

## Community Design

### Current Conditions

The development within the Glenville Town Center typifies the retail pattern found in suburbs across the country. The common development approach of the past thirty years is a large building surrounded by parking in the front yard. Pedestrian access was largely ignored, only serving to safely move consumers between their cars and the entrance. Architecture was defined by corporate standards and represented a uniform appearance regardless of context. Similarly, landscaping was delegated to those areas not taken up by the building footprint or vehicular use areas. These sites were stand-alone destinations for cars. The result is a patchwork of individual site plans with no relationship to each other or the surrounding community.

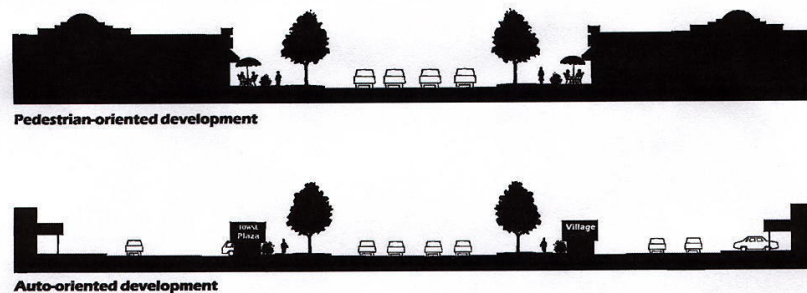
### Recommendations

One of the most significant challenges facing the Glenville Town Center is the need for a development framework that provides for incremental growth but in the end produces a whole greater than the sum of its parts: a traditional Town Center.

The intent of the following recommendations is to redirect the development pattern in the Town Center from that of a suburban pattern to a more traditional pattern that integrates into the community and seeks

to create a civic and community atmosphere that will be the symbolic and physical center of the Town. This can be accomplished through changing the paradigm of community design.

#### Profile of Development



Community or urban design is the form and pattern of development – the arrangement and relationship of streetscapes, architecture, and site design. This pattern, when arranged properly and coupled with appropriate uses, can produce active and vibrant community centers. Development patterns have recently shifted and now hearken back to traditional modes of design. A network of streets and sidewalks forms the foundation for a traditional town center. Streets are multi-functional, composed of travel lanes for automobiles, street trees, sidewalks, bus stops, and other amenities. Buildings designed to fit into the community then complete the design by fronting on and connecting to the street. Traditional neighborhoods or town centers are intricate, meeting a range of community needs, while still providing the basic business requirements (i.e. access, visibility, etc.). In order to create a healthy and sustainable Town Center, the Town of Glenville must address each component of development – streetscapes, buildings, and site design. The specific recommendations for each category are listed below.

### *Streetscape*

The importance of the public street is one of the most significant elements of the Town Center Plan. Streets are important public spaces and define the Town's character to a large extent. When buildings are brought together along sidewalks close to the street they create a development profile, or streetscape, that has a human scale and creates a sense of place. Buildings with considerable setbacks, on the other hand, create a more barren landscape and desolate environment. This is largely the form that commercial streetscapes take in the Town Center study area.

Streetscape design is complicated by many factors. Its boundaries extend along the street over numerous properties, it overlaps public and private realms, and the benefits are difficult to quantify. A traditional streetscape offers safety, comfort, beauty, and a lasting image of a vibrant and vital community. These benefits come into play when a visitor is looking for a home to raise their family or a business is looking for a new location. The images to the right show how attention to site design and architecture can change the look and feeling of a particular area. The subsequent streetscape designs incorporate all of the previously discussed building and site design standards. They will change the character of the existing streets within the Town Center and set standards for any new streets.



### Saratoga Road (NYS Route 50)

Saratoga Road should be redesigned from a single purpose arterial for cars to a multi-functional street (although it will, of course, continue its role as an arterial). Specifically, Saratoga Road should be reconstructed as a boulevard with raised medians. The introduction of medians, sidewalks, pedestrian-scaled lighting, and street trees will serve to calm traffic while at the same time organize turning lanes. Sidewalks provide a means for pedestrians to circulate and street trees enclose to the streetscape and create a buffer between the automobile and pedestrian environments. It must be stressed that this is the long-term goal for Saratoga Road. Under this scenario, curb cuts would be eliminated to the greatest extent practicable, with access provided by additional streets, formalized access roads, and interconnected parking lots. However, due to the complications inherent in dealing with existing development and uses, a phased approach is recommended. Phase I would include all project elements, except that limited curb cuts would remain (based on access management principles) and median islands would be short and incorporate several turning lanes. Phase II would eliminate all individual curb cuts to the greatest extent practicable and consolidate median islands. The result will be a coordinated and efficient access system, a multi-functional street, and a smooth and efficient flow of traffic on Saratoga Road through the Town Center.

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION  
CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS  
Case Study – Route 9, Saratoga Springs

“Context Sensitive Solutions is a philosophy wherein safe transportation solutions are designed in harmony with the community. CSS strives to balance environmental, scenic, aesthetic, cultural, natural resources, community, and transportation service needs. Context sensitive projects recognize community goals, and are designed, built, and maintained to be sustainable while minimizing disruption to the community and the environment. CSS is not a separate process or set of standards. It is a philosophy that guides NYSDOT in all phases of project development, from scoping through design and into construction and maintenance.”

The reconstruction of Route 9 in Saratoga Springs is a good example of how Saratoga and Glenridge Roads could be altered to reflect local needs and community character in the Town of Glenville.

Top: Route 9 before reconstruction  
Bottom: Route 9 after reconstruction

Source: <http://www.dot.state.ny.us/design/css/kypntpub.html>



#### Glenridge Road

Glenridge Road should also be redesigned from a single purpose arterial to a multi-functional street with sidewalks, pedestrian-scaled lighting, regularly spaced street trees, and standard street amenities.

#### Additional Local Streets

The streetscape design along any new streets should include sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian-scaled lighting, and on-street parking. Depending on the function of the particular street (i.e. collector, local street, etc.), either angled or parallel parking should be provided. Current local street standards such as street widths, total paving, curbing, and gutter details should be re-examined with traditional development in mind.

#### Gateways

New “gateways” to the Town Center are proposed at the northern, southern, and eastern entrances to the study area. The northern entrance along Saratoga Road could be complemented by a “gateway park”, which would serve as a small gathering area for residents and visitors to the Town Center. A second gateway is proposed at the southern entrance to Saratoga Road; this gateway could also include distinctive street paving patterns to announce a sense of entry to the Town Center. The eastern gateway will define the entrance to a revitalized Municipal campus.

#### Cars, Pedestrians and Access

The Town Center Plan acknowledges that the automobile will remain the primary form of transportation. However, it also recognizes that other modes of transportation are equally important and deserve equal consideration in the planning and design of future projects. Close attention to design can comfortably accommodate both the automobile and the pedestrian.

In many cases, corporate enterprises have development schemes that would meet the recommendations of the Town Center Plan, and plans that would not. A McDonald’s or Toys R Us in one town or city may be more pleasing and pedestrian-friendly than a McDonald’s or Toys R Us in a different, neighboring town or city. In the Town Center area, Glenville is aiming to create a built environment that we all recognize as “pleasing,” and an environment that embraces, instead of suppresses, the pedestrian.

#### *Building Design Standards*

Not all of the character of a town is derived from the streetscape. Architecture plays an important role in the aesthetics and functionality of community centers. As the Town Center Master Plan is implemented, the existing Town Center Overlay Zoning District should be revised to reflect the goals listed here. The following section provides recommendations for specific building standards.

#### Building Materials

Quality building materials should be required to ensure an attractive, coordinated appearance throughout the Town Center. The Zoning Ordinance currently regulates building materials within the Town Center Overlay District; however, this language should be made more specific. The goal is to create four visually appealing sides to all freestanding buildings.

- Selected materials should be attractive and durable; examples could include masonry, pre-cast concrete, stone, brick, and wood. Dryvit (stucco) is an acceptable material if combined with other materials and located higher than six feet on the façade -- it is susceptible to vandalism and damage by vehicles if not placed several feet above ground level.
- All selected materials should continue to be evaluated through the site plan review process. The Planning Board should consider developing an approved palette of building materials to make the process more efficient.



- The overall number of exterior building materials used should be limited to ensure a coordinated appearance: three is a typical maximum number (excluding glass).
- Selected building materials should contribute to articulating corners, windows, and entrances to buildings.



The Sunmark building and Socha Plaza South both utilize quality materials in a manner that distinguishes architectural features to create an attractive and inviting appearance.

#### Building Colors

The existing regulations of the Town Center Overlay District regarding colors should be revised to ensure visual harmony and an attractive streetscape.

- The Planning Board should develop an approved color palette to increase efficiency of the approval procedure. The color scheme should include earth tones or rich colors that do not jar the eye or draw too much attention to one building.
- Corporate colors should be restricted to use on signage only.



The Lewis Place office building (Saratoga Road) provides an appealing façade using earth tones and compatible materials and colors. The former Affordable Transmission building utilizes primary colors that shock the eye and fail to create harmony with other buildings.

#### Building Design

The goal of these regulations is to ensure the coordination of new development as well as visual harmony.

- All new developments should contain the three traditional parts of a building: a base, a mid-section, and a top. Should the Planning Board approve a one-story building, the different parts should be defined through detailing at the building base and eave/cornice line. On two or three story buildings, different treatments of the first, middle and top stories may be used to define the three parts.
- Roof design should conform to legitimate forms (e.g. hipped, gabled or flat). Appropriate language exists within the Design Guidelines for Commercial Development Outside the Town Center Overlay District portion of the Town of Glenville Zoning Ordinance.



The Sunmark building exhibits the three traditional parts of a building with several roof slope planes.

- The ideal building for the Town Center is a two to three story mixed-use structure. Retail activity should be the required first floor use. Offices and/or apartments should occupy second and third floors.



The two examples above depict traditional, mixed-use buildings and the important role they play, creating a sense of place. Common public sentiment favors traditional downtown retail uses and streetscapes, mixed-use buildings, pedestrian-friendly design and quality architecture.

- Functional and appropriately scaled weather protection, such as awnings, covered walkways, open colonnades or similar weather protection should be provided. It should be viewed as an architectural amenity and therefore contribute positively to the design of the building with appropriate proportions and character. Consideration should be given to continuity with weather protection on nearby buildings and the height and depth of weather protection should provide a comfortable scale for pedestrians. Appropriate language already exists in Article 18, Section B of the Zoning Ordinance (Design



Standards and Guidelines for Commercial Establishments Outside of the Town Center Overlay District).

#### Building Glazing

The objective of these revisions is to encourage interaction between the building and the street and to maintain an open and inviting appearance.

- The Planning and Zoning Commission should set and approve a standard for the required amount of glass coverage on each building façade (entrance, side, etc.) for retail and office development. A standard recommendation for retail and office developments could stipulate that a minimum 50% of all building elevations facing public streets should be covered with glass.
- All at-grade glazing should be translucent.



Hallmark provides large display windows, exhibiting an inviting appearance.

#### Building Signage

Signage regulations should address issues of safety, maintenance, and attractiveness while communicating valuable information. These requirements should also promote visual harmony. Signs should add interest to the street level environment. They can unify the overall architectural concept of the building, or provide a unique identity for a commercial space within a larger mixed-use structure. The current language addressing signage within the Town Center Overlay District is adequate to insure that these goals are met. However, it may be valuable to ask the Planning and Zoning Commission to consider the following when reviewing signs:

- Signage design must be appropriate for the scale, character, and use of the project and surrounding area. Signs should be oriented and scaled for both pedestrians on sidewalks and vehicles on streets.



The two signs above utilize a limited number of colors and quality materials that produce an attractive addition to the streetscape.

#### *Site Design Standards*

The third component to successful community design is the site plan. It is important to consider each development project not only on its own merits, but also on its relationship with its

neighbors. The following is a list of recommendations for the integration of site design into the community as a whole.

#### Building Setbacks

Setbacks are the key to defining the space of the street. They ensure a coordinated streetscape image and provide sufficient space between roads, building and parking. New retail and office buildings should have a maximum front yard and side yard setback. This requirement will encourage greater density in the Town Center and bring the buildings to the street. The current regulations in the Zoning Ordinance for setbacks within the Town Center Overlay District are sufficient to achieve this objective.

### INCORPORATING “BIG BOXES” INTO TOWN CENTERS Case Study – Washingtonian Center, Gaithersburg, Maryland

“Up until recently big box retailers have been absent from main streets and dense urban markets. Their preference had been large suburban locations with tons of parking out in front of the building. Recently, however, these large retailers have discovered the benefits of ‘Main Street.’ Washingtonian Center was the first project to incorporate big boxes into a ‘Main Street’ setting due to the insistence of the City of Gaithersburg. ‘We wanted a more urban retail environment on that site to curb the trend toward strip retail centers in our community,’ said the city’s director of planning Jennifer Russel. ‘By incorporating the city’s design suggestion into our original plan rather than starting from scratch, we were able to produce a project that met the needs of the community and is still market sensitive,’ said Tom Maskey, senior vice president of The Peterson Companies who owns the project.”

“The Main Street of Washingtonian Center is modeled after the traditional Main Street of a small town. The store of each big box retailer has been treated as a landmark building within the fabric of Main Street. Gaylons (104,000 sq. ft sporting goods store) responded to the Main Street design concept by opening up large storefronts on sides of the building facing adjacent streets, creating more pedestrian-friendly sidewalk environments. Kohl’s (103,000 sq. ft.) responded with two main entrances; one facing Main Street and the other facing its parking structure. Main Street is wide to maintain an intimate street scale and provide good visibility to all retail tenants. Shade trees, street lights, seating benches, seasonal landscaping, banner graphics contribute to the traditional, pedestrian-friendly and human-scaled character of the street. A small public square has been created at the intersection of Main Street and the lakefront as an informal community gathering place and a place for year round special events. Last summer’s Saturday night jazz concerts held in the square drew overflow crowds that came early and stayed late to shop and to dine....Further, the square has become a favorite morning gathering place for stay-at-home parents and grandparents to meet one another and stroll Main Street with children in tow. Washingtonian Center is representative of the new, innovative, Main Street retail developments...statistics and the overwhelming success of new Main Street destinations prove that we prefer shopping on a more intimate scale.”

-Jim Leonard, TenantMix.com

Three views of Washingtonian Center, Gaithersburg, Maryland

Source: [http://www.tenantmix.com/News/news\\_features.asp?Article=2](http://www.tenantmix.com/News/news_features.asp?Article=2)





### Building Density

The goals of increased density are to encourage efficient reuse of land in the Town Center, to create a critical mass of commercial activity, and to enhance pedestrian circulation.

- Second and third story office and residential uses should be encouraged wherever possible. Reduced setbacks will encourage density for infill development.



The photo-enhanced image above depicts two different development scenarios. The picture on top is a standard automobile-oriented, single use strip mall. The enhanced image on the bottom depicts the same area only built as a mixed-use, multi-functional development. Source: CDTC

### Lighting

Although the regulations regarding lighting within the Town Center Overlay District are very specific, they could be reinforced. This would enhance overall building and site design, reduce glare, improve overall pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile safety, and would discourage light pollution. Streets and other public areas should project safety and security both during the day and at night.

- “Washing” of buildings with architectural lighting should be encouraged. Currently, only one type of pole light is recommended. Storefronts, signs, unique architectural details, and key buildings should be illuminated at night.
- The Planning and Zoning Commission should establish and approve a Lighting Ordinance that addresses types of illumination, mounting heights, light intensity, spacing of installations, pre-selection of streetscape poles, and coordination of streetscape poles with furniture.
- Outdoor power and water sources are encouraged in order to facilitate building maintenance and exterior decorative lighting needs.
- Lighting should include pedestrian-scaled lighting (15-18 ft.) along all streets and paths and larger street lighting along major roads such as Saratoga Road and Glenridge Road.

### Landscaping

Regulations for landscaping will beautify and continually add additional greenspace to the Town Center. These regulations should also address issues of overall landscape maintenance.

- The Planning and Zoning Commission, with the recommendation of the Beautification Committee, should prepare and approve an overall Landscaping Ordinance that includes a “palette” of approved plant materials. Selected materials should be disease and drought tolerant, and native to the Capital District when feasible.

- Buffer planting should be encouraged around the Town Center in order to further define the area, provide greenspace and an appropriate transition to adjacent neighborhoods.
- Street and boulevard trees should be spaced no further than 30 feet apart.
- All parking areas and service roads should be planted according to the approved landscaping ordinance.
- Street trees should be added between the curb and the sidewalk.
- Landscaped areas surrounding buildings should be contiguous to surrounding open space.

#### Site Furniture/Amenities

Site amenities serve many purposes. They raise the overall visual quality of the Town Center, enhance the visitor experience, address the needs of the disabled, and maintain continuity throughout the Town Center.

- The Planning and Zoning Commission, with the recommendation of the Beautification Committee, should establish a pre-approved list with a choice of selections from at least three different suppliers. Specific items should include benches, planters, trash receptacles, mailboxes, banners/trailblazers, and newspaper boxes.

#### Site Parking

Off-street parking regulations should be designed to foster the efficiency, visual appeal, and safety of existing and future parking areas.

- Shared and linked parking facilities should be encouraged. The Town should also consider developing shared parking arrangements for businesses that operate at different times, or times other than normal business hours.
- Other parking issues to be addressed could include developing visitor drop-off zones near visitor entrances, and use (or restriction of) parking bumpers, and landscaped parking islands.
- All parking lighting should be located in curbed islands. Parking stall locations should minimize pedestrian traffic through parking stalls.
- Consideration should be given to the number of stalls per island, and the percentage covered by the drip line of a tree after 20 years.
- All parking should be located in the rear of the buildings from main streets.