



STAFF REPORT

TO: Town Council
FROM: Justin Westbrook, Community Development Director
SUBJECT: Text Amendment (TA-25-01) – Architectural Standards
DATE: March 17, 2026

Background: Staff is proposing a **Text Amendment** to the Zoning Ordinance, specifically standards that apply to non-residential architecture and design. The current standards, found in Section 7-13, outline allowances and prohibitions for various non-residential building aesthetics, such as colors, exterior materials, lighting, and the like.

Existing Ordinance: In April 2022, Town Council adopted various amendments to many chapters of the Zoning Ordinance. Of the many proposed changes, a newly adopted standard was the prohibition on non-residential buildings to use metal exteriors. There were a few exceptions to this standard, such as buildings in industrial zoning districts as well as when metal is used as an “architectural style” as defined by the Zoning Administrator, and further clarified as “modern steel and glass architecture”. In Staff’s opinion the entire section concerning Architectural Standards is cumbersome and lacks any clear direction regarding design and aesthetics for our non-residential built environment.

Proposed Ordinance: Staff had discussions with several non-residential uses regarding the prohibition of metal-sided exteriors for accessory structures. Therefore, Staff brought a proposed **Text Amendment** to the Town Council for consideration at their February 17th meeting. The proposal at that time was surgical, and attempted to address the concerns over prohibiting metal-sided exteriors by drafting language to provide additional exempt situation. Staff’s initial proposed amendment looked to allow metal-sided buildings, for accessory structures under 1,500 ft². This would be limited to structures that are clearly incidental to a principal use and must be located on the same lot as a principal building.

At the February 17th Town Council meeting, Staff heard from the Council regarding the proposal and was directed to further investigate the impacts, wording and potential addendums to the proposal. Staff received several comments from Town Council members following that meeting to help safeguard the proposal from unintended effects while still allowing non-residential uses the flexibility and cost savings of utilizing metal-sided exterior accessory structures.

Therefore, Staff has revised the proposal to address two concerns; first to further focus the intended metal-sided exterior for accessory structures, and second to reorganize Section 7-13 in a logical and easier to digest model, adding minor language adjustments to ensure continued non-residential development in the Town adheres to higher building design for larger, more nationally-based non-residential development.

The focused metal-sided exterior standard continues to be an exemption for accessory non-residential structures only. At the suggestion of Town Council, Staff has also added the following caveats and changes to the initial proposal.

- Metal-side exterior accessory structures are allowed up to 20% of the principal structures square footage, not to exceed 1,500 ft². This will ensure a metal-side exterior accessory structure does not dominate the built environment and is corresponding in size to the principal structure it serves.
- Such structures shall meet new setbacks requirements, to be placed behind the rear building line of the principal structures they serve. This ensures visibility of metal-sided exteriors is limited and non-intrusive.

In addition to the reorganization of the section, Staff also adjusted the language to be more regulatory and less suggestive.

- The reliance of standardized “corporate or franchise” architecture is now prohibited, instead of strongly discouraged. This ensures future development of corporate and franchise commercial buildings is unique to the Lowcountry’s Hometown, and establishing a sense of place and community.
- Building colors are now required to accent, blend with and compliment the surrounding area, what colors to be neutral and earth tone, instead of the suggestive language asking for consideration by the developer.
- Lighting of a building for the purposes of attention is now prohibited, ensure LED rope lighting around windows and doors synonymous with vape and tobacco stores is not allowed. Previously it “wasn’t acceptable” with no clear prohibition.
- Elevation variations are now required to prohibit large, blank walls, avoiding the appearance of “big box stores” and providing depth and uniqueness to our commercial built environment. Staff has utilized similar language with townhomes, to break up the barrack style of architecture.

Staff feels, with the guidance Town Council has already provided and changes proposed, these changes will strengthen the Town’s development standards, while still allowing flexibility to small scale commercial and non-residential uses.

As with any dimensional standard, the size of metal-sided accessory structures may be modified through either an **Administrative Variance** or a **Variance** granted by the **Board of Zoning Appeals**. **Administrative Variances** are reviewed and approved at the staff level and may allow a deviation of up to 10 percent from the applicable standard. Alternatively, a **Variance** may be requested through **the Board of Zoning Appeals**, which has the authority to establish, and exceed the maximum square footage at its discretion. Neither an **Administrative Variance** nor a **Variance** granted by the **Board of Zoning Appeals** requires approval from **Town Council**, and should a **Variance** be approved it will exceed the standard set forth by this proposed **Text Amendment**

Consistency with Plans: Adopted in 2024 as part of the Town’s Comprehensive Plan, the adopted policy guidance for the Town does not specifically mention building design or architectural styles when speaking to the ten (10) Goals and various implementation strategies outlines in the Detail Action Plan. However, throughout the Comprehensive Plan, there are many mentions of the importance of building design and architectural style as it pertains to preserving Moncks Corner’s charm and character. When the plan mentions future impacts on community character, the Comprehensive Plan states:

“As indicated through the Public Survey, 63% of respondents were either concerned or very concerned about the diminishing community character... encouraging high-quality new and infill development and a rigorous amendment to the existing design guidelines would be additional potential first steps that would apply town-wide.”

As part of a required section of any South Carolina mandated municipal comprehensive plan, the Town’s Comprehensive Plan expands upon the Town’s Economic Development and Affordability. Within this section, the Town has identified that there is a need to address blight and dilapidated buildings as they have negative impact on “the value of land and quality of life”, and that this can lead to “decreasing desirability, safety, welcomeness, and community character”. In an effort to enhance and bolster the Town’s economic development, the plan suggests that;

“Implementing strict design guidelines for new, infill, and redevelopment opportunities would ensure compatibility between the new and existing structures and maintain a consistent character and aesthetic.”

Procedural Issues: As part of any Text Amendment, the request may be initiated by a motion of the Planning Commission, motion of the Town Council or by the Zoning Administrator. In this case, the requested **Text Amendment** was initiated by the Zoning Administrator after discussion and research regarding the Architectural Standards and the impacts any changes would cause on existing and future parcels, as well as the neighborhood and immediate community around these parcels.

Planning Commission Recommendation: The Planning Commission heard the request at their January 27th meeting. The Commission voted unanimously in favor of recommending APPROVAL of the requested **Text Amendment**.

Attachments: DRAFT – Zoning Ordinance v2 (Section 7-13)