

DESIGN GUIDELINES

for the
Village Center, Retail
and Office
Districts of the
Town of Weymouth, MA

Board of Zoning Appeals

January, 2013



*Prepared by the Weymouth
Dept. of Planning & Community Development
and Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.*

INTRODUCTION / OVERVIEW

Design guidelines are an important part of the Town of Weymouth's implementation strategy for the village centers, as defined in the Master Plan prepared in 2001. The design guidelines will inform the creation of development which is sensitive and responsive to the heritage and character of the area.

What are design guidelines?

Design Guidelines address aesthetic issues in planning improvements or new development in Weymouth's village centers retail and office districts and along commercial highway corridors. These Design Guidelines are used to clarify the urban design objectives of the Master Plan and the zoning ordinance. In general, they are intended to provide ideas, stimulate thinking and promote good design. The Design Guidelines are intended to assist architects, professional planners, property owners and others in making more informed decisions related to the urban design framework; provide a context for coordination of development; and assist the municipality in evaluating development applications for the office and retail zoning districts.

It is important to note that these design guidelines are not regulatory or mandatory. Rather, they are written to assist in the permitting process described in the zoning ordinance and BZA Rules and Regulations.





A Dunkin donuts constructed without local Design Guidelines



A Dunkin Donuts constructed under Design Guidelines

The Design Guidelines provide the framework to encourage the following public and private objectives:

- Provide a coordinated approach to design and ensure a consistent and high level of design.
- Improve the quality of physical alterations and new construction.
- Enhance the quality of the pedestrian and bicycling experience along a commercial corridor.
- Enhance the character and quality of public spaces such as streets, parks and open spaces.
- Enhance economic investment for business and property owners.
- Protect and conserve neighborhood architectural character.
- Promote community awareness of the physical environment.
- Encourage flexible and individual creativity rather than anonymous uniformity.
- Protect existing property values and the natural environment.
- Provide a context to facilitate the growth of vibrant mixed-use communities in Weymouth's village centers.

These Design Guidelines carry out the above objectives by providing:

- A clear definition of design objectives that informs citizens, applicants of development proposals, and decision-makers;
- A tool that designers can use to incorporate specific approaches and techniques in their plans that will achieve the town's design objectives;
- A basis for uniform and consistent review of development proposals by the Planning Department staff, the special permit granting authorities, and the Building Department.

APPLICABILITY

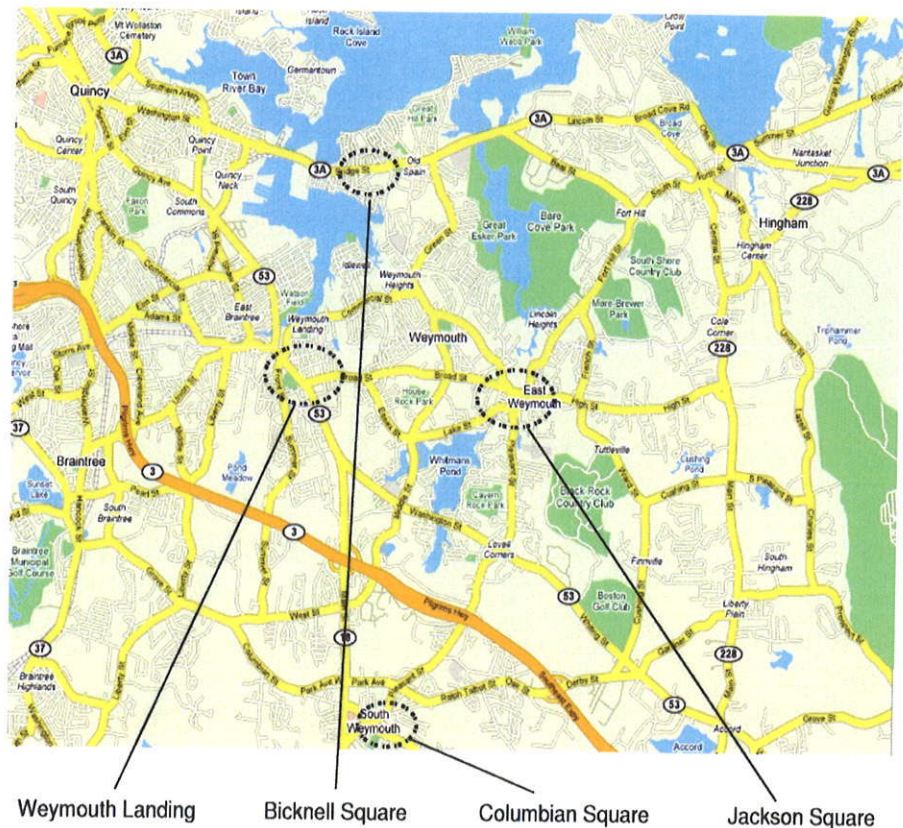
The application of the **Village Center Design Guidelines** should allow for experimentation and flexibility in design approaches. The guidelines are not intended to be universally applicable, but should be targeted to locations where public policy objectives warrant the use of substantially different design standards than applied elsewhere in Weymouth; these four village centers are shown in the map below.

The **Retail, Office and Commercial Highway Corridor Design Guidelines** are provided as a guidance document for properties located along the major corridors in Weymouth known as the Highway Transition (H-T) zone as well as in the Limited Business (B-1) and General Business (B-2) zones.

GUIDELINE COMPATIBILITY

NOTE: The guidelines contained herein are in addition to any requirements of the Weymouth Zoning Ordinance.

The pictures, drawings, and diagrams in this document are intended to illustrate the objective of the Guidelines. They are not intended to illustrate how to specifically meet zoning requirements. In any case where the guidelines conflict with those found in the zoning ordinance, the ordinance shall control.



VILLAGE CENTER DESIGN GUIDELINES

The village centers, with their mix of uses and activities, evolved in the tradition of small New England town crossroads, with public spaces and public activities that draw people for business, social and recreational activities. They help define the physical orientation and cultural sense of the community.

Development Patterns

Weymouth's four village centers remain identifiable with the larger development pattern that has emerged around them. However, they are not stable in terms of their economic viability or image. The traditional role of the village centers within the community has been diminished due to changing preferences for shopping and entertainment and the shifting patterns of daily life. Consumers no longer rely on the businesses in the village centers to serve their needs, as there are many other options. Uses that often survive in village centers have become increasingly specialized or reach out to market's far beyond the immediate neighborhood in order to be successful. Weymouth's village centers need to be reinforced to appeal to *contemporary life*, but they *also must retain the small town atmosphere that makes them so appealing*.

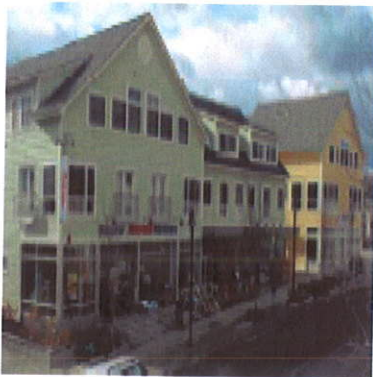
Elements of Mixed-Use

- All village centers should be mixed-use and contain public, commercial, and residential uses.
 - * Housing uses include single family (by special permit), two-family, mid-rise housing and multi-family dwellings.
 - * Commercial use uses include office buildings, retail storefronts, live/work units, and office uses (with ground level retail).
- Vertical mixed uses are encouraged.
- Civic and institutional uses are encouraged to be designed as part of a mixed use building rather than as a stand-alone building.



Vertical Mixed-Use

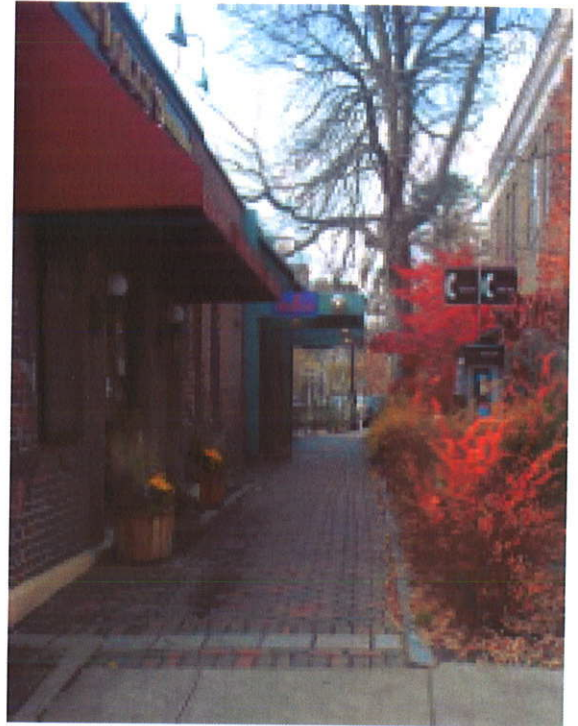
1. Retail space
2. Business space / Residential space
3. Separate entrance for business & residential uses



A strong example of residential over retail.

Street Level Activity

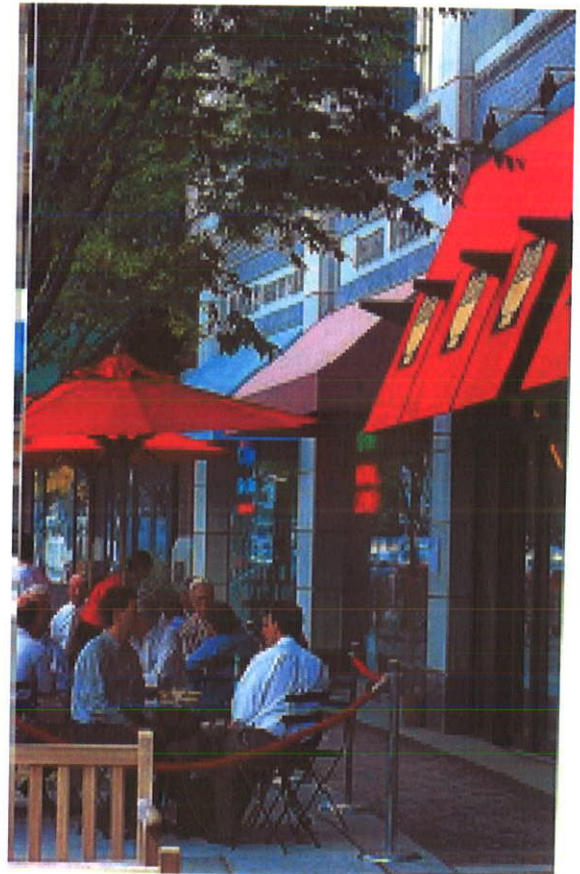
- The ground floors of buildings should contain public or semi-public uses such as retail or entertainment uses with direct entry from the street.
- Retail activities within buildings should be oriented towards the street and have direct access from sidewalks through storefront entries.
- Open-air pedestrian passageways (with or without overhead cover) are generally more visible and more inviting than interior hallways. This can be an attractive, successful location for store entries, window displays, and/or restaurant/café seating.
- When seasonably appropriate, property owners are encouraged to take the “indoors” outdoors by spilling interior space (e.g. dining areas, small merchandise displays) onto walkways and plazas and bring the “outdoors” into the building by opening interior spaces (e.g. atriums) to views and sunshine.

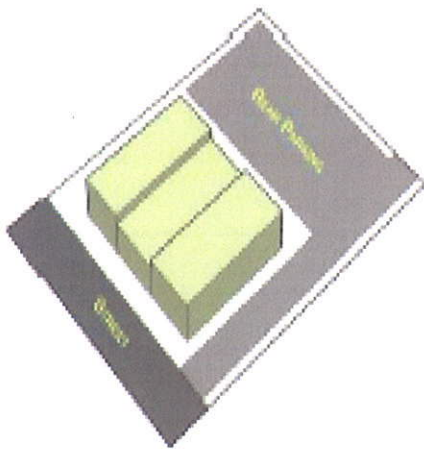


The top, right photo shows a successful public alley with stores opening onto it. This alley connects to parking located behind the retail center

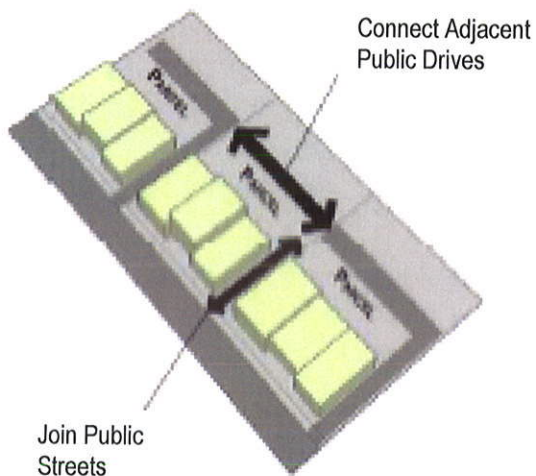
The lower, far right photo shows how outdoor space can be used for dining.

Another effective use of public space is shown to the immediate right, where retail businesses use the public sidewalk to display wares.





The front of a building should be oriented for pedestrians, not vehicles. Placing parking in the rear creates a more active street life and allows buildings to have a relationship with the street.

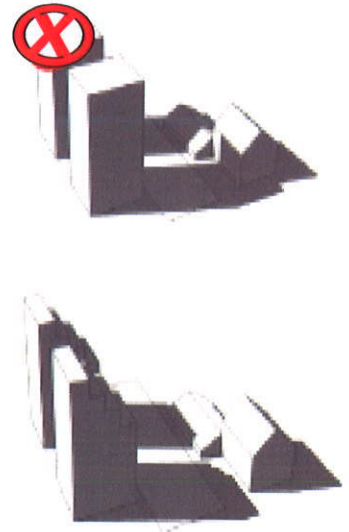


Building Placement (primarily for new construction)

- Each building should be part of the larger composition of the area within which it is located.
- Buildings should be located close to the street, with off street parking behind and/or beside buildings.
- If the building is located at a street intersection, place the main building, or part of the building, at the corner. Parking, access/egress, loading areas or service entries should not be located at an intersection.
- To maximize the street frontage of buildings and minimize the street frontage of parking lots, buildings should be articulated so that the long side fronts the street.
- Pedestrian circulation should be an integral part of the site layout. Organize the site so that the buildings frame and reinforce pedestrian circulation, and so that the pedestrians walk along building fronts rather than along or across parking lots and driveways.
- Spatial enclosure is particularly important to support pedestrian activity for shopping streets. This is most effectively accomplished by placing the buildings close to the street.

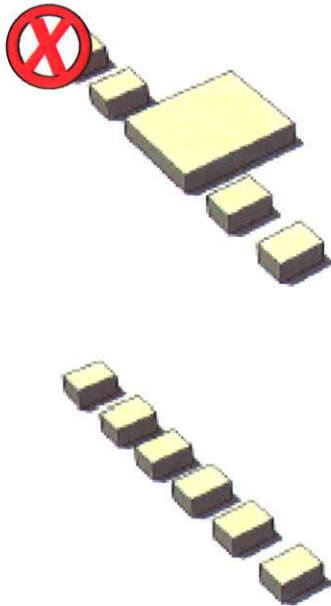
Transitional Areas

- Higher intensity buildings should not cast a shadow line on surrounding areas. To avoid this, buildings could be stepped back on their upper stories or designed in such a manner as to reduce the massing in certain parts of the building to allow sunlight to pass through.
- Well designed, pedestrian-friendly buildings are much more effective at providing an appropriate transition along street frontages from the village center to the surrounding neighborhoods than berms, fences, and walls.
- Vegetative landscaping, walls, and fences should be provided around rear parking areas that abut residential development consistent with the Zoning Ordinance. Undisturbed natural areas that function as opaque screens are preferable to new plantings.
- A landscaped buffer shall be a vegetative edge of at least three feet in depth and six feet in height at installation and contain a mix of evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs such that the buffer shall be sight impervious even during the winter.



Although the buildings shown above are taller than allowed in Weymouth's VCD, this sketch shows how stepped back buildings allow more light to penetrate the surrounding area.

General Building Design Guidelines



The top sketch demonstrates a poor spatial relationship with a much larger building out of scale with the adjacent buildings. The lower sketch shows a more favorable scale of a neighborhood streetscape.

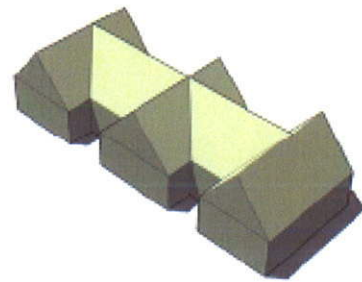
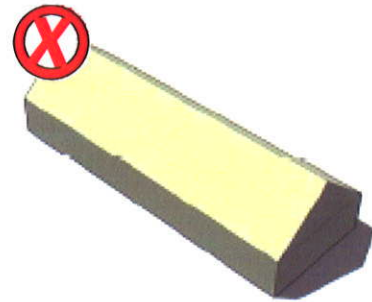
- The adaptive use of the historic building stock is encouraged as it is an effective sustainable practice.
- New and renovated buildings should strive for a contextual approach to design. A contextual design approach is not intended to necessarily mean an historical replica, but rather one that is sensitive to the surrounding urban, built and natural conditions (e.g. local models).
- Adjacent buildings should be similar in scale and configuration.
- Residential building entrances should be raised above the sidewalk a minimum of 2 feet to reinforce a privacy zone and distinguish them from the commercial entrances, where feasible and without violating Federal and State Building Codes.
- Setbacks should reflect neighboring buildings. In general, new buildings should be set right at the sidewalk edge. However a new building may have an inconsistent setback from neighboring buildings if the front setback is used for a well-designed public space or if the neighboring setbacks are inappropriate for the area.
- New buildings and the adaptive re-use of existing buildings should use green building technologies for mechanical systems, energy needs and construction materials, where feasible.

The picture on the left demonstrates the poor pedestrian environment created by a blank wall. While the picture at right shows a much more pedestrian friendly atmosphere. A pedestrian-oriented street is detailed with interesting storefronts, landscaping, furniture, wide sidewalks and on-street parking.



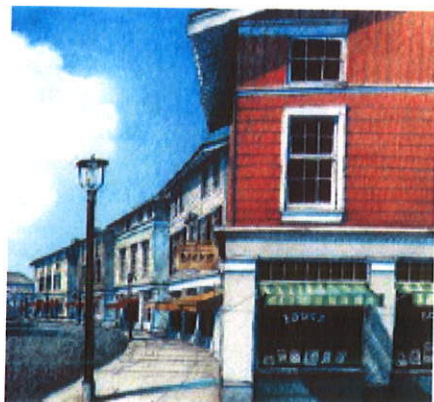
Massing

- Village architectural styles should be considered in building form, window spacing, architectural detailing and façade composition.
- Multi-story buildings should be divided into a base, middle, and top, separated by cornices, string cornices, stepbacks or other articulating features.
- Long buildings should also be modulated horizontally, with stepbacks, projections, bays, varied rooflines, columns and pilasters, or other articulating features.
- Within each volume or bay there should be an orderly placement of windows and doors.
- If a building is long or large, more than one entrance may be needed on the front façade. In general, for walkability in the core area, building or store entrances should occur at intervals no greater than 150 feet.



Breaking up the mass of large structures allows for a more personal streetscape as shown in the lower sketch. The top sketch is un-interesting and un-welcoming.

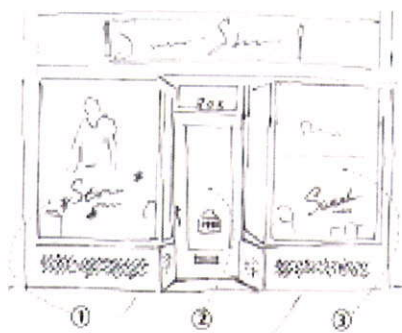
The photo at left shows how a diverse massing can make a much more interesting streetscape. Notice how, for the most part, the floors line up even though the buildings are quite different.



An articulated building wall, as shown in the two photos above, provides a dynamic streetscape.

Façade Treatment

- Avoid using too many architectural styles on a single building.
- Blank walls are discouraged on any side of the building that faces a street, sidewalk, or open space. A blank wall creates an unfriendly void for pedestrians. Maximizing the amount of windows along publicly-viewed walls allows additional opportunities to market your business and creates an inviting feel.
- Continuous lengths of flat walls are discouraged. Break up facades with column lines and bays. This helps to distinguish tenants and storefronts. Give similar attention to the side façade on corner properties.
- Maintain existing and historical architectural elements of building facades. Preserve and restore historical features. When damaged, repair with material and style that is similar or complements the existing construction, where feasible.
- Historic landmark and transitional residential buildings should retain their traditional patterns of fenestration (window placement) on the ground floor.
- Murals and other creative wall treatments are encouraged to add interest to the façade of a parking garage or a building where active uses may not be feasible. Murals may not obstruct openings in a building's façade; instead use the openings in the design of the mural.



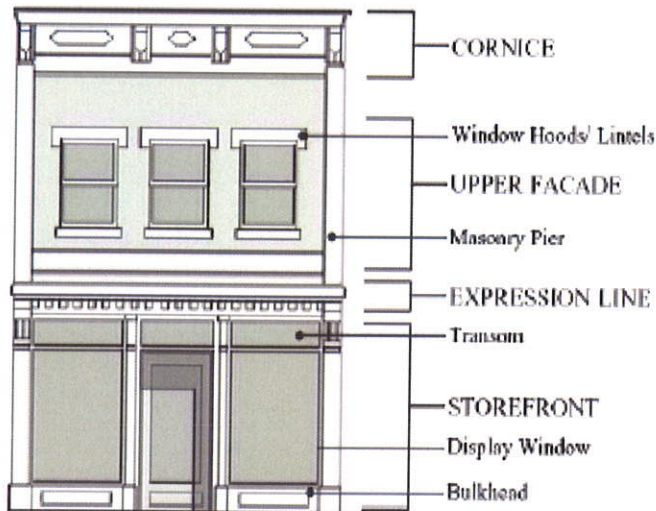
Historic buildings, such as the one at right, can be modernized while respecting the historic character. Notice also the large display windows, smaller windows on the second floor, and the recessed doorways, all elements of good design.

Good design is exemplified with three distinct bays and large display windows, as shown in the sketch at left and also in the photo at right.



Façade Treatment (cont.)

- Encourage the use and maintenance of traditional building elements including headers, water tables, sills and caps, when using brick or stone construction.
- Building walls shall have perceivable thickness, visual interest, and character. This can be accomplished by using a selection of architectural details which include vertical and horizontal projections and recesses, changes in height, floor levels, roof forms, parapets, cornice treatments, belt courses, pilasters, window reveals, forms and color, etc.
- An expression line should delineate the division between the first story and the second story. A cornice should delineate the top of the façade. These should consist of either a molding extending a minimum of 4 inches, or a change in the surface plan of the building wall greater than 8 inches.
- Changes in the plane of a building wall (recessions, projections, setbacks and height changes) should be a minimum of 2 feet.



The building in the photo above exhibits a number of traditional building elements for stone and brick, including:

- * a cornice,
- * a parapet (which improves the flat roof).
- * an expression line exhibited as a molding, and
- * use of heavier material on the ground floor façade.

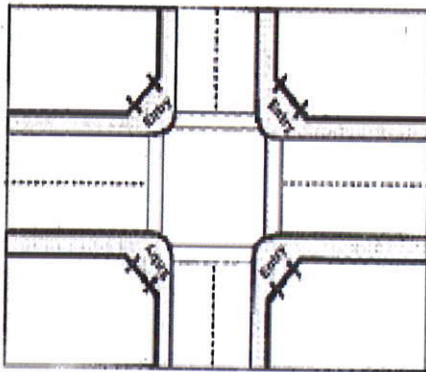
It also shows how changes in the building plane, such as the middle bay projection, create definition.

Architectural elements described at left and below





The photo shows an appropriate treatment of corner buildings. It is also an example for how to make a large building look like many smaller buildings.



Corner entries are encouraged.



The photo above shows a streetscape with a consistent façade treatment, recessed doorways, and effective use of the outdoor space.

Windows & Doorways

- Windows, bays, and door openings should be proportioned so that verticals dominate horizontals except for street-level storefront windows, which may be square.
- Large openings, such as large areas of glass or porches, should be made up of smaller vertically proportioned elements grouped together to create the desired width.
- The materials, proportions, and color of entrances and windows should complement the full building façade.

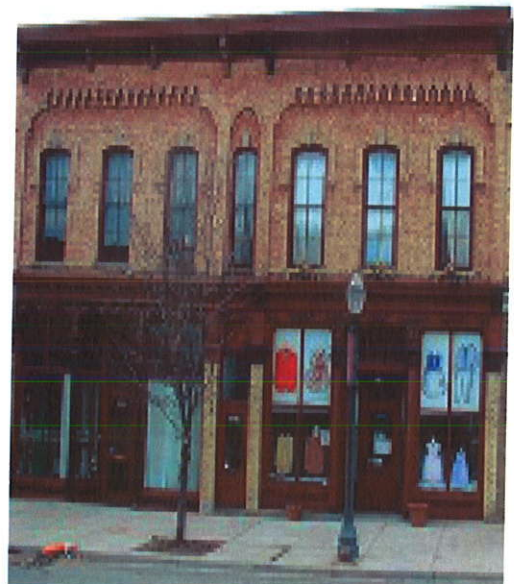
Building Entrances

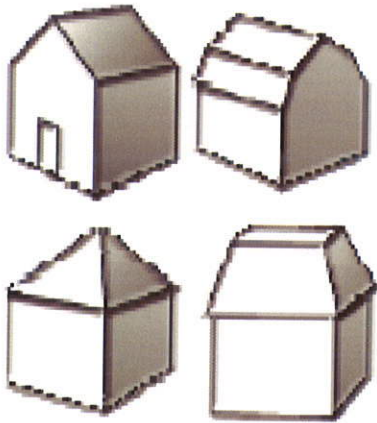
- All buildings should have a principal façade and entry facing the primary street. Such entrances should be designed to convey their prominence on the fronting façade. Buildings may have more than one principal façade and/or entry.
- Use building massing, special architectural features, and changes in the roof line to emphasize building entrances.
- The ground level of the building should offer pedestrian interest along sidewalks and paths. This includes windows, entrances, and architectural details. Appropriate signage, awnings, and ornamentation are encouraged, as conforms to the Zoning Ordinance.
- Buildings at street corners should be designed to address the corner - that is, to engage the interest of drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists at the intersection. Provide a building entry, additional building mass, and distinctive architectural elements.
- Recessed doorways are preferred. A recessed doorway helps to break up the building façade, provides a welcoming space and provides protection from sun and rain. Where a recessed doorway is not possible, an awning can have a similar effect.
- All doors facing the primary street should be operable.

Windows

- Storefront windows should be transparent. Clear, un-tinted and non-reflective glass provides the maximum visual interaction between pedestrians and the interior of the building. Mirrored glass and faux or display casements are strongly discouraged.
- Signs, including temporary paper signs, should not be displayed in windows unless in conformance with Article 16 of the Zoning Ordinance and the Sign Section of these Guidelines.
- Maintain the distinction between upper and lower floors for multi-story buildings. In traditional town centers, storefronts with large windows were on the first floor and residences with smaller windows were on the second floor. Although second stories may not always be residential, keep the distinction.
 - * Windows on top floors should be smaller than windows on the first floor.
- Windows on the top and bottom floors should align and be consistent in proportion, shape and style overall.
- Bottoms of storefront windows should be between 1 and 3 feet above sidewalk grade.
- When renovating, respect size, placement, materials, and detailing of the building if the building has historical or cultural value. For example, do not replace large windows with small ones. Look at neighboring buildings for additional clues.
- Use decorative trim to set your windows apart, but be consistent across the whole building.
- Provide south shading where possible by installing properly sized overhangs or building appurtenances on south facing glazing to provide shade in the summer and allow light to penetrate in the winter.
- In older buildings, consider installing storm windows on the inside of the original window, so they will not be seen.
- All windows should be operable.
- False window mullions should be avoided.

These photos at right show good window design in both old and new buildings. Notice how large ground floor windows can be made to appear at human scale and how second story windows are traditionally smaller.





Roof types (clockwise from top left):
Gabled, Gambrel Hipped, Mansard



In the photos above color and material is used appropriately and effectively to call out decorative detail and attract one to the space. Even the bright colors in the lower photo work well together for this type of use; however, you need to be careful when choosing these colors.

Roofs

- Local models should be considered in the selection of roof forms. Gabled, hipped, mansard, shed, flat or gambrel roofs are all appropriate roof types for Weymouth. Shed and flat roofs should be concealed with architectural detailing such as parapets or finished flashing. Avoid applied mansard roofs.
- Downspouts should match gutters in materials and finish.

Materials and Color

- Construct buildings to last. Durable materials, economic maintenance and high quality craftsmanship is the best investment.
- Use traditional materials such as wood, brick and stone. When used properly, these materials are as good as other materials.
- Treated board and other synthetic materials are discouraged.
- Materials should be used with regard to their traditional structural capacity. For example, heavier materials should always be placed below lighter materials. Veneer finishes should be configured in a way that corresponds to the material's traditional load-bearing capacity.
- Exterior building materials should have a human scale; this helps people relate to the size of the building. Non-modular exterior materials, such as stucco, and those in large modules, such as concrete panels, will need extra pedestrian-level façade details to reduce the building's bulk and create human scale.
- Use a single color scheme across all stores within a building. Use color to set off decorative details from the base tone of the building. Bright colors should only be used as accents.

Awnings and Other Appurtenances

Awnings serve many purposes including shade, protection from elements, or signage. They also create a sense of depth, add color and can dress up a building. Understand your purpose prior to choosing and installing awnings.

- Canopies, awnings and upper-floor balconies should encroach into the setback and may encroach over the sidewalk. Features extending over the sidewalk should be a minimum of 10-feet off the ground, to the extent possible.
- Awnings should be a minimum of 5 feet in width and occur on 25% to 100% of the building frontage.
- Fixed awnings should not span numerous bays, windows, or store fronts. When determining where an awning should end, look for clues on the building. The awning should delineate storefronts on a multi-tenant building.
- Awnings should complement a building and add definition. An awning should not obscure, detract or hide architectural features. Awnings should not be attached to the building trim; they should be placed within building lines. Awning hardware should be hidden or painted to blend with the facade.
- Align awnings with others on the block. This applies particularly to the bottom line of the awning.
- Awnings should be avoided on north-facing windows; the windows will be too dark to see into.
- Size, color, material, and shape of an awning should be carefully selected and consistent and compatible throughout the building and with features on nearby buildings.
- Awnings and canopies should be made of fabric or metal; plasticized fabrics and translucent awnings are strongly discouraged.
- Striped and patterned awnings can add texture to a building; but use them carefully, paying special attention to the building and neighboring buildings. A pattern should not be loud or distracting.

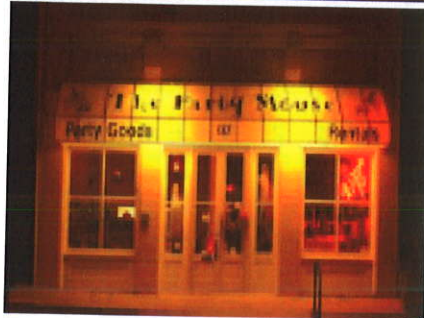
Awnings should not span numerous bays or windows and should align with each other along the block.



Well-placed window and door awnings or canopies can add interest to a building, provide shelter from the elements and conserve energy.



Awnings (cont.)



Lighting works best, with or without awnings, when directed towards the storefront instead of to the sky or street.

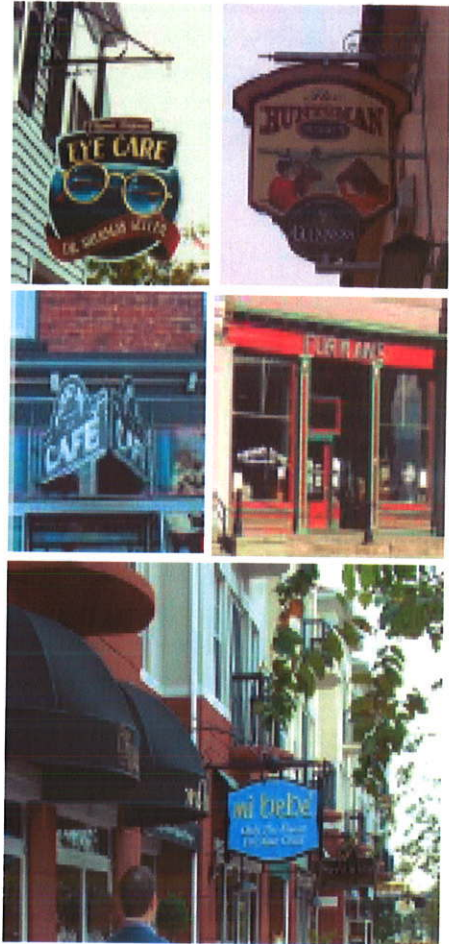
- The business name or logo is encouraged to be placed on the awning.
 - * The wording or logo should not overwhelm the awning.
 - * When lettering or a logo is placed on the awning, it should cover no more than 15 percent of the face of the awning.
 - * When lettering or a logo is placed on the valance, up to 60 percent of the valance can be covered, provided the height of the majority of the lettering is less than $\frac{3}{4}$ the height of the valance.
 - * A logo on the side of an awning should cover no more than 50 percent of the side of the awning.
- Do not install an awning if maintenance will be difficult. Awnings can be weathered from wind, rain, snow and sun. It is preferable not to install an awning rather than installing a less attractive, though durable, awning.

Outdoor Lighting

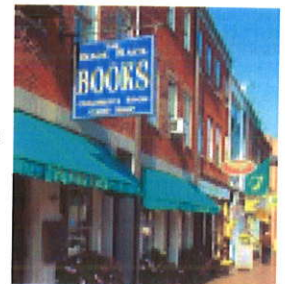
- Use a low intensity of high-quality light, which will provide good, uniform visibility while avoiding light pollution.
- Use decorative bases, posts, luminaries, and bollards, where feasible, and in context with the surrounding character.
- A lighting program should consider the illumination of sidewalks and other multiuse pathways using low intensity fixtures that provide an even distribution of light while avoiding areas of intense shadows.
- A substantial amount of lighting for pedestrians should be provided from the storefronts using either indirect illumination from within the building or direct illumination under canopies or awnings.
- All site lighting will be required to significantly reduce glare and reduce light trespass.
- Use lighting to accentuate the architectural features of the building.

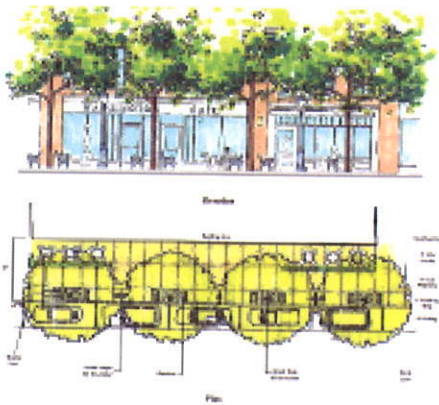
Signs

- Signs should be flat against the façade, or mounted projecting from the façade.
- Signs should be externally lit from the front. Back lighting of signs is strongly discouraged.
- Neon-lit signs should be permitted only if size and location is controlled to prevent excessive light, as determined by the Inspector of Buildings.
- Flashing signs, moving signs and roof signs are strongly discouraged.
- Temporary signs with a specific date of expiration, such as sandwich boards, should be allowed, after approval by the Inspector of Buildings.
- Signs should be made of the following materials: wood (painted or natural), stone, copper, brass, galvanized steel, painted canvas or painted/engraved on façade surface.
- Building numbers should be located on all buildings. Retail/commercial buildings numbers should be a minimum of 6 inches in height and a maximum of 10 inches.
- Retail signs along sidewalks should be located a minimum of 10 feet above the pedestrian sidewalk.
- Sign types may include the following as defined in Section XVI of the Zoning Ordinance: frame sign, awning sign, canopy sign, marquee sign, wall/fascia sign, projecting sign, window sign and pole sign.
- Signs should not cover or obscure architectural elements.
- Individual tenant signs may be located on individual storefronts, over display windows and/or at entries.
- A sign should not occupy more than 75 square feet for each business (1 square foot for each horizontal foot of building frontage of each said business).
- Parking signage should be simple and understated.



Signs can be mounted on the façade of the wall, projecting from it, or on awnings. Creative and attractive signage, such as in the top two photos, is strongly encouraged.





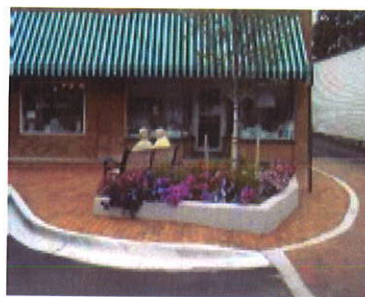
Providing trees along the sidewalk edge provides a pedestrian buffer from cars and promotes comfort.

Planters, as shown below, increase pedestrian comfort and enhance the street's vitality.



Site Landscaping

- Preserve existing native landscaping as part of the site design. Replant or donate removed vegetation for reuse, where feasible.
- Planters along the street edge of the sidewalk are encouraged.
- The corners of street intersections, particularly gateways and site entries (entries from both street and sidewalk) should be distinguished by special landscape treatments: flower displays, specimen trees and shrubs, accent rocks, low walls, signage, decorative lighting, sculpture, architectural elements, and/or special paving.
- Fences are recommended only where they are of complimentary design, materials and construction. Fences should supplement the existing and/or required plantings.
- The use of chain link or stockade fences visible from any public street within a mixed-use center is strongly discouraged.
- Consider utilizing drought tolerant plants and other xeriscape techniques. These include: amending the soil, mulching, grouping plants by water need, and utilizing water-efficient irrigation equipment and schedules.
- Use grass types requiring less irrigation and minimal maintenance.
- Landscape with plants appropriate for site topography and soil types, emphasizing use of plants with low watering requirements.



An accessible, functional social space complements this store front.



This wall and landscaping in the pictures at left screen the parking behind very effectively. The trees also provide shading.

Services and Utilities

- Loading docks, service areas and trash disposal facilities should not face open space or a public street.
- Screen loading docks and truck parking from public view using building mass, freestanding walls, and/or landscaping.
- Since delivery and trash trucks can be noisy, do not locate service areas adjacent to residential units, hotel rooms, and useable open space.
- All exterior trash receptacles should be screened from public view on three sides; and, on the fourth side, by a gate that also screens the receptacles from view. The enclosure should be made of materials and colors compatible to that of the principal structure(s). Care should be taken to minimize odors.
- Ensure that all utility equipment is located, sized, and designed to be as inconspicuous as possible. If possible, consult with the utility companies early in the design process about the location of utility boxes and meters.
- Do not locate HVAC equipment on the street-side of the building or adjacent to public open spaces, since it can be noisy. In addition, locate all building-mounted, non-street utility meters and service equipment to the side or rear of the building.
- Screen all rooftop equipment from public view.



Properly screened dumpsters are required, preferably using materials matching the principal building.



HVAC equipment and meter boxes should not be located on the street-side of a building.

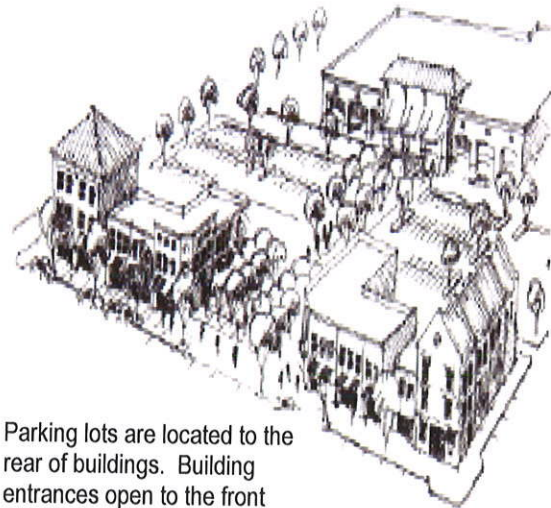
COMMERCIAL HIGHWAY CORRIDOR DESIGN GUIDELINES

Private redevelopment strategies for the Town's three main Commercial Highway Districts, Route 3A (Bridge Street), Route 53 (Washington Street) and Route 18 (Main Street), need to work in concert with the Town's zoning ordinances in order to improve the Highway Commercial areas within the Town of Weymouth. These guidelines for commercial highway areas suggest ways in which private development can help improve the appearance and livability of the highway-oriented commercial districts. These guidelines should also be used for all retail and office districts in town that are not village centers.

Development Patterns

The relationship between buildings, parking lots and the street is the most important design element within the highway commercial areas. Weymouth's three highway commercial areas are somewhat reflective of a typical suburban commercial strip that has been influenced by increasingly accommodating the automobile. Somewhat widely spaced buildings that are separated from the street by parking lots characterize these areas. Such an environment, though convenient for the automobile, appears visually disjointed, cluttered, and is inhospitable to pedestrians.

Commercial corridors in Weymouth can accommodate the pedestrian as well as the automobile and be more attractive.



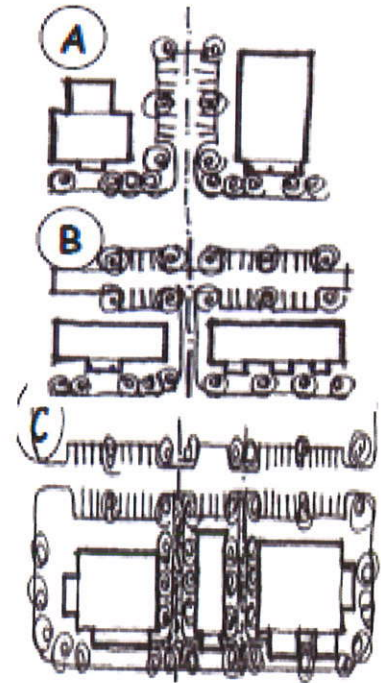
Parking lots are located to the rear of buildings. Building entrances open to the front (street) as well as to the parking lot.

Shape Community Identity with Buildings not Parking Lots

- Each building should be part of the larger composition of the area.
- Buildings should be located close to the street, with off-street parking, behind and/or beside buildings. Buildings oriented to the primary streets better shape the street corridors and, ultimately, the identity of the community. If a building must be set back, no more than one row of parking should separate it from the street.
- If a building is located at a street intersection, place the main building, or part of the building, at the corner. Parking, access/egress, loading areas, or service entries should not be located at an intersection.
- For redevelopment of existing structures where parking is located in the front, landscaping should be placed to screen parking and create a more pleasant environment.
- Parking lots should be visually buffered at the perimeter from their surroundings, using landscaping and possibly an intermittent low fence or masonry wall in key locations.
- To maximize the street frontage of building and minimize the street frontage of parking lots, buildings should be articulated so that the long side fronts the street.
- The facades of free-standing buildings should be designed to an equal level of material finish and design quality on all sides.
- To the extent practical, drive-thru facilities should be oriented away from public streets and primary development entrances.
- Smaller commercial buildings can be located in front of “big box” structures to disguise their overall bulk, while still allowing for clear identity and points of entry.
- Vary the layout of buildings to achieve an interesting visual environment.
- In developments with multiple structures, recurring forms and materials should be used to tie the development together, while establishing an overall hierarchy of buildings for visual interest and to aid in orientation.
- Buildings should be arranged to create functional public and private outdoor spaces, including sidewalks, patios, entryways, and courtyards.



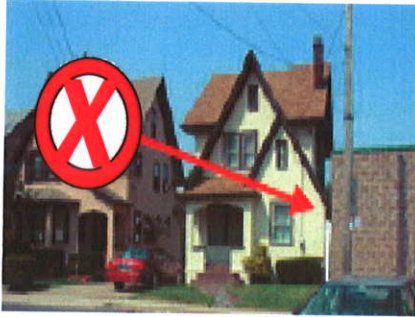
Large unbroken expanses of asphalt are unattractive and get extremely hot in the summer.



Methods of providing parking in commercial districts are shown above:

- A. Shared access with parking on the side.
- B. Shared access with parking in the rear.
- C. Connected lots with entrance from site streets.

Transitional Areas



The photo above shows an example of an inappropriate commercial buffer; because the fence is an inappropriate scale for the residential neighborhood. A natural, vegetated buffer similar to that shown below, is more desirable when transitioning between commercial and residential neighborhoods. However, a fence would also be appropriate if of the right scale and character.



The two photos at right show buffers between a residential area and a large retailer. Looking closely at the photo at the far right, you will see houses beyond the vegetated buffer. To the immediate right, a double layer of new trees have been planted.

- Higher intensity buildings should not cast a shadow line on surrounding areas. To avoid this, buildings could be stepped back on their upper stories or designed in such a manner as to reduce the massing in certain parts of the building to allow sunlight to pass through.
- Well-designed, pedestrian-friendly buildings are much more effective at providing an appropriate transition along street frontages from the highway corridor to the surrounding neighborhoods than berms, fences and walls.
- A buffer containing of vegetative landscaping, walls, and/or fences should be provided around side or rear parking areas that abut residential development consistent with the Zoning Ordinance. Undisturbed natural areas that function as opaque screens are preferable to taking down existing trees and replacing with new plantings.
- A landscaped buffer shall be a vegetative edge of at least three feet in depth and six feet in height at installation and contain a mix of evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs such that the buffer shall be sight impervious even during winter.



Foster Design Continuity

- The use of similar materials and architectural styles in private developments is encouraged because it provides design continuity within each of the commercial corridors.

Architectural Focal Features

- Both new development and large redevelopment projects should enhance prominent corners of buildings with elements such as towers, arches, or roof forms that will serve as identifiable and memorable landmarks.

Roof Forms Should Add Visual Interest

- Gabled, hipped, mansard, gambrel, stepped, and peaked roofs add variety and interest to buildings and should be incorporated in developments. Shed and flat roofs should be concealed with architectural detailing including elements such as parapets or finished flashing. Avoid applied mansard roofs.
- Downspouts should match gutters in material and finish.



Accenting the corners of a simple building form can be an effective strategy, combined with articulation of the business entries.

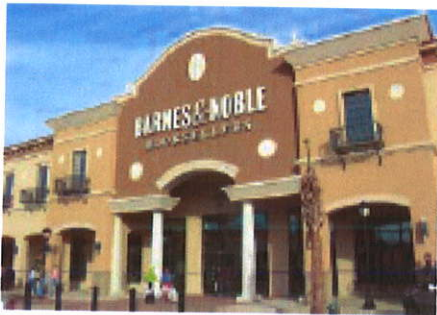
The building below lacks any visual interest with its plan façade and flat roof pitch. Furthermore, the setback from the street is excessive.



The building above adds visual interest and aesthetic quality by stepping the building height and varying the wall depth.



This building has a monolithic look and the dark glass contributes to an un-inviting character.



Varying rooflines and building forms add to the visual interest of a development and minimize the perception of building scale.



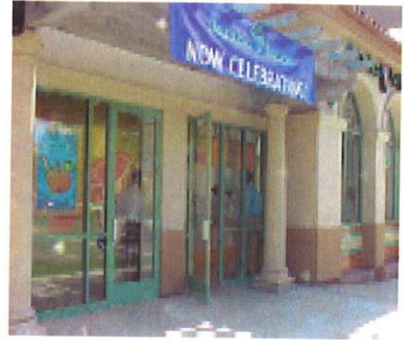
High quality materials, such as stone and masonry, are both natural and durable.

Façade Treatment, Materials and Color

- Avoid using too many architectural styles on a single building.
- Maintain, repair or restore existing and historical architectural elements of building façades, where applicable.
- Large expanses of blank walls are not appropriate. All sides of a building visible to the public should be treated consistently with quality materials and finishes.
- Facades should be well composed and articulated with a variety of materials and forms to create visual interest and character. This can be accomplished by using a selection of architectural details such as vertical and horizontal projections and recesses, windows and openings, changes in height, floor levels, roof forms, parapets, cornice treatments, belt courses, pilasters, window reveals, forms and color, etc.
- Long front facades should demonstrate a rhythm and articulation of “storefront” modules to lend a pedestrian scale to the development. Flexibility in the division of larger buildings into smaller tenant spaces should be considered.
- False fronts and false roof structures applied to generic buildings are not appropriate.
- Building entrances should be designed in a manner which breaks up the building mass and aids in pedestrian orientation.
- Construct buildings to last. Durable and natural materials, economic maintenance and high quality craftsmanship is the best investment.
- Use traditional materials such as wood, brick and stone. When used properly, these materials are as good as other materials. Treated board and other synthetic materials are discouraged.
- Materials should be used with regard to their traditional structural capacity. For example, heavier materials should always be placed below lighter materials. Veneer finishes should be configured in a way that corresponds to the materials traditional load-bearing capacity.
- Use a single color scheme across all stores within a building. Use color to set off decorative details from the base tone of the building. As a general rule bright colors should only be used as accents.

Awnings and Other Appurtenances

- Awnings, trellises or canopies are encouraged above windows, doors, and entrances to provide shade and architectural relief from flat façades. These also serve as an easily read and distinctive sign. The business name and logo are encouraged to be placed on the awning.
- Awnings should complement a building and add definition. An awning should not obscure, detract or hide architectural features. Awning hardware should be hidden or painted to blend with the façade.
- Size, color, material and shape of an awning should be carefully selected and consistent and compatible throughout the building and with features on nearby buildings.
- Fixed awnings should not span numerous bays, windows, or store fronts. The awning should delineate storefronts on a multi-tenant building.
- Awnings and canopies should be made of fabric or metal; plasticized fabric and translucent awnings are discouraged.
- Do not install an awning if maintenance will be difficult. Awnings can be weathered from wind, rain, snow, and sun. It is preferable not to install an awning rather than installing a less attractive, though durable awning.
- See “Awnings” in the Village Center Design Guidelines for other suggestions.



These entryways are stepped back from the main façade and emphasized with columns and shade structure.



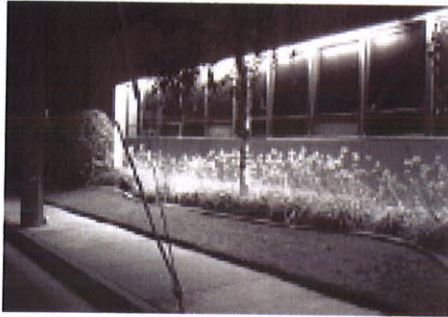
What would otherwise be a flat façade is enlivened with the installation of a simple overhead trelliswork that also provides shade protection for pedestrians.



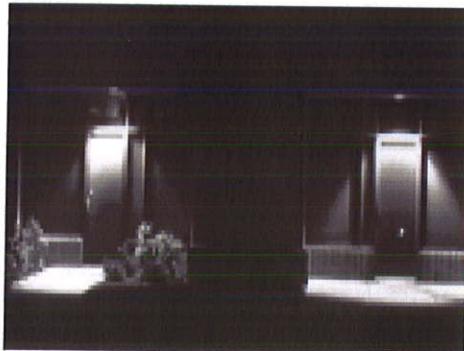
Simple design treatments can be very effective on small buildings. Here the colors (not shown), molding at the parapet, and full width awning work well together. A signage banner announcing a sale is temporary.



This lighting adds visual interest and drama while providing for security and functional use of the business at night, both for pedestrians and vehicles.



This lighting scheme creates soft and uniform lighting for the sidewalk as well as highlighting the landscaping at night.



These entries are clearly illuminated; however, there is too much contrast – too little light – between the doors, due to the dark wall color.

Appropriate pedestrian scaled lighting enhances project character and improves security and visibility at night.



Exterior Lighting

- Lighting should be consistent throughout the development and coordinated in appearance with building-mounted light fixtures.
- Property owners/developers are encouraged to utilize decorative poles and fixtures for all lighting affixed and not affixed to buildings.
- Use of high-quality light, which provides good, uniform visibility while avoiding light pollution, is encouraged. Consider illuminating sidewalks, parking areas, and other multi-use pathways using low intensity fixtures that provide an even distribution of light while avoiding areas of intense shadows.
- All site lighting will be required to significantly reduce glare and reduce light trespass. Fully shielded and full cut-off light fixtures should be used in the following locations: parking lots, public streets and pedestrian areas, pathways and building overhangs.
- Use lighting to accentuate the architectural features of the building such as principle entrances and towers as well as certain architectural details. Fixtures should be fully shielded with full cut-off.

Decorative fixtures can enhance a streetscape or parking area.



Signs

- Signage should be harmonious with the visual character of the street corridor.
- Signs and sign locations should be an integral part of the overall development, reflecting the scale, image and style of associated buildings. Sign design and materials should relate to the building elements.
- Signs should not cover or obscure architectural elements.
- Signs shall be externally lit from the front. Back lighting of signs shall not be used.
- Signs should be made of the following materials: wood (painted or natural), stone, copper, brass, galvanized steel, painted canvas or painted/engraved on façade surface.
- Freestanding Monument signage is the most appropriate along the highway corridor; pole signs should not be used. Other signs appropriate for the individual tenants may include: projecting sign, frame sign, awning sign, canopy sign, marquee sign, wall/fascia sign, and window sign.
- Individual tenant signs may be located on individual storefronts, over display windows and/or at entries.
- Provide small scale “directory” signage as needed within the development to aid in orientation for drivers and pedestrians.
- Neon-lit signs will be permitted only if size and location is controlled to prevent excessive light, as determined by the Inspector of Buildings.
- Flashing signs, moving signs (or signs with moving elements), and roof signs are strongly discouraged
- Temporary signs with a specific date of expiration, such as sandwich boards, will be allowed, after approval by the Inspector of Buildings.
- Parking signs should be simple and understated.
- Street numbers should be located on all buildings. Retail/commercial building numbers should be a minimum of 6 inches in height and a maximum of 10 inches.



Too much signage can create visual clutter and defeat the purpose of the signs. It can also detract from the character and appeal of a storefront, which makes attracting more customers difficult. Block windows with signs also impedes security.



Signs should express “permanence” in their design and materials and should be considered an integral site feature.



Buildings setback from the street and without appropriate landscaping at the street edge are uninviting and unattractive.



Varied greenery and attractive lighting adds to the appeal of shopping areas throughout the year. When parking is in the front, landscaping should be included along the street.



In existing buildings where parking is in front, landscaping can still be provided at the street edge or on a portion of the site.

Site Design and Landscaping

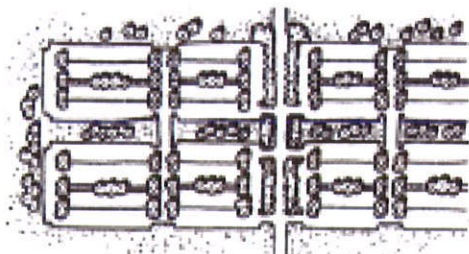
- The street corridor should reflect a natural landscape pattern, utilizing an informal pattern of high canopy trees and clusters of low-height shrubbery within the setback or buffer area adjacent to the roadway, particularly at parking areas.
- The area in between the street and front façade shall contain special landscape treatment (even when parking is located in the front). This should include but is not limited to: specimen trees and shrubs, groundcover, accent rocks, low walls, and signage. Large expanses of mulch and grass are not desirable.
- Where parking is located in the front of the building, the landscape should be more substantial and serve to screen the building from the sidewalk.
- A mix of deciduous and evergreen plantings should be utilized to maintain texture and greenery in winter.
- Preserve existing native landscaping as vegetation where possible. Where feasible, replant or donate removed vegetation for reuse.
- Consider utilizing drought tolerant plants and other landscaping techniques. These include: amending the soil, mulching, grouping plants by water need, and utilizing water-efficient irrigation equipment and schedules.
- Landscape with plants appropriate for the site's topography and soil type. Emphasis should be placed on using plants and groundcovers with low watering requirements.



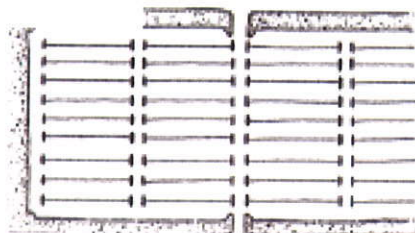
This parking area is effectively screened with landscaping and public art.

Site Design and Landscaping (cont.)

- Dead plants are worse than no plants at all. Landscaped areas bring with them a responsibility for maintenance, which includes watering, removing debris and litter, pruning and replacement of plants when necessary. All private open space and landscaping should be maintained by the owners of the development.
- Landscape features should be used to highlight entryway and other free-standing signage, to screen sign supports and ground-mounted equipment where practical, and to call attention to special gateway areas, such as corners at major intersections.
- Fences are recommended only where they are of complimentary design, materials, and construction to the site's context. In addition to this, they should supplement the existing and/or required plantings.
- The use of chain link or stockade fences visible from any public street or way is strongly discouraged.
- Drainage improvements should be designed as natural landscape features, avoiding structural improvements in design where practical.



DO THIS...



NOT THIS

Planting islands, shown in the sketch at upper left and the photo at right, help to clarify traffic patterns internal to the development sites and provide visual



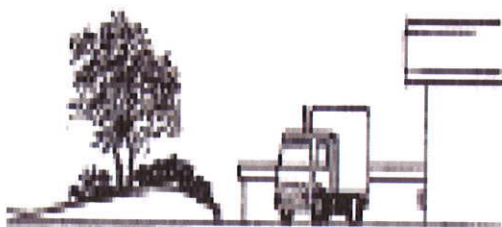
This planter without curbs serves multiple purposes, including site beautification and to catch runoff.



Fences and low walls can be effective elements in landscape design.



Services and Utilities



A combination of walls and/or berms and landscaping can be utilized to screen service areas.



A good example of a trash enclosure that is screened.



Service functions must not be performed in outside areas visible to the street.

- Loading docks, service and equipment areas and trash disposal facilities should not be visible from public roadways, passageways and parking areas.
- Screen loading docks, trash receptacles and truck parking from public view using building mass, free standing walls, and/or landscaping that is coordinated with the overall building design.
- Since delivery and garbage trucks can be noisy, do not locate service areas adjacent to residential units, hotel rooms, and useable open space.
- Ensure that all utility equipment is located, sized, and designed to be as inconspicuous as possible. Also, where feasible, consult with the utility companies early in the design process about the location of utility boxes and meters.
- Do not locate HVAC equipment adjacent to public open space since it can be noisy. In addition, locate all building-mounted, non-street utility meters and service equipment to the side or rear of the building.
- Rooftop equipment should be screened from the public view.



Outside areas visible from the street must not be used for storage or routine display of inventory.

DEFINITIONS

Appurtenance: The visible, functional, or ornamental objects accessory to and part of a building, including awnings, marquees, balconies, turrets, cupolas, colonnades, arcades, spires, belfries, dormers and chimneys.

Awning: A roof-like cover, often of fabric, metal, or glass, designed and intended for protection from the weather or as a decorative embellishment, and which projects from a wall or roof of a structure over a window, walk, door, or the like.

Bay: Space limited by two adjacent weight-bearing structures (columns, pilasters, etc.).

Bollard: Any small vertical element such as a decorative steel or iron pole, or a short concrete column intended to allow pedestrian traffic but to restrict vehicular traffic. Bollards are normally used in groups to indicate an edge between pedestrian and vehicular areas.

Canopy: A roof-like structure serving the purpose of protecting pedestrians from rain and sun, which structure projects from a building. Such structure must be open on three sides and, if ground-supported, supports must be confined in number and cross-section area to the minimum necessary for actual support of the canopy. Or, a free-standing or projecting cover above an outdoor service area, such as at a gasoline service station.

Cap: The protective top layer of a brick structure exposed to weather from above.

Column: An upright pillar or post which may support a roof or a beam, or may be purely decorative. Of definite proportions, columns are usually cylindrical in shape, and are made up of a shaft, capital, and sometimes a base. May be free-standing or attached to a wall.

Cornice: Any horizontal member, structural or nonstructural, of a building, projecting outward from the exterior walls at the roof line, including eaves and other roof overhang.

Expression line: A horizontal line, the full length of a façade, expressed by a material change or by a continuous projection, such as a molding or cornice. Expression lines delineate the transition between the floor levels.



Awning



Bollards



Column



← Cornice

← Expression Line

Street
Furniture



Façade: That portion of any exterior elevation on the building extending from grade to top of the parapet, wall, or eaves and the entire width of the building elevation.

Fenestration: The arrangement of windows in a building.

Furnishing or furniture (street): Any of numerous types of street amenities, most commonly used on commercial streets. Examples are pedestrian lights, benches, newspaper vending boxes, trash receptacles, bollards, planters, tree grates, fences, railings, bicycle racks, mailboxes, fountains and kiosks.

Pedestrian
Lighting



Groundcover: Low plantings used instead of turf where space does not allow turf or where a more decorative affect is desirable. Ground covers are generally lower than 6 inches in height.

Header: The horizontal member spanning the top of an opening, such as a door or window.

Luminaire: A complete lighting unit consisting of one or more lamps, together with the components designed to distribute light, to position and protect the lamps, and to connect the lamps to the electrical power supply; also called the lighting fixture.

Mullion: Wood or metal that separate and hold in place the panes of a window.

Parapet: A low wall at the edge of a roof, terrace, or balcony. Parapets may rise above the cornice of a building.

Pedestrian Lighting: Special lighting that adds drama, character and light to pedestrian areas. Pedestrian lighting may consist of pole-mounted luminaires 14 feet or lower in height, lighted bollards or other low-level light sources.

Pedestrian Way: Walkway providing pedestrian passage through parking lots that is distinguished by hardscape and landscape treatments that provide for pedestrian safety and ease of movement.

Pilaster: An upright, rectangular element of a building that projects slightly from a wall or surface to resemble a flat column. A pilaster is non-structural and may or may not conform to one of the classical orders in design. Often found in Greek Revival style buildings.

Pilaster



Reveal: The horizontal distance between a window or door opening and the exterior façade, measured from the dominant building surface to the window or door frame.

Sill: The horizontal member at the base of a window opening.

Stepback: The portion of the building or structure above such height that is stepped back a minimum distance from the exterior face of such building or structure which faces a street.

Streetscape: A generic term referring to pedestrian and landscape improvements in the right-of-way generally between the curb and right-of-way line. The elements of a streetscape include: building frontage/façade; landscaping (trees, yards, bushes, plantings, etc.); sidewalks; street paving; street furniture (benches, kiosks, trash receptacles, fountains, etc.); signs; awnings; and street lighting.

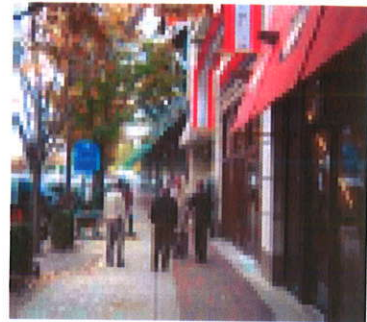
Street trees: Trees that line the street in a straight, regularly spaced row between the curb and property line.

Water table: The horizontal reveal marking the height of the first finished floor level in masonry construction.

Window, clerestory: Windows located above storefront windows in commercial-type buildings.

Window mullion, false: Wood or synthetic strips placed on the surface of one large window pane instead of between panes of glass, intended to represent a traditional mullion.

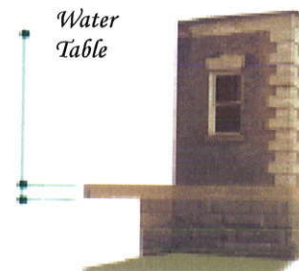
Xeriscape: Landscaping characterized by the use of vegetation that is drought-tolerant or of low water use in character. The term is a registered trademark of the National Xeriscape Council



Streetscape



Street Trees



Water Table

SOURCES (FOR TEXT AND IMAGES)

- Arapahoe Square / B-8A Design Standards and Guidelines*, City and County of Denver, Colorado: 1998.
- Commercial Design Guidelines, Southwest Community Area*, Naperville, Illinois; prepared by HNTB Corporation: 2006
- Design Guidelines for Commercial Façade Improvements*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; prepared by Philadelphia City Planning Commission and Department of Commerce: 2003.
- Downtown Streetscape Planning*, Vermillion, South Dakota; from TSP and Brian Clark & Associates: 2004.
- Downtown Urban Design Guidelines*, City of Boulder, Colorado: 2002.
- Greenwood/Phinney Neighborhood Design Guidelines*, Seattle, Washington; prepared by City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development and Seattle Design Review Program: 2006.
- Neighborhood Commercial Corridor Design Principles*, Sacramento, California; prepared by City of Sacramento Planning and Building Department with assistance from Applied Architects Inc: 2003.
- Raleigh Urban Design Guidelines*; Raleigh, North Carolina: 2002.
- Shore Drive Corridor Design Guidelines*, Virginia Beach, Virginia; prepared by the Virginia Beach Planning Department with assistance from Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc. Folck, West & Savage Architects, as part of the Shore Drive Transportation Study: 2002.
- South Main Development Standards*, Buena Vista, Colorado; prepared by Dover Kohl Associates.
- South Military Highway Corridor Study*, Chesapeake, Virginia; prepared by Urban Design Associates: 2005.
- Streetscape Manual*, City and County of Denver, Colorado: 1993.