station in northern Virginia.

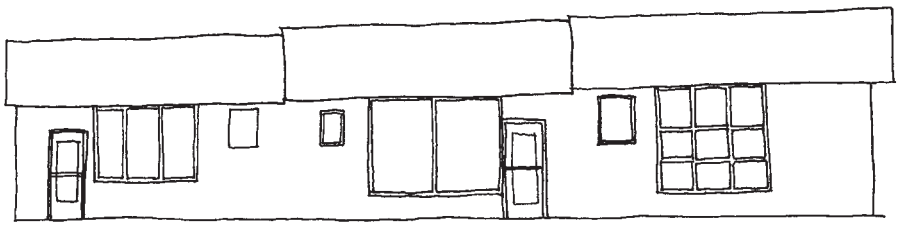
O. Additions and Corridor Conversions

Use additions and conversions to assist in bringing existing buildings into conformance with the Town's goals and vision for the entrance corridors.

The following examples show typical corridor buildings and site plans. They also show how these buildings can be converted and expanded or replaced to better meet the guidelines.

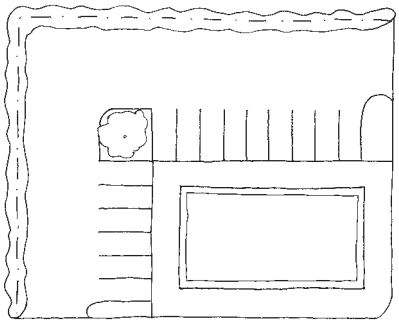
These sketches are conceptual in nature and actual site conditions, building configurations and zoning requirements may result in different site designs, parking layouts, vehicular entry, and building design than shown here.

1. One Story with Shed Roof



"Before" facade.

"After" facade with new storefront and cornice.

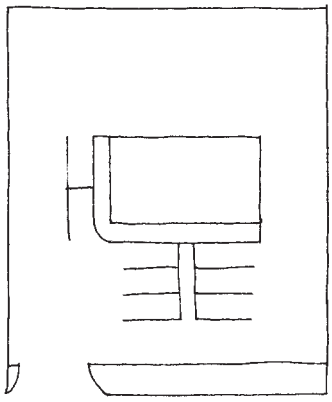


"After" site plan.

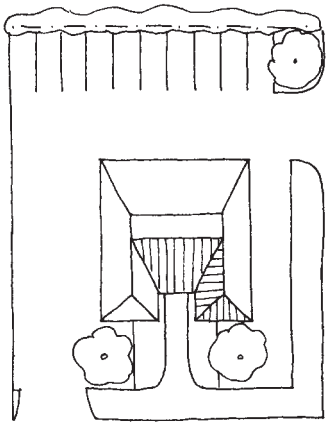
1. Two-Story with Mansard Roof

"Before" facade.

"After" facade with extended end bays.



"Before" site plan.

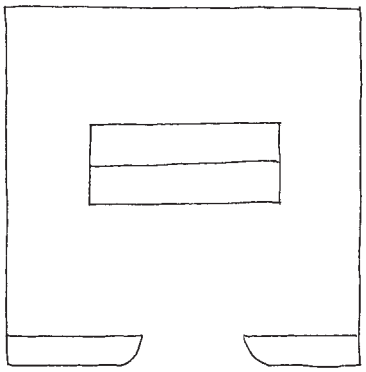


"After" site plan.

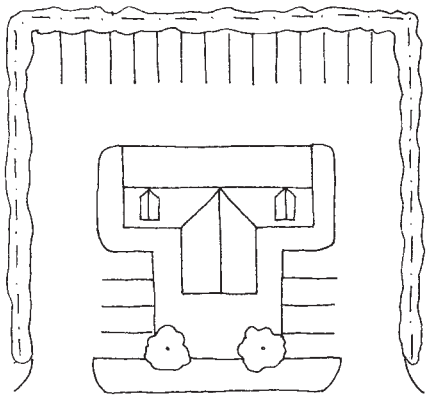
3. One-Story with Central Gable

"Before" facade.

"After" facade with center bay extension.

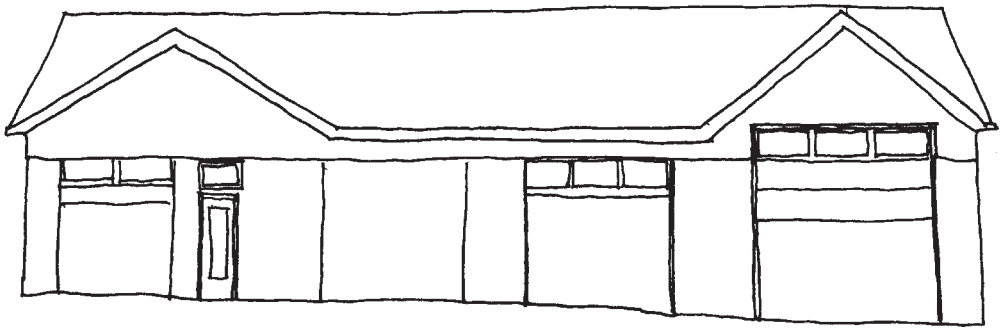


"Before" site plan.



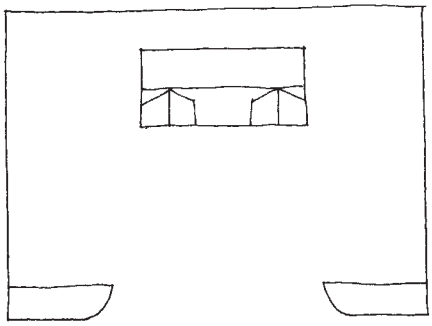
"After" site plan.

4. One-Story with End Gables

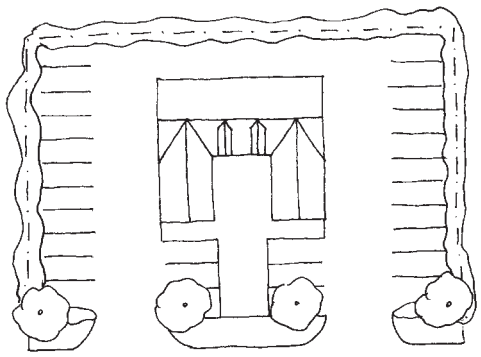


"Before" facade.

"After" facade with end bay extensions.

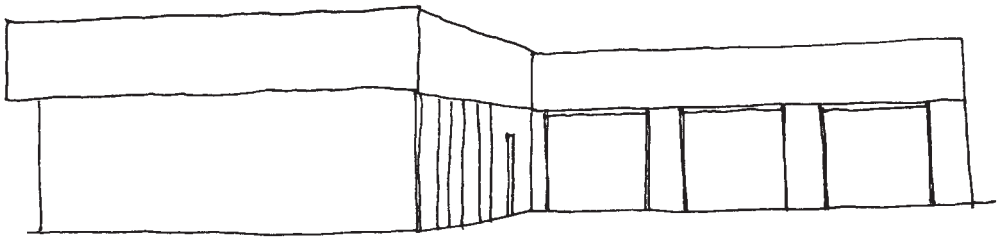


"Before" site plan.



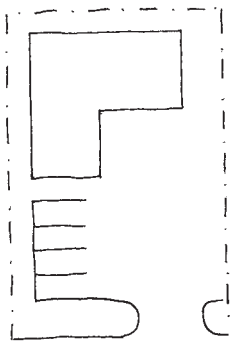
"After" site plan.

5. One-Story L-Shaped

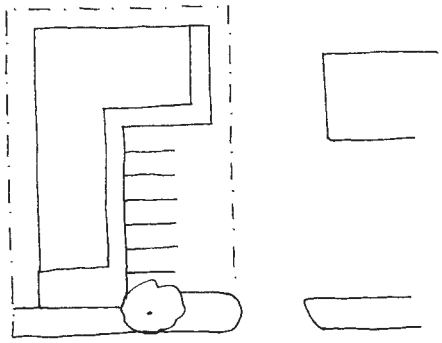


"Before" facade.

"After" facade with left storefront extended towards street.



"Before" site plan.



"After" site plan.