

History, Place & Regulation - Coupeville, Washington

Coupeville Public Library Addition

Molly Promes

Background

Site Analysis



coupeville: the larger context



coupeville at the turn of the twentieth century



coupeville today



hidden from view: the coupeville public library

Site Selection

Perched in a prominent location overlooking Penn Cove, the Coupeville Public Library sits quietly in the landscape, understating its importance as a civic institution. The expansion project presents an opportunity to elevate the presence of the library in the community and establish a greater connection between this structure and the surrounding historic fabric.

Site Characteristics and Analysis

The library is situated immediately adjacent to an open field which currently accommodates the Coupeville Saturday Farmers’ Market; it also enjoys proximities to the waterfront commercial district, historic Main Street, and several distinct residential areas. In essence, the library is at the hub of the community. The site is sloped downward to the north, and an elevation change of approximately 14 feet occurs across the site from the southeast to northwest corners.

Site Context and History

This site straddles the divide between Coupeville’s principle two original land claims, and negotiates the boundary of two distinct platting systems. The open field beyond was once the farm of prominent Coupevillain Fred Krueger, and grain elevators once stood tall in roughly the location of today’s library.

Site Importance within the Coupeville Context

Coupeville might best be described as a patchwork, with distinctive landscape elements woven together with a lively variety of architectural styles developed over the course of more than a century. The library site represents an opportunity to unify these contextual elements, and speak both to Coupeville’s past and future.

History, Place & Regulation - Coupeville, Washington

Coupeville Public Library Addition

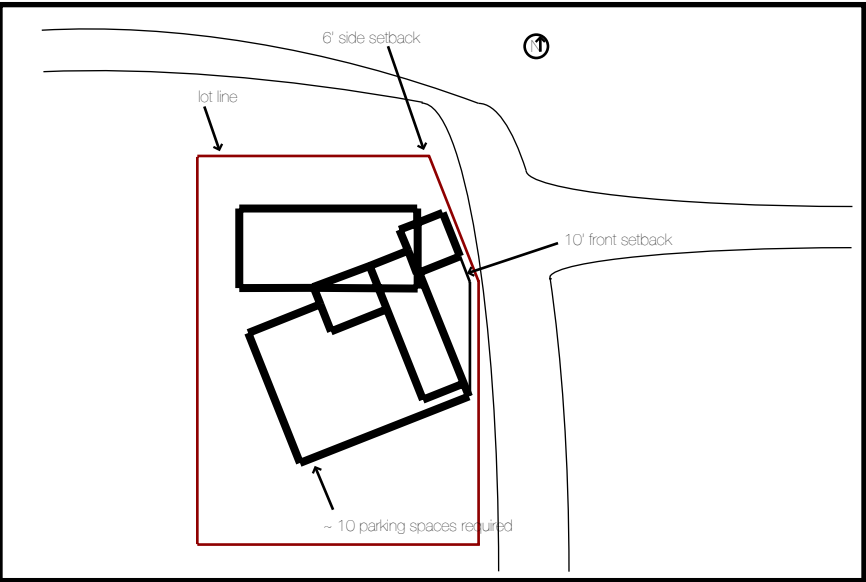
Molly Promes

Project 1

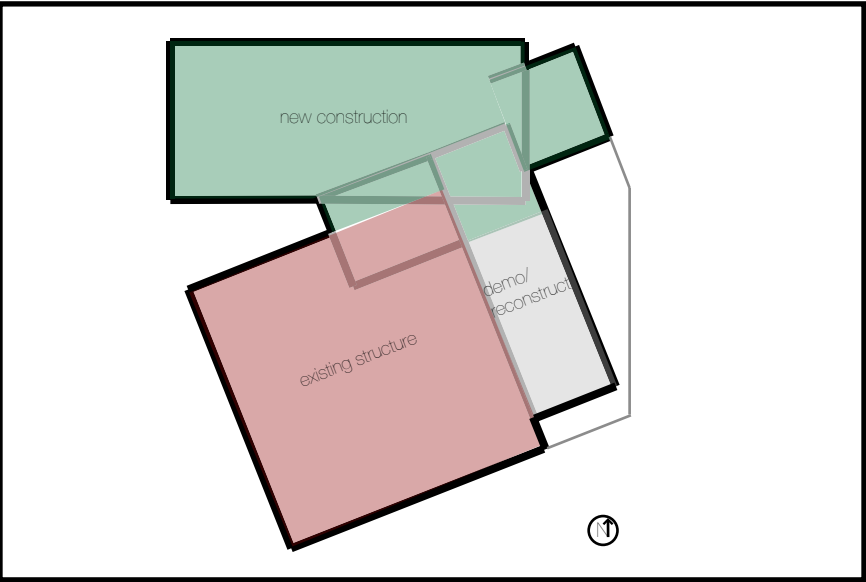
A Beacon of Light



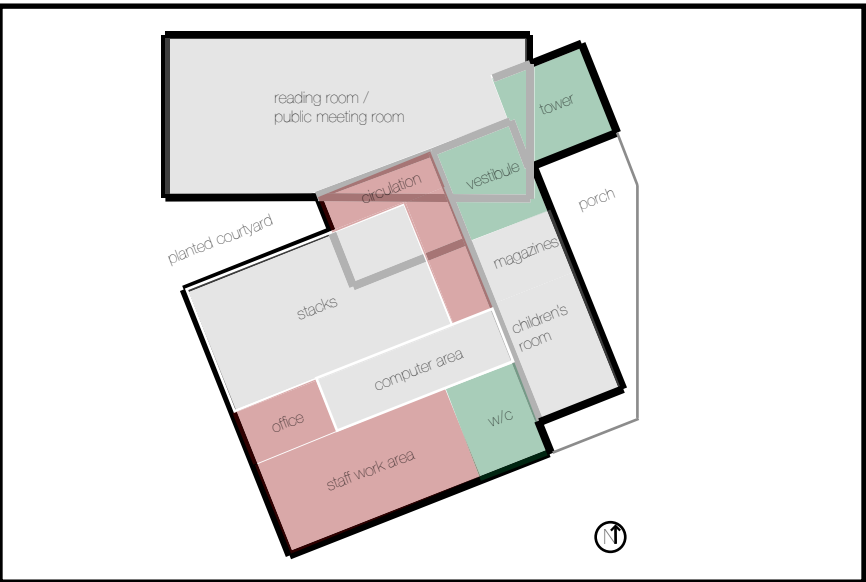
light reading



site/zoning issues



existing structure & proposed addition



diagrammatic plan

Program

The library expansion project involves increasing the size of the existing 1988-constructed building in order to accommodate an increased service area population. The specific areas of the library requiring expansion include staff work spaces, reading and study areas, and computer areas; in addition, expansion plans call for a new community meeting room. In this first design iteration, in order to make most efficient use of such a meeting space, a flexible space that could function as both a reading room and a public meeting room is proposed.

Zoning Code

The zoning code for this public-zoned area of Coupeville was straightforward and presented few constraints. The height limit here, as in the rest of Coupeville, is 28 feet, and the setbacks are 10 feet at the street, and 6 and 10 feet at the rear and side yards, respectively. Parking requirements mandate that one space be provided for each employee, plus one space for each official vehicle, and one visitor space for each 1000 square feet of public space. Currently, parking spaces are provided for 27 vehicles, which is well in excess of the code’s mandate.

Design Goals

Three primary design goals guided the development of this first scheme: elevating the public profile of the library, minimizing disruption to the existing structure, and maximizing the assets of the current library were key considerations during the design process. In relating to the surrounding context, this design concept makes reference to the town’s rich fabric without resorting to overt historicism. Coupeville’s zoning code allowed for the achievement of these goals with few impediments.

History, Place & Regulation - Coupeville, Washington

Coupeville Public Library Addition

Molly Promes

Project 2

Maintaining the Status Quo



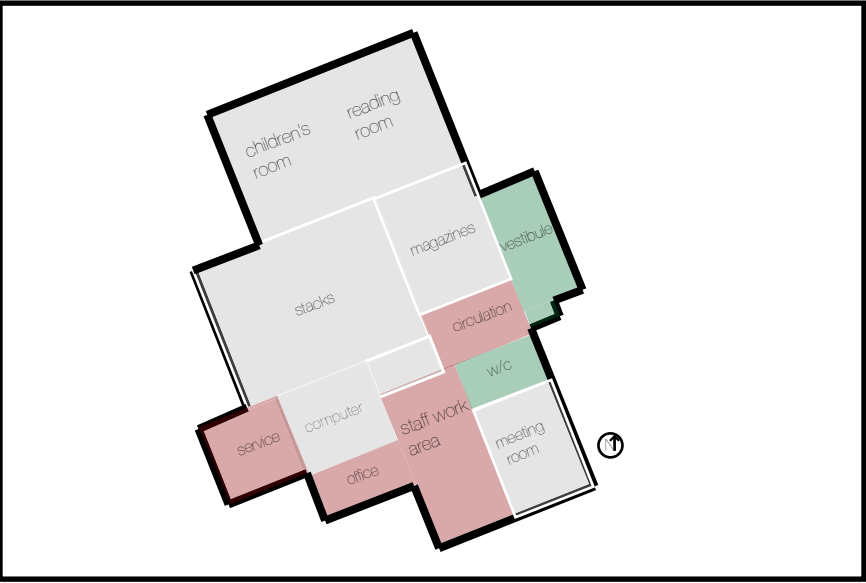
still sprawling into the landscape



materials and roofline to remain



existing structure & proposed addition



diagrammatic plan

The Cost-Driven Approach

This design iteration focuses on efficiency and functionality of program, with little attention to aesthetics or larger ideals. As a publicly funded project, cost savings will be a primary consideration, and thus exploring the possibilities of inexpensive designs which are still acceptable under Coupeville’s code is an instructive exercise. This particular design represents the resolution of basic programmatic concerns, and does not take into account the rich context of the site.

Design Strategies

Because basic function and cost were the dominant concerns here, the design process was defined by a quick but thorough analysis of spatial requirement diagrams prepared by the library staff. These diagrams simply showed three programmatic protrusions emerging from the north, south, and west faces of the existing building; each represented an expansion of immediately adjacent spaces. The footprint of the library addition was prepared accordingly; rooflines and cladding materials were extended to the new portions of structure wherever possible. Little attention was given to how the design might more efficiently address long-range programmatic issues or the surrounding context.

Zoning Code and Loopholes

This design, although it makes only modest reference to its context and adds little to the character of Coupeville, is still fully compliant with Coupeville’s zoning requirements. Thus, it was not necessary to actively seek out code loopholes. However, it is worth noting here that several avenues exist for circumventing the 28-foot height requirement, had this been a design priority. Given the slope of this site and the rules for establishing a vertical datum, it is possible to add an additional 7 feet to the overall height of the structure, while still meeting code requirements.

History, Place & Regulation - Coupeville, Washington

Coupeville Public Library Addition

Molly Promes

Project 3

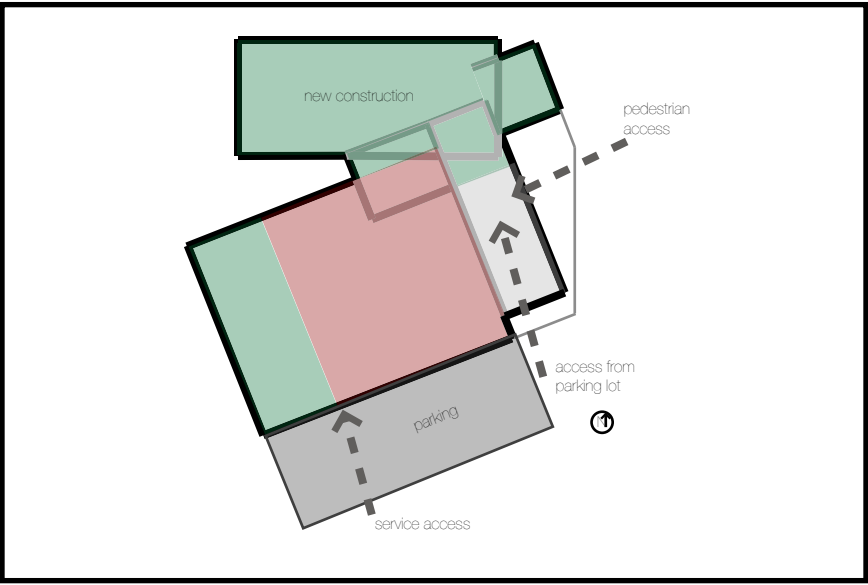
Expanding Even Further



addressing the open field

The Balanced Approach

This iteration functions as an alternative design possibility to the first project; here, programmatic concerns are addressed in a modified manner, but the contextual response parallels that of the initial design. This particular plan is distinguished from the first by the location and function of the community meeting space. Rather than economizing on space, this version allows the community meeting room its own dedicated space along the west side of the building, facing the open field.



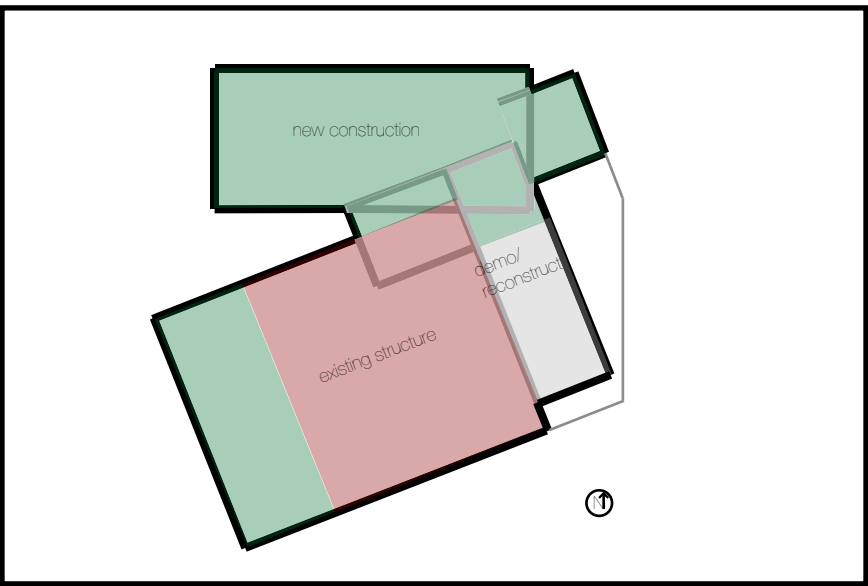
circulation & access

Zoning Code

Once again, height, setback, and parking requirements were the primary code constraints. Here, however, because expansion on the west side is limited by the location of the lot line and setback requirements, it was not possible to develop a space of great proportions.

Design Goals

Like the first design, this iteration seeks to elevate the library's public profile, while retaining the positive features of the current structure. This project also ascribes to the notion that historic forms might be abstracted and reinterpreted, but should not be directly replicated. The new design challenge presented here was addressing the open space to the west while still integrating new construction with the library's existing form, and relating to the historic context. This has been resolved through a simple extension of the existing roofline, and the borrowing of neighboring craftsman elements, which have an earth-hugging quality well suited to the terrain, and a welcoming disposition that addresses the open field.



existing structure & proposed addition



diagrammatic plan

History, Place & Regulation - Coupeville, Washington

Coupeville Public Library Addition

Molly Promes

Project 4

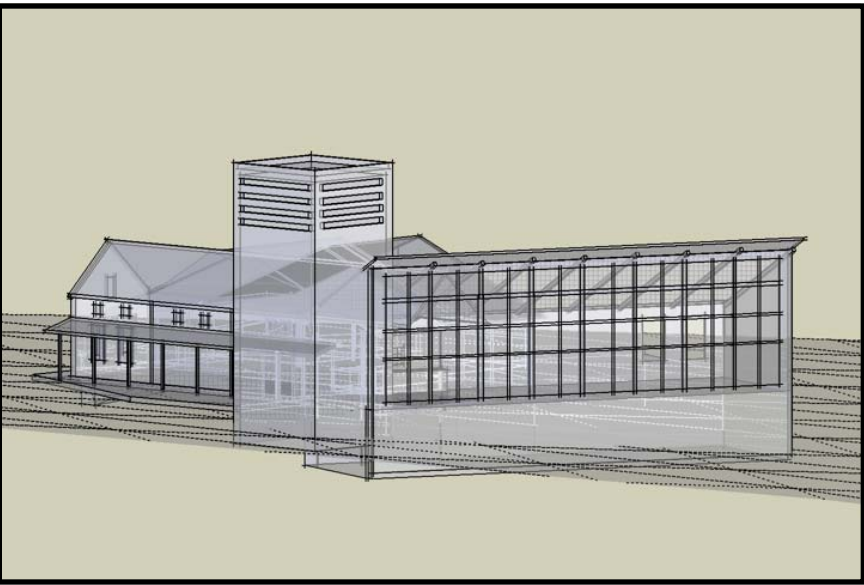
Attention to Detail



preserving the view: plate glass windows

Design Guideline Response

In the government/commercial historic overlay zone, Coupeville’s proposed design guidelines seek primarily to preserve historic structures, enhance views of Penn Cove, ensure the use compatible massing, colors, and materials in new construction, and encourage the use of landscaping to reduce the impact of larger buildings and to screen parking. These overarching strategies align neatly with the design goals for each iteration of the Coupeville Public Library addition.



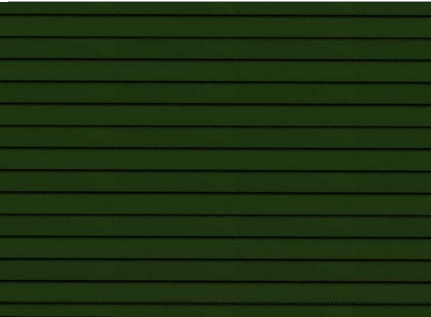
design standard: divided light windows

Breaking Up the View

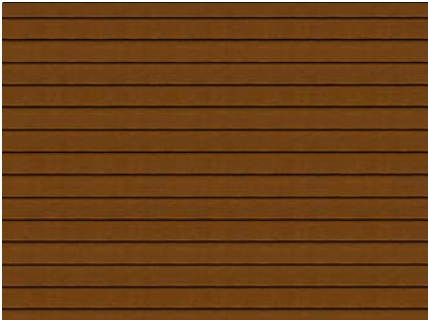
One of the more specific proposed design guidelines would, however, directly affect these projects. This requirement pertains to windows, and specifies that windows in historic neighborhoods must have detailed treatments, such as true divided lights. Adhering to this requirement would substantially change the character of the north elevation, as shown in sketch.

A Question of Materiality

The guidelines recommend that colors and materials be chosen that enhance the architectural features of the building, and do not conflict with surrounding structures. In keeping with this guidance, the material palette at left has been chosen; this responds to the town’s strong wood building tradition, contemporary color schemes, and natural landscape.



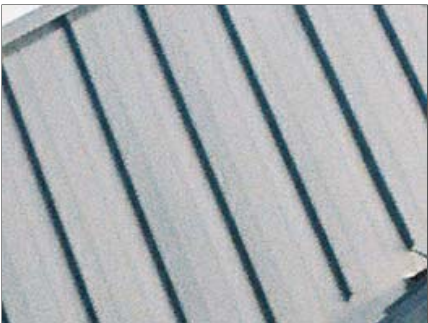
existing lap siding repainted



natural finish lap siding



existing cedar shake shingles to remain



reflective metal roofing



crushed rock pathways and parking



natural landscaping palette

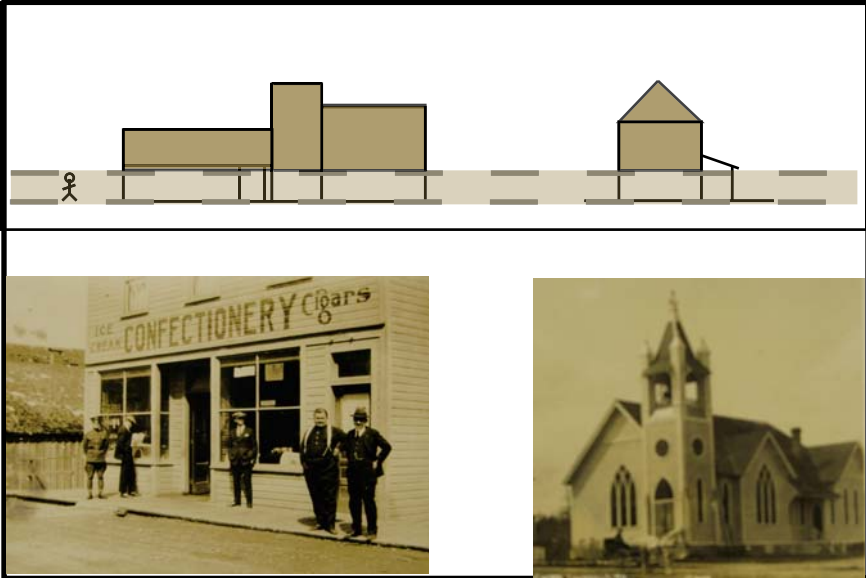
History, Place & Regulation - Coupeville, Washington

Coupeville Public Library Addition

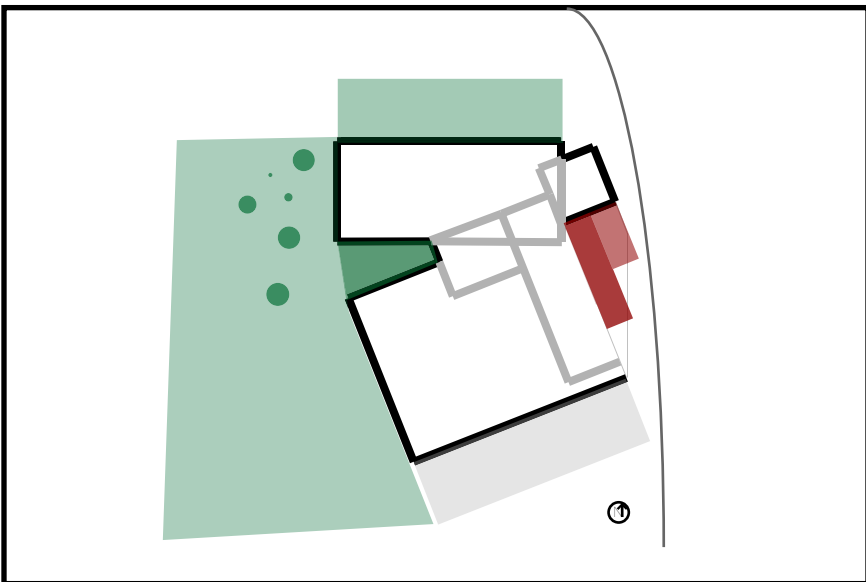
Molly Promes

Conclusions

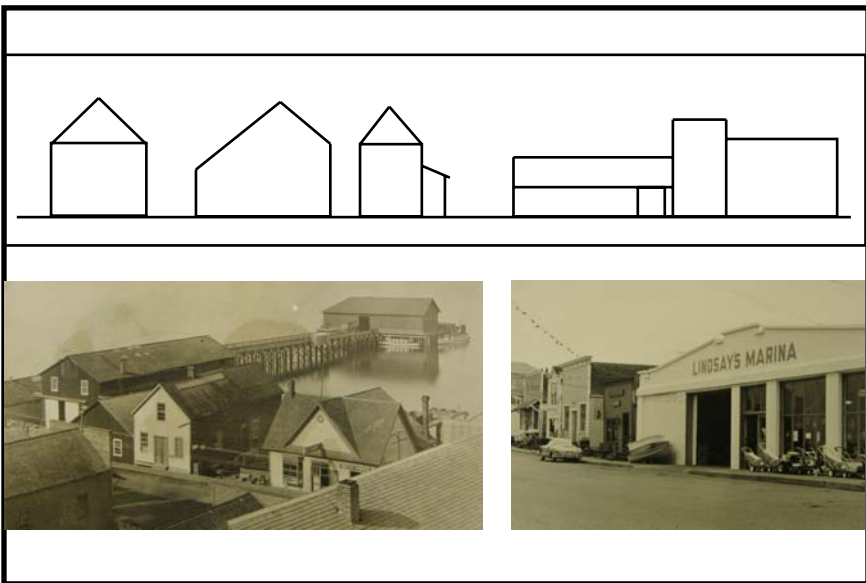
Better by Design Review?



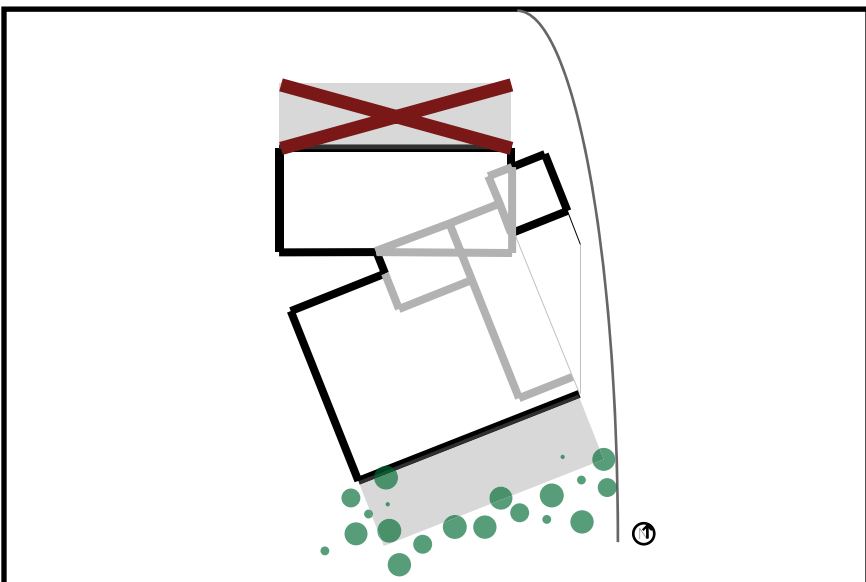
human scale: materials & composition



outdoor spaces: variety in scale, depth, and texture



good neighbor: respect for surrounding mass and scale



shielded parking: landscaping that conceals automobiles

De-Coding Coupeville

The four design iterations reveal that in those areas of Coupeville that are zoned public, code requirements are relatively relaxed, and do little to limit design possibilities. In this respect, it appears that Coupeville's standard model code denies its unique sense of place.

Coupeville's proposed design guidelines, like the current code, seem to overlook the possibility of contextually insensitive public buildings. A revised form-based approach to design guidelines for public buildings might seek to employ the following principles:

- 1. Remember the human scale.** Formal compositional elements, such as massing, can scale down a massive institutional structure. Similarly, small-scale materials, such as lap siding or brick, can lend a structure a more human appearance.
- 2. Establish variety in outdoor spaces.** When a site allows opportunities for open space, efforts should be made to create a variety of outdoor "rooms" that can accommodate a multiplicity of uses. These spaces should express a variety of scales, depths, and textures.
- 3. Be a good neighbor.** Respecting surrounding mass and scale is critical to a successful design. This can be accomplished in a number of manners, including breaking up massing, and following existing siting patterns.
- 4. Shield parking.** Parking lots ought not be the most prominent element of a public building; instead, they should be sheltered by landscaping, and placed along the side or rear of the structure.
- 5. Have fun.** Coupeville is a lively town, and its architecture should reflect its unique spirit of place. Design guidelines are intended to reinforce and enhance the character of the town, rather than constrain or limit creative possibilities.