

# Chapter 7 – Town Character and Appearance Policies and Strategies

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## Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan’s Town Character and Appearance Policies and Strategies describe the goals, policies, standards and implementation strategies ~~for-related to~~ what the citizens of Wells want their Town to look like and how to achieve ~~it~~this as an aspect of the Vision for Wells. The policies ~~define-address~~ the character and appearance of the Town in terms of its natural, social and built environment ~~for~~ specific geographic areas. They address the protection of scenic areas and vistas, as well as guidelines for new development, buildings, landscaping and other features that affect the Town’s function, character and appearance.

The outreach and engagement opportunities during this comprehensive planning project identified an awareness by residents that Wells is changing. This change is a result of the growth and development activity experienced over recent decades. Residents voiced a shared concern that aspects of the Town’s rural and small-town appearance have been lost, and the implementation actions identified in this Plan should address this shift. Looking forward, Wells will strive to retain and restore its distinct community character through context sensitive design requirements and infrastructure projects that reinforce the look and feel of the Town. New developments will be expected to do the same in an effort enhance the character and appearance that residents and visitors are seeking.

## Goals

### State Goal:

1. Encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of each community, while protecting the State’s rural character, making efficient use of public services and preventing sprawling development patterns. (~~Growth Management Act~~).
2. Promote an economic climate that increases job opportunities and overall economic well being.
3. Preserve the state’s historic and archeological resources.

### Regional Goal:

(~~No goal specified~~)

**No goal specific to population is available at the regional level.**

### Wells Goals:

1. ~~Maintain~~Preserve and restore the distinct the small town-character of the

community, including the rural feeling created by both the physical and social environment west of Interstate 95, and the coastal feeling to the east of Interstate 95.

2. Retain open space and natural areas throughout the community.
3. Assure that new development is in character with traditional New England architecture, and is of a scale and intensity that is compatible with the existing character of Wells, and reinforces the vision and purpose for the zoning district it is within.
4. Promote those amenities which foster small town neighborliness such as local businesses, places for people to gather and meet, sidewalks, tree-lined roads, and a sense of community and security.
5. Protect the scenic quality and ecological integrity of the Town along the beaches, marshes, rivers, main roads, and in areas with outstanding scenic beauty.
6. Enhance citizens' awareness of the land and its resources as part of the community of Wells.
- ~~7. Protect and enhance the Town's tourism economic base and quality of life by maintaining and enhancing the Town's village, waterfront and rural character and appearance.~~

### **Policies**

To achieve these goals, it is the policy of the Town of Wells to:

#### General

1. Preserve the Town of Wells' historic, traditional New England seacoast and rural community character and appearance. The character and appearance that evolves from the variety of traditional New England Colonial and Victorian architectural styled wood homes, buildings, barns or barn-like buildings that give Wells, Maine its unique character (herein referred to as the "Traditional New England Style" or "Wells Maine Style"), and both the coastal and rural upland forested landscapes.
2. Encourage the use of cluster design in new subdivisions in appropriate areas to preserve open space. Link these neighborhoods and to each other and the central area via pedestrian /bicycle paths, that promote off road movement and, preserve corridors of open spaces that ~~and to prevent reduce~~ fragmentation of wildlife habitats.
3. Preserve scenic vistas especially toward the seacoast from Route 1, and along other scenic corridors especially along including Routes ~~1~~, 9, 109, and town roads in rural areas.

4. Pursue ~~locating the burying of~~ existing overhead utilities ~~underground~~ especially in the central area, ~~and~~ along Route One, within important viewsheds, and elsewhere where feasible.

#### Business Development – Business Areas

- ~~1.~~ 1.—Encourage the development/installation of public and ~~business oriented~~business-oriented buildings, landscaping, signs, lighting, benches, paving materials, and other elements that shape the character and appearance of Wells to reflect the Traditional New England Style.
- ~~1.2.~~ Pursue the adoption of a form-based code to guide future development activity. The focus of this type of zoning ordinance is on the location, size, and appearance of buildings and their relationship with public roadways and the streetscape. It is also a user friendly and visual regulatory tool, and would reinforce the objectives of this Plan.

#### Business Advertising and Signs

1. Promote a Town-wide business marketing and signage program in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce and local business owners and the Amtrak marketing program to attract more business and improve advertising while reducing signage.
2. Provide for on-site local ~~highway oriented~~highway-oriented signs for business identification. Work with the Chamber of Commerce and local business owners to minimize on-site signs wherever possible; particularly along commercial corridors. Reducing redundant signs on buildings and in on-site ~~free standing~~free-standing locations will make the business and scenic environment better for business, better for public safety and save an unnecessary business expense.
3. Encourage signage that reflects the Traditional New England Style.
4. Encourage ~~highway oriented~~highway-oriented sign messages to be brief, clear, and simple so that driving safety is enhanced.
5. Develop a policy to limit State Department of Transportation off-site signs to only businesses not located on State numbered highways and to only the blue and white business identification signs.

#### Landscape Architecture – Business Areas and Scenic Corridors

1. Landscaping ~~will~~should be used to reinforce the ~~“rural farm, /upland forest, or and seacoast appearance”~~ that exists in Wells, Maine, e.g. the Traditional New England Style. Landscaping plans should use ~~the native white pines, other conifers, deciduous~~ trees (birch, maples, pinus etc.); shrubs and ground cover vegetation in informal, rural farm and forest-like designs and patterns. This particularly applies along rural scenic corridors (e.g., Route 109 and 9) west of the Turnpike.
2. Along the commercial corridors east of the Maine Turnpike (Routes 1 and 9/109),

maple or other trees that create spectacular fall color for citizens and ~~tourists~~tourists' enjoyment will be planted as street trees and on-site in informal patterns.

3. Along rural scenic corridors (Route 9 and 109 west of the Maine Turnpike), existing native trees and other plant material will be preserved or enhanced with similar plant materials. Building ~~set-backs~~setbacks and buffers will preserve existing landscaping, and building site clearing should be minimized. Parking shall be located to the rear of buildings or screened from the public way by natural landscaping materials including trees, shrubs, earth berms, and rocks.
4. On other streets, street trees will be planted consistent with a Development Plan for Landscaping and Street Trees.
5. In all Town areas, where possible, rock walls will be preserved and constructed to reflect the Traditional New England Style ~~rural~~ character.
6. From the intersection of Routes 109 and 9 east, and along Route 1, where possible:
  - a. Public sidewalks will use "New England Cobble" pavers or other material that reflects a native rock or similar paving appearance.
  - b. Street curbs will be constructed of granite.
7. Native Maine granite and other rock is encouraged in building construction, walls, planters, etc. too.
8. All onsite utilities will be located underground.
9. Over time, All overhead utility lines along Route 1, 9, ~~and~~/109 in the defined Town Center Area and other growth areas will be located underground where feasible.

#### Rural Areas and Neighborhoods

1. Protect and enhance the character and appearance of the remaining rural areas. When rural lands are subdivided, they shall use the cluster design concept and the developed portions will be screened from view.
2. New business development including multi-family housing with three or more units shall reflect the Traditional New England Style in architecture, signs, streetlights and other "built" features. These areas will be designed so they are linked to other neighborhoods and to the Town Center by pedestrian and bicycle pathways, open spaces, and scenic local and collector streets.
3. ~~Rural~~ Farm houses, barns or barn-like buildings existing as of 1915 will be protected via an incentive program.

### Beach Areas and Neighborhoods

1. Protect and enhance the character and appearance of beach areas and neighborhoods. As each of these areas strive to become more resilient to rising sea levels and coastal hazards they should ~~as residential areas with a neighborhood village center, less~~ identify ways to reduce vehicular traffic, provide more public access, and conserve natural ecologically critical areas – open space areas for recreation and natural wildlife habitat.
2. New business development including multi-family housing with three or more units shall reflect the Traditional New England Style in architecture, signs, street lights and other “built” features.

### Scenic Rural Corridors

1. Protect and enhance the scenic quality of local streets and highways through natural or naturally appearing landscaped forested and rural areas as scenic rural corridors.
2. Parking shall be located to the rear of buildings or screened from the public way by natural landscape materials including trees, shrubs, earth berms and rocks.

### Route One Corridor and Identified Growth Areas Within –Post Road Antiques and Arts Corridor

1. Promote Route One as “Post Road Antique and Arts Corridor” and increase its commercial business and scenic appeal by reinforcing the traditional New England Style character and appearance. It will be aimed to increase business and economic development, increase safety, increase appeal and increase value. It will:  
**CPUC - Is this still the goal for this corridor?**
  - a. Encourage existing businesses and new businesses focusing on marketing antiques, art and other products and services serving residents and visitors (e.g. motels, restaurants, and other existing uses);
  - b. ~~Encourage~~ Require a unified building placement and appearance featuring the Traditional New England Style.
  - c. Promote increased pedestrian and bicycle traffic via new sidewalks and walkways pathways between ~~stores~~ destinations.
  - d. Encourage increased landscaping including maple street trees for fall color and pines for ~~year-round~~ year-round evergreen foliage;
  - e. ~~Promote~~ Require new benches, and street lights, and other streetscape amenities that reflecting the Traditional New England Style.
  - f. Encourage signs that are low, use brief simple messages and are consistent with the Traditional New England Style.
  - g. Promote an improved and expanded Wells trolley service.
  - h. Encourage less traffic; coordinated access and parking; and traffic turn-arounds to keep business in Wells.
  - i. Promote Town “gateway entrances” at the north and south ends of the

- Post Road featuring distinctive landscaping.
- j. ~~Promote~~Require underground utilities where feasible over the long term.

#### Wells Transportation Center

1. Continue to encourage the development/redevelopment of this area to serve travelers (tourists, residents, and others) at this transportation gateway to the Wells community. Promote traditional New England style architecture and building appearance through flexible design standards incorporating a mix of design and façade methods.

**CPUC – is this still a policy priority?**

#### Route 109 east of the Turnpike

1. Encourage the protection and enhancement of Route 109 east of the Turnpike to Route 1. Protect and enhance the current scenic, rural/forested landscape and feature Traditional New England-Wells Maine Style mixed-use development along a corridor that links the Wells Turnpike Center to Route One via vehicular, trolley, bicycle and/or pedestrian circulation.

#### Town Signs and Entrances

1. Encourage the development of a standard design for Town Entrance signs that reflects the Traditional New England Style and branding for Wells.
2. Support the installation of Town Entrance signs at strategic locations.

### **Standards**

1. To achieve these policies, the following are Town of Wells' standards to guide development:
  - a. Existing standards in the Land Use ~~ordinance~~Regulations.
  - b. Continue to develop and adopt ~~Set~~ new standards in the land use regulations for business-commercial buildings, landscaping, signs, lighting and other elements that shape Town character and appearance to reflect the traditional New England, Maine Wells Style.

### **Implementation Strategies**

1. Adopt Town Character and Appearance design standards for all commercial zoning districts that can be used to evaluate site plan, sign and subdivision applications and Town Development Plans required to implement the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Initiate a street tree planting and green infrastructure implementation program for Routes 1 and 9/109.
3. Initiate a street curb and sidewalk improvement program for all town owned and maintained roadway corridors.

4. Initiate a study to determine the feasibility of an underground utilities program for Routes 1 (Post Road Antiques and Arts Corridor) and 9/109 east of the Turnpike in conjunction with all of the utilities currently located on the poles ~~Central Maine Power, Verizon, the cable company,~~ and the Maine Department of Transportation.
5. Adopt a Development Plan for the ~~Post Road Antique and Arts (Route 1)~~ Corridor that includes a form-based code, access management plan, and streetscape standards to guide future development activity.
6. Adopt a Development Plan for Route 109 east of the Turnpike including a form-based code, access management plan, and streetscape standards to guide future development activity.
- 6.7. Continue to implement and expand upon the Development Plan for the Wells Transportation Center.
- 7.8. Adopt a standard design for Town Entrance signs that reflect the Traditional New England- Style and branding for Wells.
- 8.9. Adopt a standard design for Wells' historical markers.
- 9.10. Adopt an ordinance to prohibit the placement of merchandise in building setbacks.  
**CPUC - Is this still a need?**