
TOWN OF STONINGTON

Design Review Guidelines

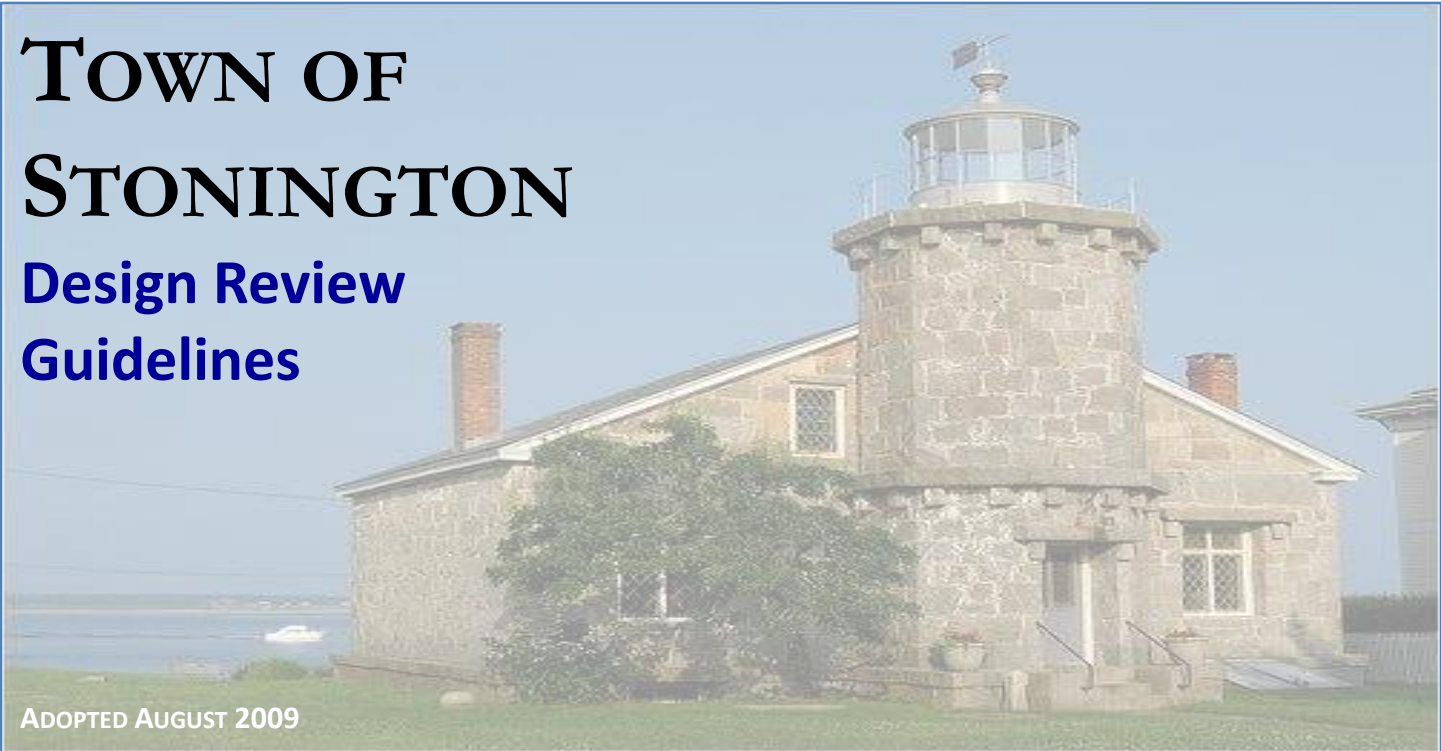


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Scope

Stonington's Architectural Design Review Board (ADRB) reviews site plans and special use permit applications for commercial, industrial, institutional and multi-family residential developments. Single-family homes are not reviewed by the Board. The ADRB is appointed by the Board of Selectmen and functions in an advisory capacity to the Planning & Zoning Commission, providing commentary with regard to scale, massing, colors and proportions of buildings, landscaping, public spaces, lighting and signage. For additional guidance, see Zoning Regulations Section 2.15 (Architectural Design Review) and Section 2.16 (Design Review Requirements).

Objectives

Objectives of the Architectural Design Review Board are to:

- Promote development projects that are in harmony with Stonington's architectural heritage, thus preserving and improving the appearance, beauty and character of the community.
- Encourage better design and site planning, ensuring that new development fits sensitively into the surrounding neighborhood.
- Improve communication among developers, neighbors, and the Town early in the design and siting of new development.

Design Importance

Stonington's Plan of Conservation & Development calls for Town to control the design of commercial development and to encourage new development that is in keeping with the character of the community. The Design Review Board encourages development that is better integrated into the Town and contributes to Stonington's unique architectural vernacular.

Proposals Requiring Architectural Design Review

Developments Requiring Design Review

ADRB review is required for the following development proposals submitted to the Planning and Zoning Commission (ZR Section 2.15.3):

- New commercial, institutional, industrial, multi-family residential or mixed-use construction for which Planning & Zoning Commission site plan or special use permit approval is required.
- Exterior changes to existing commercial, institutional, multi-family or mixed-use structures, defined as building additions, partial demolitions or replacement of materials comprising 25% or more of a structure's exterior façade.
- Special Detached Signs (ZR Section 7.12.7.4) and Multi-Tenant Signage Programs (ZR Section 7.12.8).

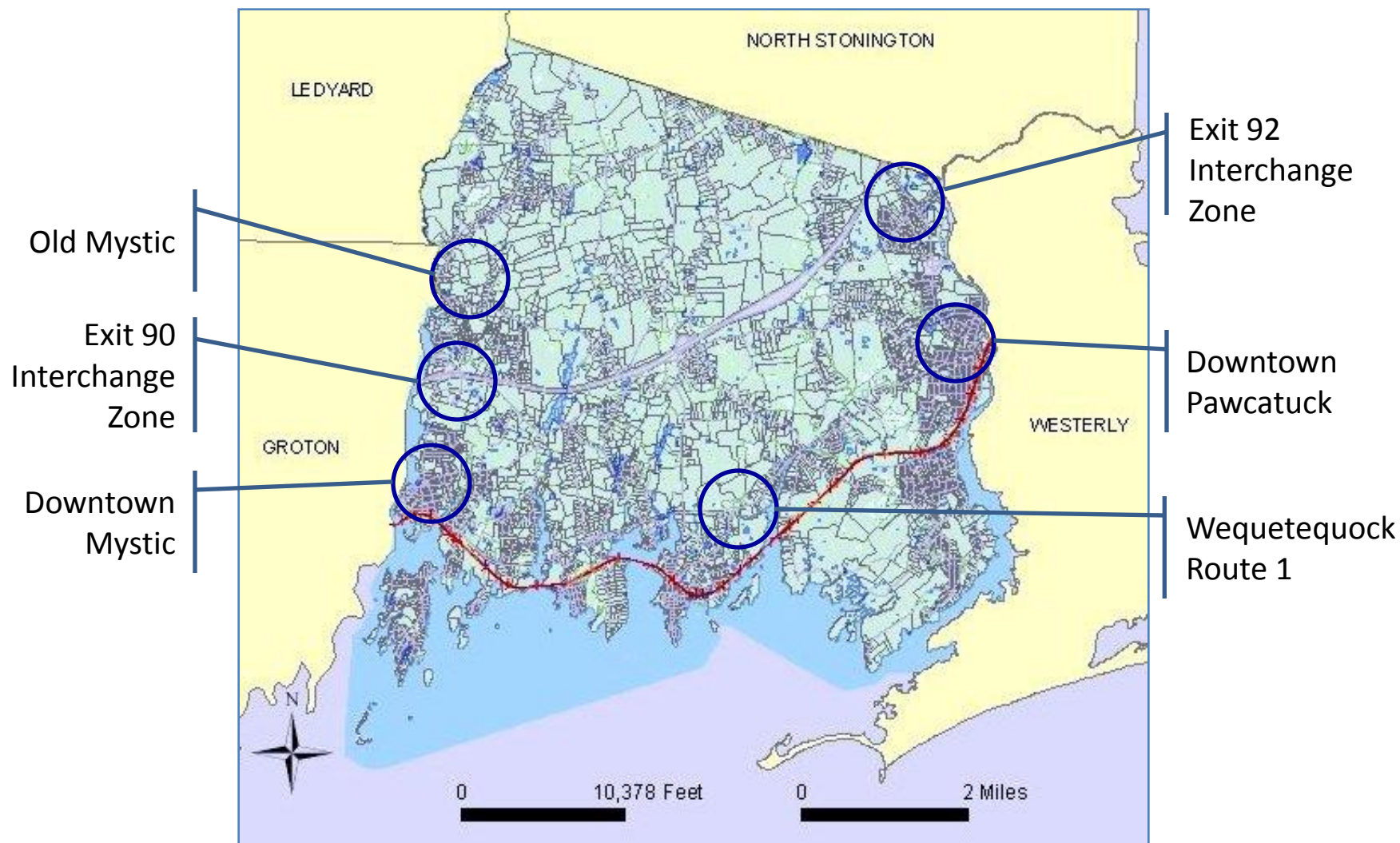
When Design Review is Not Required

Design review is not required for single-family, duplex and triplex residential units; site plans subject to Section 8.3.2.1 of the Zoning Regulations (permitted and accessory uses in residential zones); applications for activities that only require a Zoning Permit issued by the Zoning Official; or Bed and Breakfast Facilities (ZR Section 6.6.17).

Up-Front Informal Meetings

Since design review is obligatory for most commercial, retail, mixed-use and multi-family development projects, prospective applicants are encouraged to meet informally with Planning Department staff and the ADRB prior to submitting an application, and before undertaking a significant monetary investment in project development and site design.

District Map



Steps in the Design Review Process

There are three basic steps to Stonington's design review: 1) Planning Department staff provides general guidance to applicants prior to submission of a formal application; 2) development projects are referred to the ADRB, which conducts its Design Review and submits written recommendations to the Planning & Zoning Commission; and 3) the Planning & Zoning Commission conducts its own review, which may include a public hearing, and then renders a final decision with due consideration of comments from the ADRB, planning staff, the applicant and the general public. **The Architectural Design Review Board meets at 5:00 PM on the third Wednesday of each month in the Mystic Chamber of Commerce Conference Room, 14 Holmes Street (Schooner Wharf Building, Downtown Mystic).**

Required Submission Materials

Pursuant to ZR Section 2.15.6, applicants proposing developments requiring ADRB review must submit eight (8) complete copies each of following items. It is expected that members of the applicant's design team will be present at ADRB review meetings.

Completed Application Form: Name and address of applicant, architect, and landscape architect; property location; sq. ft. of each proposed building; building use; and written narrative stating how the project's architectural design and site layout protects and strengthens the visual definition and identity of Stonington's architectural heritage.

Site Plan: Scaled plan drawing depicting proposed buildings, driveways, parking areas, walkways, exterior lighting and drainage features.

Architecture: Elevation drawings and dimensions of all sides of proposed buildings, prepared by a Connecticut licensed architect, expressing sufficient detail to illustrate mass, scale, character, colors and texture, with a focus on windows, doors and roofing.

Landscaping: Landscape plan, prepared by a Connecticut licensed landscape architect, showing the relationship of existing and proposed plantings to site topography, proposed and existing structures, driveways and parking areas.

Site details (or Catalog Cuts): Fencing, lighting, pedestrian walkways, retaining walls, curbing, etc.

Signage: Applicants installing signage to serve new or existing buildings must submit photographic or color renderings, including overall exterior dimensions, graphics, style, colors, and lighting. The site plan must indicate location of all proposed signs.



Waivers

The ADRB may by majority vote, waive one or more of the submission items listed above, provided that such request is made in writing by the applicant at the time of the Board's design review. Waiver requests must describe in sufficient detail why such information is not relevant to the review. Applicants are advised that such waivers apply only to information and materials sought by the ADRB, and not to the submission of materials required by the Planning and Zoning Commission. A waiver granted by the ADRB does not guarantee or ensure that any waiver of any part of the Zoning Regulations will subsequently be granted by the Planning and Zoning Commission as part of its Special Use Permit or site plan review.

Written Report

The ADRB shall submit a written report to the Planning and Zoning Commission for each proposal reviewed, preferably not less than ten (10) days prior to the scheduled meeting or public hearing at which the application will be heard. This report shall be made available to the applicant, and shall be entered into the Planning and Zoning Commission's official records.

The ADRB does not render interpretations of Zoning Regulations that govern use of a property, the granting of variances, inland wetlands or watercourses, or building code compliance. Furthermore, the Board's recommendations are not binding; rather, they are of an advisory nature, and a plan's endorsement by the ADRB does not imply or guarantee subsequent approval of an application by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Contact

Planning Department
Town Hall -- 152 Elm Street
Stonington, CT 06378
Telephone (860) 535-5095 • FAX (860) 535-1023 • dop@stonington-ct.gov



Design Guidelines -- Architectural Compatibility & Massing

Scale, Height & Bulk

Projects should be compatible with the historic scale of surrounding development and that which is anticipated by Stonington's Plan of Conservation and Development. Buildings should be designed and sited to provide a sensitive transition to near-by, less intensive zoning districts. Projects should be designed in a manner that will encourage similar height, bulk, and scale of anticipated development on adjacent vacant tracts of land.

Elements of Massing

- A variety of building types and massing, small variations in setbacks, and areas of lawn or open space to create diversity in the overall consistency of buildings lining a street.
- Differences in development standards between abutting zones (allowable building height, setbacks, lot coverage).
- Effect of a property's size, shape and topography.
- Height, bulk and scale relationships resulting from lot orientation (i.e., rear lot line to adjoining rear lot line vs. rear lot line to side lot lines).
- Type and amount of separation between adjoining lots (i.e., separation by only a property line vs. an alley or street, or by other physical topographical features such as grade changes or wetlands).

Techniques

- Use of architectural style, color, materials and details such as roof lines or fenestration.
- Creative use of landscaping or other screening.
- Sensitive topographic transitions, such as terrace-walls rather than a retaining wall to give a more human scale to a project, or stepping a project down a hillside.
- In mixed-use developments, balancing of massing composition by use of a focal element.
- Articulating perceived heights differently than actual heights by use of fenestration and material transitions (including color and texture).
- Flat roofs should be avoided; gables and dormers should be in proportion to the building.



Design Guidelines -- Context, Elements & Materials

Context

Stonington's various commercial districts and historic villages each have a well-defined and unique character, compatible with and complementary to the Town's organic pattern of settlement and style of buildings. Even where there is no consistent architectural pattern, new designs can contribute to a district's architectural characteristics by complementing certain existing physical conditions:

- Style articulation through form, mass, roof, fenestration, and detailing.
- Building scale and proportion.
- Proper (and correct) architectural style (i.e., an Italianate's low-pitched roof & bracketed cornice).
- Building details and fenestration patterns (i.e., an Italianate's tall-narrow windows & hood-cap trim).
- Use of complementary materials (i.e., proper placement of brick, stone, clapboard and shingles).

Methods & Elements of Articulation

Several effective methods in which buildings may be articulated to create intervals that reflect and promote compatibility with context include:

- Modulating the facade by stepping back or extending forward a portion of the façade.
- Repetition of window patterns at an interval that equals the articulation interval.
- Adherence to the neighboring cadence of entry and window display at the streetscape level.
- Massing alternation of elements such as dormers, roofs, gables or other elements to reinforce the modulation or articulation interval.
- Changing the materials with a change in the building plane.
- Providing a lighting fixture, tree or other landscape feature with each interval.

Signage

Carefully designed signs with external illumination should compliment a building's architecture, be incorporated into the landscape plan, and serve to unify a commercial zone.



Design Guidelines – Building Site Characteristics

Response to Site Characteristics

Placement of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation, scenic views or other natural features.

Topography

- Reflect, rather than obscure, natural topography (i.e., structures should be designed in accordance with changes in elevation).
- Where neighboring buildings have responded to similar topographic conditions in a positive way, consider similar treatment for the new structure.

Streetscape Compatibility

Since the character Stonington's districts is defined by the experience of traveling along its streets, siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce desirable spatial characteristics of the street right-of-way. Streets are perceived as individual spaces or "rooms", and the placement of a building and its setback from the street will determine the character and proportion of this room.

Landscaping

The ADRB requires that a landscape plan be submitted as part of the development proposal. Just as our experience of the local landscape defines our understanding of Stonington, the plants selected for landscaping will be determined by characteristics unique to the specific site. Landscaping must be adequate to complement the building and site. The design should be propose plant materials and their configurations that are suitable to regional conditions and compatible with the environment of costal Connecticut.

Parking

In order to create a strong building edge along the street, on-site parking should be placed to the rear or sides of buildings. Ample landscaping provides shade and buffers cars from neighboring properties. Large expanses of asphalt should be reduced into smaller visual units without sacrificing parking spaces.



Downtown Pawcatuck – A National Register Historic District

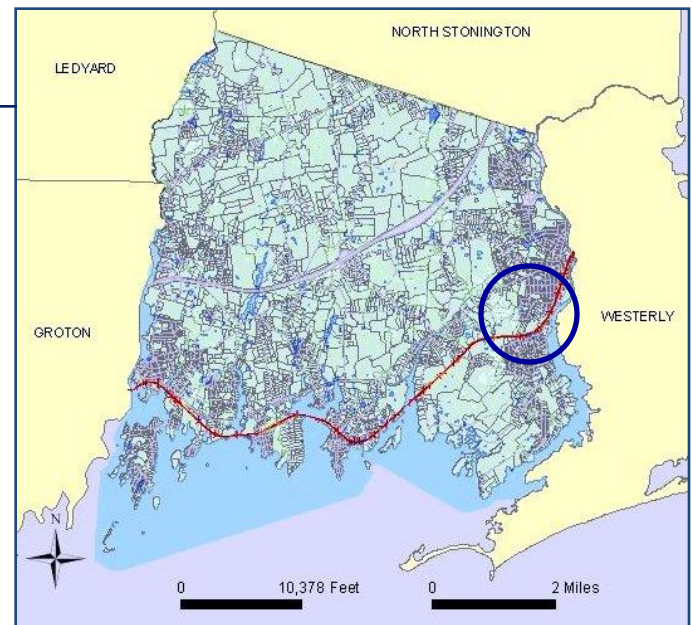
Narrative

Downtown Pawcatuck is a riverfront village (and a CDP -- Census Designated Place) in the eastern-most area of Stonington encompassing West Broad Street (U.S. Route 1), Liberty Street (CT Route 2), Mechanic Street, Cedar Street and Courtland Street. The core of this area is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, reflecting a pattern of settlement originating during the Nineteenth Century when the economy was dominated by nearby textile mills.

Today, Downtown Pawcatuck still embraces its Nineteenth Century fabric of streetscape façades, density and compact storefronts. Nearby Westerly, RI has experienced a successful revitalization that includes streetscape enhancements, façade improvements, and the rebirth of mixed-uses including offices, retail outlets, boutiques and restaurants. The ADRB's goal is to promote this pattern of settlement and architectural legacy.



Map DP-1: Downtown Pawcatuck.



Downtown Pawcatuck (Contd.)

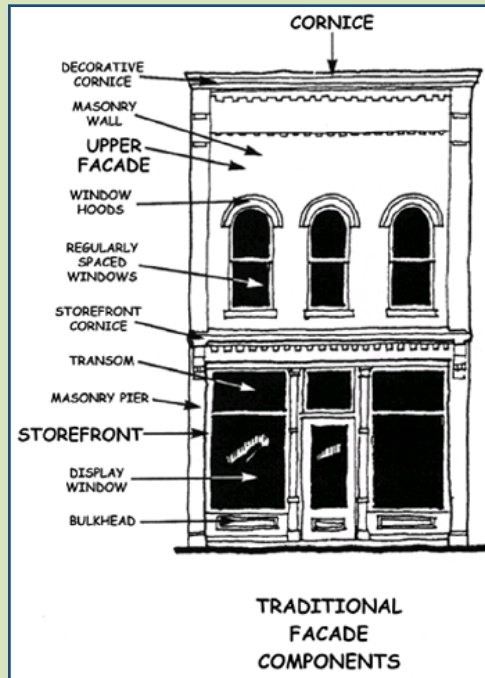


Plate DP-2: Typical storefront façade elements.

Plate DP-3: Historic storefront facade.

Desirable features:

- Historic millwork
- Paneled bulkhead
- Colored awning
- Brick
- Window header & sill
- Decorative cornice



Plate DP-4: Downtown Pawcatuck's exemplary design elements. They include a pronounced storefront baseline, regulated vertical modulation, quality scale and proportion, and a complimentary use of color and detail elements.



Downtown Mystic – A National Register Historic District

Narrative

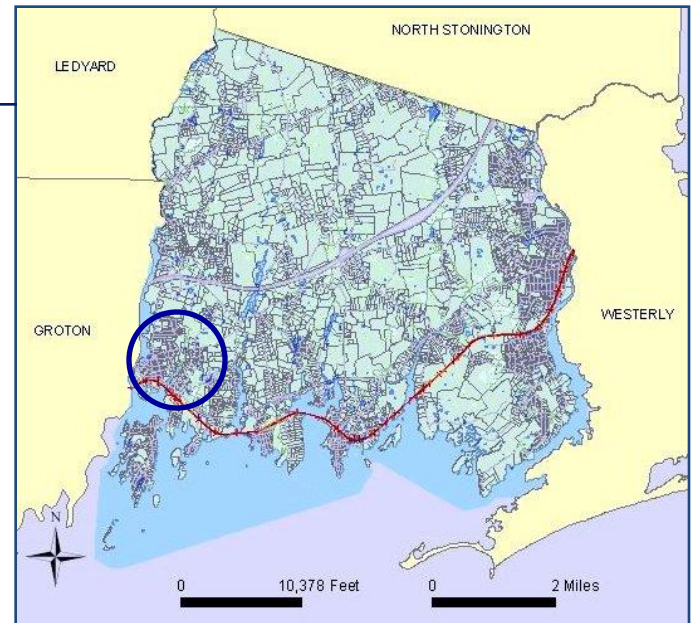
Downtown Mystic is another village (and CDP), located in the western-most part of Stonington bounded by the Mystic River, Mystic Seaport Museum, Greenmanville Avenue and Fishers Island Sound. It too is a National Register Historic District. Though it lacks an independent government, Mystic is a historic shipbuilding village, important in the Nation's maritime past.

Today, Downtown Mystic is still characterized by its late-Nineteenth Century fabric of streetscape façades, high density, and attractive compact storefronts. Connected to neighboring Groton by the Mystic River Bascule Bridge, it is Connecticut's preeminent tourist destination. Mixed-uses including office, retail, boutique shops, hotels and restaurants contribute to the rich variety of architecture characterizing Downtown Mystic. The ADRB's goal is to promote a continuation of this pattern of settlement and architectural legacy.



Map DM-1: Downtown Mystic.

Plate DM-2: Carefully designed signs with external illumination compliment a building's architecture, and serve to unify the commercial zone.



Downtown Mystic (Contd.)

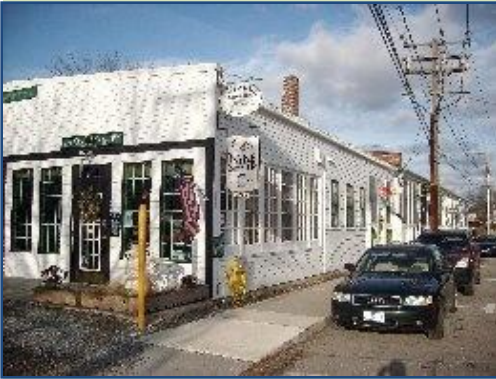


Plate DP-3: Adapted storefront façade on Holmes Street.

Plate DP-4: Typical adapted business use.

Desirable features:

- Residential Scale
- Historic Massing
- Appropriate Detailing
- Maintains Original Style



Plate DP-5: Exemplary design elements in Downtown Mystic. Both are major restorations of existing properties that incorporate quality scale and proportion, attention to historic massing, and a complimentary use of color and detail elements.



Wequetequock – U.S. Route 1

Narrative

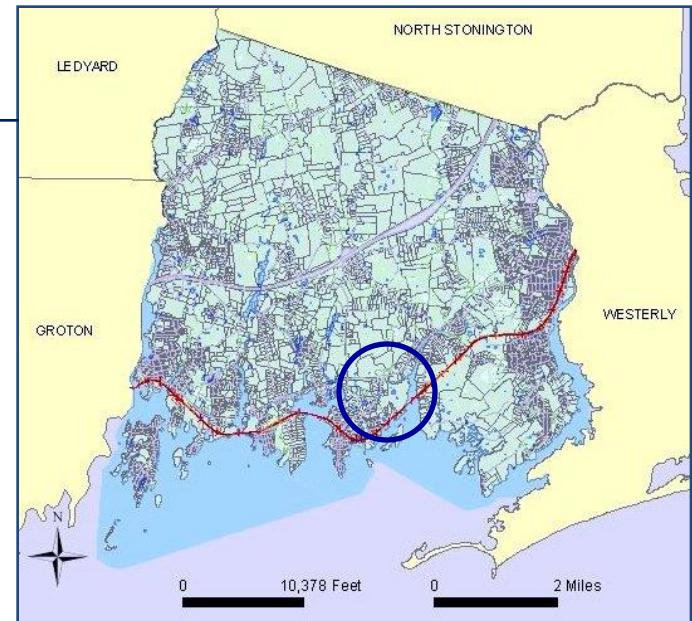
Wequetequock is a loosely defined village extending along U.S. Route 1 between Stonington Borough and Pawcatuck. It was home to the Town's first settlers, William Chesebrough and Walter Palmer. Although characterized by low density highway strip development, Wequetequock historically was an agricultural settlement, with farmers living along the inlets of Wequetequock Cove and Fishers Island Sound.

Today, Wequetequock remains scenic and largely undeveloped, mostly due to lack of utility infrastructure and natural constraints including ledge and abundant tidal wetlands. Small-scale commercial uses are intermixed between residential neighborhoods with which they enjoy a relatively compatible coexistence. The ADRB's goal is to promote a unifying architectural theme representative of Stonington's historic villages.



Map W-1: Wequetequock – Route 1.

Plate W-2: A Cottage on Wequetequock Cove, considered to be the symbol of this community. Note the cobblestone façade.



Wequetequock – U.S. Route 1 (Contd.)



Plate W-3: The Pawcatuck Post Office, US Route 1.



Plate W-4: A typical commercial structure, light in use and harmonious with surrounding residential scale.



Plate W-5: Stonington's Police Department (left) and light commercial use (right). Though use and massing differ, both are compatible with the Route 1 transect between the Borough and Pawcatuck.



Narrative

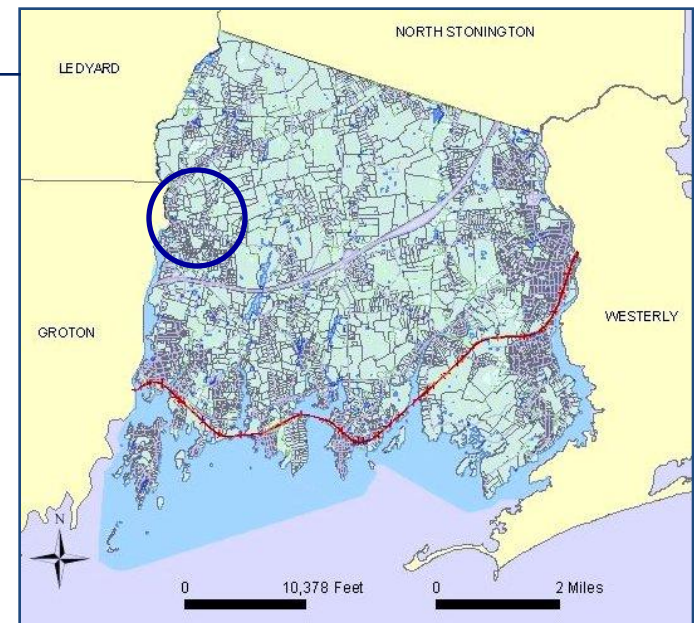
Old Mystic is a small historic village located at the tidal headwaters of the Mystic River, bounded by Route 184 to the north, Route 234 to the east and Interstate 95 to the south. Route 27 – a state designated scenic highway – runs through the heart of the village.

Like Stonington's other villages, Old Mystic holds on to its late-Nineteenth Century fabric of historic structures, a higher density of settlement than surrounding rural areas, and sympathetic alternations of commercial buildings and residences. Interstate 95 channels traffic flow away from this area, allowing Old Mystic to maintain a quiet existence. Mixed commercial uses including a mill, several offices and small stores, intermixed among single-family homes, all of which contribute to the rich variety of architecture characterizing the village's historic landscape. The ADRB's goal is to promote this pattern of settlement and architectural legacy.



Map OM-1: Old Mystic Locale.

Plate OM-2: A typical historic structure in Old Mystic.



Old Mystic (Contd.)



Plate OM-3: Historic structures along Old Mystic's Rte. 27 (now a museum).

Plate OM-4: Old Mystic Mill, now adapted commercial space but testament to Old Mystic's textile past.



Plate OM-5: The variety of historic residential structures, including an ornate Second-Empire. Other forms in this area include Federal, Revival, and Carpenter-Gothic.

Exit 90 Interchange Zone – Mystic’s “Golden Triangle”

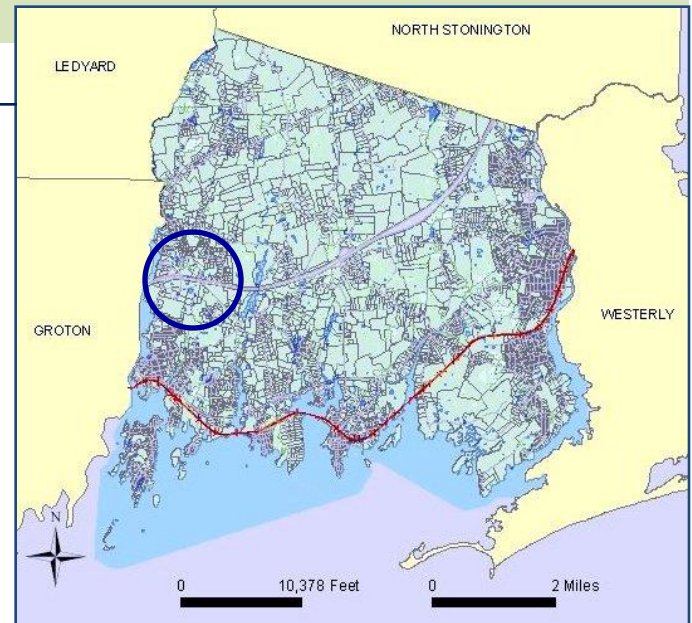
Narrative

The commercial area around Exit 90 known as the “Golden Triangle” is emblematic of 20th century automobile-oriented development. Wide speed inducing streets and site driveways, large asphalt parking lots, and drive-thru restaurants are not connected to the land or sea; furthermore, they have little connection to Stonington’s historic Nineteenth Century villages. Ironically, the gateway to Connecticut’s premier tourist destination bears little resemblance to the architectural qualities of the town that people flock to see and experience. Hence a key objective of the ADRB is to address the question: “Can the commercial area around Exit 90 be remade as a walkable, architecturally sensitive district that will not only serve as a welcome center but also as a sustainable place centered on heritage tourism?” Today, the Interchange Zone consists of an un-unified collection of uses including Olde Mistick Village, Mystic Aquarium, and many hotels, restaurants, shops and other tourist-supporting uses. As the visual gateway to Stonington, this area and its development is of primary architectural interest to the Town.



Map IZ-1: Exit 90 Interchange District.

Plate IZ-2: Entrance to Mystic Aquarium.



Exit 90 Interchange Zone (Contd.)



Plate IZ-3: Whitehall Mansion at Marriot's Residence Inn.

Plate IZ-4: Part of Olde Mistick Village, a "village-style" ensemble of small colonial shops and stores.



Plates IZ-5 & 6: Favorable design adaptations to Mystic's architectural legacy; Abstract Revival of Starbucks (left) and the Hilton Hotel's historic mill form (right).



Exit 92 Interchange Zone

Narrative

The commercial area along Route 2 south of Exit 92 faces tremendous development pressure, and the assemblage of disparate parcels into large tracts fosters “big box” retail and commercial strip development. In response, the Planning and Zoning Commission has amended the HI-60 zoning regulations to include guidance on landscaping, access management and building design. But similar to Exit 90, future development will be automobile-oriented, and there will be pressure to approve wide site driveways, large parking lots, and drive-thru facilities possessing little connection to Stonington’s historic villages. In response, the ADRB promotes building designs and landscape plans that take the rough edge off commercial strip development, and foster a style of architecture that is both sensitive to and suggestive of Stonington’s historic villages. Like Mystic’s “Golden Triangle,” Exit 92 is a visual gateway to Stonington and its development is of keen architectural interest to the Town.

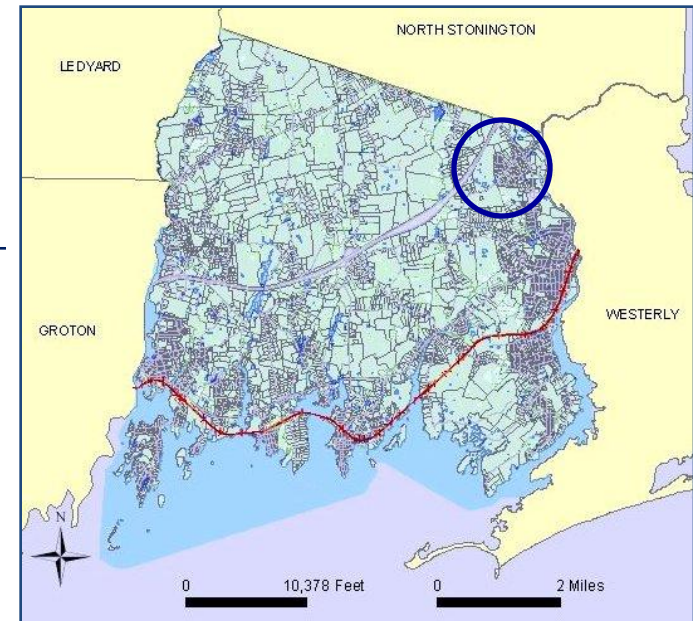


Plate IZ-7: Street view of Newport Fed Savings Bank. Note landscaping, shingles and stone façade.



Plate IZ-9: Street view of La Quinta Inn & Suites. Shutters, dormers and brick wainscot break up massing.

Map IZ-8: Exit 92 Interchange Locale.

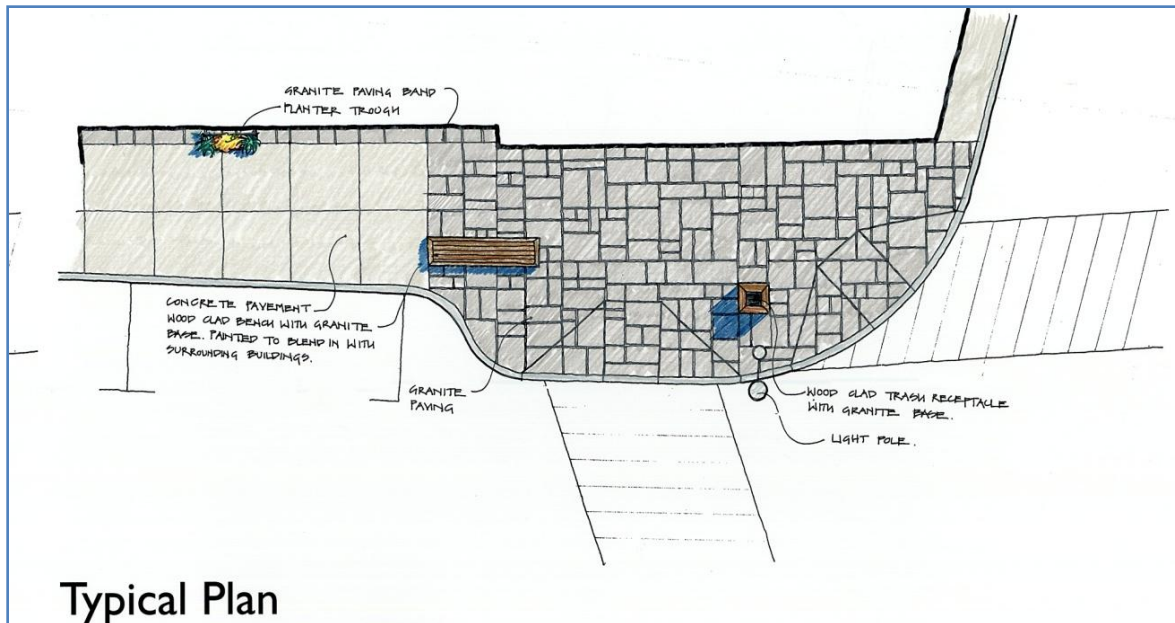


Placemaking describes the process of creating squares, plazas, parks and streets that will attract people because they are pleasurable or interesting. Landscape often plays an important role in the design process. According to the Project for Public Spaces (www.pps.org), successful public spaces have four key qualities: they are **accessible**; people are engaged in **activities** there; the space is **comfortable** and has a good image; and finally, it is a **sociable** place -- one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit.

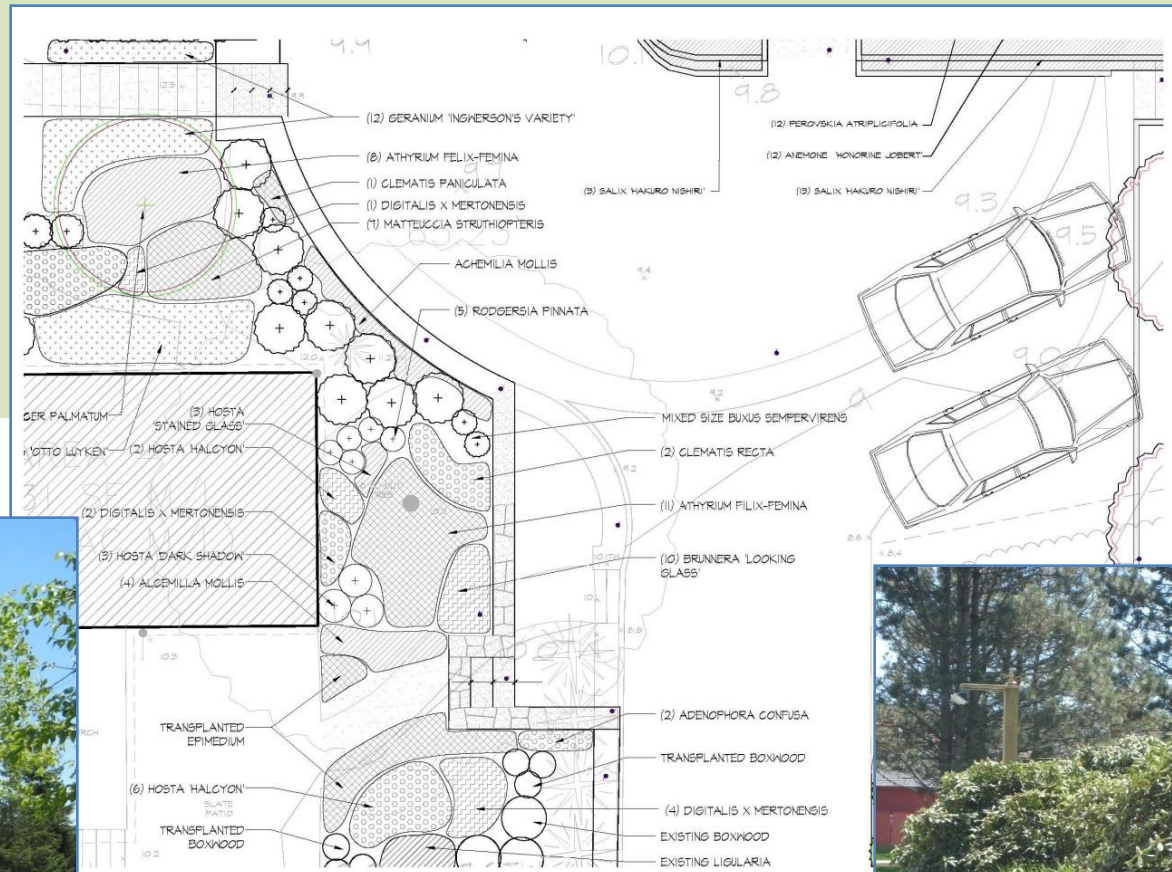


Questions to consider:

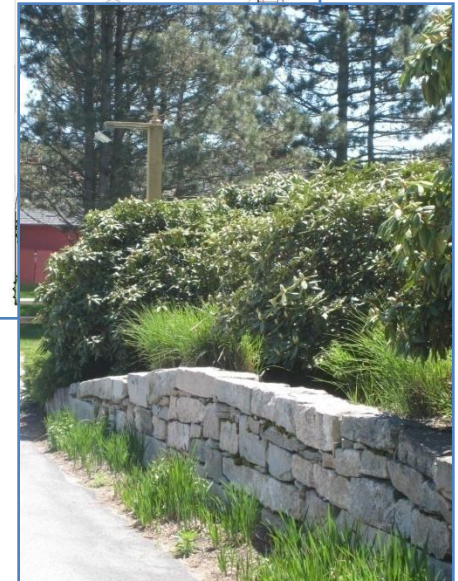
- Is there a good connection between the space and adjacent buildings, or is it surrounded by blank walls? Will occupants of adjacent buildings use the space?
- Can people easily walk to the place or do they have to dart between moving cars to get to the place?
- Does the space function for people with special needs?
- Do the roads and paths through the space take people where they actually want to go?
- Can you see the space from a distance? Is its interior visible from the outside?



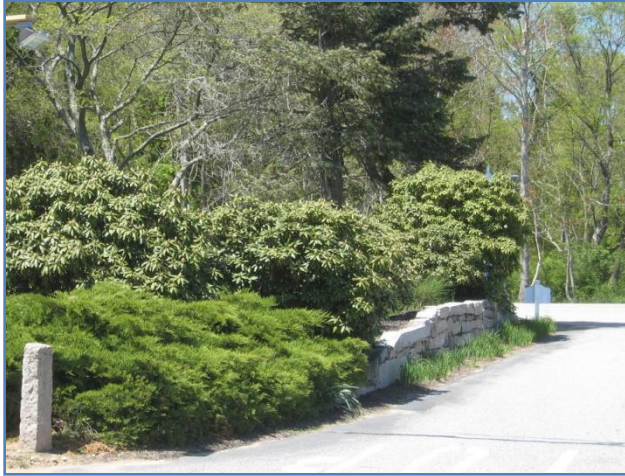
Typical Plan



The most valuable contribution to landscape design is often made at the earliest stage of a project in generating ideas and bringing flair and creativity to the use of space.



Landscaping (contd.)



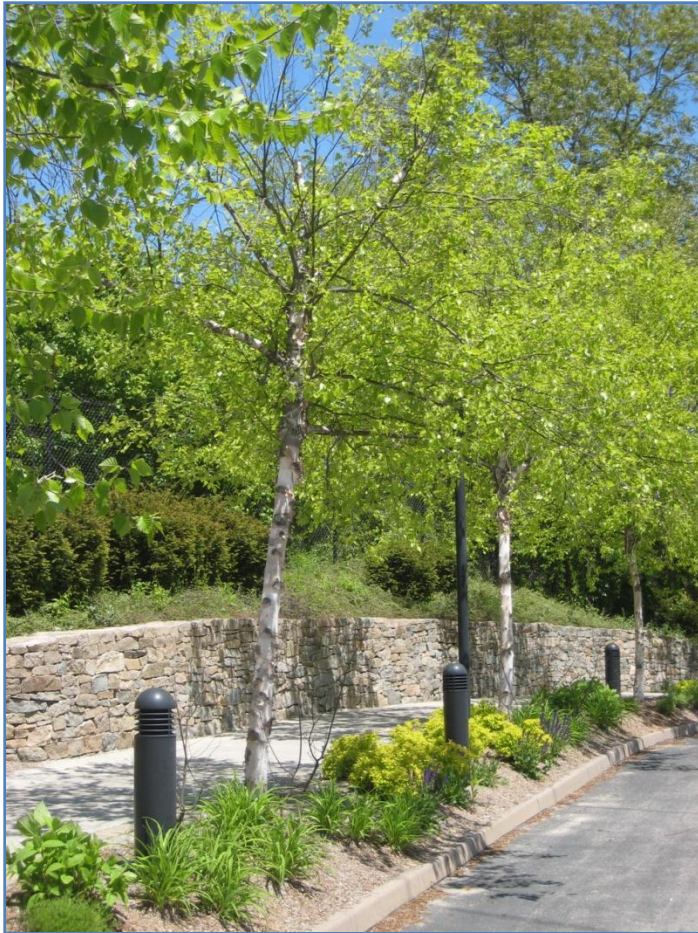
Successful landscape design strikes a balance between functionality and proper selection of plant material. By utilizing the right plant for the right setting, long term survivability will be enhanced and the required level of maintenance will be reduced. When determining landscape needs, attributes of the overall effect should be considered, including canopy of trees, plants used for screening and area definition, foliage contrast, form color, fragrance, ground masses. All of these characteristics work together to form a harmonious landscape that not only meet the needs of property owners, but also become an asset to the entire community.



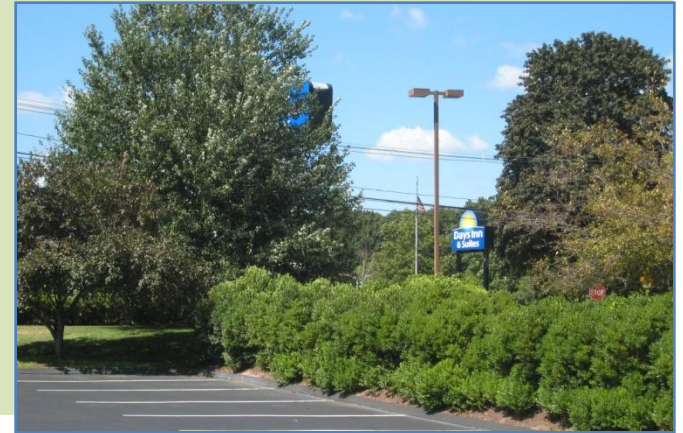
Stonington falls within Zone 6 on the U.S. Department of Agriculture “Plant Hardiness Zone Map” with minimum temperatures between -10 F to 0 F. In choosing appropriate plantings, hardiness zone should be considered along with topography, exposure, drainage, proximity to large bodies of water, sheltering plants, as they all mitigate the influence of temperature. Rainfall must also be considered, especially if the soil is not well drained or drains too quickly. Soil on the site should have a strong influence on plant material selection.



Outside Lighting



Outside lighting should be well integrated with landscaping and building design.



Full Cut-Off Lighting means 0% uplight from an exterior fixture. The uplight from non-cutoff fixtures can be plainly seen, obstructing our view of the night sky and creating distracting glare at critical viewing angles.



**Town of Stonington, Connecticut
Architectural Design Review Board
Application Form**

Submit eight (8) complete copies of site plans and architectural renderings to the Planning Office no later than the date of application submission for a Special Use Permit or Site Plan. Endorsement by the Architectural Design Review Board does not imply or guarantee approval of an application by the Planning & Zoning Commission.

PZC Application #	Submission Date:	Map/Block/Lot:
E-911 Street Address:		Zoning District:
Name of Applicant:		
Mailing Address:		
Applicant's Phone & Email:		
Architect-- Name / Address/ Phone:		
Landscape Architect -- Name / Address / Phone:		
Project Narrative: Provide sq. ft. of each proposed building, and building use. A written narrative must state how the project's architectural design and site layout protects and strengthens the visual definition and identity of Stonington's architectural heritage.		
<div style="border-top: 1px solid black; width: 100%; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> Signature of Applicant	<div style="border-top: 1px solid black; width: 100%; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> Date	