

# Town of Ridgway

## Commercial Design Guidelines

*Amended October 13, 2021*

### I. Introduction

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#### a. Purpose

Following the 2011 update of the Land Use Plan, the Ridgway community expressed interest in protecting the unique and eclectic character of the Town. This is embodied in that document as follows:

*There is recognition that development alone will not provide these solutions, but when intertwined with a reinforcement of existing development, a celebration of the Town's unique culture and identity, and innovation, it is a critical element of the long-term solution. Many western communities appear to have lost their chance at preserving authenticity, in the wake of rapid economic growth. The silver lining of the difficult economic times of the last several years is the opportunity for Ridgway to focus and build upon the community's unique attributes.*

The Land Use Plan prioritizes the preservation of small-town, rural character, specifically stating that new development should add to the town's character, sustainability and quality of life, provide for a sustainable, well-balanced economy, and maintain Ridgway's unique appeal. The Land Use Plan embraces the vision of the community, which is identified in the 2009 Strategic Plan, by calling for building setbacks and building orientation that create a more "walkable", pedestrian-scaled emphasis in the Historic Business and General Commercial Districts. These development concepts, in concert with much of the constructed town landscape, embody the community's desire for unique and variable architecture that is appropriately scaled for a small community while avoiding large, monolithic structures that diminish the historic, rural landscape.

The Land Use Plan also defines Highways 550 and 62 as key gateways and view corridors for the Town of Ridgway, and highlights the importance of this Scenic Byway intersection as a focal point for the community. Recognizing the significance of this junction for the community and reconciling the opportunity for appropriately scaled construction while preserving the historic character of the Town, the General Commercial District is more suited to larger structures than the Downtown Historic Business District. These Guidelines apply to all development in the Historic Business and General Commercial Districts, as indicated.

In addition to the Land Use Plan, the Town of Ridgway has embarked on two programs that will further reinforce and enliven downtown. The "Prospective" Creative District, recently designated by the State of Colorado, will encourage local art activities within the vicinity of Downtown. Creative Districts have tangible economic, beautifying and revitalizing effects. Secondly, Ridgway has initiated the Main Street® Program for the Historic Business District. This is part of a larger

Colorado Main Street® Program administered by the State of Colorado's Department of Local Affairs which aims to unify and revitalize historic districts "within the context of historic preservation". Emphasizing unique architecture is a pillar of their approach.

Design standards such as these are intended to document a community's design objectives so that developers and consultants can visualize how their projects work towards the goals stated in the Town Plan (2011 Land Use Plan). They are intended to assist property owners, developers and town review boards with the preliminary planning, design, and evaluation of proposals and approval of projects. By incorporating the Guidelines in the early phases of design, time consuming and costly changes can be avoided. Additionally, they are intended to reduce or eliminate the more common architectural characteristics of sprawl development, keeping with the Town of Ridgway's vision for the future.

The goal of these Guidelines is to ensure that, over time, the Guidelines will nurture the character and natural beauty of the community, making it an even more appealing and prosperous place.

**b. Scope**

This document provides Design Guidelines for all new construction and exterior alterations of properties within the Town of Ridgway's two primary commercial districts, the Historic Business District (HBD) and the General Commercial District (GCD). A map is provided at the end of this section; however it is recommended that you check with the latest maps on file at the Town Offices to verify what properties are covered. These Guidelines apply to all commercial and mixed-use (residential and commercial) developments, regardless of size.

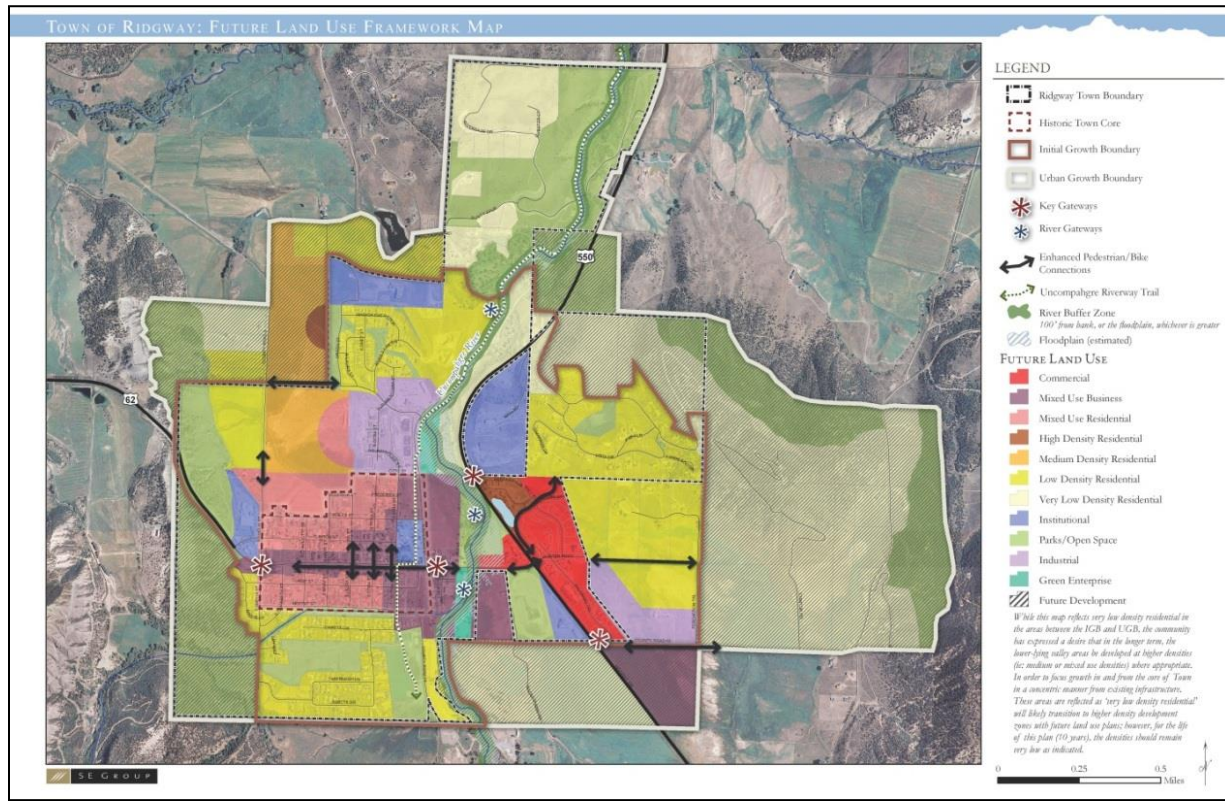
Ridgway is unique. Situated in a beautiful valley and surrounded by spectacular 10,000 to 14,000 foot mountains, it is a town that is not only historically significant, but a place of unparalleled scenic beauty. Thus, the Guidelines were drafted with the specific purpose of maintaining a Land Use Plan for commercial designs consistent with these unique community aspects.

However, sometimes, one size doesn't fit all. For that reason, there will be exceptions and that is to be expected. Indeed, the local government in Ridgway is willing and prepared to work with any property developer to assure that a feasible design, consistent with the intent of the Guidelines, can be achieved. In order for an exception to any single, or multiple Guidelines, to be approved, it must be shown that that such exception is justified by a substantial and compelling reason.

**c. Authority**

Town Staff will administer this section. For all projects involving new construction, or renovation of a building, with one or more commercial uses in the Historic Business and General Commercial Districts. The Planning Commission, acting as either the Planning Commission or the Board of Appeals, reserves the right to retain a design professional, of their choosing and at the applicant's expense, to review the application and provide a report regarding whether or not the application complies with the intent of the Design Guidelines.

## d. District Boundaries Map



Always check with the Town to be sure the most recent District Boundaries Map is being utilized.

## II. General Commercial District

### a. Character Overview

The General Commercial District is equally important to Ridgway's economic sustainability, but provides a different facet of retail and business opportunities than the Historic Business District. Commercial development within this District is encouraged to be pedestrian-oriented within the development; however it is geared more towards the drive-up customer as the main point of arrival. Furthermore, with no historic buildings on-site to influence the architectural style or ambiance of new commercial developments within the General Commercial District, close attention must be paid to site planning and design elements to promote an experience that is still complementary to Ridgway as a whole.

In general, unique and variable architectural design is encouraged, while large, uniform and generic-looking buildings should be avoided. As described in the Land Use Plan, the community desires to carry the character and distinct charm of Ridgway forward in all new commercial developments.

With such a small developable land area, nearly all of which is within view of travelers driving on Highways 550 and 62, every development makes a difference in the overall impression and

experience of Ridgway. Thus, the Commercial Design Guidelines play an ever-important role in promoting the historic, rural landscape that the community desires to maintain in the future.

**b. Site Planning and Parking**

Site plans for new commercial development within the General Commercial District are encouraged to place buildings towards the front of the lot, with parking in the rear or the sides of the building where practical. Windows and entrances may be located on both the front and the rear, emphasizing access for patrons who may be arriving via automobile, or those who may be walking or biking via sidewalks and bike lanes from other areas of town. Some buildings may front more than one street, in which case there will be multiple building “fronts” instead of front and rear building aspects.

Parking should be provided to the greatest extent possible at the rear or sides of buildings (*except when prevented by building orientation*) and parking should be sited to provide the least visual impact from public rights of way.

1. Parking and driveway areas and primary access to parking facilities should be surfaced with asphalt or concrete, or alternative materials and systems approved by the Town. Hard-surface alternatives to concrete and asphalt are encouraged. Improvements shall not impede drainage on street or public rights-of-way.
2. Parking lots should not dominate the frontage of pedestrian-oriented streets, interfere with designated pedestrian routes, or negatively impact surrounding areas.
3. Where feasible, parking lots are encouraged to share access drives with adjacent property with similar land uses. Shared access should include cross-access easements and/or similar shared use and maintenance agreements.
4. Off-street parking areas should be designed so that vehicles may exit without backing onto a public street unless no other practical alternative is available. Off-street parking areas should be designed so that parked vehicles do not encroach upon or extend onto public rights-of-way, sidewalks or strike against or damage any wall, vegetation, utility or other structure.
5. Circulation areas should be designed to facilitate the safe movement of vehicles without posing a danger to pedestrians or impeding the function of the parking area.
6. Parking area lighting shall comply with Town Outdoor Lighting Regulations.
7. Where possible, shared off-street parking for compatible uses should be considered and should include a shared parking agreement including substantiation that parking will be available during the times it is needed.
8. Bollard and/or street lighting should, where appropriate, be used to provide lighting at critical points in the parking lot without over lighting, glare or lighting trespass.

9. Use of landscape/grassed catchment areas shall follow the requirements of Ridgway Municipal Code 7-7-8(C).

10. Site parking should include bike racks and areas for parking strollers and other non-motorized vehicles near the main entrance to the primary building(s) and should have a logical connection to on-site non-motorized access routes.

**c. Mass and Scale**

While the mass and scale of buildings within the General Commercial District might be larger as compared to other areas of the community, development should take steps to minimize the impact of this type of commercial development on the distinct character of Ridgway. Large, featureless “big box” retail structures are out of context in Ridgway.

**d. Architectural Design and Materials**

Architectural design within the General Commercial District has the opportunity to be modern and streamlined, yet still must uphold the character and distinct qualities of Ridgway as a whole.

Naturally-derived materials are always desirable, such as stone or wood; and innovative materials such as metal, or high quality and environmentally friendly wood-alternative decking and siding are also encouraged. Whenever possible, local and regionally-produced materials are preferred.

Developments should incorporate architectural features and techniques to avoid monolithic shapes and surfaces. Changes in color, pattern, texture and material are encouraged on the primary facade as well as all other visible building elevations.

Materials within the General Commercial District should emphasize quality, durability, innovation, and variation. A broad array of materials is acceptable, but those that leave an impression of a poor quality, low durability and generic character are not permitted.

**e. Screening and Buffers**

Screening and landscape buffers shall follow the screening and buffering requirements as described in Ridgway Municipal Code 7-7-7(G).

Parking areas, outside trash receptacles, large utility boxes, open storage areas, conflicting land uses, mechanical systems and other unattractive views should be screened from the street and public right of way.

Screening of utility boxes, trash enclosures, and similar uses should be around all sides except for those required for access, which will be screened with a gate on the access side.

### **III. Historic Business District (Historic Town Core)**

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#### **a. Character Overview**

Ridgway's Historic Town Core is the heart of the community. It is home to the original Ridgway Townsite and is comprised of a walkable grid pattern, historic structures, local businesses, and the historic Hartwell Park. It is a place where the community gathers and residents and visitors alike shop, dine, relax and enjoy town. As recognized in the Land Use Plan, maintaining its charming, rustic character is important to the quality of life and sustainability of the greater Ridgway community. To this end, the Town is participating in two statewide economic development efforts, the Creative District Program and the Main Street Program, whereby the existing assets of the Ridgway community and its built environment in this historic downtown location are the focal point of current and future development.

Many of Ridgway's historic buildings were destroyed by fire in the early years, and a number of new buildings were constructed in the 1980's and 1990's. Despite the forces of nature and development influences, the Town retains a characteristic historic feel in its downtown area, with a number of historic buildings remaining from the late 1800's and early 1900's and including historically platted secondary roads and alleyways.

There are approximately 10 significant, historic, commercial structures in the downtown Historic Business District/ Main Street area. This represents roughly 20% of the commercial building stock downtown where the location and key uses of these historic buildings are significant for the Ridgway community, including the Old Stone Town Hall and Jail ("the Firehouse"), the Ridgway Train Depot, the Bank Building, and the Sherbino Theater. Most of these buildings have taken on modern businesses or uses, and provide the design foundation upon which the Historic Business District is built.

In general, new commercial construction and renovation in the Historic Business District should complement rather than overpower the historic buildings.

#### **b. Site Planning**

The way in which a building is placed on its lot and relates to the neighboring buildings contributes to the visual unity and character of the Historic Business District. New construction should complement the size, height and arrangement of surrounding buildings.

Buildings within the Historic Business District were traditionally placed at the front of the lot, facing the public right of way, to provide ready pedestrian access. Many were fronted by sidewalk or boardwalks and had shed-roofed porches. Horse and wagon hitches were found on railings in front of the buildings. Today, that same model promotes a pedestrian-friendly and aesthetically-pleasing environment.

New development should place any new building to the front of the lot with the entrance at the front of the building in order to define the street edge and promote a pedestrian scale experience.

For new buildings or renovations on corner lots, both street-facing walls should be treated as primary facades.

Place less-public areas such as storage, manufacturing spaces, and loading docks toward the rear of the building, shielded from the street view.

**c. Architectural Design**

A new commercial building in the Historic Business District should blend in with its historic counterparts in terms of architectural design. Features that need to be considered include roof, storefront, windows and decorative elements.

25' x 142' is a typical width and length for historic lots in this region, which creates the visual pattern for which towns such as Ridgway are known. Multi-story structures often have a visual distinction between the ground floor and the upper floor(s). Porches and sidewalks are also characteristic of the historic era in which many of Ridgway's buildings were constructed. They allowed people to walk along the street edge without being marred by mud or dust. Similarly, porches provided shelter and shade. Today, porches and sidewalks would add an element of historic character while also enhancing the pedestrian movement throughout the Historic Business District.

Exterior building elevations and roof lines should maintain the scale and integrity of nearby architectural character and detailing.

The architectural treatment of the front facade should be continued, in its major features, around all visibly exposed sides of a building, except in the Historic Business District where side setbacks have been legally addressed in accordance with Ridgway Municipal Code Section 7-3-10(A) and a future building may directly abut the structure.

Entrances should be clearly defined to orient customers and give dimensional character to the building. Each principal entrance should have clearly defined features such as canopies, overhangs, arches or peaked roof forms. Covered, functional front porches or boardwalks are strongly encouraged.

Roof forms should complement the historic character of the District. This may include a variety of textures and forms, but should be in keeping with the scale of the structure itself, adjacent buildings, and avoid overly large or bold designs.

Flat roof structures should be capped by an articulated parapet design which acts as a structural expression of the building façade and its materials.

Historic architectural features, such as brick cornices with dentil molding or corbelling on masonry buildings, should be incorporated where appropriate.

Recessed entries, kick plates and transoms are encouraged to be incorporated into the architectural design.

Provide a shed-roofed porch on new buildings, when appropriate to the architectural design of the building.

Large areas of blank wall should be avoided, unless required by the Town-adopted Fire Code. If blank walls cannot be avoided, design accents such as pilasters or other façade articulations should be utilized to reduce the overall wall mass.

**d. Materials**

Traditional materials used in the Historic Business District included brick, log, milled wood, stone and metal. It is desirable to continue these historic uses in an innovative and sustainable manner.

Materials similar in texture and finish to those used traditionally and that complement nearby buildings should be selected and used.

New buildings must use materials that are compatible with historic materials and, when possible, are sustainably and/or locally-sourced. Examples of these materials include brick, stone, rusted metal, stucco, milled wood, log and composite siding.

**e. Screening and Buffers**

Screening and landscape buffers shall follow the screening and buffering requirements as described in Ridgway Municipal Code 7-7-7(G).

Parking areas, outside trash receptacles, large utility boxes, open storage areas, conflicting land uses, mechanical systems and other unattractive views should be screened from the street and public right of way.

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