DESIGN GUIDELINES HANDBOOK

Wellesley, MA

March 2020

architecture
urban design
GAMBLE ASSOCIATES

Adopted by the Review Board TBD

Prepared for Town of Wellesley

Town of Wellesley - Planning Department
525 Washington Street, Wellesley, MA 02482
Tel: 781-431-1019

Prepared by

Gamble Associates
678 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 502
Cambridge MA 02139
Tel: 617-292-9912

Comments / Questions

This Handbook is a living document that will evolve over time with the changing needs of the Town. In that spirit, we invite comments and perspectives that will inform the Town of Wellesley as it updates and amends this work.

Comments on this document may be made to

Tucker Beckett
Phone: 781-431-1019, ext. 2237
Email: tbeckett@wellesleyma.gov

Purpose of the Handbook

This Handbook addresses new construction and exterior renovations along the primary commercial corridors and Village Centers in Wellesley. It provides guidance to the public and private sectors about what is envisioned in terms of new development and how to achieve design excellence. The Design Guidelines provide information and examples to property owners and developers about what is expected in terms of building quality, massing, height and character, as well as the interface with the public realm.

However, the guidelines do not replace zoning or define uses. The Guidelines define expectations for new development while still allowing for flexibility that foster high-quality design. They pertain to renovations of existing sites, new development on properties that are vacant, or sites that are likely to be redeveloped in the future.

Table of contents

Introduction 4

Context 16

Building 30

Public Realm 46

Signage 60

Checklist 80

Introduction

Context

In 1976, Wellesley adopted a Design Review section in the Zoning Bylaw and established a Design Review Board. The Design Review process provides a method by which business owners, property owners, residents, and Town Departments can work collaboratively to protect the historical and cultural heritage of the Town, maintain an attractive and sustainable environment, and enhance the "character" of Wellesley.

The Design Guidelines Handbook was last amended in 1989. This edition has been updated with support by urban design consultants Gamble Associates, who led a public process involving public meetings, stakeholder interviews and surveys, and with direct input from the Design Review Board members and Planning Department staff.

The Design Review Board meets bi-monthly to review applications. Applications are reviewed based on Zoning Bylaw *Section XXII Part C., Design Criteria* and this Handbook as described in *Part D., Design Guidelines Handbook*. The intent of the Design Review Board is not to prescribe a particular architectural style, but rather work with an Applicant to achieve results beneficial to both the Applicant and the Town. The Board's recommendations on these proposals are taken into consideration by the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals and the Inspector of Buildings, depending on the type of project.

Community character

Community and character are elusive terms. For some, community character is defined by the small-scale, eclectic architecture of commercial buildings and diversity of Wellesley's historic, residential homes. For others, character may be best embodied in the public realm like the town's well-maintained streets, sidewalks and public spaces, or the healthy tree canopy and lush parks, trails and playgrounds. Most importantly, a community is comprised of *people*, and each resident or visitor may describe the Town differently.

Design guidelines identify, maintain and celebrate characteristics of the Town that residents cherish today and limit the possibility that new development erodes, in some way, the Town's identity in the future. The scale of a building, its material palette and relationship of the building to the street and site all impact the character of a place. While it is not possible to represent every characteristic of what future development will entail, a variety of examples rendered here capture a diversity of possible scenarios.

Design Goals

The following goals for this Handbook were created as an outgrowth of community conversations.

1. Represent dimensional requirements graphically
2. Invest in the public realm
3. Improve walkability (and diminish the impact of automobiles in the public realm)
4. Strengthen gateway locations along the commercial corridors
5. Encourage small-scale retailers
6. Foster more outdoor activity and placemaking opportunities
7. Implement downtown branding and wayfinding program/project
8. Translate Guidelines into Standards*

*Design Guidelines are discretionary. Design Standards, by contrast, are codified within the zoning by-law and are required. Design Guidelines are the "may" while Design Standards are the "must".

Design Tools

1. Promote a sense of community
2. Reinforce the villages concept
3. Enhance the public realm
4. Create a sense of place making
5. Preserve the character of landmarks and historic fabric
6. Define the scale, proportions, and architectural language of new construction
7. Do due dilegence to protect the natural habitat and environment
8. Encourage sustainable solutions to new projects

Wellesley is fortunate to have many historic buildings still in existence. The task for new buildings is to respect the scale and character, and complement the existing historic resources in a harmonious way with tasteful, new development. Image: Town of Wellesley, MA

Institutional relationships

Wellesley is fortunate to have strong civic, cultural and academic institutions, neighborhood schools, and religious centers. Unlike urban settings, where these uses commingle with institutional space, these uses have distinct boundaries with their neighbors. Inevitably however, as these uses evolve, they place tensions on existing neighborhoods at their borders. The edges between institutions and residential areas are opportunities for shared amenities and programs that can emerge in the seams between them.

Enhancing the quality of design for buildings and spaces relates to new development in institutional settings as well as in the Village Centers and along the commercial corridors. Serving as a catalyst for adjoining neighborhoods and not being defensive against them should be an objective for Wellesley's institutions. Being cognizant of scale discrepancies, ensuring a superlative public realm and developing in a sustainable manner that treads lightly are equally important.

Sustainability / resiliency

As the effects of climate change become more visible, fighting the causes is one of the biggest challenges of our time. Urban development requires the consumption of precious resources. But smart, sustainable development can contribute to a more energy efficient way in which we work and live in the future. Developers are encouraged to read the Town's forthcoming Sustainable Building Standards (SBS) which highlight the Town's priorities and goals with regard to buildings, sustainability and greenhouse gas emissions.

The most sustainable development is the reuse of existing buildings. Smart modifications to floor plans can allow buildings to be successfully converted to different uses. The design of new buildings should anticipate possible changes in the future and, when possible, provide for flexibility. Green roofs and retention areas should be considered as well as the reuse of recycled materials. A goal of new development in Wellesley should be to design a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certifiable project *at a minimum*.

The public realm offers huge potentials in fighting climate change. Bioswales and permeable paving can manage storm water effectively and and can help reducing irrigation. Mature tree canopies provide much needed shade in the hotter months and prevent heat islands.

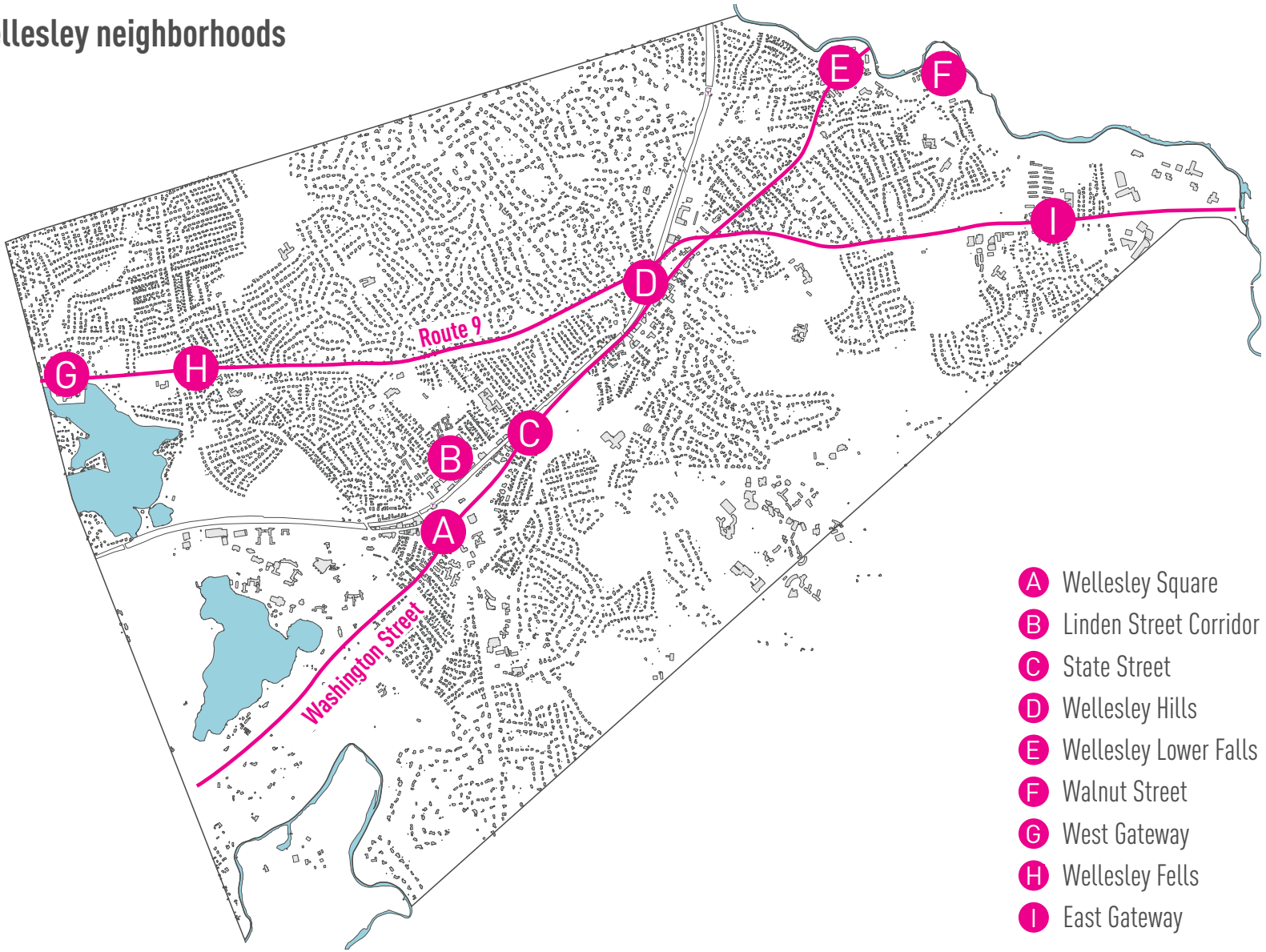
Parking and access

Parking and access are primary considerations for new development. When parking is located in front of buildings, it can require multiple curb-cuts for the property it serves. As a result, the relationship of the building to the street favors vehicles, not pedestrians. Surface parking lots located in front of commercial establishments facilitate access for patrons but do not improve the character of the public realm.

Consideration should be given to shared parking opportunities where day and night uses overlap in order to increase development potential. This has the added benefit of encouraging alternate modes of transportation and various modes of travel. Regardless of where they are located, existing and future parking lots should be visually buffered with trees and plants. Development should equally consider the experience and demands of the pedestrian, the cyclist, as well as the public transit rider and car.

Parking demands and traffic parameters are changing at a fast pace. Development projects need to anticipate an increase in designated drop-off areas for ride-sharing vehicles, parking spots with electric charging stations and facilities for e-bikes and scooters.

Wellesley neighborhoods



- A Wellesley Square
- B Linden Street Corridor
- C State Street
- D Wellesley Hills
- E Wellesley Lower Falls
- F Walnut Street
- G West Gateway
- H Wellesley Fells
- I East Gateway

A Wellesley Square

With the iconic Wellesley Town Hall, an historic building that is on the National Register, presiding above the heart of Wellesley Square and lending its character in subtle and not so subtle ways to many of the buildings nearby as well as others throughout the Town, it is important to reflect on some of its features: The rare red color of the slate roof and reddish brown earth tones of the brownstone, the proportions and articulation of the circular turrets on the western façade, the seamless, delicate integration of the original two halves of the building (east end library 1883, west end government offices 1885) into one structure, the incredible detail that identifies the entablature, cornices, balustrades, finials, and banding, as well as its siting on conservation parkland that contains large canopy trees appropriate for an arboretum and robust understory landscaping.

Echoes, even contemporary ones, of this building permeate Wellesley Square, which is the preeminent commercial area in town Wellesley Square straddles the intersection of Route 16 (Washington Street) and Route 135 (Central Street), spilling onto Grove Street and along the entire lengths of Church and Cross Streets. It contains a retail area of over 60 stores and restaurants as well as a number of residential properties that encircle a second iconic building in the area: The third iteration of the Village Church and, to its rear, the church's historic and tranquil cemetery. Wellesley Square has an eclectic mix of architectural styles that contribute to the character of this area, all the while reflecting and even amplifying elements that define Town Hall.

- Wellesley Free Library: extensive use of red brick, curved projection on the elevation that faces Town Hall
- Waban Block, designed by Luther Greenleaf, dark red brick construction, rounded corner, strong banding (appropriate for signage) separating the first story retail from the upper story residential/office area and an imposing cornice
- Holman and Morton Blocks elaborate entrance entablature for the signature storefronts on the prominent corner of each of the buildings, continuation of banding and cornices that integrate and distinguish the various storefronts
- Village Church brick construction that displays the symmetry important to Colonial Revival architecture combined with arched windows and an imposing steeple that displays arches as articulated embellishments, which serve as counterpoints to the Great Hall windows and turrets of Town Hall
- Storefronts along Central Street facades with strong banding and intricate cornices primarily one-story buildings that merge this area into the surrounding residential neighborhood and subordinate the streetscape to the importance of Town Hall, the Village Church, and the hub at the intersection of Washington, Central, and Grove Streets
- Extensive integration of beautifully landscaped pocket parks, including Central Park, Flag Pole Park, and Station Park, with its pre-Cambrian rock outcropping and signature tree: the Station Oak

Streetscape, landscaping, numerous public shade trees and frequent use of storefront window boxes that are meant to extend the greenery outward from Hunnewell Park toward the surrounding residential neighborhoods

B Linden Street Corridor

The Linden Street corridor (specifically Linden Square, which encompasses the area along Linden Street between Kingsbury Street and Crest Road) once represented the business/industrial backyard for Wellesley Square. Over the last 15 years, redevelopment gentrified this area so that is begs a stronger connection to the businesses along Central Street. The north side of Linden Street sets the anchor grocery provider at the rear of the area to provide easy circulation for deliveries and front-of-store customer parking; yet retains a streetscape of three-story retail and office space that contains robust landscaping, public shade trees, sidewalks, on-street parking, and – at the main entrance – an echo of the rounded turrets remembered from Town Hall.

There is extensive use of red brick and banding for store signage. The south side of Linden Street retains some of its early character of a strip mall, although renovations have added to the articulation of each storefront and the landscaping and stone walls at the sidewalk's edge seek to balance the streetscape of the north side of Linden Street.

C State Street

Extending along Washington Street from the eastern edge of Wellesley Square, there is Morton Park, the Police Station, and the Tolles-Parsons (Senior) Center – this area ending at the intersection with State and Kingsbury Streets. Use of red brick, massing attuned to the surrounding residences, and occasional use of slate roofs as well as traditional articulation continue the character of Wellesley Square eastward. Again, the rounded turrets of Town Hall are echoed with the front projection of the Kingsbury Room at the Police Station. Only the Tolles-Parsons Center reverts to wood frame construction, perhaps intending to seem residential even though its volume predominates.

D Wellesley Hills

The area recognized as Wellesley Hills extends roughly from Forest Street to just past the Hills Branch Library, a National Historic Register site. The anchor for Wellesley Hills is the Isaac Sprague Memorial Clock Tower at Elm Park. Its fieldstone/granite color is a counterpoint to the rich landscaping of the park and that coloration permeates Wellesley Hills Square. This neighborhood marks the crossroads of Route 16 (Washington Street) and Route 9 (Worcester Street) Until the early 1930s. These two arteries crossed at grade and were well known for the extensive canopy of elm trees that led along Washington Street towards Wellesley Square. In 1934, after several years of negotiation with the Commonwealth, the reconstruction of Worcester Street created the underpass of Route 9 beneath Washington Street. It was constructed using Milford granite. The widening of both Washington and Worcester Streets, the 1938 hurricane and Dutch Elm disease decimated the canopy. Mournful, town residents strove to replace the canopy with the native public shade trees that thrive there today.

Wellesley Hills is recognized by its one- and two-story buildings, some constructed of brick, with slate roofs. Eaton Court offers the popular Tudor stucco, beam, and brick of 1920s Colonial Revival architecture. The formal buildings Phillips School and the Stuart Building are three story brick structures that echo what exists in Wellesley Square. There is a reliance on elaborate cornices and rooflines as well as significant banding at a pedestrian oriented level, appropriate for signage.

E Wellesley Lower Falls

Developed as a mill and industrial area alongside the Charles River, connected to and almost interchangeable with Newton Lower Falls, this is the original industrial district for Wellesley. It was and remains an amalgam of brick mill buildings, one- and two-story storefronts along Washington Street, and a railroad terminal depot that has been converted to a popular local restaurant. Part of this area includes the bridge over the Charles River (which separates Newton from Wellesley) and the Walnut Street corridor that was re-imagined as a 1970s office park.

Significant buildings in Lower Falls are the old mill buildings that line the river front and are barely visible from the street. They are brick and fieldstone, factory-like in their practical design. One notable exception is an old brick parking garage directly opposite Glen Road at 54 Washington Street. The brick has been painted white, but the architecture made a transition from the mills and small commercial area to the residences that lines Washington Street as it made its way up a steep incline towards Wellesley Hills. The Lower Falls Commercial Area zoning returned a strong connection to the Charles River with the orientation of Waterstone at the edge of riverfront parkland.

F Walnut Street

A commercial area characterized by a number of office buildings is located on Walnut Street with easy access to Route 128, and is bordered by the Charles River Reservation along the river banks. The buildings are generally three or four stories high with large parking lots in the rear. Most facades are brick, and a few of the old mill buildings have been converted to office uses. Few homes directly abut this area. The parks adjacent to the river provide pleasant open areas and scenic vistas for the enjoyment of workers and residents.

G West Gateway

West Gateway, along Route 9 at the Natick line, reflects the commercial flavor of Natick more than it serves as a transition to the residential character of Wellesley's Route 9 (approximately 75 percent of Worcester Street is zoned residential). Several office buildings, car dealerships, gas stations and practical drive thru coffee establishments populate the West Gateway area to the west of the overpass that crosses Weston Road (historically called Blossom Street). A massive indoor recreational center dwarfs everything nearby. Although young trees have been planted, there is a mournful loss of tree canopy along the street edge. This is odd and must be remedied with any new development as this is the primary entrance to Wellesley, noted as a Tree City since 1984.

Charming residential neighborhoods abut this commercial stretch, often located just behind many of the office buildings. It is important to note that the Crosstown Trail, one of Wellesley's principle wooded foot trails that sits on top of the historic Cochituate Aqueduct, crosses Route 9 close to the traffic signal at Overbrook Road. Better integration with these neighborhoods and any pedestrian traffic they might generate can be fostered by robust landscaping.

H Wellesley Fells

Approached from Wellesley Square on Weston Road, The Fells neighborhood is marked by the historic The Fells Branch Library (originally a one-room schoolhouse) before passing under Route 9. At this juncture the commercial development is noted for a number of long-time family businesses including a grocery market and pharmacy. Other services include small eateries and offices. There is a parking lot. The businesses are community oriented, not oriented to Route 9.

I East Gateway

East Gateway, which defines the intersection of Route 9 and Routes 128/95, is an amalgam of office parks that pride themselves on having campus-like settings. The topography aligns itself with the Charles River and the land is respectfully landscaped with mature trees and understory bushes to the point of emphasizing forested woodlands. This character is magical and vitally important because of the wetlands, buffer zones, river frontage and even FEMA floodplain.

This principle entrance to the Town from the east is where the professional administrative and business life along the highway dissolves into residential neighborhoods that depend on a suburban tree canopy and a sense of place. As with many office structures, red brick predominates, but the palette is not monolithic. As residential mixed-uses are added to the East Gateway, mass and scale need to transition from the business vocabulary to the smaller residential neighborhood dwellings that are near this area.

Design Guidelines structure

This Handbook is divided into four parts; context, building, open space and signage. The four categories update the previous Design Guidelines (November 1989) by simplifying the document structure and providing precedent images. The previous document did not include images. The categories are color-coded for ease of navigation and there are several subcategories under each part.

CONTEXT

1 Historic Setting and Heritage 18
2 Relation to off-site features 20
3 Public Realm 22

BUILDING

1 Height 26
2 Massing 28
3 Setback + Stepbacks 30
4 Materials 32
5 Green Building 34
6 Mechanical and Utility 36

PUBLIC REALM

1 Landscaping 40
2 Parks and Open Space 42
3 Preservation of Landscape 44
4 Connections 45
5 Tree canopy 46
6 Streetscape 47

SIGNAGE

1 Wall Signs 52
2 Projecting Wall Signs 53
3 Window Signs 54
4 Awning Signs 55
5 Standing Signs 56

A building's context is its "site" and the relationship of the development to adjoining areas.

CONTEXT

1 Historic Setting and Heritage

When a new building is built adjacent to an old one, it invariably draws a comparison. What does it mean to construct a new building in an area surrounded by old ones? Does a contemporary building built in an historic area need to look old? Downtowns and corridors that have matured over time benefit from variation and diversity of architecture.

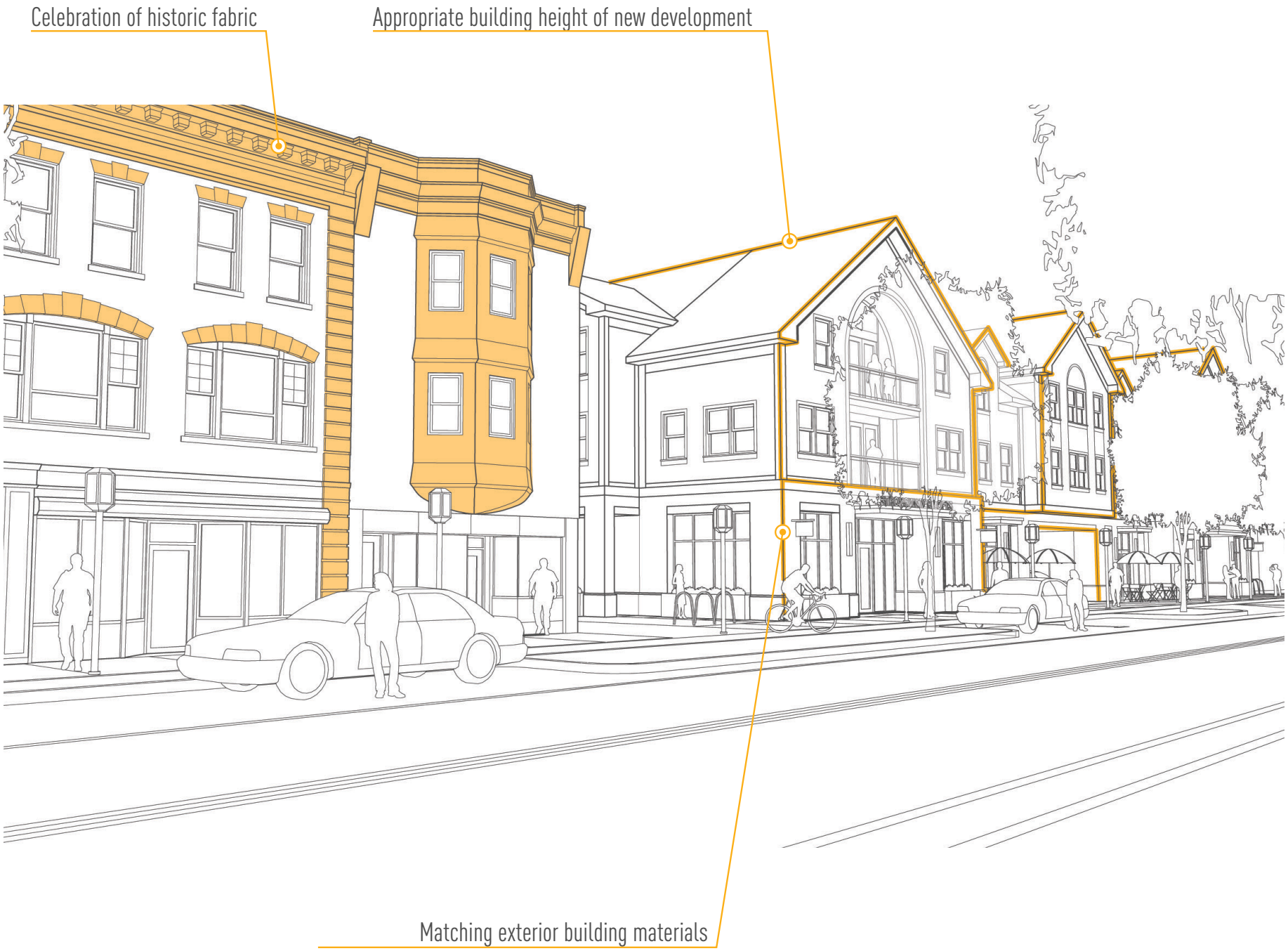
A harmonious relationship for new development means that there is a functional or visual relationship between the existing historic fabric. Infill development in an historic context needs to evaluate the scale, setbacks, proportions, and heights of the surrounding buildings. The choice of materials also impact the quality of the development and how well it fits in the context. What matters most is *quality.* Style is subjective, and trends change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The contrast of something new to something old heightens the character of both
- Scale is more important than emulating an historic style
- Matching or integrating exterior building materials offer opportunities for design innovation and exploration
- Additions or modifications to historic buildings should be done in a manner that is thoughtful to the existing historic building

Celebration of historic structures adds to the identify of communities

Harmonious coexistence of historic fabric and modern addition


Celebration of historic fabric
Appropriate building height of new development
Matching exterior building materials

2 Relation to Iconic Site features

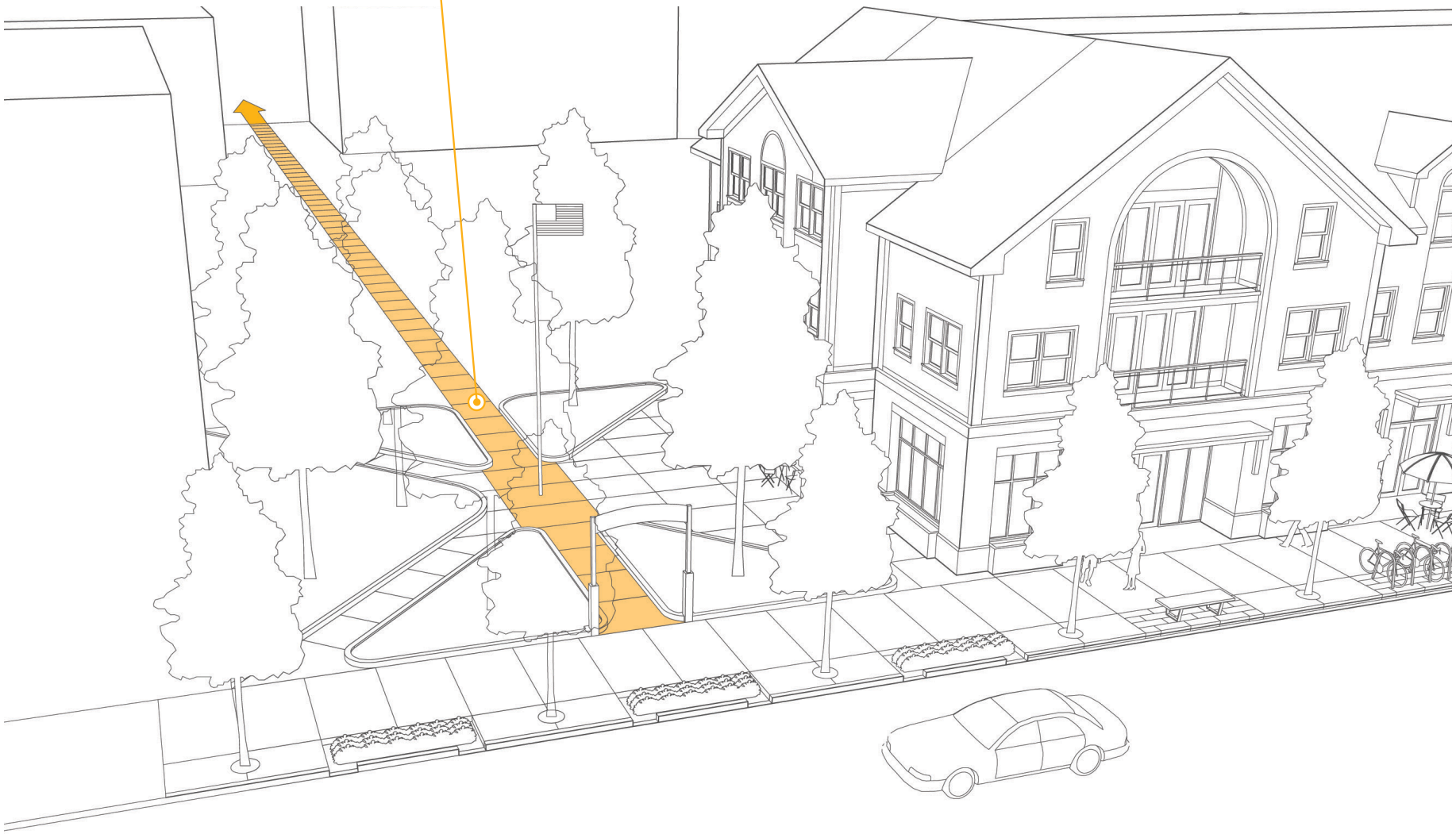
This Design Guideline Handbook informs development on private property. However, when each development takes into account characteristics intrinsic only to its individual site, opportunities for linkages to adjoining areas are diminished; the potential for connectivity is lost. New development needs to consider the manner in which it reinforces linkages to other amenities like historic sites, important vistas, parks or open spaces beyond it's property line. Connections should be made to Wellesley's extensive network of trails that consists of over 45 miles and link open spaces across different parts of town.

Communities benefit from linkages to adjoining landmarks and spaces

Linkages are successful when activated with public amenities

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider open space linkages between properties to enhance adjoining community assets
- Break down the scale of large developments by introducing passages into the site
- Introduce green space setbacks and linear pathways as a way to organize redevelopment


Visual linkage to iconic feature

3 Scale and Public Realm

While aligning a building's primary elevation to the property line is most often the appropriate urban design response in a downtown or Village Center, there are instances where some open space setbacks should be included as part of a development. Modestly-scaled open spaces add vitality to the public realm and provide areas for resiliency strategies that mitigate negative environmental impacts.

A more continuous and accessible "streetwall" along the main corridor will encourage pedestrian activity and create a more aesthetically pleasing, human-scaled environment. The majority of surface parking should be moved to the back of the buildings and therefore bring the buildings closer to the street edge. The number of curb cuts should be minimized in order to increase pedestrian and cyclist safety but anticipate greater need for vehicular drop-off zones

RECOMMENDATIONS

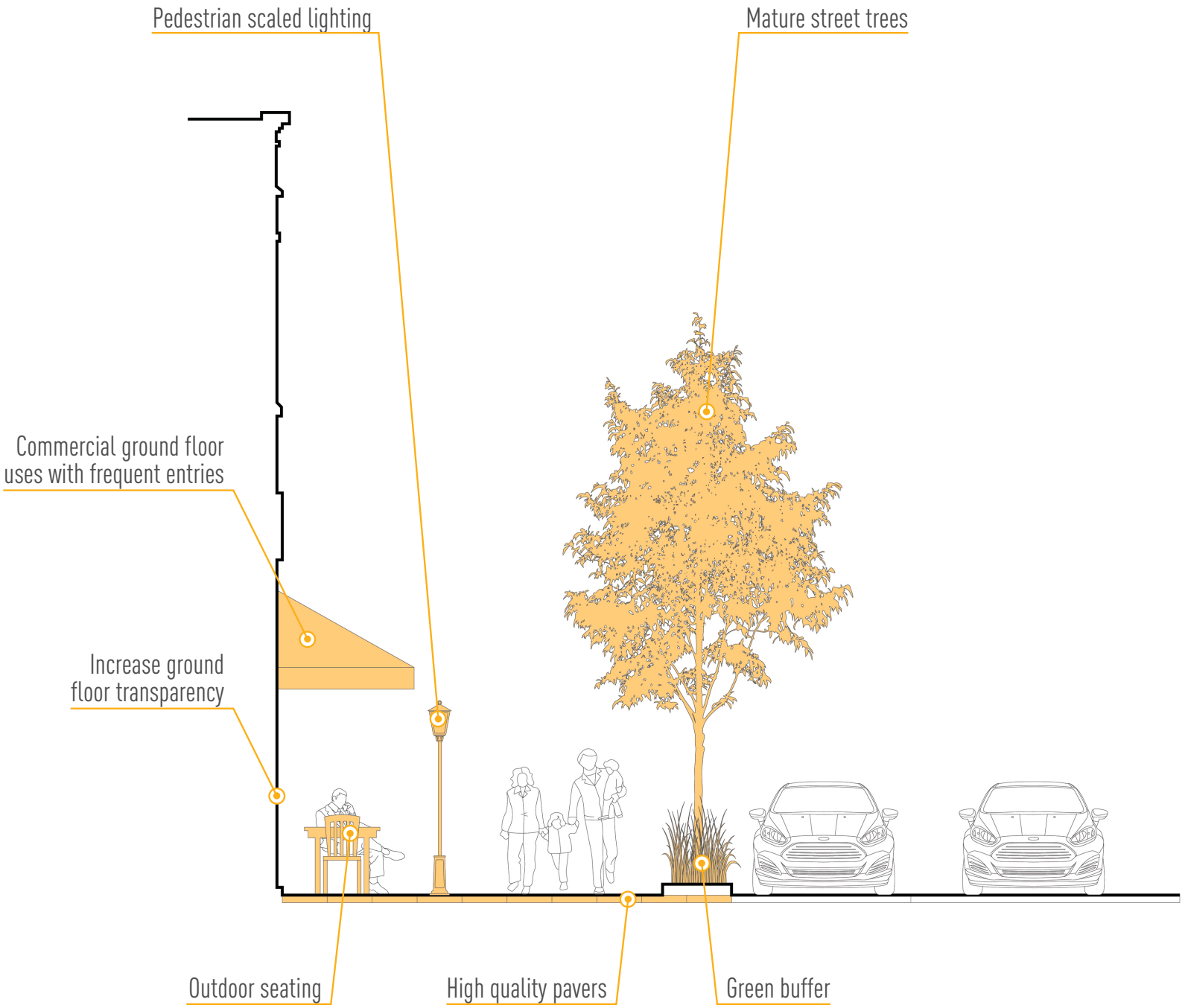
- Align building setbacks between sites to foster larger areas of public congregation
- Use high quality materials on the ground plane
- Include frequent entrances along ground floors
- Place active ground floor uses along public rights-of-way
- Increase ground level transparency to dissolve the visual barrier between the interior and exterior

Wellesley, MA

An attractive public realm defines the identity of the Town

Plymouth, MA

Public realm offers opportunities for public art and community expression


Pedestrian scaled lighting
Mature street trees
Commercial ground floor uses with frequent entries
Increase ground floor transparency
Outdoor seating
High quality pavers
Green buffer

The form and scale of the architecture.


WELLESLEY
FREE
LIBRARY
Falls Branch
1851


WELLESLEY
MIDDLE SCHOOL


STARBUCKS COFFEE
LINDEN
SQUARE
CVS/Pharmacy
The Cottage


LINDEN SQUARE


1904


WELLESLEY BANK
Kidville
WELLESLEY BANK

BUILDING

1 Height

Height constitutes just one aspect of a building's massing, but it may be the most conspicuous. Heights are impacted by a variety of factors, including floor to floor dimensions, construction type, topography and the scale of surrounding buildings. The perceived height of a building is also impacted by the width of the street it fronts. In general, larger commercial corridors and primary streets that are wider warrant taller buildings.

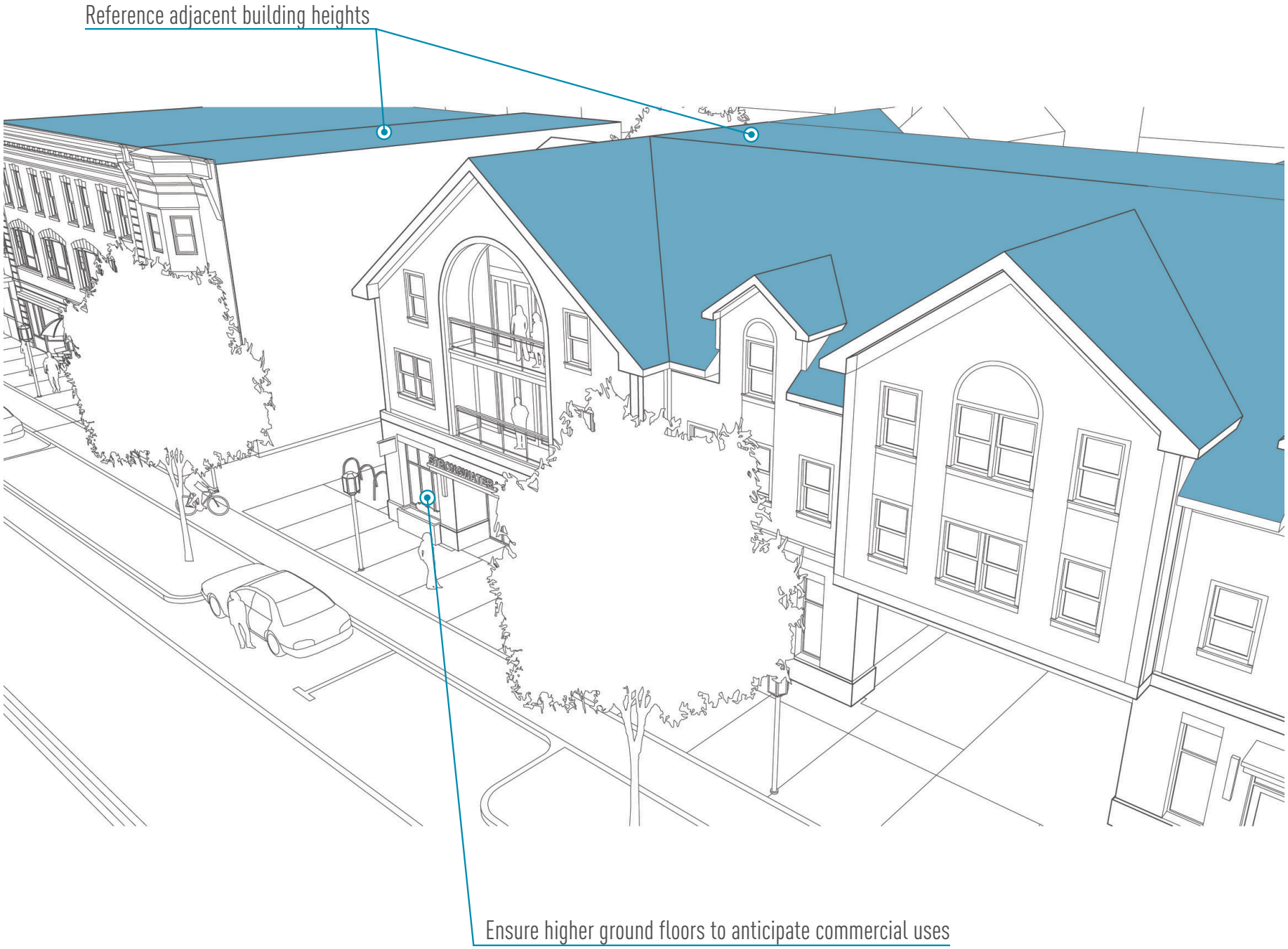
The impact of height can be diminished by the inclusion of open space or a building setback. A taller building will appear less tall when setback from the street. However, in an effort to define Wellesley's Village Centers, large building setbacks are not preferred. When concerns about density arise as a result of a building's height, the relationship of the building facade to the public right-of-way can have a greater impact than any other dimension.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Acknowledge or reference heights of adjacent buildings
- A general datum of 3-4 stories is encouraged along the Village Centers and commercial corridors
- Taper height adjacent to adjoining residential areas
- Ensure higher ground floors to anticipate commercial uses
- Incorporate upper floor building setbacks

Historic buildings give clues to appropriate building heights

Window proportions impact the perception of building height


Reference adjacent building heights
Ensure higher ground floors to anticipate commercial uses

2 Massing

A building's mass has to do with the overall proportion of a structure, including the size of the building footprint and its relationship to the context. As previously vacant or underutilized sites fill in with new development, figuring out how to encourage increased density (consistent with zoning) is important to achieve the Town's goal of a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Larger building masses are appropriate for the Village Centers, gateways into downtown and major Route 9 intersections. Buildings in prominent locations are important for orientation. Prominent locations include building facades that terminate view corridors, corners of buildings and elevations that form the backdrop to parks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- When abutting residential areas, taper a building's mass to relate to the neighborhood scale
- Utilize projecting bays, porches, balconies awnings and sun-shading devices to break down scale
- Excessively long building elevations should add visual relief to the facade through subtle modulation
- Recessed porches, terraces and step-backs create depth
- Aligning floor to floor heights and borrowing the rhythm of adjoining buildings creates coherence between sites

Appropriate massing creates attractive pedestrian environment

Brake up building masses to prevent long, continuous streetwalls


Modulate larger building masses
Diminish long elevations by providing visual relief
Aligned floor heights of adjacent buildings
Step-backs create depth within the facade

3 Setback + Stepbacks

In areas with a lot of commercial activity, it is important to maintain a continuous streetwall with few building **setbacks**. Setbacks that do occur should be used for pocket-parks, plazas or landscape zones. What constitutes an appropriate setback is impacted by the scale of the street it fronts, ground floor uses and pedestrian activity on adjoining sites. Larger landscape setbacks are appropriate for residential areas, whereas mixed-use buildings in Village Centers should define the streetwall.

A **step-back** minimizes the visual and shadow impacts of higher floors, allowing for greater height while maintaining a consistent scale with adjacent buildings. Step-backs occur at the upper level of buildings where the upper plane of the building is recessed from the lower stories. A step-back is encouraged above the third or fourth floor, depending on the context. This allows for the stepped-back level to be largely hidden from street view.

RECOMMENDATIONS

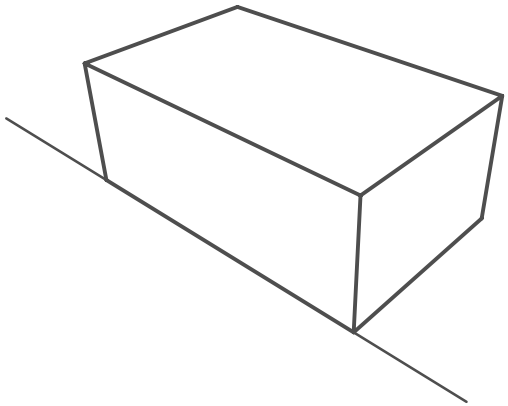
- When abutting residential areas, taper upper floors to relate with the scale of adjoining residential neighborhoods
- Step-back the third of fourth floor a minimum of eight to ten feet to reduce the perceived height of the building

Setbacks break down larger building masses

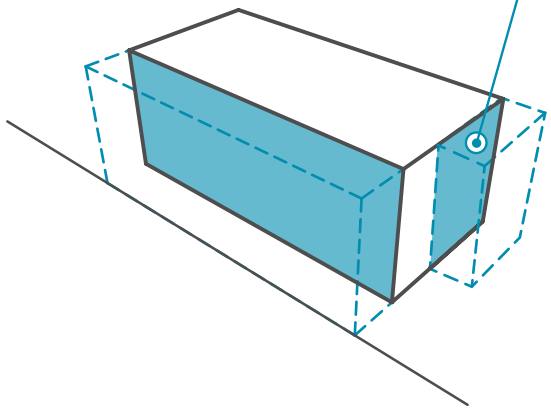
Stepbacks and setbacks diminish the effects of building height

Side stepbacks break up the building massing

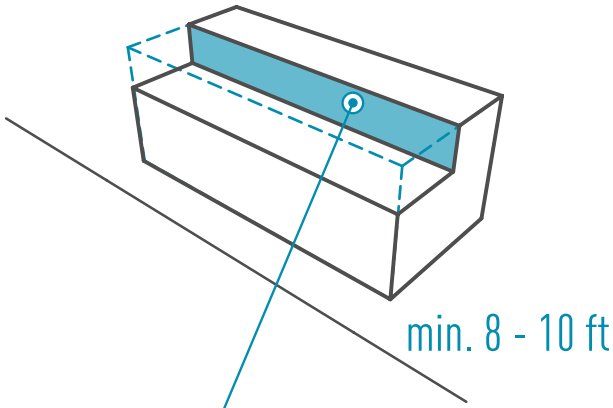
Streetwall



Setback



Stepback



min. 8 - 10 ft

Upper-story stepbacks diminish the effects of building height

4 Materials

A wide variety of materials helps breaking down larger building masses. Not every building elevation needs to be treated equally. The highest quality materials and greatest articulation should be reserved for the primary facade and the ground floor of the building. This is the area that garners the most attention from pedestrians and should provide a high level of transparency.

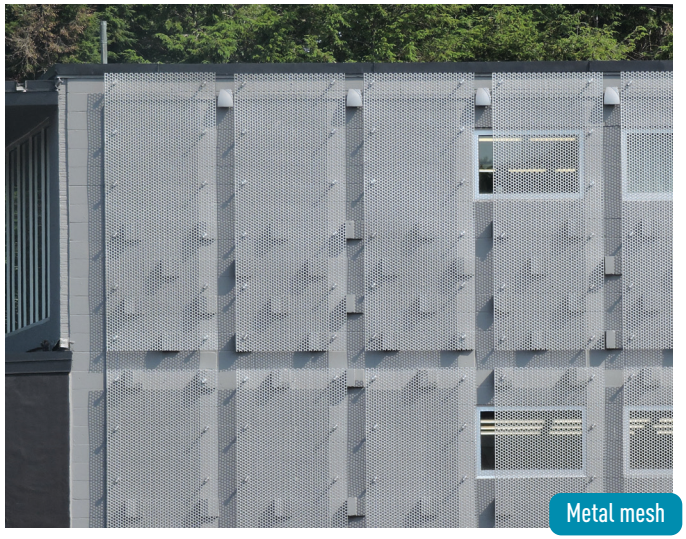
Materials should be selected by their durability, maintenance and ability to be recycled. Materials should be selected that are locally-harvested and have a low-embodied energy content. Using local materials reduces transportation and distribution costs of the product. The recladding of buildings with alternative, high quality materials enhances durability and aesthetics. The reuse of a building should be respectful to the past .

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Build with natural and sustainable materials
- Specify zero or low-emission building products to improve air quality
- Reclad building elevations with contemporary materials
- Increase transparency and signage
- Cheap, non-durable cladding and finishes age poorly, require frequent maintenance and diminish the overall quality of the building and are discouraged

Recladding is a cost-effective way to enhance a building's curb appeal

Brick buildings with white storefront trim works well together

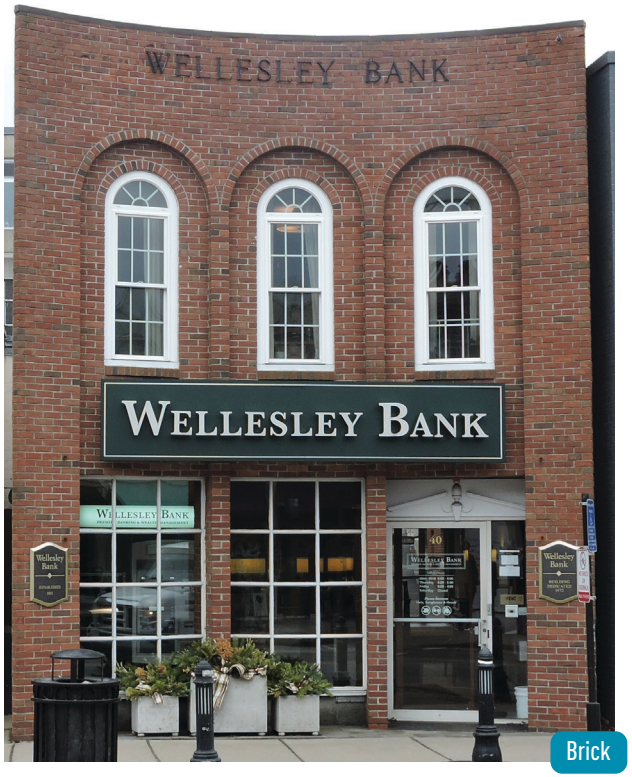

Metal mesh


Natural stone


Wood cladding


White Brick


Natural stone



Brick


Brick

Painted Brick

5 Green Building

Buildings account for half of the world's greenhouse gases and consume 50% of its raw materials. A green building is one where environmental responsibility is an integral part of the design, and the negative impacts associated with development are minimized. Green buildings utilize alternative and renewable energy sources for generation and retention. A sustainable development uses less energy through the use of solar panels, wind turbines and geothermal fields. The goal is to design buildings that are net zero ready at a minimal additional first cost of construction.

For more information on sustainable municipal buildings, please refer to the forthcoming **Wellesley's Sustainable Building Standards (SBS).** The SBS informs private developers about the Town's priorities and goals with regard to buildings, sustainability and greenhouse gas emissions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reuse existing buildings to the extent possible
- Integrate rainwater harvesting, green roofs, energy responsive facades, sun-shading devices, natural daylighting, recycled content and low embodied energy materials
- Increase the tree canopy, planted areas, rain gardens and green roofs

Fitting materials add quality and variation to a facade

High School with photovoltaic system, geothermal energy, and shading devices


Solar panels applied to the roof
STRONGWATER LOFTS
Energy efficient windows
Performative landscapes

6 Mechanical and Utility Equipment

Mechanical systems constantly evolve, and too little emphasis is placed on the appropriate location and installation of systems on the exterior of a building. Misplaced louvers, AC units and/or power generators compromise the aesthetics of a building. No technical equipment should be installed next to a public right-of-way. They should be largely hidden from public view.

The amount of cellular antenna in our landscape has increased exponentially. While sufficient cell phone reception is essential to a vital economy, clunky antennas mounted on buildings and roofs compromise the architectural quality of a village setting. Site utility needs in a manner that minimizes their visual impact to the public right-of-way.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Integrate mechanical systems into the building's roofline and/or shield from view
- Match a building's materials or colors to integrate surface mounted equipment into a building's facade
- Utilize landscape buffers at ground level

Plymouth, MA

Conceal cellular antennas (e.g. place inside cupolas)

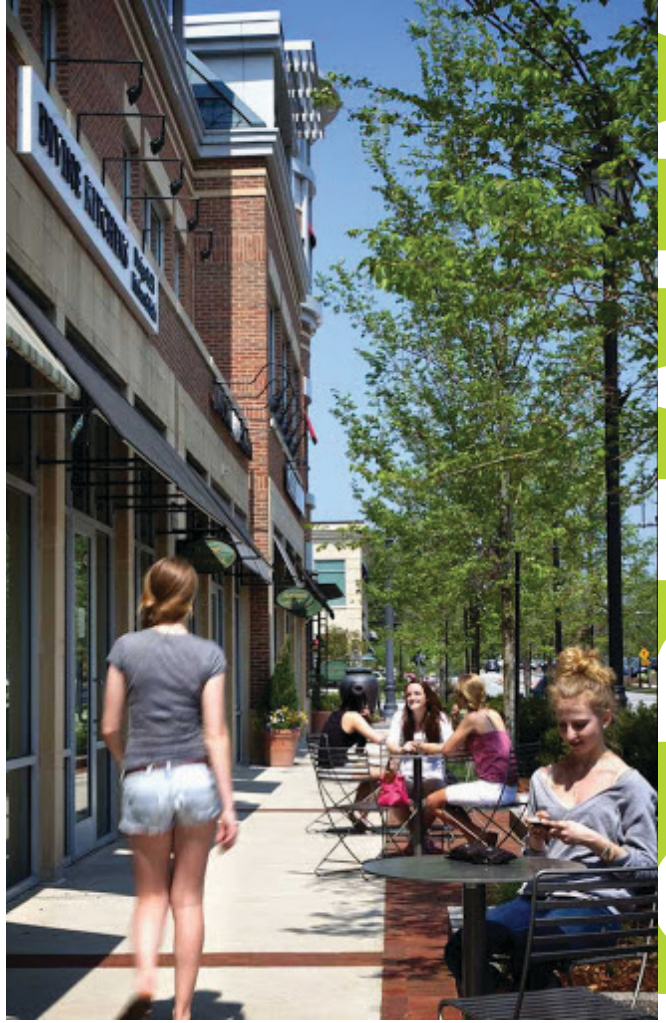
Needham, MA

Mechanical equipment should be shielded from the public right-of-way


Equipment integrated in building roof
Cellular antennas with little visual impact
Central air conditioning replaces visually disruptive window units

Public Realm and landscapes
in and around the property.

PUBLIC REALM



1 Landscaping

Landscape should be an integral part of all site plan developments. Trees, shrubs, and other landscape elements can be used to accentuate buildings, create a sense of identity, reduce the amount of impervious surfaces, and benefit the environment and human health. The characteristics of each site should be carefully evaluated for planting selection and success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Preserve existing significant vegetation, and landforms
- Install planters and flower beds to break up paved areas
- Diminish the amount of impervious surfaces
- Provide sufficient soil volume to ensure the health of plantings which also contribute to on site stormwater management
- Select appropriate plant species that will thrive in various site conditions.
- Plantings should be a combination of native and locally adaptive species, lessening water demand while providing biological benefits.
- Planting species should scale properly to the surroundings and avoid unsafe conditions.
- Incorporate planting to add aesthetic value

All landscape areas should have sufficient soil volume to support selected planting types. Incorporate appropriate plantings that are in scale with their surroundings and can tolerate urban conditions. In the village centers which have more pedestrian traffic, the planting palette with seasonal changes could create an inviting streetscape. Parking lots in commercial districts should be separated from the street by plantings, earth berms, walls, and/or other landscape elements to minimize the view of vehicles and headlight glare while allowing the public to see the building.

The transition between the public realm, buildings and parking areas are essential in a Village Center context. Planting beds are especially needed when it comes to surface parking lots which consist of vast amounts of asphalt with no shade or spatial definition. Landscape strategies such as bioswales are an effective tool to address stormwater runoff and increase water permeability. Evergreens are an effective year-round buffer between commercial areas and residential neighborhoods.

Landscaping in the interior of parking lots should be provided, incorporating trees, berms and other landforms where possible. The amount of impermeable pavement should be reduced. Plant materials should be chosen for longevity, low maintenance requirements, attractive appearance, ability to survive, and effectiveness as screening devices.


LINDEN SQUARE


NEWTON-WELLESLEY
OUTPATIENT SURGERY CENTER
25
NO PARKING HERE TO CORNER

2 Parks and Open Space

The most evident feature of active, economically-healthy commercial areas is the presence of people; on the sidewalks, sitting in restaurants or cafés, or simply people-watching. The most dramatic way for this to occur is to encourage or incentivize ground floor activities to have an outdoor, as well as an indoor, presence. Modestly-scaled open spaces in the form of plazas, courtyards or gardens create opportunities for ground floor uses to spill out onto the public realm.

A key element of successful revitalization efforts is an organized and well managed program of events, festivals and regularly scheduled activities that can happen in these spaces and are designed to bring people to the Village Centers, or keep those already there longer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide flexible and programmable outdoor space for different uses with appropriate shade structures
- Provide multiple seating options, sufficient lighting and shade to encourage people to use the space
- Context-sensitive design for site elements and material selection as well as relationship to surroundings
- Ensure site access and connectivity/ social equity
- Enhance the interface between ground floor uses and exterior landscape zones with greater transparency

Seating areas invite the public to gather and enjoy the outdoors

Parks offer opportunities to celebrate history and art


FULLER BROOK PARK

3 Preservation of Landscape

The village character of Wellesley is defined in large part by its historic resources and impressionable open spaces. While some landscapes are highly visible, like Morton Park at Town Hall, others are less so. The Lower Falls are a hidden gem and remain unnoticed for most people traveling along Washington Street. The preservation and enhancement of a town's natural landscape must be given priority to add to resident's quality of life and attract economic development.

It is in the best interest of Wellesley to maximize the quantity, quality and use of open space within the parameters of new construction and building alterations. New development should make efforts to reduce the degree of modification to a property's topography.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Utilize existing topographic conditions and grade changes
- Minimize disturbance of existing tree root zone and preserve existing healthy trees
- Integrate existing, healthy vegetation and landforms
- Preserve vulnerable landscapes and ecosystems
- Grow the general tree canopy
- Implement permeable paving, sand-based structural soil, and/ or Silva cell to promote root and tree health and support on-site storm water management efforts

Naturalized areas need to be celebrated and made more accessible

Cultural landscapes strengthen the identity of a community

4 Connections

Wellesley has nearly 50 miles of trails. However, greater connectivity is still needed within each character zone. A network of attractive open spaces that are well-designed, programmed and active during all seasons and times of the day will enhance the character of the Town. Open space linkages for pedestrians and cyclists reinforce the role of the town's naturalized areas and help to overcome the multiple layers of car-dominated infrastructure that erode the character of the public realm.

Multi-use paths offer passive and active recreational opportunities

Seating areas offer a chance to relax and enjoy the scenery

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Seek collaboration between properties or as public / private partnerships to increase connectivity
- Integrate isolated areas into a larger framework for connectivity with mid-block connections and wide sidewalks

5 Tree canopy

Landscape investment in the form of tree plating, bioswales and raingardens create shade, increase filtration, enhance biodiversity and reduce heat island effect. A robust planting regime provides seasonal color and visual interest. By insisting on an expansion of a mature tree canopy within or adjacent to the public-right-of-way a more impressionable and connected downtown is possible. Shaded zones and streets facilitate a safe pedestrian environment that encourage walking and biking.

It is vital to choose the right tree types that can thrive in the New England climate. Trees in Village Center settings and along major corridors need to be resilient to salt and snow management strategies. It is important to note that the tree pits in Wellesley are too small to support tree growth, which is why many commercial areas lack tree pits. Avoid the use of mono-cultures that are susceptible to pests. Elm, Oak, Honey Locust, and Ginkgo are strong options. More information can be found on the USDA Plant Hardiness Map.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Plant trees along sidewalks and building edges to visually buffer parking areas
- Minimize large paved areas without naturalized zones
- Diversify plant types and scales to increase biodiversity of the environment
- Increase tree quantity in commercial areas

Mature trees enhance public spaces and beautify the street

Choose diverse tree species that withstand harsh conditions

6 Streetscape

While aligning a building's elevation to the property line is most often the appropriate response for building in a downtown setting, there are instances where some spatial relief is needed and a building setback could be included as part of a property's redevelopment. Modestly-scaled open spaces add vitality to the public realm.

Planters, green buffers, and performative landscape elements provide shade in the summer and create a sustainable, green environment. Appropriate lighting keeps historic features visible at night and increases security around the downtown. A reasonable effort should be made to remove unsightly utility poles and install underground wires instead. A superlative public realm means that equal care is given to the ground plane in front of a building as the vertical surfaces of the building itself. Where space allows, the public realm offers a great opportunity for public art that further adds to the identity of Wellesley.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure active ground floor uses that can spill out onto the sidewalk to create a vibrant street life
- Implement complete streets to provide a safe environment for all modes of transportation

Wellesley, MA

Multi-use paths offer passive and active recreational opportunities

Wellesley, MA

Seating areas offer a chance to relax and enjoy the scenery

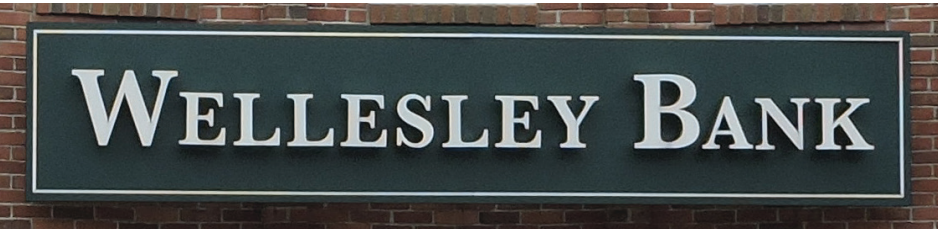
The wide variety of graphics that communicate information at different scales.


ITALIAN • OLD SCHOOL • PIZZERIA


DEPRISCO


Smith&Wollensky


Pine Straw
LIVE.GIVE.CELEBRATE.


WELLESLEY BANK


Kidville


ERIC BARRY
PHOTOGRAPHY


NWH
NEWTON-WELLESLEY
OUTPATIENT SURGERY CENTER


altostrada

SIGNAGE

Signage Introduction

Commercial corridors are impacted by the character of their storefronts, window displays and building facades. The quality and character of signage on these storefronts contributes to the look and feel of the street, and by extension, the entire public realm. Signage is essential to the success of a business, providing visibility and distinction from neighbors and competitors. Signs must be legible for both vehicles and pedestrians, during the day and night. Signage needs to be affordable yet high-quality and express a unique brand. The goal of this section is to provide business-owners and the town a practical guide to affordable signage that provides effective identity and visibility, reduces clutter, encourages creativity and diversity, respects the building facades, and ultimately improves the character of Wellesley's Village Centers. The Design Review Board oversees some types of signs, but not all. This section articulates Design Guidelines for the sign types under the board's purview, including directional signage, directory signs, informational signs (sandwich boards), temporary signs and out of store marketing signs.

- Allow for creativity and express the uniqueness of Wellesley
- Clean old hardware/panels before installing new signs
- Expose and restore historic building elevations
- Use the best materials one can afford
- Seek the advice of town staff and designer
- Size the signage appropriately to the building
- Internally-illuminated "sign boxes" are prohibited

Please refer to the **Wellesley Signage Guide** for an illustrated set of tables that depict each sign type and their corresponding requirements.


1 Wall Signs
2 Projecting Wall Signs
WELLESLEY
3 Window Signs
4 Awning Signs
5 Standing Signs

1 Wall Signs

The sign band area on a building is a horizontal zone typically above the storefront windows, or on upper floors below the windows or cornice. This is an ideal place to locate a primary business sign that is visible for passing cars and pedestrians. Signage is mounted parallel (flat) to the building facade and can be individual letters or contained in a single panel.

Generally, a single primary sign over the main display window is mounted below the sill line of second floor windows on a multi-story building or the lowest point of a building cornice line for a single-story building. The sign should fit within the sign band area and expose some of the building facade on all sides of the sign panel. When multiple signs are placed along a single building facade, the size of all signs shall be considered in their relationship to the building. Letters can show the original building facade behind them.

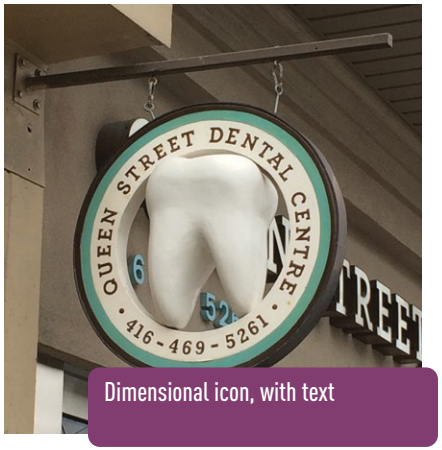
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Painted or dimensional letters, cut letters and shapes applied directly to building are encouraged
- Use high quality materials, painted metal, plastic, or wood
- Signage is intended to be lit externally by multiple small down-lighting fixtures mounted to the building or sign panel, or through back-lighting
- Consider the relationship of signage to building features and existing signage regarding placement and size

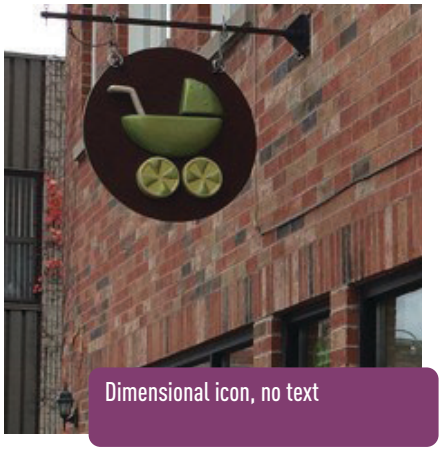
Letters applied directly to building

Painted letters on painted wood panel

Letters applied directly to building



Dimensional icon, with text



Dimensional icon, no text

Sign with small light fixture

Metal sign with painted logo

Profile panel with painted letters

Decorative bracket

2 Projecting Wall Sign

Projecting wall signs are perpendicular to a building's elevation. They should be mounted near the entrance to the business. The sign has two identical sides. Projecting signs, (which are also called blade, shingle and pendant signs), provide effective visibility to pedestrians and enliven the sidewalk experience.

Projecting signs shall be sized appropriately to the building facade and located so as to not obscure architectural details. Vertical columns are ideal mounting locations. Signage should project no more than four feet from face of building (including brackets) and maintain a space between the sign and the building face.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Use of high quality materials, cut or painted metal, plastic and wood is encouraged
- Mount signs securely to avoid wind damage
- Signage may be lit externally by installing small fixtures mounted to the sign or building face.
- Internally illuminated signs in translucent plastic are discouraged

Note: Projecting Wall Signs require special permit from ZBA

3 Window Signs

Window signs display the business name and logo and may state the nature of the business. Signage typically is located on the main storefront display windows. Detailed information, such as telephone numbers and hours of operation, should be smaller scale and located on entry doors.

Graphics maybe be located on each main display window of the tenant space. Window graphics should not obscure views into the retail space. Retailers are encouraged to minimize additional signage and postings that may further obscure views into the interior.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Individual letters and graphics are preferred over large decals or supergraphics
- Unique, cut vinyl, metal leaf, or hand-painted signs are encouraged
- White or light-colored letters can be more legible than dark colors

Window graphics permit views

Uncluttered window graphics with organized door signage

4 Awning Signs

In addition to providing sun and weather protection, awnings can be used as signs when a sign band is not available. Awnings may be used to supplement wall signs or projecting signs. Standing signs must be pushed back 15 feet from the street, and they aren't limited to Route 9.

Multiple smaller awnings above each display window are preferred over a continuous awning that runs the length of the storefront. Awnings may be used on both street-facing sides of a corner storefront.

The usage of high quality materials, such as silk-screened or sewn-on appliqué graphics on fade-resistant awning material is encouraged. Mounted awnings need to be installed securely to prevent excessive flapping on windy days. Awnings may be illuminated with building mounted down-lights.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Internal illumination is discouraged
- Explore opportunities for multiple awnings in a series
- Utilize high-quality materials

Awning signs combined with text

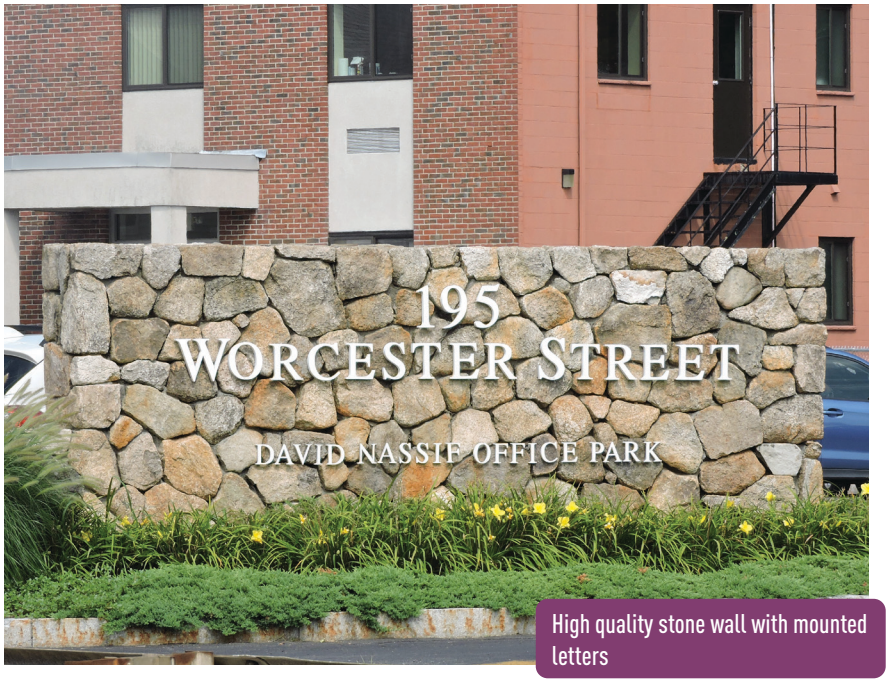
Awning signs combined with sign band and graphics

5 Standing Signs

One single, freestanding sign near the main access drive clarifies the entrance to the property and helps create an “address”. These signs increase wayfinding, but must not obstruct views for exiting vehicles. High quality materials like stone and metal are encouraged. Signage may be externally lit by installing small fixtures below the sign. Standing Signs must be pushed back 15’ from the street.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Scale signage for vehicular speeds and scale of site
- Highlight signage with mounted downlights or uplights
- Utilize high quality materials for retaining walls / backdrops



High quality stone wall with mounted letters

Standing sign with address and office park branding

Checklist

This checklist summarizes the Design Guideline recommendations. It should be used as a means to gauge if a proposed project complies, complies with deviation, does not comply or is not applicable.

CONTEXT

- ☐ Development respects historic setting of the property
- ☐ Development fits within village character
- ☐ Development pays tribute to Wellesley's heritage
- ☐ Development establishes relation to off-site features
- ☐ Pedestrian scaled lighting
- ☐ Outdoor seating and amenities
- ☐ Active ground floor uses
- ☐ Majority of surface parking is behind the building
- ☐ Landscape buffer zone between surface parking areas and the primary building facade
- ☐ Development helps to define the corridor and neighboring buildings

BUILDING

- ☐ Appropriate building height in relation to neighboring buildings
- ☐ Larger building masses are modulated
- ☐ Long building elevations provide visual relief
- ☐ Setbacks allow for optimized public realm
- ☐ Upper-story Stepbacks
- ☐ High ground floor that anticipate commercial uses
- ☐ Ground floor transparency
- ☐ High-quality, natural, and durable materials
- ☐ Rainwater harvesting, green roofs, energy responsive facades, sun-shading devices, natural daylighting, and recycled content
- ☐ Renewable energy: solar panels, high efficiency heating / cooling
- ☐ LEED certifiable building (or higher)
- ☐ Mechanical equipment shielded from public right-of-way
- ☐ Attractive facade that contributes to the architectural quality of the corridor

OPEN SPACE

- [ ] Sustainable, native landscape features
- [ ] Planters and flower beds that break up paved areas
- [ ] Reduced stormwater runoff through maximum permeability
- [ ] Landscaping elements shield surface parking lots
- [ ] Installation of pocket parks (if possible)
- [ ] Minimal soil removal / modifications
- [ ] Respects existing topography / natural features
- [ ] Attractive pedestrian connections to surrounding parcels
- [ ] Mature street trees and healthy tree canopy
- [ ] High quality pavers
- [ ] Robust green buffer adjacent to Route 9
- [ ] Resiliency strategies incorporated into the planted edges
- [ ] Safe shared-use path

SIGNAGE

- [ ] Allow for creativity and express the uniqueness of Wellesley
- [ ] Size of all signs are considered in their relationship to the building
- [ ] High quality materials
- [ ] Appropriate lighting
- [ ] Sign does not interfere with the public realm
- [ ] Applied signs respect architectural features
- [ ] Secure installation to prevent swinging or detachment
- [ ] Window sign does not obscure views into ground floor use
- [ ] Appropriate scale for both pedestrians and cars
- [ ] Legible, clear design that improves wayfinding
- [ ] Sign creates building "address"
- [ ] Sign adds depth and visual interest to the facade

architecture
urban design

GAMBLE
ASSOCIATES

Gamble Associates
678 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 502
Cambridge MA 02139
617-292-9912