

Planning Board Aims for Better Design

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Local Planning Boards are responsible for implementing their community's vision on a project-by-project basis. Every decision has an impact, good or bad. That's why it is so important for local Boards to request the best and hold developers to the highest possible standard. Although many projects ultimately reflect compromise and may not be "perfect" examples of development, local Boards should be inspired by what some of their neighbors are accomplishing.

The first step to enhancing a project is to ask for improvements from the beginning. Working with developers early in the process is a crucial step in helping them understand what your community wants to see in a new project. The outcome is often improved by steadfast and creative Planning Board input.

REDESIGN FOR A BETTER FIT

One example of a recently built project that reflects improvements incorporated through the site plan review process is the Glenham Professional Plaza on Route 52 in the Town of Fishkill.

When our department first saw the site plan for this large office building situated at the gateway to two communities, it was apparent that a redesign should be considered.

Greenway Connections guidelines recommend buildings that front the road, parking to the rear and sides, and substantial landscaping with street trees. The initial site plan was essentially the opposite of what is recommended and included:

- Parking predominantly along the road frontage;
- Minimal landscaping provided;
- Significant grading and clearing necessary to accommodate the building and vehicular circulation;
- Unattractive architecture.



The redesigned Glenham Professional Plaza in Fishkill shows parking to the side and rear, improved landscaping, and minimal grading.

ALTERNATIVE APPROVED AND BUILT

According to Brendan Fitzgerald of Hudson Valley Engineering Associates, P.C., the original plan mimicked one done for the site by a previous developer. Input from the Planning Board, Town Planner, and Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development resulted in a redesign of the project that included the following elements:

- Parking was shifted to the rear and side of the building, allowing the architecture to be featured rather than the asphalt
- Street trees and significant landscaping were added, while natural vegetation was retained as a buffer with nearby homes;
- Grading and clearing was kept to a minimum, resulting in a cost savings to the developer;
- Architecture was improved to be more in keeping with local character.

The redesign made the on-site septic workable and reduced development costs. The project also shares an access driveway off Route 52 with an adjacent parcel. According to Fitzgerald, not only were there cost savings but the review process was streamlined by complying with the Board's requests.

For More Information

Dutchess County's Greenway Guides: Site Plan example in [Greenway Guides Introduction Commercial Strip Redevelopment](#)
[Street Trees](#)
[Parking Lots](#)
[Landscaping](#)

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