

CONVENIENCE STORES WITH GAS PUMPS

Feature a well-designed store at the front of the parcel, with the gas pumps, canopy and accessory parking toward the rear.

The typical gas station layout from the past with a couple of pumps in front and the repair bays in a building out back, no longer works well with the current demand for a convenience store, customer parking, more pumps, and an oversized canopy. Although each site requires a different design, we need an alternative model that features an attractive store up front, rather than the less appealing gas pumps and expansive asphalt pad.

Putting the parking and pumps toward the back allows a direct walking connection to the store entrance, as well as a safer transition distance between vehicles turning in quickly from the road and those backing out of parking spaces and moving around the pumps. It also makes rear connections between neighboring businesses easier to coordinate.



Without an emphasis on locally inspired architecture, front canopy franchise formats can create look-alike boxes and asphalt landscapes on almost every main corner.

Guidelines for Gas/Convenience Stores

- **Highlight the store up front** in a well-landscaped setting with the parking, pumps, and canopy in a secondary position toward the rear.
- **Reflect traditional architecture** of the community and region in building and roof forms, window proportions, materials, colors and details.
- **Provide a direct sidewalk connection** to the store entrance at the front or side of the building.
- **Design all four sides of the store** with windows and other architectural features to avoid visible blank walls.
- **Connect the canopy with the primary store structure** whenever possible, and coordinate the roof design and supports even if not attached.
- **Use recessed, non-glare lighting under the canopy**, pedestrian-scale lighting around the building, and medium height downlighting in the parking area.
- **Encourage a monument-style sign** integrated into a planter or landscaping and/or a wall or hanging sign, not standard pole signs or canopy signs.

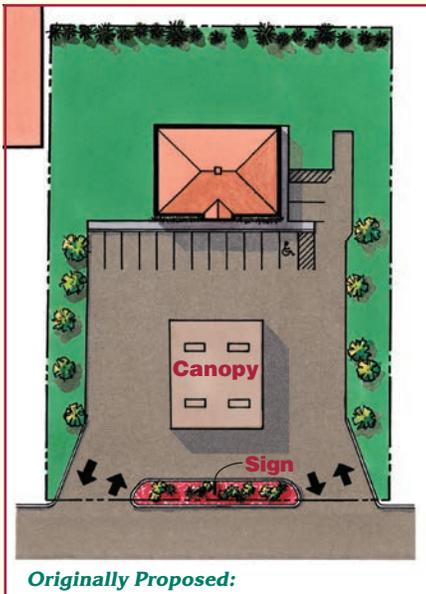


An attractive convenience store near Kingston, R. I. with the canopy to the rear, quality landscaping and side yard parking, but no sidewalks.

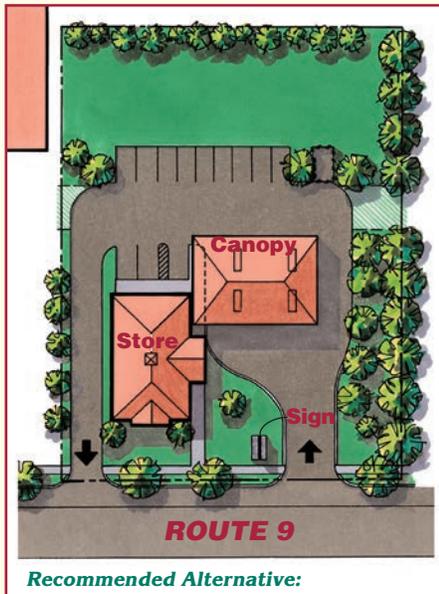


A wood gas station sign in Rhinebeck that is integrated with the site's landscaping and building materials.

A Dutchess County Case Study



A typical layout with the store set back from the road, no sidewalk connections, canopy looming in front, overly wide driveways, and an uninterrupted block of blacktop, bigger than two basketball courts.



The store is up front in a landscaped yard with a direct walkway connection to the side entrance. The canopy is attached to the building toward the rear, still visible from the street. Note the potential rear connections to adjacent businesses.



At this gateway location, the Rhinebeck Board insisted that the pumps be behind the store. The applicant preferred the angled canopy to allow some side yard parking, but the store entrance was placed too far back.

Canopy Design

Some canopies, as big and bright as a hovering spaceship, are used not just to cover the pumps, but to act as a giant billboard for the business, with brash colors and multiple signs. As an accessory feature to the primary uses, which center around the store building, canopies should never visually dominate the site. Canopies are roof structures and should be patterned after traditional roof types and structural supports in the area. Canopy and roof signs should be prohibited.

Glaringly bright canopy lighting actually reduces overall visibility by making adjacent areas look dark by comparison. Balanced downlighting is more effective than overly bright lighting (see Lighting Guide), and all canopy lighting should be recessed.



This side canopy in LaGrange was designed to reflect the roofline and cornice details of the old store building.



A model sketch plan for an attached canopy to the rear of a proposed convenience store in the Town of North East.



Source:

Clark Wagner, *A New Urbanism Approach to Service Station Design*, American Planning Association, Jan. 2001