

VILLAGE DISTRICT FAQ'S

The Planning and Zoning Commission adopted a comprehensive revision to the zoning regulations in May of 2007, including the creation of "Village District" regulations for the Central Business District area (downtown – primarily Main Street, Bailey Avenue, and parts of Catoonah Street and Prospect Street).

The following questions and answers will explain the purpose and requirements for a Village District, and why it makes sense for the downtown Ridgefield business area.

What is a "Village District" in Connecticut?

In 1998, the Connecticut Legislature adopted legislation authorizing local zoning commissions to create Village Districts and regulations, allowing them to protect the distinctive character, landscape, and historic structures within those districts. The law requires that all applications for construction or reconstruction in the district for properties visible from the road be subject to these regulations.

What is this extra layer of regulation, and what does it mean for properties and property owners within the district?

The Planning and Zoning Commission already regulates much of the change that occurs within the downtown area, but this new regulation assures that all visible changes would be subject to additional architectural review. In addition to permits that are currently required by the Commission, the Zoning Enforcement Officer, the Planning Director or the Building Department, any exterior changes and signage within the new District would be subject to review by one of the following persons or boards (as may be designated by the Commission):

1. Architect
2. Landscape architect
3. AICP Planner (American Institute of Certified Planners)
4. Architectural firm
5. Architectural Review Board or Architectural Advisory Committee

Who would be on the Architectural Review Board for the Village District?

The Commission appointed the current Architectural Advisory Committee as the Village District Consultant since the time that the regulations were adopted. The Commission can modify this position at any time. Some have suggested forming a board that would deal specifically with the Village. Members of other Town agencies such as the Historical Society or the Ridgefield Design Council might be included. For now, the AAC acts as the VDC.

What are the criteria for this extra review?

The State statute requires that "All development in the village district shall be designed to achieve the following compatibility objectives:

1. The building and layout of buildings including site improvements shall reinforce existing buildings and streetscape patterns and the placement of buildings and shall assure there is no adverse impact on the district;
2. Proposed street shall be connected to the existing district road network, whenever possible;
3. Open spaces within the proposed development shall reinforce open space patterns of the district, in form and siting;
4. Locally significant features of the site such as distinctive buildings or sight lines of vistas from within the district, shall be integrated into the design;
5. The landscape design shall complement the district's landscape patterns;
6. The exterior signs, site lighting and accessory structures shall support a uniform architectural theme if such a theme exists and be compatible with their surroundings; and
7. The scale, proportions, massing and detailing of any proposed building shall be in proportion to the scale, proportion, massing and detailing in the district."