

# City of Norwich Village District Design Guidelines

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**City of Norwich, Connecticut  
Planning and Neighborhood Services  
23 Union Street Norwich, CT 06360**



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## DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS

### Introduction

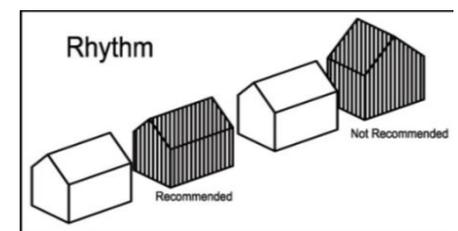
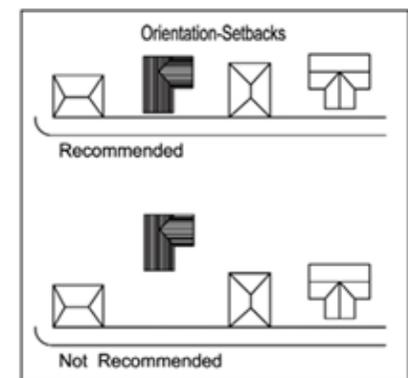
The design standards shall be established for each specific village. The Commission on the City Plan, in their review of applications, shall consider these standards and other pertinent factors such as the type and style of exterior windows, doors, light fixtures, signs, above ground utility structures, mechanical appurtenances, type and texture of building materials, and hours of operation. Ordinary maintenance does not require approval if replicated in the same material, profile, and configuration as previously existed.

### General Design Criteria

In considering all applications, the following elements specified below shall be taken into consideration in all Village Districts.

### Site and Landscape Design

- a. Preserve natural, historic, and cultural resources defined as physical evidence or place of past human activity: site, object, landscape, structure; or a natural feature of significance to a group of people traditionally associated with it.
- b. Preserve and enhance scenic or historic views.
- c. Protect residential properties from noise and traffic.
- d. Minimize and avoid the removal or disruption of historic, traditional or significant structures, stonewalls and stone rows, or architectural elements.
- e. Restrict the removal, demolition or alteration of stone walls within the Village District unless the applicant has demonstrated that such removal, demolition, or alteration is necessary for the continued use of the property.
- f. Create landscaped space between the street and the buildings that serves as a foreground.
- g. Screen mechanical equipment and dumpsters from the public view using evergreen plant materials and/or fencing complementary to the landscaping or the architectural detailing of the building.
- h. Provide safe and convenient pedestrian connections within the site and between adjacent sites.
- i. Provide pedestrian sidewalks, walking paths, and trails constructed of brick, or paving blocks, but are not to be gravel, earth or loose stone.
- j. Respect existing building lines, mass, and their relationship to existing streetscape.
- k. Design sites to include bicycle and pedestrian amenities including a bicycle rack, crosswalks, and benches.
- l. Demarcate outdoor spaces and patios with perimeter features such as low fences, planters or other architectural features.



- m. Preserve existing street trees and stone walls parallel to rights of way or proposed pedestrian amenities to the maximum extent practicable.
- n. Limit new curb cuts on existing streets to be as narrow as safely possible and utilize existing or single driveways if possible.
- o. It is encouraged to provide compatible landscape treatments along the property frontage such as trees, shrubs, herbaceous plants, planters and pedestrian amenities such as benches, trash receptacles, and bike parking. Dumpsters are to be located in the rear of the property and be shielded from public view.
- p. Favor appropriate landscape pavement treatments such as: gravel and cobblestone, exposed aggregate concrete, textured concrete, and brushed concrete sidewalk.
- q. Limit or enclose news-boxes and public advertisement stands to unify the appearance along the public right-of-way.
- r. Design new buildings and structures that contribute to the characteristic rhythm of the street and have similar setbacks from the street line.
- s. Use landscaped buffers to create transitions between both connecting and conflicting uses.

### Architectural Design

- a. “Historic property” means any individual building, structure, object or site that is significant in the history, architecture, archaeology and culture of the state, its political subdivisions or the nation and the real property used in connection therewith. Historic properties should be retained, restored or renovated over time to retain and express their heritage.
- b. Respect the historic origins of existing historic buildings. The design of changes, renovations, additions or alterations of existing historic buildings should reflect their original conditions, styles and features. Provision shall be made to coordinate site architecture with the character of the area’s historic district.
- c. Architectural features shall be evaluated based on the scale of the building(s), the quality of the design, and the relationship to surroundings.
- d. Building materials shall have good architectural character and durable quality and shall be selected for harmony of the building with adjoining buildings.
- e. Facades and rooflines shall be articulated and/or varied to reduce the appearance of bulk and provide architectural interest. Large, inarticulate boxes are not permitted.
- f. Building textures, colors, and components shall be selected for harmony with the building with adjoining buildings.
- g. Large structures should have well-articulated facades to reduce the appearance of significant bulk. Building massing shall be articulated by sloped roofs, windows, and entries.
- h. Architectural details characteristic of the particular style and period of the neighborhood should be incorporated into the design for new construction, renovation or substantial improvement to the exterior and should relate harmoniously to adjacent buildings.
- i. Architectural details of a period need not be duplicated precisely, but they should suggest the extent, nature, and scale of the period.



*The photo illustrates appropriate roof treatments and highlights the scale, and compatibility with the architecture of the village district*

## **Siding & Facades**

- a. Materials, texture, and color used on the exterior walls and roof should emphasize the use of natural materials or be those associated with traditional New England architecture.
- b. Appropriate façade materials are brick, stone, and wood, including narrow width siding, clapboards, wood shingles, or a reasonable equivalent.
- c. Limit or avoid the use of metal, unfinished concrete, or concrete block, and asphalt siding.
- d. Additions and alterations to existing structures should utilize the type of building materials original to the structure.
- e. Limit or avoid the use of aluminum and vinyl siding on any new construction.
- f. If aluminum or vinyl siding must be used, it should replicate the natural material i.e. wood.

## **Windows**

- a. Restore original windows.
- a. Windows should be proportional, symmetrical, and adhere to the appropriate architectural style of the building.

## **Porches & Doors**

- a. Preserve and/or restore porch detail.
- b. Reconstruct lost porches, and if early photographic evidence is not available, should be based on historical precedence for the style of building.
- c. All porch additions must be compatible with the detail and style of the building.
- d. New and replacement doors should be consistent with the characteristic architectural style of the building.

## **Fire Exits & Handicapped Access**

- a. Exterior stairs to upper level entrances and exits should be concealed from public view.
- b. Visible exterior stairs generally will be permitted only when there is no other option available for a building to meet safety code.
- c. Stairs should reflect the detail and finish of the main structure.
- d. Where ramps must be added to visible sides of an historic structure, they should be made as discrete as possible and reflect characteristic details of the building.
- e. Ramps can be constructed as landscape terraces to mitigate visual impact on the building.

## **Color**

- a. Color is not regulated, but it is recommended to take into account existing and historic color schemes of the neighborhood.
- b. It is recommended that color be consistent.
- c. The use of bright colors is likely inconsistent with the historic color pattern of existing neighborhoods, and is not encouraged.

## Landscape Design – Planting Material

### Street Trees

- a. Plant street trees. Planting conditions vary.
- b. Locate street trees both in wells with grates as well as in roadside “esplanades” (landscaping strips) or shrub beds.



*This is an example of an encouraged streetscape with street trees*



*This is an example of a compatible sidewalk with landscaped buffer along the streetscape*

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### Plant Beds & Planters

- a. Provide space-defining plantings in certain locations, or define walkways to help address traffic flow issues.
- b. Use public seating and planters to define outdoor public gathering spaces. Planters may be used to highlight entrances to commercial establishments.
- c. All plantings should be native to Connecticut and noninvasive.
- d. Plants in containers require seasonal, or at a minimum, yearly replanting and additional care and maintenance with appropriate soil or mulch and regular watering.

### Sidewalks

- a. Create sidewalks or planting space along the road for any new construction, renovation or substantial improvement to the exterior.
- b. Limit or avoid the use of asphalt for either sidewalks or curbing.
- c. Provide walking areas beyond the street right of way to improve and encourage pedestrian circulation in the Village Districts.

## Fencing

- a. Maintain stone walls free of overgrowth, particularly in the right-of-way along the road.
- b. Where fences have been removed, reconstruct historically appropriate fencing.
- c. Favor historically appropriate fencing such as stone walls, simple picket fences, and other finished timber styles. Avoid brick walls, barricade fences, split rail fences, chain link, and metal mesh fences.

## Awnings

- a. Awnings may not obscure important architectural details by crossing over pilasters or covering windows.
- b. Multiple awnings or signs on a single building shall be consistent in size, profile, location, material, color and design.

## Signs

- a. Locate signage to complement the architecture and site design. The signage should be integrated into the overall site design and should be complementary in colors and materials with the buildings and landscape.
- b. Every sign shall be designed as an integral architectural element of the building and site to which it principally relates and shall be coordinated with the building architecture.
- c. New signs should never block existing signage, views, and flow of traffic.
- d. Signage proposals should consider the rhythm and scale of other signs in the area to avoid conflict and visual clutter.
- e. Use landscaping to complement signs and blend them into the surrounding area.
- f. Use pendant light fixtures for lighting signs.
- g. All signs must be down lit.
- h. Internally lit translucent or neon plastic signs and flashing signs are discouraged.
- i. Backlit signs, neon, and marquee signs are discouraged.
- j. Avoid or limit bright background colors, including large white areas.
- k. Signage lettering should be clear, concise, and easy to read. Signs with running text are discouraged.
- l. Signs should not project above the façade line of any building.



*Example of an appropriate monument sign with lighting and landscaping*



*Example of a non-compatible sign*

- m. For buildings with multiple storefronts, center sign on structural elements that define individual businesses.
- n. Signage should be made of materials that are sturdy enough to withstand exposure to the elements.
- o. Where space permits, signs should be oriented perpendicularly to the street, within the motorist's 'cone of vision.' This allows the sign to be viewed while approaching from either direction.
- p. Signs may be oriented parallel to the street if the sign is sufficiently set back from the road.

**Freestanding Signs**

- a. Monument signs are permitted, but freestanding post signs or pole signs are discouraged.
- b. Top-heavy, pole-mounted, free-standing signs are discouraged.

**Window Signage**

- a. Window signage shall be limited to 20% or less of the total window area.

**Band Signage**

- a. Band signs should be centered above storefront windows or other significant architectural features of the building.

**Public Art/Historical Markers**

- a. Historical Markers/Plaques/Interpretive Signage/Replicas/Artifacts are permitted to mark an appropriate significant historic site in Norwich.
- b. Public Art will be reviewed on a case by case basis based on the procedure defined by the City of Norwich’s Monument Committee.

**Lighting**

- a. Use historic or period styles of lighting. Contemporary styles are acceptable if suitably scaled to the structure and environment.
- b. Use light fixtures that eliminate wasted light, unwanted glare, and nighttime light pollution.
- c. Light trespass or light emitted by a luminaire that shines beyond the boundaries of the property on which the luminaire is located is discouraged and must be avoided.
- d. To promote energy conservation, all non-essential exterior lighting shall be encouraged to be turned off after business hours, leaving only lighting deemed essential for building security.



*Historic light fixtures add character to site design while illuminating appropriated areas*

- e. To limit sky glow, decorative uplighting is prohibited. This prohibition includes exterior lighting used to uplight trees, building facades, commercial icons, statues and monuments.
- f. Exterior lighting of the building and site shall be directed downward and designed so that light is not directed off-site or upwards.
- g. Light levels must be consistent. Lighting will be restrained in design and excessive brightness avoided.
- h. Flashing, neon, and color changing lights are discouraged
- i. Lighting that is intermittent, rotating or moving is discouraged.
- j. Use LED white light bulbs.
- k. Norwich Public Utilities (NPU) Historic Lighting Standard will be implemented for public street lights.
- l. All lighting shall be situated and sized so as not to result in hazardous interference on abutting properties or public roadways, or result in beams onto public roadways or adjacent buildings.
- m. Exterior lighting shall enhance public safety, the building design, and the landscape.



*Not encouraged lighting*



*Encouraged gooseneck lighting*

## Utility Structures

- a. Utilities will be placed underground whenever practicable. The Commission may require that utilities be placed underground for new construction or Special Permit uses, except for good cause shown by the applicant.
- b. Screen roof mounted mechanical equipment such as heating and air conditioning units, antennas, satellite dishes and other mechanical equipment, from public rights-of-way.
- c. Generators are permitted, but must be located to minimize their visibility, without overly compromising the effectiveness of the generator.
- d. Above-ground propane and similar tanks must be placed out of public view. When tanks cannot be relocated to the rear of a building, they should be placed underground.
- e. Electric and utility gear should be placed as discretely as possible.
- f. Locate plumbing and mechanical roof vents out of public view.
- g. Avoid and limit unnecessary clutter related to trash receptacles, news boxes, and the like. Such facilities should be consolidated in designated screened areas.



*Example of an exposed utility structure which is not encouraged*



*Example of an appropriately shielded utility structure*

### **Parking**

- a. Use hard-surfaced materials that provide an aesthetic alternative to bituminous concrete for parking areas.
- b. Use materials that are consistent with the historic character of the Village District, such as cobblestone, brick, compacted stone dust or materials which imitate these design elements.
- c. Locate parking in secondary rather than prominent locations. Parking in the rear of the building is preferred. Parking in the front yard is inappropriate.
- d. Place parking areas at the side or rear of structures; partially concealed with landscaping fencing or walls; and/or be broken into separate sections of parking rather than large and highly visible lots. Alternative parking materials are encouraged.
- e. Visually reduce large expansive lots with the use of landscaped buffers and berms.
- f. Parking layouts should balance the functional requirements of vehicle circulation with provisions for pedestrian amenities.
- g. Create a strong streetscape edge by locating majority of parking behind buildings.
- h. Provide vehicle barriers (e.g. curbs, low fences, etc.) to protect and not obstruct adjacent walkways.



*An example of breaking up pavement with greenspace*

### **Accessory Buildings**

- a. Accessory structures shall be designed to incorporate and/or mimic architectural elements of

- primary structures on the property. Accessory structures should be properly scaled.
- b. Trailers used for business, office and storage purposes shall not be permitted in this zone unless it is in connection with a permitted construction operation. In such instance the trailer may be placed for such purposes for a period of time not to exceed the duration of the construction project and in a location least visible from the street.

### **Solid Waste and Recycling Storage**

- a. Solid waste and materials awaiting recycling shall be stored inside a building or structure, or within an outdoor screened area (either by solid stockade fencing, by vegetation or both) which screening shall not be more than six feet in height and be placed in such a manner that the stored materials are not visible from public roadways or adjacent properties.
- b. Waste receptacles should be placed in conjunction with pedestrian seating areas and building entrances.

## **NORWICHTOWN VILLAGE DISTRICT**

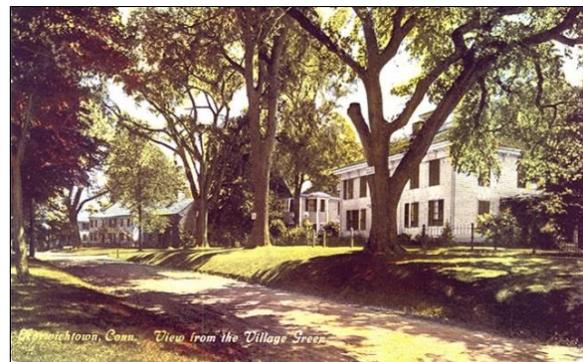
### **History**

Norwich was founded in 1659 and Norwichtown was the first area of English settlement. The land was purchased from the Mohegan Tribe, and the town was built around the green in the seventeenth century. The Norwichtown Green boasts a number of Colonial and Victorian era houses, shops, schools and a church. Further, the area includes the Norwichtown Local Historic District and Norwichtown National Register Historic District which includes the Lowthorpe Meadows, Norwichtown Green and the Colonial Burying Ground.

The Norwichtown Local and National Register Historic District is an exceptionally well preserved entity containing a high concentration of historic contributing buildings and sites dating from the late seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. This truly authentic New England village has a distinct character that reflects the historic nature of the Town. Historically, Norwichtown functioned as an agricultural, social, and business center.



Eastern View of the Central Part of the Town of Norwich, c. 1836 wood block engraving from a sketch by John Warner Barber. John Warner Barber, Connecticut Historical Society



Elm Ave, early twentieth century, postcard

## DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NORWICHTOWN VILLAGE DISTRICT

### Intent

The district boundaries are defined on the official Zoning Map of the City of Norwich. To that end, incorporated in these regulations are provisions to protect the Norwichtown Historic District area and other important historical resources in the Norwichtown Village District. The purpose is for the Norwichtown Village District to gradually and harmoniously reflect the Norwichtown Historic District.

In the instances where the Village District overlaps with the Local Historic District or a National Register Historic property, any exterior changes shall adhere to “The State Historic Preservation Office- the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings”, revised through 1990, as amended and the distinctive characteristics of the district identified in the municipal plan of conservation and development. The following sources provide a basis for assessing a structure’s integrity/significance in the Norwichtown Village District.

In administering this provision of zoning regulations, due regard shall be given to:

- Carley, Rachel. “Norwich, Connecticut Historic Neighborhoods.” The Norwich Historical Society, 2008.
- Caulkins, Frances Manwaring. *History of Norwich Connecticut From its Possession by the Indians, To the Year 1866*. Norwich, Connecticut: John Trumbull Press, 1989.
- Perkins, Mary Elizabeth. *Old Houses of the Antient Town of Norwich 1660-1800*. Norwich, Connecticut: Press of the Bulletin Co, 1895.

Erections or alterations that fall within the Local Historic District remain under the jurisdiction of the Norwich Historic District Commission and shall be referred to them as needed.

### Architectural Elements Specific to Norwichtown

A. New construction or exterior modifications must ensure that the new building is compatible with the existing architectural styles represented in the Norwichtown Historic District. New construction, renovation or substantial improvement to property should be in line with the following architectural styles:

- Post Medieval (1600-1700; locally to c.1740)
- Dutch Colonial (1625 –ca.1840)
- Georgian (1700-1780, locally to c.1830)
- Federal (1780-1820; locally to c.1840)
- Early Classical Revival (1770-1830; locally to c. 1850)
- Gothic Revival (1840-1880)
- Italianate (1840-1885)

All definitions referenced below are from:

McAlester, Virginia Savage. *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Understanding America's Domestic Architecture*. Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 2017.

<p>Identifying features: “Steeply pitched, side gable roof with little or no rake or eave overhang and no cornice detailing; massive central or end chimneys of brick or stone, often formed into decorative shapes; small windows, originally with narrow surrounds and fixed or casement sashes having many diamond shaped panes (these were universally replaced by larger double-hung sashes during the 18th and 19th centuries; when the earlier-type windows are present today, they are modern restorations); most were originally one room deep (linear plan) with batten (vertical board) doors. In Massachusetts and Connecticut, a characteristic second floor overhang is commonly present on the front façade.”</p>	<p><b>POST MEDIEVAL</b> 1600-1700; locally to c.1740</p>  <p><b>Simon Huntington House, c. 1690</b> (enlarged 1760 and 1780) 2 Elm Ave</p>
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<p>Identifying features: “One story (less commonly one and one half stories, rarely two stories) with side gambrel roof having little or no rake (side) overhang; most originally with entrance doors divided into separately opening upper and lower halves (in about half the surviving examples, these have been replaced by later single-unit doors). There are subtypes of this style: Urban Tradition, Rural Tradition with Unflared Eaves and Rural Tradition with Flared Eaves.”</p>	<p><b>DUTCH COLONIAL</b> (1625 –ca.1840)</p>  <p><b>Lathrop Schoolhouse, c. 1783 69 East Town Street</b></p>
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Identifying features: “Paneled front door, usually centered and capped by an elaborate decorative crown supported by decorative pilasters; usually with a row of small rectangular panes of glass beneath the crown, either within the door or in a transom just above; cornice usually emphasized by decorative moldings, most commonly with tooth like dentils; windows with double hung sashes having many small panes (most commonly nine or twelve panes per sash) separated by thick wooden muntins; windows aligned horizontally and vertically in symmetrical rows. Never in adjacent pairs, usually five ranked on front façade, less commonly three or seven ranked. There are other defining features such as: Side-Gabled Roof, Gambrel Roof, Hipped Roof, Centered Gable, and Town House.”

## GEORGIAN (1700-1780, locally to c.1830)



Colonel Joshua Huntington House, c. 1771  
11 Huntington Lane

Identifying features: “Semicircular or elliptical fanlight over front door (with or without sidelights); fanlight often incorporated into more elaborate door surround, which may include a decorative crown, or small entry porch; cornice usually emphasized by decorative moldings, most commonly with tooth like dentils; windows with double hung sashes usually having six panes per sash and separated by thin wooden supports (muntins); windows aligned horizontally and vertically in symmetrical rows, usually five ranked on front façade, less commonly three ranked or seven ranked; windows never in adjacent pairs, although three-part Palladian style windows are common. There are other defining features such as: Side-Gabled Roof, Hipped Two Story Roof, Hipped Three Story Roof, Center Gable and Townhouse.”

## FEDERAL (1780-1820; locally to c.1840)



First Congregational Church, c. 1801  
81 East Town Street

Identifying features: “Entry porch (portico) dominating the front façade and normally equally in its height; porch roof usually supported by four simple columns (Roman Doric or Tuscan types) each with a shallow square base (plinth); the columns support a prominent centered gable; a semi-circular or elliptical fanlight normally occurs above the paneled front door; windows are aligned horizontally and vertically in symmetrical rows, usually five ranked on front façade, less commonly three ranked or seven ranked. Other defining features include: Two Story, One Story, and Gable Front and Wings.”

### EARLY CLASSICAL REVIVAL (1770-1830; locally to c. 1850)



Samuel Huntington Mansion, c. 1769, exterior altered c.1900  
34 East Town Street

Identifying features: “Steeply pitched roof, usually with steep cross gables (roof normally side gabled, less commonly front gabled or hipped; rarely flat with castellated parapet); gables commonly have decorated verge boards; wall surface extending into gable without break (eave or trim normally lacking beneath gable); windows commonly extend into gables, frequently having pointed arch (Gothic) shape; one story porch (either entry or full width) usually present, commonly supported by flattened Gothic arches. Other identifying features include: Centered Gable, Paired Gables, Front Gabled Roof, Asymmetrical, Castellated or Parapeted, and Polychromed.”

### GOTHIC REVIVAL (1840-1880)



Residence, c. 1890 65 Town Street

Identifying features: “Two or three stores (rarely one story); low pitched roof with moderate to widely overhanging eaves having decorative brackets beneath; tall, narrow windows, commonly arched or curved above; windows frequently with elaborated crowns, often of inverted U shape; many examples with square cupola or tower. Other defining features include: Simple Hipped Roof, Centered Gable, Asymmetrical, Towered, Front Gabled Roof and Town House.”

## ITALIANATE (1840-1885)



Azariah Lathrop House, c.1752 , exterior altered circa 1880 14 Elm Ave

### Site Design

- Hoop accessory structures are discouraged.
- Avoid or limit drive through windows particularly when they could negatively impact neighboring historic or natural resources with pollution such as noise, light, and odor.
- Buffers or visual barriers such as a green barrier, appropriate fencing, or both are encouraged to protect the cemetery and natural areas from all sources of pollution including light, noise, and litter.

### Fencing

- Use stone walls, simple picket fences, and other finished timber styles. In some instances, wrought iron fencing is appropriate.
- Vinyl fencing will only be permitted if it is located in the rear of the property and is a dark brown or dark green natural color. White vinyl fencing is discouraged.

### Landscape Design – Planting Materials

- Where possible, begin to reintroduce elm trees back into the Norwichtown area.

### Public Art/Historical Markers

- Permanent or temporary artifacts, replicas or reproductions of structures or objects, such as a liberty pole or pillory, are permitted, and will be referred to the Monument Committee and the Historic District Commission as needed.
- Permanent Public Art, such as paintings or modern sculptures, especially located on or near the Norwichtown Green, is not recommended.

## Lighting

- a. It is encouraged that lighting sources from freestanding lights not be visible from any cemetery or natural area.
- b. All lighting must be historically appropriate to the period of the building.
- c. Exterior lights must be historic in design.

## Awnings & Signs

- a. Awnings are discouraged.
- b. Signage should be wooden and perpendicular to the road.
- c. Sign brackets should be consistent with both the style of the sign and any historic trim on the building.
- d. Marque signs are discouraged.



*Example of an appropriate sign for Norwichtown*

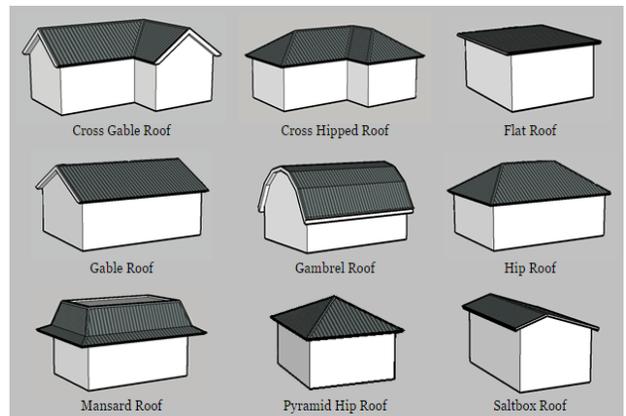
## Utility Structures

- a. Solar panels are allowed, but their type and location are regulated as follows:
  - Solar panels should be placed so as to minimize their effect on the architectural integrity of the structure.
  - Where practical, solar panels should be placed on a non-street facing roof.
  - Piping that is not integral to a panel should be concealed within the attic.

## Roofs

- a. Roofs must match the architectural style of the building and be compatible with architectural styles in the Village District.
- b. Roofing materials should be compatible with the architectural style of the building and the district. Appropriate materials include: cedar shake, slate, copper, or a reasonable equivalent. Tarpaper, sheet metal, plastic or fiberglass surfaces are discouraged.
- c. Examples of Roofing Styles Permitted in the Village District:

- Side-Gabled
- Center-Gable
- Front – Gable
- Gable front and wing
- Center Gable
- Paired Gables
- Asymmetrical
- Gambrel
- Hipped, Simple Hipped
- Gabled or hipped roof of low pitch



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Jason Vincent, AICP, Town of Stonington Director of Planning

**Referenced Regulations and Guidelines:**

Towns of Brooklyn, Lebanon, Ledyard, Portland, Preston, Ridgefield, Waterford, and Westport

**Referenced Reading:**

Carley, Rachel. “Norwich, Connecticut Historic Neighborhoods.” The Norwich Historical Society, 2008.

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