



Stone Cladding Materials

Note: As authorized by § 8.5.2.C.1, this interpretation is provided at the initiative of the Zoning Administrator for the purpose of providing clarification to property owners and improving administration of the Ordinance. Capitalized terms are defined in § 9.3 of the Ordinance. This interpretation may be appealed to the Board of Zoning Appeals per § 8.5.17 of the Ordinance.

Summary

Article 4 of the Zoning Ordinance includes forty-seven instances of the term *Natural Stone*. Every instance pertains to permitted cladding materials for walls, Facades, chimneys, porch piers, and other building elements. The term includes veneers which replicate the textures, colors, shapes and aesthetic quality of organic stone. These products are permitted materials for purposes of zoning compliance review.

Rationale

The prescriptions for *Natural Stone* contained in Tables 4.3.1.A-N of the Zoning Ordinance regulate the appearance of Facades. These provisions produce a high-quality aesthetically consistent built environment. Organic stone veneers and cultured stone veneers are both produced from natural materials.¹ The appearance of cultured stone is virtually indistinguishable from organic stone alternatives.² Cultured stone products are also often more versatile and cost effective than organic stone.³ All of these products, whether organic or cultured, yield the elevated aesthetic prescribed by the Columbia City Council through the Zoning Ordinance.

The word *Natural*, as used in the material standards of the Zoning Ordinance, refers to the ingredients and aesthetic qualities of a building product. In this sense, organic stone veneers are not any more *natural* than cast stone veneers. Nearly all construction regulated by the zoning Ordinance utilizes standardized building materials procured from modern suppliers. Although historically significant in Middle Tennessee, the collection of local stone for fences and buildings is now exceedingly rare. All building materials result from the mixing of natural resources and human labor. Stone veneers are produced through an industrial

¹ Modern stone veneers are marketed under various terms including *cultured, cast, manufactured, and molded*. These terms are interchangeable for purposes of this interpretation.

² Lograsso, Sarah. An In-Depth Look at Manufactured Stone Veneer. Masonry Magazine. N.Date. <https://masonrymagazine.com/Default?pageID=2058>

³ Lerner, Michele. The Manufactured Stone Sustainability Story. Green Builder. March 20, 2024. <https://www.greenbuildermedia.com/blog/the-manufactured-stone-sustainability-story>

process. Organic stone is shaped and cut into thin pieces after the raw material is harvested. Only after this process of quarrying and reshaping can the semi-standardized product be applied to building facades.

Modern materials are produced from stone ingredients. The Zoning Ordinance permits cementitious siding, and stucco. Fiber board products and stucco are created from cement. Naturally occurring stone, namely limestone, is the key ingredient of cement. The material is molded, colored, and texturized through a process not unlike stone cutting. Cultured stone products have the appearance and durability of organic stone which has been quarried and shaped into a veneer. The key differences between cultured stone and organic stone are weight and price, which are not regulated by the Ordinance. Stone veneers produced from natural ingredients (e.g. limestone) which bear a natural appearance are acceptable facade materials.