

## **Rowayton Avenue District Overlay Design Guidelines**

**Effective February 19, 2024**

1. Purpose and Intent
  - a. The purpose of the Rowayton Avenue Village District (O-RAVD) is to protect and enhance the unique physical characteristics of the neighborhood commercial areas which are located adjacent or in close proximity of the waterfront and to ensure that it is maintained for future generations in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-2j. Village Districts. These design guidelines shall be used to recommend site layout, design principles, patterns and materials that will preserve and protect the public's water views and complements the existing architecture in the area.
  - b. The O-RAVD is a Village District that shall function as an Overlay Zone over the underlying Base Zone CD-3W.
2. Applicability
  - a. Planning & Zoning Commission (Commission) approval shall be required for any new Construction and/or Development within the O-RAVD in accordance with Section 8.4.5, Site Plan Review, and Section 6.10, Coastal Area Management Overlay. In addition to the Review Criteria listed in Section 8.4.5.N of the Norwalk Zoning Regulations (the Regulations), the Commission shall consider each section of the O-RAVD in reaching their decision.
3. Definitions
  - a. All terms are defined in accordance with Article 9 of the Regulations.
4. Peer Review Process
  - a. Design Review and recommendation by the Village District Consultant shall be required for all Development to which these guidelines are applicable as indicated in Section 8.4.5.E of the Regulations. The Commission shall hire a Third-Party Village District Consultant (Consultant), who shall be an architect, landscape architect or certified planner, with pertinent experience, to review the design of new Construction of all properties within the O-RAVD.
  - b. Village District Consultant
    - i. The Consultant shall issue a recommendation for approval if the project meets the Village District Review Standards on [insert section of the regulations here] and all other applicable design principles, guidelines, and requirements, including these O-RAVD Design Guidelines.
    - ii. The Consultant shall submit a report and recommendation to the Commission within thirty-five (35) days from their receipt of the Application. Any delay in the submission of the report will not alter any other time limit imposed by the Regulations and/or Connecticut General Statute. The report of such Consultant shall be entered into the public record and considered by the Commission as part of their deliberations in making their decision.
  - c. Peer Review Guidance

- i. The Consultant’s design review and recommendation shall be based on the design principles and guidelines contained herein.
- ii. In particular, the Consultant’s design review shall cover and address the following criteria:
  - 1. The design and placement of buildings with particular attention to building materials and maintaining and enhancing the public’s viewshed of the water.
  - 2. The maintenance of existing public views, if in the opinion of the Commission, are known and significant community asset(s).
  - 3. The design, hardscapes, and placement of public roadways, sidewalks, bike lanes and other associated infrastructure.
  - 4. Site and landscape treatments and features shall, to the greatest extent possible, consist of native and climate tolerant materials.
  - 5. Preservation of historic Structures and/or other unique characteristics of the Site and area.
  - 6. Other elements that the Commission deems appropriate to maintain and protect the unique physical characteristics and qualities of the O-RAVD.
- d. Peer Review Requirements
  - i. At a minimum, the following items shall accompany a Design Review Application:
    - 1. An aerial map showing the property location.
    - 2. A landscape plan and engineered site plan.
    - 3. Architectural drawings and renderings.
    - 4. Color photos of the Building and existing Site conditions, including Adjacent and Abutting properties. These photos shall illustrate the public’s *existing* viewsheds and view corridors of the water.
    - 5. Architectural Building plans and elevations for new Buildings and existing Buildings that are to be retained. In addition, these plans shall illustrate the public’s *proposed* viewsheds and view corridors of the water will be as a result of the proposed Development.
    - 6. Shop drawings for any proposed fixtures, and swatches and color chips for all proposed fabric, materials and colors.
- e. Additional Materials for an Application Related to Existing Historic Buildings
  - i. The Applicant shall supply documentation of the original style of the Building and a narrative stating how the proposed Construction/Development is consistent with or in contrast to said style. For the purpose of these guidelines, historic Buildings are herein defined as those Constructed on or before 1965 and all Buildings within the O-RAVD listed in the City of Norwalk’s Historic Resources Inventory.
  - ii. Within the narrative mentioned in subsection 4.e.i., if a historic Building(s) exist on the Site, the Applicant shall provide pictures of said Building(s), the Building(s) Adjacent to and Abutting the Site, and the view from across the Street. The narrative shall indicate how

the proposed Construction/Development and/or Addition is consistent with the context and describe the treatments of facades facing public Streets or public Parking Areas.

5. Design Principles and Guidelines

- a. These principles and guidelines are intended to protect and strengthen the existing physical characteristics that make the O-RAVD an asset within Norwalk. The boating and maritime uses, amenities and gathering places, walkability, public access to the waterfront and public views of the water are what define this area and provides its uniqueness as a distinct neighborhood within the city.
- b. Some of the common elements found in the O-RAVD of traditional New England coastal communities and should be incorporated into new Developments. These include pitched roofs, wood clapboards, brick and stone.
- c. Design Principles
  - i. The following design principles shall apply to new Construction and/or Development of Properties within the O-RAVD. These principles are consistent with the legislative requirements of CGS Section 8-2j. Village Districts.
  - ii. Additional guidance may be found in the *Secretary for the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* (36 CFR 67), which are regulatory for the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program, and the Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, which assist in applying the Standards to historic rehabilitation projects.
- d. Design Guidelines
  - i. The following Design Guidelines have been established in furtherance of the implementation of the Design Principles and shall apply to all new construction, substantial reconstruction and rehabilitation of properties that are within the O-RAVD [and in view from the public right-of-way – including the water], provided that such Design Guidelines are intended to supplement the Design Principles in view from the public right-of-way.
    1. Building Design
      - a. Building Placement and Orientation
        - i. The placement of new Building(s) shall be consistent with the bulk and height standards for the CD-3W Zone as illustrated in Section 4.3 of the Regulations.
        - ii. Building(s) shall be placed to conceal parking at the interior or rear of the Lot.
      - b. Building Facades
        - i. Building Facades shall be oriented in accordance with Section 4.3.5.A of the Regulations.
          1. In addition, Building Facades shall:
            - a. Have a ground floor architecturally distinguished from the remainder of the building designed to be an

attractive frame for the pedestrian space. In ground floor areas of buildings not dedicated to residential uses, the public facing portions of this level shall comply with the Façade Glazing requirements in the CD-3W Zone, by horizontal measurement to twelve (12) feet above the Finished Grade. For the purposes of calculating transparency, mullions greater than 2 ½ inches wide shall be excluded. See Appendix A for examples.

- b. Utilize techniques of architectural expression such as:
  - i. Changes in materials.
  - ii. Expressions of fenestration: sills, lintels and framing of windows.
  - iii. Expression of structural elements.
  - iv. Adornment: Sculptural expressions, ornamentations and patterning/textures are integral to the architectural vocabulary, not applied, used to embellish portions of a building.
  - v. Lighting used to give orderly emphasis to elements of the building facades.
- c. Avoid long, blank facades. Large portions of facades lacking windows are to be ornamented with features scaled to those portions size. Further, garage facades are to be treated as are other blank facades and ornaments are required for all such facades visible from public rights-of-way. Landscaping and vegetative screening is not a substitute for architectural ornamentation.
- ii. Private Frontages shall be provided in accordance with Section 4.3.1-E of the Regulations.
- iii. Watercourse Lots are subject to Section 4.3.3.H.3.
  - 1. In addition to the required Public Realm, Watercourse Lots may also provide a Private Frontage type per Section 4.3.7.A along the Lot's Frontage with the adjacent Watercourse.
- iv. Outdoor Dining is Permitted in accordance with Section 4.3.9.D.
  - 1. Outdoor Dining may also be provided via a Dining Yard and may utilized as a Private Frontage Type for a Lot's Street

Frontage as well as the Frontage along the Watercourse provided that a minimum five (5) feet of clearance is maintained along the Public Access along the Watercourse and that it does not obstruct the Public View Corridor.

- c. Building Types
  - i. Building Types shall be provided in accordance with Section 4.3.8.A and Tables 4.3.8.A and 4.3.8.B of the Regulations.
- 2. Public View Corridors
  - a. All Watercourse Lots shall provide an unobstructed and continuous public view corridor from the Street to the Water of at least 30% of the Lot's Street Frontage. The location of the public view corridor(s) on the Site shall, in the opinion of the Commission, be oriented to provide the public with the best possible view to the Five Mile River.
  - b. Watercourse Lots that have less than seventy-five (75) feet of Street Frontage shall provide an unobstructed and continuous public view corridor from the Street to the Water of at least 30% of the Lot's Street Frontage, provided that such public view corridor shall not be less than fifteen (15) feet in width at any point.
  - c. Watercourse Lots that have seventy-five (75) feet or greater of Street Frontage may provide multiple unobstructed and continuous public view corridors from the Street to the Water, provided that at least one public view corridor is a minimum of twenty (20) feet in width and that no public view corridor is less than ten (10) feet in width at any point.
- e. Landscaping Standards
  - i. All landscaping shall be provided in accordance with Section 4.3.16 of the Regulations.
  - ii. Landscape Use and Orientation
    - 1. In the absence of a Building that frames a Street, landscape features shall define edges, and frame Streets and public spaces, while shielding negative views such as dumpsters or loading areas.
    - 2. Plantings shall be a native and salt tolerant species,
    - 3. Plantings shall not obscure site entrances and exit drives, accessways, road intersections or the Public View Corridor.
    - 4. Site and landscape features shall be integrated with the design of new Construction, substantial reconstruction, and rehabilitation of Properties within the O-RAVD and in view from public rights-of-way, in order to reflect a coordinated site and building design.
  - iii. Existing Landscaping
    - 1. Existing trees, and healthy and mature trees that characterize portions of the neighborhood shall be preserved to the greatest extent possible, and they shall be

incorporated into the proposed site plan. Trees that must be removed because of health or location shall be inspected by a certified arborist and replaced on-site with a species and caliper recommended by the arborist.

2. Existing trees shall be protected from damage during site Construction and staging, according to best management practices. An operation and maintenance plan shall be submitted as part of the Application detailing how existing trees shall be protected throughout the demolition and construction phase of the project.
3. New trees and shrubs shall be selected from indigenous species native to the region or species adapted to the area. Species identified as invasive by the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group of the University of Connecticut shall not be allowed.
4. Tree species shall be selected to maintain adequate height clearances for sidewalk circulation and visibility of commercial storefronts.

f. Lighting Standards

- i. All lighting shall be provided in accordance with Section 4.3.17 of the Regulations.
- ii. Glare and Overspill
  1. All lighting shall not cast glare or spill over onto streets, public ways, the sky, the water, or onto adjacent properties in an amount determined unreasonable by the Commission. A lighting plan shall be submitted as part of the application.
  2. All lighting shall be Dark Sky compliant.

Appendix A

