

City of Helen



Architectural Guidelines

Architectural Guidelines for The City of Helen

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The City of Helen Planning, Design & Review Board

Before beginning any work:

Please refer to City of Helen Code of Ordinances

Section 34-576, along with these guidelines.

It is your responsibility to know & follow building code.

It shall be strictly enforced.

The general motif of all commercial developments shall be

Alpine Design.

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Foreword

In the 1960's, Helen, Georgia was a typical small lumber town without a future. This changed with the work of enlightened merchants and residents in the building of an Alpine Village. John Kollock, a local artist, developed a number of drawings from his visits to the Bavarian region of Germany. These drawings were used to inspire the redevelopment of Helen in an Alpine Village. **It is the architecture of Helen that differentiates it from other tourist destinations. People come to Helen to experience Bavarian architecture.** All new commercial construction within Helen should contribute to the character of this 20th century recreation of a Bavarian town. That is the motivation for these guidelines.



Introduction

One of the attractive qualities of Bavarian towns is that they have developed over centuries. A typical European town started as a small village growing within natural geographic boundaries, such as a stream edge or mountainside. Frequently, a wall was added for protection of the town edge if exposed to fields. The town would typically grow to the boundary, and then newer construction would begin to take place outside these boundaries with structures built further apart. The original town is frequently called Altstadt (old town) with newer construction occurring beyond in the Faubourg (false town). Because of walls or natural boundaries, the Old Town is much denser. Since Old Towns evolved before cars were invented, small walkways wind through this part of town. The generator of traffic was people and animals. In the Old Town, buildings vary in height but are primarily two- to three-story structures with a focus near the center spires or the clock tower or town hall. In Faubourg, the focus is more agricultural with a main house and outbuildings separated from the next by fields. Larger roadways break off into smaller paths leading to the main house. In Helen, the original town is similar to the Bavarian Old Town. Helen, too, has grown in recent years across the river and south into a faubourg known as “The Island.”

People find traditional Bavarian architecture fascinating because of its use of materials and forms. Large, exposed wood beams, decorated doorways, paned windows, shingled roofs, bell towers, cobble stoned streets all exhibit a smaller and more detailed scale than we see of today’s construction. Because old towns evolved over centuries, the buildings contain a variety of architectural forms and styles. Buildings can date anywhere from the 12th century to the 21st century. They also incorporate elements from a number of different architectural styles. The town evolved as the needs, beliefs, and circumstances of the people changed. Early Bavarian towns were designed around an agrarian focus, which many still have. As architecture evolved circumstances may have required drawbridges, turrets, arches and other fortifications for defense. Recent designs for efficiency and changing land use in larger towns (like a shop under the house rather than cows) add another dimension to the evolution of Bavarian style.

The City of Helen is not a true reproduction of a Bavarian Village, but an artist's interpretation of a typical Bavarian town. Through John Kollock's paintings, elements of Bavarian architecture were recreated in Helen. Helen's style of Bavarian architecture incorporates the featured design elements in a true Alpine Village. Though a typical Bavarian building may only contain a few architectural features, buildings in Helen have a number of features on each building, actually exaggerating the elements of Bavarian style. The visitor to Helen sees the image of an Alpine village, not a true depiction of an Alpine village. It is the essence of an Alpine village that Helen tries to convey to its visitors.

Helen also differs from an actual Alpine village in that it uses 21st century design and construction methods, craftsmanship, and materials. This can benefit construction, as there are simpler more economic ways to construct a building than by using the earlier methods of construction and materials which would be required in true reproduction. Bavarian towns were designed around an agrarian focus with areas for livestock totally unlike today's Helen, which is focused on the needs of tourists. A building form, for example, that was originally designed as a barn structure can be used in Helen as the base form of a motel. Where sheep were herded through the winding paths of the Bavarian town, in Helen tourists walk from shop to shop along brick paver paths.

The architecture of Helen needs to respond to fostering a Bavarian essence, while responding to the needs of the 21st century tourist. Since the early redevelopment of Helen, a number of inappropriate architectural elements not found within traditional Bavarian architecture have been added to the design of structures.

Alleyways

The charming villages of the mountainous regions in Bavaria are mazes of alleys called Gassen (pronounced Gah – Sen) These alleys, smaller than the Strassen (street) weave throughout the Altstadt sections of villages, and this is the area much of the real business is done. Villagers often live above their businesses and need only to go downstairs to go to work.

The density in the villages is influenced by the scarcity of land in Bavaria and by the tight restriction against building outside the central business district. Helen similarly has a shortage of land zoned retail.

Visitors to Helen are drawn to these narrow alleyways. White Horse Square, Helen Square, Horse & Ducky Platz, Fussen Platz & Swiss German Plaza. These Gassen convert a space that might accommodate one or two street side shops into an area containing perhaps six to ten shops and restaurants. Thus, not only is the visitor drawn to stroll down these quaint alleys, but the developer is also able to make better use of a piece of property.

The alleyways should have a plane surface constructed of pavers. Experience has shown that the surface must be smooth enough to allow easy walking, rolling strollers, and so forth. The surface should not be solid concrete. If concrete must be used it should be stamped and stained for a rustic look.



Arches

Arches are found frequently throughout Germany, and these arches have a variety of functions. An example of the use of arches in Helen include the arch under the tower in Helen Square which allows the pedestrian to pass from Main Street, under the tower, into another shopping area.

Arches such as this are found all through Rothenburg in upper Bavaria. Another example in Helen is the archway at the Helendorf Inn which allows automobiles to pass from the street to the parking area. This use of the archway places parking behind the building, which is preferable to a long expanse of asphalt in the front of the building.

Additional graceful arches are found on store fronts where an arched window is often preferable to a rectangular window. Examples of this use can be found at Hansel and Gretel Candy Kitchen. The developer should include this idea in their development whenever it is possible, as the arch adds character and a look of authenticity to a building.



Awnings

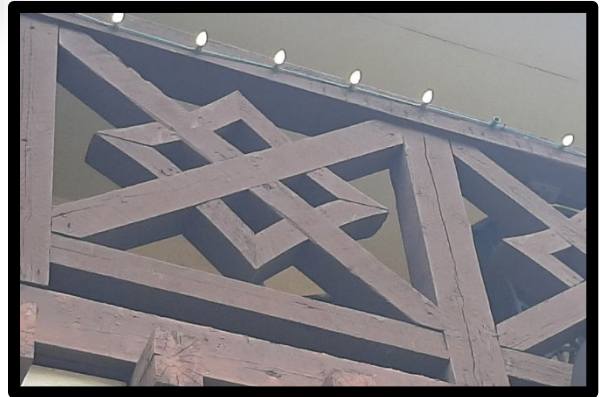
Awnings are used in Bavaria on the front of most retail shops. These awnings are retractable, of canvas or similar cloth material, and they are generally bright colored in contrast to the buildings. Awnings provide shelter from precipitation as well as providing shade from the sun.

When awnings are utilized on a building, the owner must remember to watch for fading or other deterioration to the fabric. Damaged awnings should be replaced or repaired as soon as damage is noted.



Balconies & Railings

There are typically two types of wood used: Heavy, structural pieces, or thin boards, usually highly jig sawed in intricate patterns. If thin boards are used, attention should be given to their anchorage and to the structural framing behind them. Please keep in mind that the largest opening cannot be larger than 4". All railings should be an "Alpine Design" "Standard pickets are not acceptable & will not be allowed."



Bavarian Color Schemes

Buildings in the Alpine Region feature woods that are stained in earth tone colors. These colors include dark rich browns, greens, and maroons, and variations of these colors include their softer shades.

Additional colors are utilized. Please check with the employees at Helen City Hall or Ace Hardware for an up-to-date color chart.

Often buildings consist of a lower level constructed of block covered with stucco. Upper levels are frequently wood in stark contrast to the color on the base. Builds may also be covered in half timbers.



Building Massing

In the denser downtown (Alstadt) buildings closely abut and almost overlap in the interest of utilizing the limited space that exist. These buildings due to their height and narrowness, might have a steeper roof, 10/12 or 12/12, but they may just as easily have a 4/12 or 5/12 pitch.

These buildings, since they are so close, should be designed to complement each other rather than detract from each other. Careful planning gives the impression that these buildings were always “neighbors” as opposed to being built in different eras. White Horse Square is a good example of an area that gives the impression of being one unit, even as it continues to evolve.

People always state there is nowhere for Helen to grow. There are many places for the town to grow. The more we create building massing, the more it will take on the look of a Bavarian Village.



Doors

All doors should have Alpine style trim or faux painted accents. Doors should be made of wood whenever possible. The door often has a semicircular head or a segmented arch head, with or without additional ornamentation. Good examples are the Helendorf Inn or the Hofbrau Haus.

Additionally, doors should have “Carriage” lights on the sides.



Fascia trim

Trim shall be Alpine design and painted in contrast to the main building color. If decorative Alpine style trim is installed over a larger board, it needs to be painted a different color to be defined.



Horizontal Circulation

The key to site circulation and horizontal pedestrian circulation is simplicity. Part of the charm of historic Bavarian site planning is that it evolved during an era that did not have cars and trucks. Small vehicles, such as carts and wheelbarrows, require much less turning area than today's vehicles and small alleyways and walkways result.

Cars in the landscape should be minimized. Create parking and site circulation behind buildings, so the building can be close to the street, and cars hidden behind. If the building cannot complete the job of screening the cars, add screening walls or hedges to minimize the cars presence. The result provides two benefits. First the building can be closer to the street, which is a traditional Bavarian pattern, and second, even when all cars are parked and the lot is full, the scene will look historically Bavarian.

Even though the design of vehicles has changed over the centuries, for the most part the size of pedestrians has not. A four-foot sidewalk is comfortable, a five-foot sidewalk is needed for two wheelchairs to pass. Consider using materials other than standard concrete, such as precast pavers or stamped and stained concrete, making sure that the texture is not too coarse to accommodate those with ambulatory impairments.



Landscaping

Helen is Georgia's Alpine Village, and this should be reflected in planting schemes. Evergreen trees and perennials compose the Alpine plant palette.

Traditional Bavarian architecture does not use foundation plantings. Tall columnar evergreens, such as Norway Spruce trees, may be evident near buildings, with boscsages of linden or planer trees planted in public spaces.

Window boxes are strongly encouraged, with colorful annuals. Bulbs are also recommended along sidewalks, in planter boxes, and in imaginative places that can be viewed by the public.

Please refer also to the City of Helen City Ordinance 34-708 for requirements of landscaping in parking lots.



Roofs

Roofs in Bavaria, especially on retail buildings in villages, are 6/12, 5/12 or even 4/12 pitches. These low slopes enable snow to be held more easily in winter for roof insulation.

Roofs should overhang the front and rear of the buildings. They are often supported by knee braces as much as five (5) feet or six (6) feet in vertical height. Often the larger the building, the greater the overhang, and large buildings with overhangs eight (8) feet – ten (10) feet are not uncommon. The minimum overhang for buildings in Helen should be three (3) feet with a maximum of six (6) feet for gables and two (2) feet for the eaves. Gable overhangs should be of a consistent length; that is if the overhang is four (4) feet, it should be four (4) feet throughout the span of the gable. Corbels should be used to support the large overhangs.

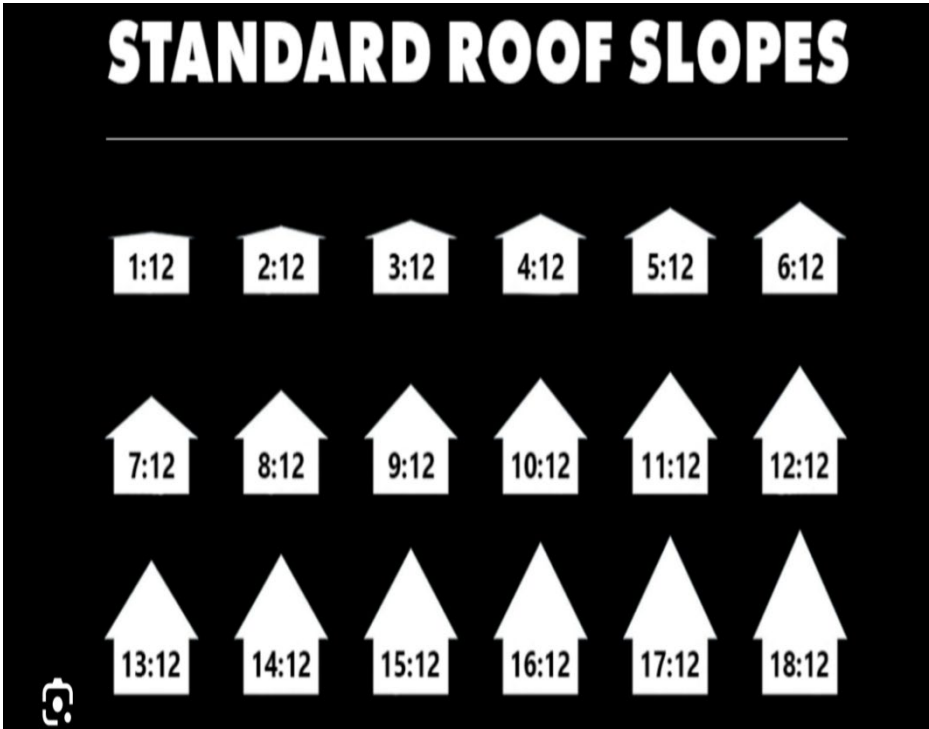
Red is the most common color for roofing shingles, but the use of brown shingles should be considered for contrast.

Some different roof types to consider are listed below:

Gable	Dormer	Jerkinhead	Hexagonal (towers)	M Shaped
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Shingles that are red or brown are acceptable. Standing seam metal can be used as well as coated metal shingles. They must be red or brown, but not bright red.

Examples of roof pitch, large overhangs & corbel





Roofscapes

The Alpine roof is a collection place for a variety of elements.

Dormers – Dormers are typically not used on broad roofs of rural Alpine buildings. They are found in villages and towns where steep roofs are common. Two types are most prevalent. The eyelid and the standard dormer. Both are well adapted for use on 12/12 slopes and steeper.

Other – Chimneys are often a simple element, made of stucco with a round top. These can be used to cover vent pipes protruding through the roof. Bell towers are more decorative and are a prominent feature of the roofs.

Dovecotes – Dovecotes are occasionally seen and are constructed of stucco with red tile roofs.

Cupola – A cupola is relatively small, usually dome-like structure on top of a building often crowning a larger roof or dome. Cupolas often serve as a roof lantern to admit light and air or as a lookout.



Signs, Banners, & Murals

Signs and Murals will be inspected annually in accordance with the renewal of the business' occupational tax license. (City of Helen Ordinance 34-1001)

Banners must be approved by the Planning Design and Review Board. Their display is on a temporary basis only.

Any illegal sign or banner may result in a citation.

For specific definitions of dimensions and locations of permitted signs, the builder, developer or shopkeeper should refer to Chapter 34 Article VII of the Helen City Code of Ordinances. Additionally, the sign must go through an application process and be approved by the Planning, Design and Review Board before it may be hung.

Signs are constructed of various materials, but the preferred medium is wood.

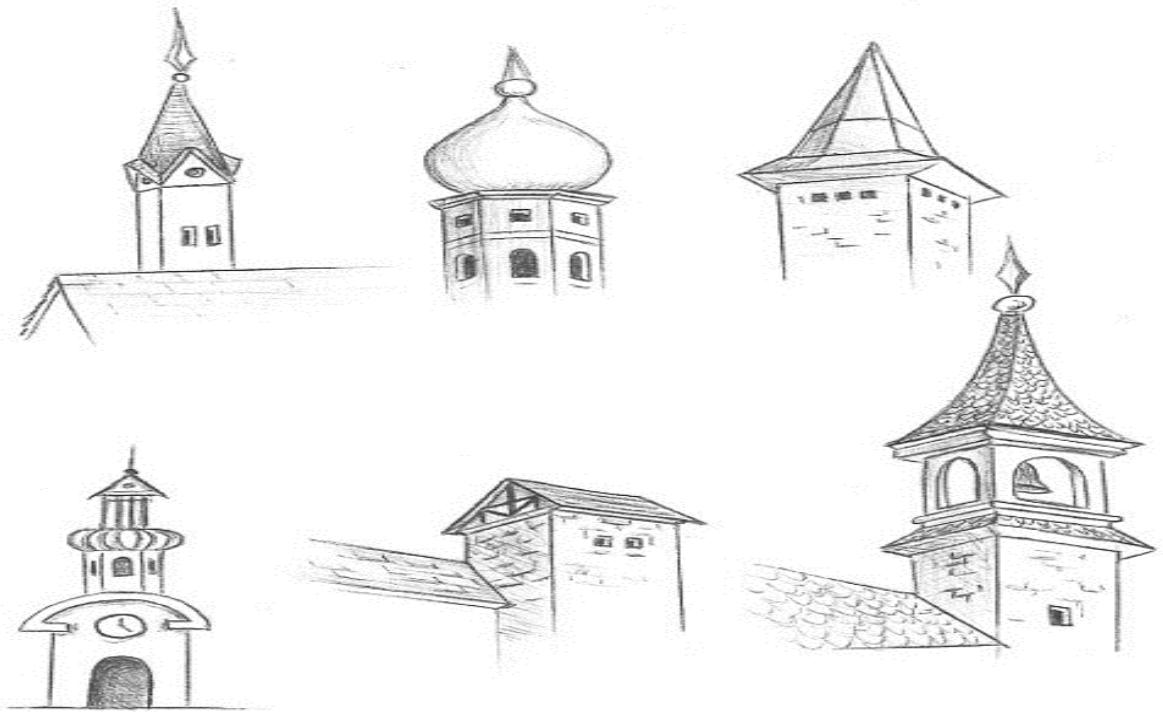
There is an approved color chart and font list available with the sign application.

You are entitled to place a mural on your building. Keep in mind that this also falls under the advisement of the Planning, Design and Review Board. Murals are a vital part of buildings, and they should be considered for any large expanse of a wall that would otherwise be nothing more than a blank space.



Towers

Towers are found throughout Europe and give the eye vertical relief from what would otherwise be a lateral panorama. Having evolved from the watch towers thousands of years ago, they add much interest to the village landscape.



Towns & Villages – General

There are large differences between architecture for residences primarily in a rural setting, and architecture for towns & villages, where greater density and emphasis on foot traffic are evident. Roofs are much steeper with slopes up to 18/12. The Bavarians like to emphasize this by often placing steep roofs next to each other, but at the same time mixing in roofs sloping in opposite directions to add diversity of the streetscape.

Buildings are placed close together, but with occasional reliefs, by using such devices as small mini-parks or widened sidewalks with seating and narrow access to interior courts. Other street amenities are the extensive use of ornamental metal brackets for signs, window flower boxes, decorative awnings, decorative street lighting and cobble stone style pavement.

Half-timber on facades is often used. The use of decorative balconies, though so common in rural settings, is rarely encountered, and even then, is a secondary rather than a dominant element.



Vertical Circulation

Vertical distance in level can be handled in three ways:

#1 Steps

#2 Ramps

#3 Elevators

Steps: Maximum riser height is 7"

Minimum tread depth is 11"

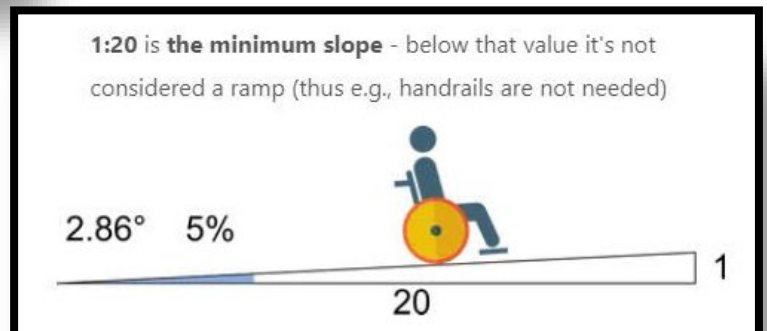
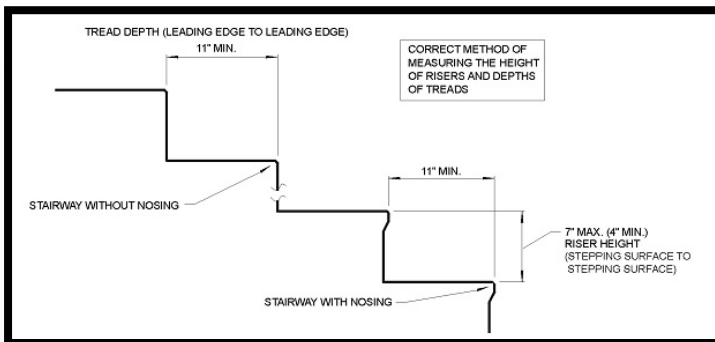
Ramps: Maximum slope per

ADA Standards = 1:20

Maximum rise per run = 1' – 6"

Handrails required on both sides over 6" rise

Elevators: This is a modern usage projected into an architectural setting far removed from concern with engineering demands and all other contemporary influences. Fortunately, there are many types of Alpine towers of appropriate proportions and dimensions that can readily be adapted to this unusual use.



Windows / Window trim

Windows shall have a grid structure (City of Helen Code of Ordinances 34-576 #8A) to help create the feeling of an “Old World Village Alpine” style trim made of wood or faux painted wood is recommended.

The basic window unit consists of a multi-panel sash with a wood surround, usually painted. The window, while popularly used as a single unit, is often seen in combinations of from two to five units, either combined or separated by regular consistent spacing. A single sheet of glass used for the entire window is not used and snap in grids are recommended.

Windows offer fine opportunities for embellishment. Shutters with jig saw patterns are often used. Flower boxes are also quite common; however, true Bavarian spirit reveals itself in painted or applied ornamentation. Often these applications are very elaborate and are either painted on or built up three-dimensional.

Often the details around windows, including virtually everything, but the window frame and the glass, consist of alfresco painting. Frequently, a viewer cannot tell this unless the window is seen very close up or from the side.



Conclusion

If the perspective builder follows the guidelines as spelled out in the preceding pages, he or she should be able to create an inviting atmosphere. By doing this, you are creating a better place for everyone. The more we take pride in our town and attempt to create a European style village of our own the more we succeed. More people will come and will be return visitors.

