



BOARD OF TRUSTEES STAFF MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 8, 2025
TO: Mayor and Board of Trustees
FROM: Emily Weber, Contract Staff - Planning Department
SUBJECT: **LEGISLATIVE** – Ordinance 06-2025 – Board of Trustees discussion and decision on the proposed text amendments regarding the Central Business District and associated design standards.

Overview and Analysis

At the direction of the Board of Trustees, staff prepared language for the Central Business District (CBD) Design Standards guidebook. The guidebook is intended to be a supplemental resource to reinforce the language in the Town Code related to the historic western character of Grand Lake. To support the guidebook, staff proposes text amendments to the Town Code that modify the boundary of the CBD and reference the design standards.



Proposed Central Business District Boundary

The proposed text amendments and guidebook establish clear, actionable design standards that ensure new development and redevelopment are compatible with Grand Lake's unique identity while supporting development feasibility. The guidebook enhances existing code language and further emphasizes the desired character. Additionally, the guidebook provides a more precise definition of "historic western" character in the context of Grand Lake by identifying common architectural elements that contribute to this identity.



Background

The proposed text amendments and guidebook have been discussed in multiple forums over the past several months. Feedback was gathered during regular public hearings, a Board workshop in September, and through general Planning Commission and Board of Trustees discussions at public meetings. The proposed design standards reflect a compilation of all input received throughout this process.

On October 22, 2025, the Planning Commission and Board of Trustees held a joint work session to review the intent and details of the proposed design standards language. Based on feedback from that discussion, staff revised the language and presented it to the Planning Commission for consideration on December 3, 2025.

The Board of Trustees serves as the decision-making body with authority to adopt legislative actions, such as code changes. The Planning Commission's role is to review proposed text amendments and the accompanying guidebook, then provide a recommendation to the Board. The recommendation from the most recent Planning Commission meeting is included later in this staff report.

Summary of Guidebook

The proposed Central Business District Design Standards guidebook is intended to supplement the Town Code by providing clear guidance on key design elements that define Grand Lake's unique character. These standards draw inspiration from the Town's historical and existing structures and are organized into six main categories: color and material selections, ground level interest, connectivity, parking, rooflines, and windows.

The guidebook's purpose is to clarify and reinforce elements already addressed in the Town Code. In some cases, the standards build upon existing provisions. For example, the street wall standard. Where the Town Code allows for discretion, the guidebook introduces a maximum setback to maintain a consistent street wall along Grand Avenue. Additionally, for areas where the Code is suggestive or subjective, the guidebook expands on architectural elements and includes supporting visuals to aid interpretation. In situations where prescriptive standards may not be appropriate, the intent is to guide design decisions in a way that preserves and enhances the character of Grand Lake. The full guidebook is provided as an attachment to this staff report.

Proposed Text Amendments

1. Section 12-2-26 (A) of the Municipal Code of the Town of Grand Lake with the addition of the **bold underlined** language as follows:

(A) *Mixed-Use Regulations for the CT, C and RST Districts.*

1. Mixed-use developments in the above listed districts will be subject to the following supplementary regulations. These regulations are minimum requirements and will also apply to Planned Developments within these districts.
2. Multiple family dwellings may be constructed above commercial uses provided:
 - (a) Access to dwelling units is not through commercial establishments.
 - (b) Trash, service and loading areas shall be screened from view from the dwelling units and from street entrances to dwelling units.
 - (c) Outdoor lighting associated with commercial uses within the structure, including lighting for parking, service and loading areas, shall be designed and located such that the direct source is not visible from any dwelling unit within nor shall there be any glare.
 - (d) At least two (2) means of ingress and egress from each floor of dwelling units shall be provided and that all other regulations as may pertain to fire protection be met.



3. Mixed-Use projects shall conform to the following schedule of (Private) Open Space Land Area Requirements:

Group	Gross Square Footage of Floor Area Of Structure or Land Use Area	Land Use or Floor Area	Minimum Open Space Land Area Required
I.	75%—99%	Commercial (C.)/ Office (O.)	20%
	25%—1%	Residential (R.)	
II.	50%—75%	C. & O.	25%
	50%—25%	R.	
III.	25%—50%	C. & O.	35%
	75%—50%	R.	
IV.	10%—25%	C. & O.	45%
	90%—75%	R.	
V.	1%—9%	C. & O.	50%
	99%—91%	R.	

4. In all applicable districts, the developer shall submit a proposal for the Open Space Land Area Required for Mixed-Use projects. The Open Space Land Area Requirement is to be provided on-site, in accordance with the Section 12-2-6 Definitions.

5. **When a mixed-use development is located within the Central Business District, it must comply with all applicable design standards outlined in the Central Business District Design Standards guidebook.**

2. Section 12-7-2 - Purpose of the Municipal Code of the Town of Grand Lake with the addition of the **bold underlined** language as follows:

An historical perspective is extremely important to the Town, therefore it is the intent that new materials and innovations will strengthen and be harmonious with the "historic western" feel of the Town. A creative and rigorous approach to the best selection and application of building materials will generate a more inviting, vibrant and harmonious appearance to the Town.

As Grand Lake becomes more densely built, there is a need to create a symbiotic relationship between buildings and public and open spaces. The Town of Grand Lake seeks to preserve the historical, rustic, and unique western small-town character of Grand Lake while also integrating its preservation with new and pioneering creative designs. Intending to help enhance quality and strengthen visual continuity while preserving historically significant properties, allowing innovation and encouraging creativity, the purpose of these standards is to stimulate creative design solutions for individual properties while promoting and preserving a sense of cohesiveness among the entire Town of Grand Lake.

A successful project will combine the design elements of composition, scale, proportion and rhythm in proposed materials, surfaces and massing, designing buildings, open and public spaces that are timeless and in character with our Town and harmonious to the human eye. In addition, materials, surfaces and massing create a sense of entry and a desirable sense of place.

The provisions of this Article shall apply to any structure, including temporary facilities, within the Town limits on or after the effective date of the Ordinance for the following:

- (A) New construction of any building.
- (B) Exterior remodeling or painting of any existing building, even if a Town of Grand Lake Building Permit is not required.
- (C) Re-roofing, enlargements, expansions of or additions to any existing building.



Where a property is located within the Central Business District and meets the above criteria, both the design standards in this Article and those in the *Central Business District Design Standards* guidebook shall apply. If a conflict arises between the provisions of this Article and the *Central Business District Design Standards*, the more stringent shall apply. Where the *Central Business District Design Standards* guidebook is silent, the provisions of this Article shall apply.

3. Section 12-7-3 - Definitions of the Municipal Code of the Town of Grand Lake with the removal of the ~~strikethrough~~ language and the addition of the **bold underlined** language as follows:

Central Business District — Commercially zoned, or commercial transitionally zoned lots **generally** located **between Broadway Street and Hancock Street and between Park Avenue and Lake Avenue. Properties within the CBD are subject to the *Central Business District Design Standards*, a supplemental guidebook that establishes specific design requirements and development goals for this district. The guidebook also provides a map identifying the exact boundaries of the Central Business District.** ~~on or between Hancock Street and Haskell Street, on Grand Avenue, and between Hancock Street and Vine Street on Park Avenue, and between Hancock Street and Ellsworth Street on Lake Avenue.~~

4. Section 12-7-3 (C) (3) (e) of the Municipal Code of the Town of Grand Lake with the removal of the ~~strikethrough~~ language and the addition of the **bold underlined** language as follows:

(e) *Infill/building additions in the central business district.*

1. When a new use (infill)/addition is proposed to an existing commercial development the newly constructed portion of the building should appear as an originally conceived part of the design. The new additions should match the scale and reflect the proportions of the original structure where they adjoin or are adjacent. New construction of a different height and bulk, than that of the original structure, should not occur abruptly.
2. New additions should match the existing approved architecture of the existing central business district. See for example, Figures 1 and 2 below. Such matching approval shall be in the sole discretion of the Town. The extension of canopy elements, lighting, boardwalks, planting areas, fenestration (window) patterns, structural rhythms, and use of materials should exhibit a seamless transition between existing and new construction.
3. Large setbacks from the street rights-of-way should be discouraged for new building construction.
4. New construction should not incorporate precise replication of town center architecture but utilize similar colors, materials, textures, pattern, repetition, rhythm, and proportions to achieve architectural unity.
5. **All properties within the Central Business District shall meet the standards established in the *Central Business District Design Standards* guidebook.**

Planning Commission Discussion and Recommendation

At its December 3, 2025 meeting, the Planning Commission reviewed the proposed code amendments and guidebook and heard public comments. Feedback from the public included concerns about prohibiting metal as a building material, with general support for allowing metal as an accent material consistent with the existing Town Code, given its durability and fire resistance. Additional comments



noted that requiring mullions could create maintenance challenges and that the proposed 10-foot maximum setback is too restrictive for outdoor dining, with a preference for a 15-foot maximum setback.

Commissioners discussed several aspects of the guidebook and expressed that it is not comprehensive enough, particularly in identifying prohibited uses such as parking garages in certain locations. They also voiced concern that the process may be moving too quickly and suggested hosting a public open house for broader input. Regarding specific design standards, the Commission agreed that metal is acceptable as an accent material, except for corrugated metal, and clarified that setback and maximum setback measurements should be taken from the building wall. Parking requirements were also discussed, with some concern about commercial parking reductions and strong support for maintaining residential parking requirements, which have been updated since the previous work session. Commissioners expressed a general dislike for subjective standards and recommended removing subjectivity wherever possible.

The Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Resolution 15-2025 regarding the proposed text amendments and applicable design standards, subject to the following conditions:

Regarding the Guidebook

1. In section 1 (Color and Material Selections), clarify that metal is a permitted roof material.
2. Revise Standard 1.3.a to list metal as an acceptable accent material, excluding corrugated metal, while allowing oxidizing metal.
3. Revise Standard 2.2.a so that the maximum front setback is measured from the building wall.
4. Revise Standard 2.3.b to clarify that the 12-foot setback is measured from the building wall.
5. Revise Standard 3.1 by removing items a, b, and c to avoid overly prescriptive requirements. If awnings remain as a callout, specify that natural materials shall be used.
6. Revise Standard 3.2 by removing items a and b, leaving only the provision that open space requirements are waived for mixed-use buildings.
7. Revise Standard 4.1 to include an exception stating that if parking is not permitted to be constructed per the Town, payment or construction is not required.
8. Remove Standard 5.3.d entirely.
9. Revise Standard 6.3 to include prescriptive requirements.

Regarding the Text Amendments

10. Confirm that the description within the Central Business District definition matches the boundaries shown in the guidebook.
11. Revise Section 12-7-3(C)(3)(e) to ensure consistency with the guidebook.

Staff Comments and Analysis on Planning Commission Recommendations

The table below outlines potential changes based on the Planning Commission’s recommendations. ~~Strikethrough~~ text indicates language to be removed, while **bold and underlined** text reflects additions.

	Text Changes Based on Recommendations	Staff Comments
1	Design Intent: Cultivate a cohesive visual identity throughout the CBD that reflects the historical and rustic character of Grand Lake as a mountain town.	A clarification to ensure that metal roofing remains an acceptable material as permitted by the Town Code.



	Primary building materials should be authentic, durable, and evoke a western aesthetic. Colors and finishes should be muted and convey high-quality design and detailing. <u>The following design standards apply exclusively to siding materials and do not include roof materials.</u>	
2	1.3.a: Metal materials shall not be used as a primary or accent element within the CBD. <u>Corrugated metal shall not be used as an accent material. Acceptable metal materials, as defined in Town Code Section 12-7-4, are permitted for use as accent materials.</u>	There is mixed feedback on whether metal materials complement the character of Grand Lake. However, corrugated metal is universally considered undesirable within the commercial district.
3	2.2.a: The maximum setback may be measured from a covered overhang. For example, a covered outdoor patio located 10 feet from the property line would meet the requirement. <u>shall be measured from the building wall. Structured overhangs or covered patios do not count toward the maximum setback; measurement must be taken from the building wall itself.</u>	The intent of the original language was to allow for outdoor seating options. Under the recommended language, outdoor seating is limited to the 40% lot frontage, if desired. The clarification regarding structures is necessary because, according to Town Code, any element with a roof supported by columns is considered part of the building. Therefore, structured overhangs would normally count toward setback measurements under Town Code standards.
4	2.3.b: The setback shall be a minimum of 12 feet, measured from the face of the building, including any covered structural elements. <u>building wall.</u>	The Board may want to consider additional clarifications about any additional “structure” within the setback zone. Example: structured overhangs.
5	3.1: Development shall construct the boardwalk in the adjacent right-of-way. This requirement applies to all street-facing facades. a. A covered boardwalk is encouraged to protect pedestrians from the natural elements. b. Awnings may be used instead of a covered boardwalk. The awning roof and cladding material shall not be metal; however, metal framing may be permitted. c. The design of boardwalks and covered walkways shall comply with Town Code Article 11-4. d. Where a building is set back to the maximum allowable distance along Grand Avenue, it is encouraged that pedestrian elements, like the continuation of the boardwalk, are used to connect the building to the public right-of-way.	At the work session, the language stated that the boardwalk “shall” be covered by a structural element. However, feedback indicated a desire for variation and therefore the language was changed to “encouraged.” Current Code states “Covered walkways and arcades should be provided on all buildings frontages where pedestrian traffic is likely.” The Planning Commission’s recommendation aims to eliminate subjectivity. If the desire is still to require a covering of some sort but in a more definitive manner, a possible standard could read: <i>“Buildings are required to provide one of the following: (a) a structural boardwalk covering; (b) natural material awnings over doors; or (c) an architectural offset that offers some form of protection from the elements.”</i>
6	3.2: Open space requirements are waived for mixed-use buildings. a. Where open space is proposed, it is encouraged to be along frontages other than Grand Avenue. b. For buildings set back to the maximum allowable distance along Grand Avenue, it is encouraged that public seating, art installations, or landscaping elements be incorporated to enhance the pedestrian experience.	By removing subjective language such as “encouraged,” the recommendation becomes more objective. However, using subjective terms can help convey the aesthetic vision the Town aims to achieve. Omitting any reference to preferred open space eliminates it as a consideration during development plan reviews.
7	4.1: Development within the CBD is exempt from the	This clarification allows for limited exceptions



	<p>commercial parking requirements outlined in the Town Code when the subject property is adjacent to existing and constructed public parking spaces located within the ROW.</p> <p>a. If public parking spaces are not currently constructed within the ROW directly adjacent to the subject property, the applicant shall be responsible for constructing the necessary parking spaces or pay a fee in lieu to meet the commercial parking requirement.</p> <p>b. <u>If the Town does not permit parking within the ROW adjacent to the subject property, the developer is not required to construct the spaces or pay the fee in lieu.</u></p>	<p>where parking is not permitted in the Town.</p>
8	<p>5.3: A basic building form is preferred. Any variation should be subordinate to the overall massing and contribute to a cohesive design.</p> <p>a. Varying building heights may be used to reflect different modules.</p> <p>b. Larger buildings should be divided into smaller modules that reflect the scale and lot widths of traditional Town structures.</p> <p>c. Moderate wall plane offsets, such as notches or projections, may be used to add interest.</p> <p>d. Excessive variation that results in a visually busy or disjointed design is discouraged.</p>	<p>The Planning Commission’s recommendation aims to remove subjective standards. For example, the term “excessive variation” is inherently subjective, yet the intent is to prevent an overly “busy” building form. Historic and existing structures in the Town are generally simple in form, with minimal changes in materials, offsets, or insets. The goal is to articulate what is not desired without being overly prescriptive. Overly prescriptive aesthetic standards can unintentionally eliminate uniqueness and may affect properties differently due to their specific circumstances.</p>
9	<p>6.3: Mullions shall be incorporated into window designs to reinforce the historic character of the district. <u>Mullions must be a minimum of two inches and a maximum of four inches in width in-between the windows.</u></p>	<p>Being overly prescriptive may influence window placement, which is partially determined by the interior layout and design. Note: that a mullion divides two or more separate windows, whereas a muntin divides individual panes within a single window.</p>
10	<p>Central Business District: Commercially zoned, or commercial transitionally zoned lots generally located between Broadway Street and Hancock Street and between Park Avenue and Lake Avenue. <u>Hancock Street on the east to Broadway Street on the west, and from Park Avenue on the north to the shoreline of Grand Lake on the south. The boundary also includes properties along Lake Avenue and curves around the Grand Lake Yacht Club before returning to Hancock Street.</u></p> <p>Properties within the CBD are subject to the Central Business District Design Standards, a supplemental guidebook that establishes specific design requirements and development goals for this district. The guidebook provides a map identifying the exact boundaries of the Central Business District.</p>	<p>The intent of the original language was to use the term “generally” to loosely define the area and then reference the guidebook, which can be updated periodically without requiring a code amendment. An alternative approach would be to specify the exact boundary line within the definition. An example: beginning at the intersection of Hancock Street and Park Avenue, the boundary runs west along the midpoint of Park Avenue, including all lots south of Park Avenue, until reaching Vine Street. At Vine Street, the boundary turns south along the midpoint of Vine Street, including all lots east of that midpoint, until it intersects with the alley half a block north of Grand Avenue. From there, the boundary runs west along the midpoint of the alley, including all lots south of that midpoint, until reaching Broadway Street, etc.</p>
11	<p><i>Potential to remove “Large setbacks from the street rights-of-way should be discouraged for new building construction.” This is covered in the guidebook.</i></p>	<p>In general, this section has a lot of subjectivity and overlaps with the guidebook. Further review required.</p>



Board of Trustees Consideration

The Board of Trustees of the Town of Grand Lake, Colorado, pursuant to Colorado statute and the provisions of the Grand Lake Municipal Code, is vested with the authority to make amendments to the Town Code. Board members are encouraged to review and evaluate the proposed text amendments and supplemental design guidelines, taking into account the Planning Commission's recommendations and public comments received during the public hearing. In doing so, the Board should consider the implications of these amendments and guidelines and proceed to make an appropriate motion.

Sample Board of Trustees Motions

Approval with or without conditions

I move to approve Ordinance xx-2025, amending Town Code Sections 12-2-26, 12-7-2, 12-7-3, and 12-7-4 regarding the Central Business District and Applicable Design Standards.

OR... with the following conditions:

-
-

Denial

I move to deny Ordinance xx-2025, amending Town Code Sections 12-2-26, 12-7-2, 12-7-3, and 12-7-4 regarding the Central Business District and Applicable Design Standards, based on the following factors:

-
-

Attachments

- Draft Central Business District Design Standards Guidebook
- Draft Ordinance