


MARS DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Borough of Mars, beginning in spring of 2014, has undertaken a concerted effort to restore downtown to its rightful place of importance in the community, and in turn help rekindle a sense of place and community that will positively impact the quality of life for all residents. As part of the comprehensive effort to revitalize the heart of the community, Mars has dedicated time and resources to developing a facade improvement program. This unique program is set in place to help offset renovation costs for property/business owners within the corridor looking to complete facade upgrades and beautification. The facade design guidelines, this document will help formalize facade revitalization efforts and provide a framework for proposed enhancements.


The guidelines outlined in this document are to be utilized by existing business and property owners looking for guidance on appropriate and historically accurate facade upgrades, as well as prospective property owners who are interested in preserving or revitalizing a building within the Borough. Information outlined in this document will be utilized by the Borough of Mars as a set of guidelines for review and approvals of proposed facade work within the Borough. While these guidelines are prepared with extensive public input, adapting to the ever-changing need of the community is vital for a thriving community to remain current. These facade design guidelines are not intended to, nor shall they, remove any rights of development or uses of property.

GUIDELINES INCLUDED



SIGNAGE GUIDELINES
Signage is a vital component of the streetscape and overall unification of character

01



FACADE GUIDELINES
Facades play an integral role in the success of any corridor or civic space

02



SITE DESIGN GUIDELINES
Appropriate site design will determine the look, feel and use of parcels

03

MARS, PA IS A COMMUNITY IN THE PROCESS OF COMPLETING A TRANSFORMATIVE DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PROCESS THAT WILL HELP REACTIVATE THEIR ORIGINAL DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS AND PERSONIFY THEIR UNIQUE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE; PROMOTING THEIR COMMUNITY AS THE PRIME DESTINATION FOR BUSINESS ATTRACTION AND IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE IN BUTLER COUNTY.

ABOUT MARS

Located approximately 18 miles North of Pittsburgh, Mars is a small town situated in Butler County. Mars is ideally situated along SR228 between I-79 and Cranberry, PA. This location positions Mars as a crossroads for the surrounding communities, including several of the Country's fastest growing areas; Adam' Township and Cranberry Township.

Settlement in the Mars (originally called Marshall) area dates back to 1798 when Isaac Covert purchased 100 acres of land for a homestead. Mars experienced economic growth in the second half of the 1800's with the construction of a local saw mill along Breakneck Creek, increased farming activity, construction of the first general store (1862, by Frank Johnston), construction of Mars' first Post Office by Samuel Parks in 1873, and installation of the Pittsburgh/New Castle/Lake Erie Railroad in 1877.

This economic activity and development created the traditional core business district known as 'Downtown Mars'. The early 1900's saw further economic growth within the Borough of Mars with the introduction of streetcars connecting Mars to Butler (1907). This streetcar line was referred to as the Butler Short Line and allowed residents of Mars to commute to work, as well as bringing regional travelers to the Borough. In 1931, due to national and regional financial hardships, the streetcar system in Mars was stopped. The Mars Public Library was chartered in 1947, and its current building location on Grand Ave. was established in 1953. It was significant in that it was the first library established in the region.

By the 1980's the new economic power house of Cranberry began to emerge adjacent to Mars, causing a once economically viable and thriving downtown district to become distressed. Once vibrant and active, many historic buildings have become vacant and in need of repair; likewise, the physical condition of the downtown streets and infrastructure have also deteriorated and serve to deter economic growth and public activity in the downtown.

Mars has assets that need to be capitalized upon, including its ideal proximity to Cranberry and Pittsburgh, its small town identity (which is lacking in the adjacent communities), its natural assets (rivers and open space), and its unique history.



Currently the image and condition of the infrastructure along the roadway corridors within the downtown district is not of a quality that is inviting, and detracts from the assets found within the Borough. A comprehensive facade upgrade/ renovation program within the downtown district will create a more inviting community image, preserve and enhance existing assets, and support an environment that is conducive to economic development.



IMPORTANCE OF AESTHETICS

The importance of a quality aesthetic cannot be overstated. Communities seeking to create a sense of place and foster a dynamic economy must take steps to become visibly enticing. In the age of information with photo sharing being so ubiquitous, it's imperative that cities invest in being pleasing to the eye, otherwise, they become nearly impossible to market. When a community takes steps to grow more aesthetically appealing, the effort to market that community becomes considerably easier and often times is done by thousands of visitors with smart phones through social media. First impressions can last a life time and first-time visitors to a town should find a community that is attractive and well maintained. This leads to sharing their experience with all of their social connections and fostering a positive impression of the community. In addition, residents' sense of civic pride is greatly affected by the appearance of the heart of their community.

Historic Images of Mars



Mars Design Guidelines

Design Guidelines Overlay District Map



All guidelines were prepared for implementation within the above outlined geographic area. The boundary description is as follows:

- *Crowe Ave to the West*
- *SR 3015 to the Southeast*
- *The Southern end of parcel 450-S2-B22-0000 to the South*
- *West Railroad Avenue to the East*
- *Clark Street to the North*

GUIDELINES PURPOSE



PURPOSE OF DESIGN GUIDELINES

As the Borough of Mars looks to help business/property owners transform their facades, guidelines are being prepared to outline an implementable and achievable framework for properties within the project area. Facade Guidelines, this document, will help the Borough achieve the below parameters:

- Maintain and renovate buildings within the historic downtown and immediate project area
- Preserve unique architectural character of the community
- Renovate inaccurately restored buildings within the project area
- Assist in renovation projects, creating a sensitivity to architectural continuity within the community
- Ensure material selections for renovations are accurate, meet community standards and are environmentally sustainable
- Spark an interest in facade upgrades within the community
- Assist local business owners/property owners with transforming buildings into historically accurate representations of local landmarks
- Attractive facilities, further expanding the economic viability of Mars
- Provide direction in terms of architectural detail that foster a more cohesive and attractive business district

NEED FOR DESIGN GUIDELINES

As communities around the Borough of Mars continue to grow and develop, there is a growing need for the downtown corridor to be utilized by local and surrounding community residents. In order to create this regional destination and create a stronger economy within the facade program project area, the community has a need to formalize appropriate facade revitalization parameters. This need has been determined through the increasing amount of real estate transactions and building permits within the downtown core area, subsequently creating a haphazard and non-historically accurate look for the town. The desire for this document is to provide guidance on appropriate facade elements, including; Signage, Awnings, Windows/Doors, Architectural Elements, Roofing, Materials, Tuckpointing, Historic Preservation, Entrances, Building/Paint Colors and Art Displays. Through increased uniformity of these items, the Borough of Mars is attempting to create a cohesive architectural character that is unique to the Borough and will draw people in for shopping, dining and retail purposes. The purpose of facade guidelines is not a matter of simply telling property owners what to do, but providing a helpful framework for property owners to work from in order to realize the best results. Well executed guidelines are not meant to be proscriptive, but instead to give direction in terms of material and design choices that will benefit the overall aesthetic of the district and in turn benefit the property owner by ensuring the investment fosters a return in value.