



Town of Manchester Comprehensive Zoning Update

Date: 12/8/25

Recommendation 7: Restructure Historic Zone Regulations and Provide a Village District Overlay Zone

Purpose: Restructure the historic zone regulations to establish the Silk Mill and Family Mansion areas as separate zoning districts to allow the regulations for each zone to be tailored to each zone and to classify the Family Mansion area as a residential zone. Establish a village district overlay of the Silk Mill and Family Mansion zones to enable the application of design standards that are present within the existing regulations but currently outside of the Zoning Commission's authority to enforce.

Description: This recommended amendment does the following:

- Establishes the Silk Mill area of the Historic Zone as the "Silk Mill" zone, a commercial zoning district, and provides a new purpose statement for the zone.
- Establishes the Family Mansion area of the Historic Zone as the "Family Mansion" zone, a residential zoning district, provides a new purpose statement for the zone, relocates the zone from the commercial/industrial/mixed-use principal and accessory use summary tables to the residential principal and accessory use summary tables, and relocates the development standards from the commercial/industrial/mixed-use standards table to the residential standards table.
- Establishes a new Historic Village District overlay zone (as authorized by CGS § 8-2j), which overlays the Silk Mill and Family Mansion zones.
- Designates the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District Commission as the architectural review board (Board) for the District. Such a board is required by CGS § 8-2j.
- Updates the existing Historic District regulations to meet the procedural requirements of a village district per CGS § 8-2j.
- Requires an update of the official zoning map to update the zone names and add the Historic Village District overlay zone.
- Changes references across the regulations from "Historic Zone" to "Family Mansion" and "Silk Mill" zones as appropriate.

Geographic Extents: Historic Zone

POCD Consistency: Protection of the district is supported by the Manchester Next Plan, which identifies the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District as a cultural resource and as a special district that should be prioritized for preservation in the Conservation and Growth map.

Context: The Historic Zone is not an adopted local historic district and hence is not regulated by a local historic district commission which would have the authority to enforce design and preservation standards. Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-2j provides the authority to enforce design standards through adoption of a village district, which the properties comprising the Historic Zone are a suitable candidate for. Outside of a local historic district or a village district, neither the Cheney Commission nor the Planning and Zoning Commission have the authority to enforce design standards that exceed conventional zoning regulation. Additionally, best practices in zoning require uniformity across a zone and the provision of different standards across the same zone (as is the case for the Silk Mill and Family Mansions area) runs against the uniformity principle of zoning as established through a long history of case law.



Recommended Zoning Amendments (text to be removed in ~~strike through~~, text to be added in **red**)

1. Establish the Family Mansion zone and Silk Mill zone as separate base zoning districts with the Family Mansion zone classified as a residential district and the Silk Mill zone remaining a commercial district. Amend and replace the existing Historic Zone purpose statement to provide unique purpose statements for each as Sections 2.1.4 and 2.2.9 as follows:

2.1.4 Family Mansion Zone (FM)

The purpose of this zone is to protect the historic residential buildings of the Cheney Brothers Historic District while allowing for their reuse for select commercial or mixed-uses that allows for the preservation and continued productive use of those structures.

2.2.9 ~~Historic Zone (H)~~

~~The purpose of this zone is to allow development that will protect, preserve, and enhance the unique historical and architectural qualities of historic places of the Cheney Brothers Historic District and provide a redevelopment potential for residential, office, commercial and industrial uses. The Historic Zone is divided into the Silk Mill area (H-SM) and the Family Mansion Area (H-FM).~~

2.2.9 Silk Mill Zone (SM)

The purpose of this zone is to allow development that will protect, preserve, and enhance the unique historical and architectural qualities of historic places of the Cheney Brothers Historic District while allowing for redevelopment including office, commercial, and industrial uses.

2. Establish a Historic Village District overlay zone that overlays and is aligned with the boundaries of the Family Mansion and Silk Mill zones and provide a purpose statement for the zone in Section 2.4.3 as follows:

2.4.3 Historic Village District

The purpose of the district is to provide standards and guidance that will protect, preserve, and enhance the unique historical and architectural qualities of historic places of the Cheney Brothers Historic District. The Historic Village District overlays the Silk Mill and Family Mansion zones.

3. Remove the Family Mansion zone list of permitted principal uses from the Section 4.2 Principal Uses: Commercial, Industrial, and Mixed-Use Zones and relocate to the Section 4.1 Principal Uses: Residential Zones use summary table indicating the permitted uses as follows:

Use	FM
Bed & Breakfast	SE
Group Child Care Home	P
Inn	SE
Residential, Single-Family	SP
Wireless Telecommunications Facility	SP



4. Remove the Family Mansion zone list of permitted accessory uses from the Section 5.2 Accessory Uses: Commercial, Industrial, and Mixed-Use Zones and relocate to the Section 5.1 Accessory Uses: Residential Zones use summary table indicating the permitted uses as follows:

Accessory Use	FM
Accessory Building or Structure	P
Accessory Dwelling Unit	P
Antennae or Dish	P
Dormitory	P
Electric Vehicle Charging Station	P
Family Child Care Home	P
Home Occupation	P
Off-Street Parking	P
Signs	P
Solar Energy System	P
Sports Court	P
Swimming Pool	P
Wireless Telecommunications Antenna	P

5. Replace the Section 9.5 Historic Zone regulations with the following:

9.5 Silk Mill Zone (SM)

9.5.1 Purpose

See Section 2.2.9

9.5.2 Single Family Dwellings

Single-family dwellings in the Silk Mill zone existing as of October 2, 1989 may continue to be utilized on lots conforming to the following minimum requirements:

- A. Maximum buildable area of lot: 30%
- B. Minimum lot area: 18,000 square feet
- C. Minimum front area: 40 feet
- D. Minimum rear yard: 30 feet
- E. Minimum side yard: 15 feet

9.5.3 Elderly Housing Uses

The following elderly housing uses shall only be permitted in existing buildings in the Silk Mill zone: assisted living facilities, congregate housing, convalescent homes, continuing care retirement communities, independent living facilities, and senior multi-family residential.



6. Relocate the design standards of Section 9.5 Historic Zone to new section 12.3 Historic Village District Zone and revise as necessary to comply with statutory requirements of village districts per CGS § 8-2j as follows:

12.3 Historic Village District

12.3.1 Purpose

See Section 2.2.9

12.3.2 Administration of Historic Village District Regulations

- A. The Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District Commission shall act as the architectural review board (Board) for the District and shall maintain at least one member that is an architect, landscape architect, or planner who is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners as required by CGS § 8-2j.
- B. All applications for new construction, substantial reconstruction, or rehabilitation of properties within the District and in view from public roadways shall be subject to review and recommendation by the Board.
- C. The Board shall review an application and report to the Planning & Zoning Commission within 35 days of receipt of the application and no later than 7 calendar days prior to the public hearing or the meeting at which the application is to be considered. Such report and recommendation shall be entered into the public hearing record and considered by the Planning & Zoning Commission in making its decision. Failure of the Board to report within the specified time shall not alter or delay any other time limit imposed by these Regulations.
- D. The Planning & Zoning Commission may seek the recommendations of any Town agency or regional council or outside specialist with which it consults, including, but not limited to, CRCOG or the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation. Any reports or recommendations from such councils or organizations shall be entered into the public hearing record.

12.3.3 Development Criteria and Considerations

Within the District, uses and development shall be in conformance with the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development and this section as applicable. The recommendations of the Preservation and Development Plan for the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District shall also be considered to the extent that the purpose of enhancing the historical characteristics of the district, providing an economically viable land use pattern within the district, and furthering the general preservation of the district's architectural heritage are achieved.

Such development shall promote the educational, cultural, economic, and general welfare of the citizens of Manchester through the preservation and protection of the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant in the history of the Town of Manchester and through the maintenance and improvement of sites for such buildings and places. Use and reuse of properties shall be developed to achieve the following objectives:

- A. The building and layout of buildings and included site improvements shall reinforce existing buildings and streetscape patterns and the placement of buildings and included site improvements shall assure there is no adverse impact on the district.
- B. Proposed streets shall be connected to the existing district road network, wherever possible.
- C. Open spaces within the proposed development shall reinforce open space patterns of the district, in form and siting.
- D. Locally significant features of the site such as distinctive buildings or sight lines of vistas from within the district, shall be integrated into the site design.
- E. The landscape design shall complement the district's landscape patterns.
- F. The exterior signs, site lighting and accessory structures shall support a uniform architectural theme if such a theme exists and be compatible with their surroundings.



- G. The scale, proportions, massing and detailing of any proposed building shall be in proportion to the scale, proportion, massing and detailing in the district.
- H. Construction and development of new structures and buildings shall enhance and protect existing historically significant structures and will ensure the preservation of the general characteristics of the District.

12.3.4 Building Rehabilitation

The exterior rehabilitation of all segments of the visible structure shall be subject to review by the Board and approval by the Planning & Zoning Commission. Furthermore, findings to the design, architectural treatment and aesthetic character shall be made in view of the fact that excessive uniformity, dissimilarity, inappropriateness or poor quality of design in the exterior appearance of buildings in any neighborhood adversely affects the desirability of the immediate area and the neighboring areas for residential, commercial or other purposes and, by so doing, impairs the benefits of occupancy of existing property in such areas, the stability and value of both improved and unimproved real property in the area, prevents the most appropriate development and use of such areas and produces degeneration of property with deterioration of conditions in the area affecting the health, general safety and welfare of the community. Designs for exterior building rehabilitation shall recommend appropriate material, colors, etc. intended to maintain or restore the integrity of the regional architectural character of a given structure. Property to be rehabilitated shall be required to meet the following recommended level of rehabilitation:

- A. Every reasonable effort shall be made to provide a compatible use for a property, which requires minimal alteration of the building, structure, or site and its environment or to use a property for its originally intended purpose.
- B. The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building, structure, or site and its environment shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.
- C. All buildings, structures and sites shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and that seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged.
- D. Changes that may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognized and respected.
- E. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship that characterize a building, structure or site shall be treated with sensitivity.
- F. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by historic, physical, or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other buildings or structures.
- G. The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building materials shall not be undertaken.
- H. Every reasonable effort shall be made to protect and preserve archeological resources affected by, or adjacent to, any project.
- I. Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property, neighborhood or environment.



- J. Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to structures shall be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be unimpaired.

12.3.5 Construction of New Buildings

- A. The design, architectural treatment and aesthetic character of proposed buildings shall avoid excessive uniformity, dissimilarity, inappropriateness or poor quality of design in the exterior appearance of buildings that could adversely affect the desirability of the immediate area and the neighboring areas and be detrimental to the preservation of the historic character of the area.
- B. Designs for buildings shall recommend appropriate materials, colors, style, etc. intended to maintain the historical integrity of the architectural character of the area and of adjacent structures within the District.
- C. Exterior building materials used in new construction shall be similar to materials used on existing neighboring historical buildings within the zone or shall be materials that are normally associated with materials found in buildings of the architectural period of such neighboring buildings. Other materials may be used that provide compliance with other regulatory requirements or that promote consideration such as energy efficiency.
- D. The architectural design of new construction shall be compatible with and reminiscent of architectural styles exhibited by adjacent historical buildings within the District, by other historical buildings within the District, or by buildings found elsewhere of the same architectural period.

12.3.6 Site Development Criteria

Since prior building development has determined the character of the area, land development shall be consistent and shall be in harmony with the established physical relationship of existing buildings to land area. Such lot or site area as defined in Item A below may be developed and used for a permitted use or Special Exception use provided that the Planning & Zoning Commission finds that the Detailed Plan for the lot or site area has been formulated and integrated in a proper manner with the adjacent developed lots with respect to height, building coverages, building line and building placement on the site and takes into consideration the criteria set forth in these provisions.

- A. Required Lot/Site Area
 - 1. Every lot to be used for a use or uses allowed in this zone shall have a minimum lot area no less than the lot of record in existence at the time of adoption of this regulation with the exception of Item 2 below.
 - 2. In the case of an existing principal building or a portion of an existing principal building on one lot of record, the minimum site area for the development of that building or that portion thereof sufficient in amount to satisfy the site development criteria of this section while still leaving adequate land area for the future site development of any remaining buildings or portions of buildings on that lot.
- B. Height: Existing principal and accessory buildings shall not be increased in height except to allow accessory building utilities including but not limited to radio and television antennae, air conditioning, ventilation, solar heating and elevator systems.



12.3.7 Site Design

- A. Adequate ingress and egress to an off-street parking area or facility shall be provided for all vehicles by means of clearly limited and defined drives.
- B. Separate pedestrian walkways and/or means of pedestrian ingress and egress to the parking area or facility may be required by the Planning & Zoning Commission in appropriate instances because of the size, layout or location of the parking area or facility.
- C. All parking areas shall be located and designed to ensure a 15-foot distance between parked vehicles and principal buildings. The Planning & Zoning Commission may modify this requirement provided separation is provided through other means (plantings, etc.) and approved by the Commission.
- D. Landscaping may be required by the Planning & Zoning Commission in addition to any other landscaping provided or required for other portions of the site. Such additional landscaping may be required by the Commission because of the size, layout or location of the parking area or facility. All landscaping, whether required or not by these regulations, shall be properly installed and maintained on a year-round basis.
- E. The Planning & Zoning Commission may require that an off-street parking area, loading area, or parking facility be properly lit because of its size, layout, location or the particular use served by it.

12.3.8 Off-Site Parking for Inns

The Planning & Zoning Commission may permit off-site event parking located either inside or outside of the District when the applicant can show the existing parking arrangement with an off-premises parking site and demonstrate to the Commission that shuttling patrons to and from the site will not add significant traffic to area streets and intersections.

12.3.9 Fire Protection

Fire hydrants shall be installed as specified in Section 14.5.B.

12.3.10 Utilities

- A. All uses shall have public sanitary sewer and public water.
- B. If improvements to the Town water, sanitary or drainage system are necessary to accommodate increased sanitary and drainage discharge from the site or increased water service to the site, the developer shall make such improvements as may be required by the Planning & Zoning Commission and such improvements shall be shown on the Detailed Plan.
- C. All on-site utilities such as electric power and cable television shall be underground.
- D. All engineering and construction shall be in accordance with the requirements of the Town of Manchester Public Improvement Standards unless specifically waived or deferred by the Planning & Zoning Commission for any good reason.

12.3.11 Site Preservation, Landscaping, and Screening

- A. Development of all sites shall be designed in such a manner as to minimize erosion from the site both during construction and after development and to prevent sedimentation of watercourses and storm drainage system both on and off the site. Disturbed areas shall be kept to a minimum and seeded as soon as is practicable.
- B. Landscaping shall be provided in accordance with Section 14.7.3.
- C. Screening shall be provided in accordance with Section 14.13.3.



7. Amend the following sections to change reference from Historic Zone to Family Mansion and Silk Mill zones:
 - Section 6.5.G
 - Section 6.17.3
 - Section 6.19 Items A and E
 - Section 6.38.3.B
 - Section 6.38.7.B.3
 - Section 7.31
 - Section 7.34
 - Section 14.7.3
 - Section 14.13.3
 - Section 17.4.6 and 17.4.6.G
 - Section 18.7.7
8. Amend the following sections to change reference from Historic Zone to the Silk Mill zone.
 - Sections 11.1.5.A.1, 11.1.5.A.2.a, 11.1.5.A.2.e, and 11.1.5.B
9. Amend Section 14.8 Noise Abatement as follows:

14.8 Noise Abatement

Within all ~~business zones, commercial and industrial zones, and the Historic Zone,~~ all machinery and devices such as ventilation fans, drying fans, air compressors, air-conditioning units, etc. shall be shielded and insulated in a manner that shall deaden noise and deflect sound waves away from abutting premises.



8. Revise Section 7.11.2 (Electric Vehicle Charging Station, Historic Zone) as follows:

7.11.2 Historic ~~Zone~~ Village District

- A. To ensure that the unique historical and architectural qualities of the Historic ~~Zone~~ Village District are preserved in accordance with Section 9.5, the ~~Cheney Brothers National Historic District Commission~~ Architectural Review Board will review the Detailed Plan and make a recommendation to the Planning and Zoning Commission. The Commission will then review and act upon the Detailed Plan prior to the issuance of a building permit.
- B. Applicants shall demonstrate to the Commission's satisfaction that any proposal for electric vehicle charging stations in the Cheney Family Mansion Area as outlined in the Preservation and Development Plan for the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District, dated April, 1980, shall not be visible from the public street.

9. Revise Section 7.32.2. and 7.32.2.E (Solar Energy Systems) as follows:

7.32.2 General Standards for Freestanding Solar Energy Systems in the RR, AA, RA, RB, RC, RM, PRD, EHD, and Historic Village District Zones.

- E. The following additional requirements apply to solar energy systems in the Historic Village District Zone:
 - 1. To ensure that the unique historical and architectural qualities of the Historic ~~Zone~~ Village District are preserved in accordance with Section 9.5 ~~Historic Zone~~ 12.3 Historic Village District, the ~~Cheney Brothers National Historic District Commission~~ Architectural Review Board will review the Detailed Plan for conformance with the U.S. Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings and make a recommendation to the Planning and Zoning Commission. The Commission will then review and act upon the Detailed Plan prior to the issuance of a building permit.
 - 2. Applicants shall demonstrate to the Commission's satisfaction that any proposal for solar energy systems in the Cheney Family Mansion Area ~~zone~~ as outlined in the Preservation and Development Plan for the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District, dated April, 1980, shall not be visible from the public street.