



CITY OF WORCESTER URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

NOVEMBER 2012



URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES
CITY OF WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS
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Aerial view of downtown Worcester

I. INTRODUCTION

Preamble

Rich in design, the distinctive quality of Worcester’s architecture is evident throughout the diverse neighborhoods of the city—from the grand homes of Salisbury Street to the traditional three-deckers that line the streets of Vernon Hill. The size, type, and placement of buildings, as well as the street patterns, are all elements that define the public realm in a community, and provide a framework for how development should look, feel, and function. When development occurs that does not fit within the existing context, the public realm can be dramatically altered.

The fabric of downtown is woven from its significance as the center of municipal government and the site of important business, cultural, and civic activities. Diverse uses including offices, medical services, educational institutions, residences, and retail shops are found in the city center. While the historic character of the area as a bustling hub of activity remains, the current urban design vision emphasizes the downtown as a livable, walkable, progressive, and sustainable urban community.

Similarly, the Canal District still offers a mix of uses and styles that harken back to the geographic, entrepreneurial, and cultural forces that shaped the original development of the area. And though the historic context of the neighborhood remains strong, the loss of industry left many vacant mill buildings that are slowly being transformed through creative adaptive reuse.

Within the downtown and the Canal District, new infill development and rehabilitation of existing buildings, in concert with renewed investment in streetscape, provides the opportunity to enhance the public realm and restore the urban fabric that defines these two neighborhoods and tells a story of Worcester’s celebrated history.

Purpose

Urban design guidelines protect and enhance the existing historic buildings while ensuring that new construction fits into and complements the surrounding setting. Cities around the Commonwealth and the nation enjoy the benefits of such guidelines.

These guidelines seek to minimize the reliance on highly subjective, individual tastes and preferences of permit granting authorities to consistently apply a clear, professional policy informed by the most up-to-date thinking on urban design and development. This clarity of policy is essential for the long-term success of the City’s efforts to improve both the downtown and Canal District. Worcester’s embrace of widely accepted design principles will add value to projects and increase the return on investment for developers.

Approach

Although the context and public realms may differ, the downtown and the Canal District each have a combination of distinctive street patterns and unique architecture.

Therefore, joining these two important neighborhoods into a single district for the purposes of implementing design guidelines is a natural fit. By establishing a Design Guidelines District (“District”) and implementing Design Guidelines (“Guidelines”), future development will respond to the unique character of these areas by addressing both the function of the streets and the architectural diversity.

With a focus on the public experience, one important means of understanding the District is through street hierarchy, ranging from the minor streets to the primary corridors. The design of the streetscape and its architectural setting will vary depending on the location within this framework of street hierarchy. The design response in relation to street hierarchy and function also will help clarify orientation within the District and prioritize public goals.

Another way of understanding the District is to examine the contrast between the historic areas and the areas driving innovation. The historic areas tend to be on the western side of downtown along Main Street and throughout the Canal District with the scale and architecture of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The innovation areas generally lie on the eastern side of downtown along Major Taylor Boulevard and include some of the larger parcels for future infill development.

By considering both the street hierarchy and the historic and innovative character of the District, the Guidelines create a qualitative and quantitative framework for defining future growth within the District. The historic and innovation themes described above define the qualitative aspects of the aesthetic experience, responding to existing buildings and periods of development. Street corridors based on hierarchy respect the established patterns of travel and the quantitative or dimensional criteria that define use consistently along their lengths.

Background

While the City's existing Zoning Ordinance regulates heights and density for private development, there are few controls regarding the massing of buildings, relationship to the street, or appearance. Yet these characteristics make a tremendous difference in how a building exists in a public realm, fits into the context of existing buildings, and enhances the public experience. Many new and renovated buildings today represent public/private partnerships, which should also extend to the expectations of creating a vibrant character in the District.

The Guidelines have been developed through the City's Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED) and Department of Public Works and Parks (DPWP), with preliminary assistance by Sasaki Associates, Inc. The Guidelines set forth a clear policy for development and encourage a commitment by all parties to achieving the highest level of design.

Goals

The Guidelines address the urban design of the District. They focus on the pedestrian environment and the public experience of the street and focus on massing, scale, and style, while allowing for and encouraging design creativity. These Guidelines will ensure that the District continues

to evolve into an exciting and attractive destination. Promoting good design raises the value of real estate in the District, making it a more desirable place for investment in the short term and the long term. While updates may be necessary over time, the intent is to establish a set of guidelines that will apply today and into the future.

The Design Guidelines are directed primarily at developers and property owners that propose demolition, rehabilitation, and construction of buildings in the District, as well as the installation or repair of building signage.

Implementation

Any person contemplating a demolition, rehabilitation, construction, or signage project should consult the City of Worcester's EOED to determine if the project is within the Design Guidelines District. If so, such persons are strongly encouraged to review these Guidelines as early as possible in the development process. In this way, the Guidelines can shape the design from the outset and clarify expectations regarding the development process.

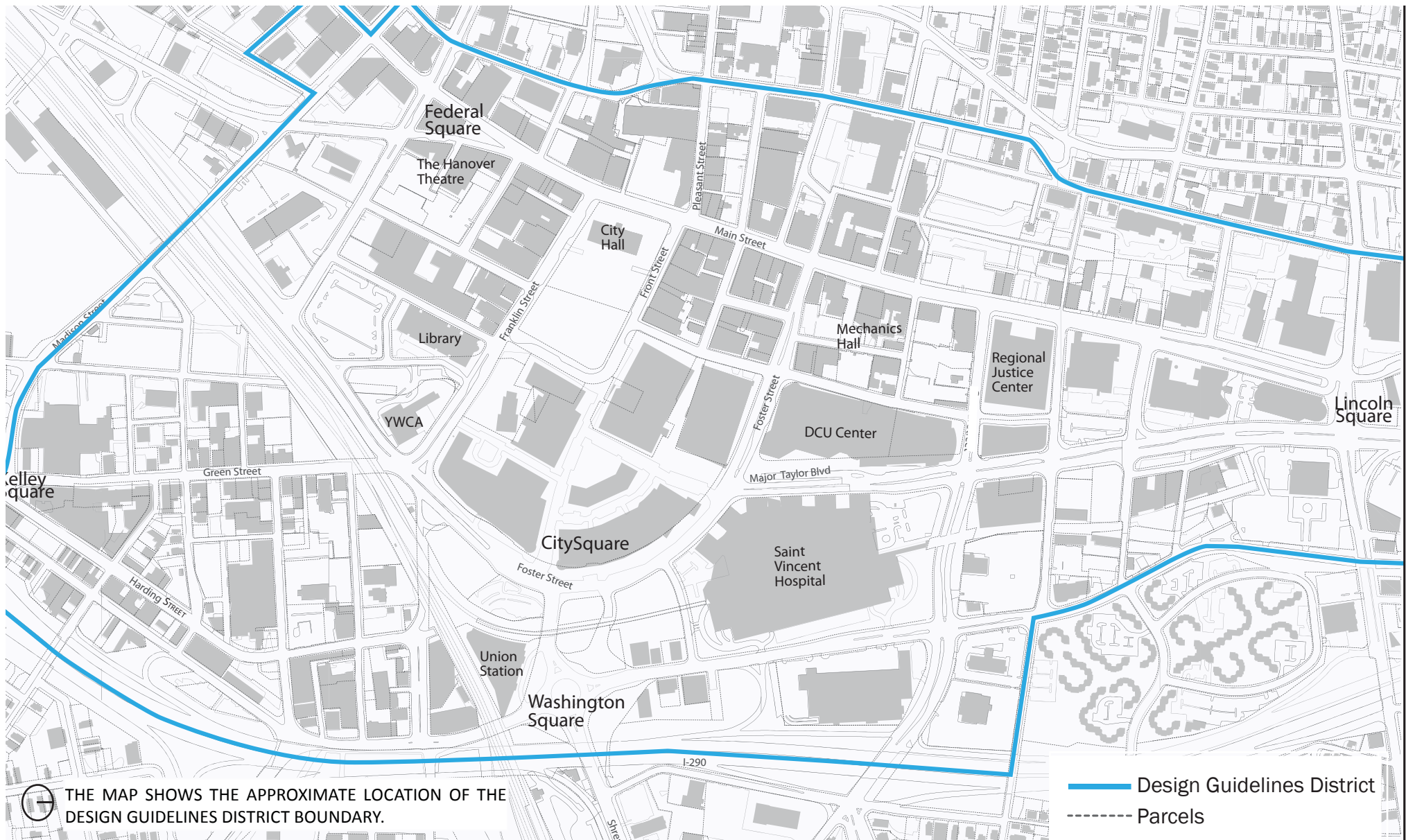
The staff from the EOED will conduct an internal review of the design of projects and provide comments and feedback.

Exemptions

All projects that receive financial support of any kind from the City, or through a City funded program, are required to follow the Guidelines unless otherwise waived, at the City's direction, in writing. A specific set of guidelines similar to, but apart from, the Guidelines outlined in this document were approved by the City as an element of the CitySquare project development agreement. Certain large-scale municipal facilities, including the DCU Center, are also exempt.

For more information, please contact the City of Worcester's Planning and Regulatory Services Division at: (508) 799-1400 ext. 260 or planning@worcesterma.gov

II. GUIDELINES DISTRICT BOUNDARY



III. DISTRICTS



Example of Historic Spine

The character of the Design Guidelines District varies, with the downtown areas to the western side of Main Street and the Canal District exhibiting a more historic character, and the areas to the easterly side of downtown -- including Washington Square -- offering opportunities for a more innovative character.

HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Historic Spine

Streets in the Historic Spine comprise the grand-scale core of the historic district; the broad streets and relatively intact historic architecture create an opportunity to evoke Worcester's past. Massing, architectural articulation, and the selection of street furnishings and materials will support this character. Main Street and Green Street constitute the primary Historic Spines.

Historic Quarter

These areas have similar architectural character to the Historic Spine, including buildings primarily built prior to 1950, but have typically narrower streets that carry significantly less traffic. This allows for a smaller, more pedestrian-oriented scale while maintaining the historic theme of the District.



Example of Innovation Spine

INNOVATION DISTRICTS

Innovation Spine

The Innovation Spine is characterized by wider streets, modern architecture, and larger-scale buildings when compared to the Historic Spine. As such, it has a much more contemporary character establishing a forward-looking aesthetic for the corridor that supports Worcester's commitment to advancement as one of its keys to continued growth and success. Major Taylor Boulevard and the portion of Foster Street between Commercial Street and Franklin Street constitute the primary Innovation Spines.

Innovation Quarter

The Innovation Quarter currently consists of areas that are generally underutilized and possess potential for redevelopment. It can be characterized by a theme of innovation drawn from the Innovation Spine and has street patterns that encourage dense, pedestrian-scaled development with finishes and furnishings of an appropriate scale and character.



Connector Street



Internal Street

STREET HIERARCHY

The street hierarchy is a functional understanding of the District that primarily informs wayfinding and orientation. The dimensional qualities and the level of future investment in streetscape enhancements are tied to this understanding. All District streets should be pedestrian in nature.

The Primary Streets should each have a continuous, distinct character along their length.

The Gateway Streets should read as important cross streets with consistent dimensions and wayfinding signage.

The Connector Streets and the Internal Streets tend to be narrower and carry more local traffic, making them interesting environments that further contribute to the pedestrian nature of the District.

For more information, please see the *City of Worcester Streetscape Policy*.

IV. DESIGN GUIDELINES



New and historic buildings within a consistent streetscape

The Design Guidelines will promote high quality urban design by reinforcing basic principles that make a city desirable and attractive for residents, employees, and visitors. The Guidelines are not intended to limit the development program, but rather to ensure that the program responds to its site context and minimizes adverse impacts to the pedestrian environment.

The intent is to ensure that each building acknowledges surrounding buildings and site characteristics, enhances the pedestrian environment, and contributes to the civic pride of the District over the long term. In some cases, new civic buildings may be designed as an exception to the Guidelines, allowing these unique buildings to stand out within the urban fabric due to their public function and their role as landmarks for the community.

The Guidelines are presented as a series of articles. Within each article, the principle is stated, the definition of terms to clarify the intent is presented, and more detailed explanations follow.

Specifically the Guidelines focus on:

- **Build-to Lines:** Building placement within the parcel to reinforce the street.
- **Streetwall Height/Stepbacks:** Apparent height from the street level.
- **Prominent Elements:** Need for special architectural treatment in prominent locations in the city.
- **Façade Articulation/Composition:** Appropriate articulation, both horizontally and vertically, that provides interest and breaks down the scale of the building façade.
- **Ground Level Façade:** The relationship of ground floor uses to the public realm.
- **Architectural Expression:** Doorway and window treatment and consideration of materials used on the building.
- **Surface Parking and Service Locations:** Structured parking and surface parking treatment.

BUILD-TO LINES



Build-to line: Southbridge Street



Build-to line: Main Street

BUILD-TO LINES

Principle

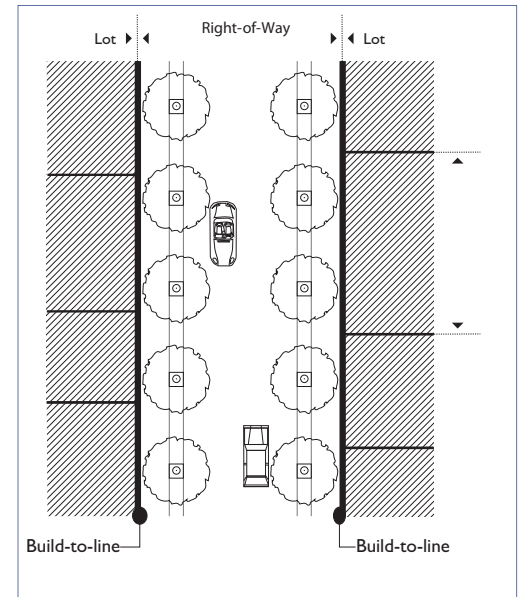
Streets and public spaces should be strongly defined by a consistent street wall in order to create an outdoor room with three-dimensional qualities.

Definitions

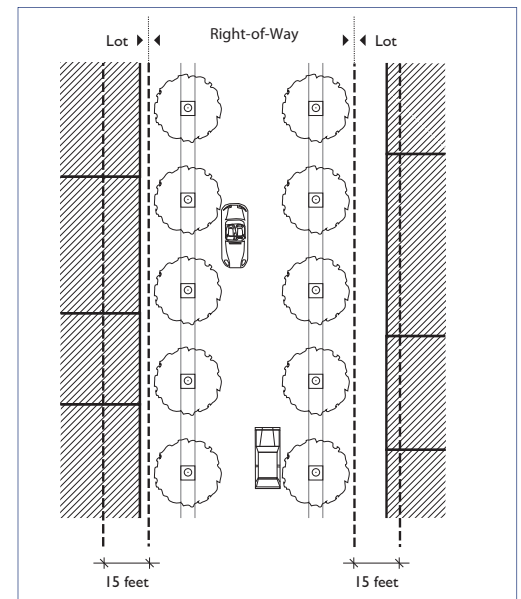
Build-to lines indicate the placement of the building in relation to the street and, together with other buildings, establish the street wall. This standard only applies to the measure of the lot line that coincides with the public right-of-way for a thoroughfare.

Guidelines

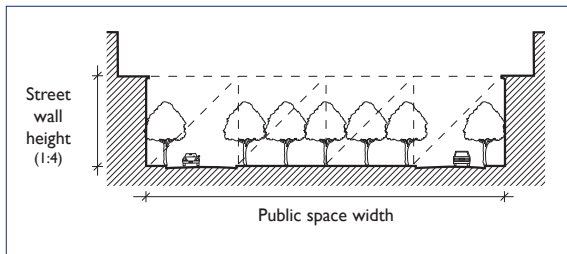
When practicable, one hundred percent of the lot lines that coincide with a public way should be occupied by the building façade. The building façade should be located on the build-to line. On large residential projects (one block length or more), building façades may be placed along a consistent build-to line recessed up to 15 feet from the right-of-way. Vehicular access into the building and service functions are strongly discouraged on Primary, Gateway, Connector, and Internal Streets, all of which are intended to be pedestrian in character. Access and service functions should occur on alleyways and service streets.



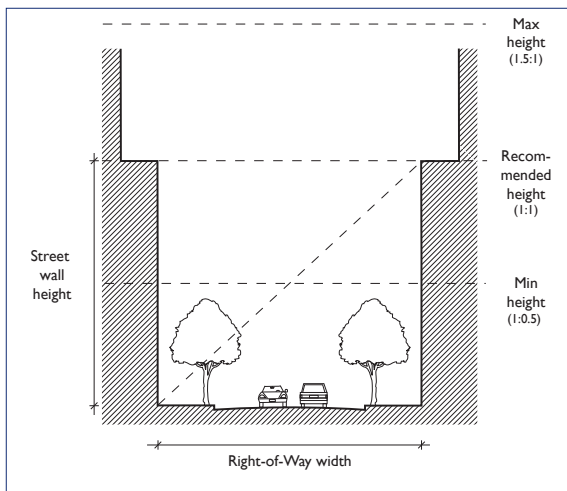
All districts



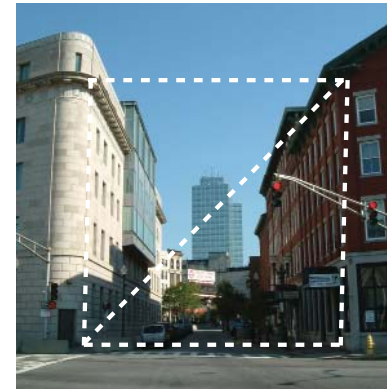
Residential blocks



Street wall height by public spaces



Street wall height



1:1 Street wall ratio: Myrtle Street & Southbridge Street



Consistent street wall height: Main Street

STREET WALL HEIGHT

Principle

The street wall should be scaled to define the pedestrian realm, with consistent heights along the street corridor.

Definitions

In elevation, the façade of the building or the part of the façade visible to the pedestrian creates the street wall in three dimensions. With step-backs, the total height of the building may be greater than the height of the street wall.

Guidelines

Dramatic changes in street wall height from one building to the next and from one side of the street to the other are discouraged, although precedents exist in Worcester for slightly higher façades at the corner of the block. The recommended height of the street wall should be equal

to the width of the right-of-way to create a 1:1 ratio. As a minimum, the height of the street wall should be equal to half the width of the right-of-way (1:0.5 ratio). As a maximum, the height of the street wall should only exceed one and a half times the width of the right-of-way (2:3 ratio) in prominent locations. On a public space, the height of the street wall should be equal to one-quarter of the width of the public space to create a 4:1 ratio.

On a corner lot, the most important street defines the desired height of the street wall. The minimum height of a street wall (1:0.5) is not applicable on alleyways and service streets, where lower street walls may be allowed.



Step-back: Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences

STEP-BACKS

Principle

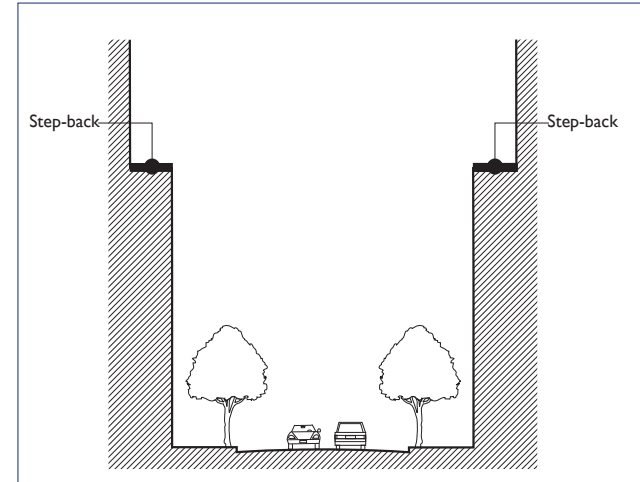
Building step-backs should be used to minimize the visual and shadow impacts of higher elements, allowing for greater height while maintaining a consistent scale with adjacent buildings.

Definitions

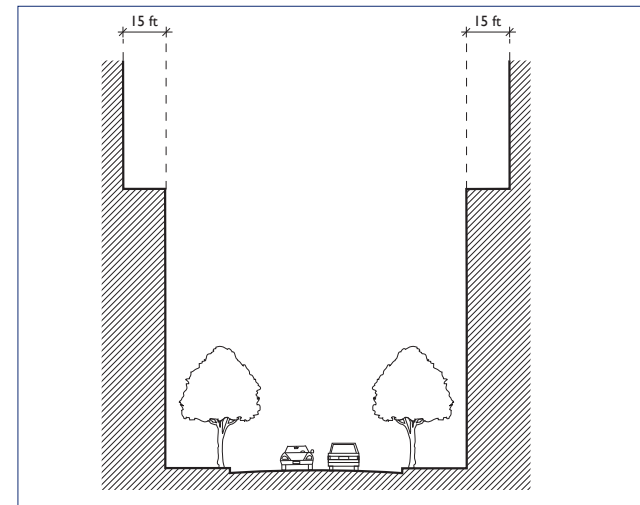
Step-backs occur at the upper levels of the building where the upper plane of the building is recessed from the street wall plane.

Guidelines

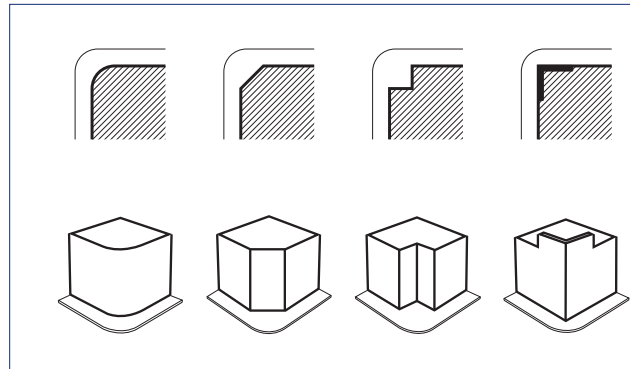
A minimum step-back of 15 feet is encouraged if the building exceeds the recommended height of the street wall. This allows for the first stepped-back level to be fully hidden from the street, which will highlight the portion of the façade on the build-to line. With step-backs, the total height of the building may be greater than the height of the street wall.



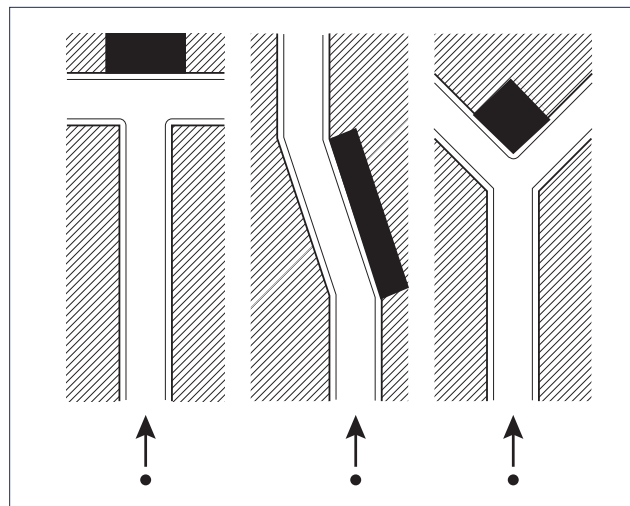
Step-back



Minimum step-back



Corner treatments



Prominent locations



Prominent element: Walnut Street toward Main Street



Corner treatment: Harrington Corner

PROMINENT ELEMENTS

Principle

Structures in prominent locations should have distinct profiles to serve as landmarks, which give areas their identity and are important for orientation.

Definitions

Prominent locations include:

- Building façades that terminate view corridors
- Corners of buildings, especially at gateway locations
- Buildings surrounding the Common or other open spaces

Guidelines

Distinct profiles should be created on prominent locations. Examples include increasing the height of the façade in relation to the street wall, emphasizing the shape or form of the prominent portion of the façade, highlighting an entrance treatment, varying the build-to line on a corner with a diagonal, or creating a slight recession or protrusion.



Façade articulation: Main Street

FAÇADE ARTICULATION

Principle

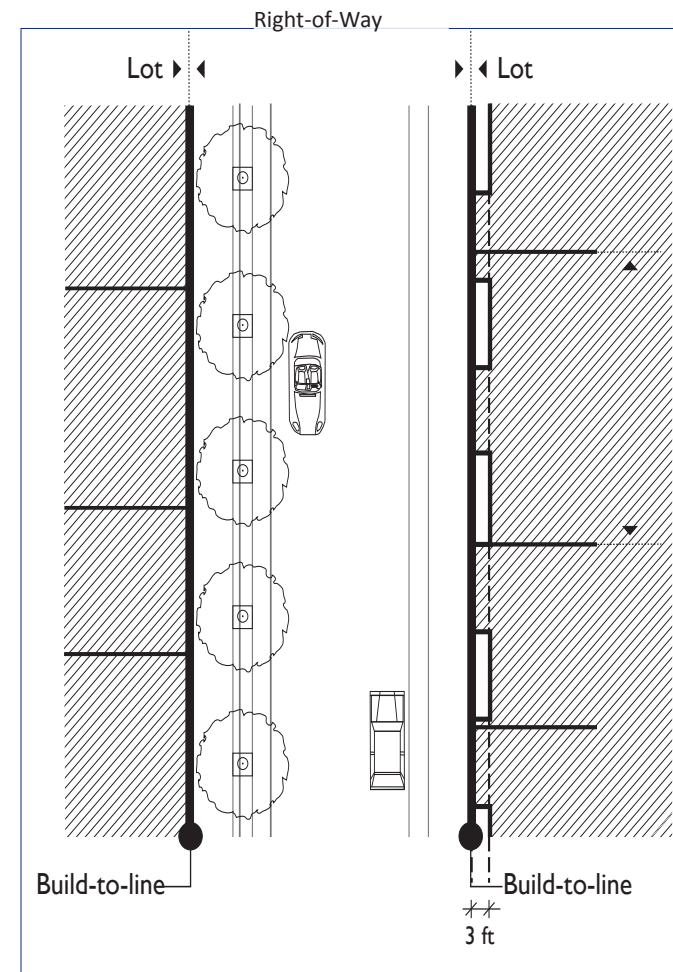
Articulation should be used to break the scale of the building into an aggregate of smaller forms, introduce texture, and to relate to the human scale, without detracting from the overall sense of a consistent street wall.

Definitions

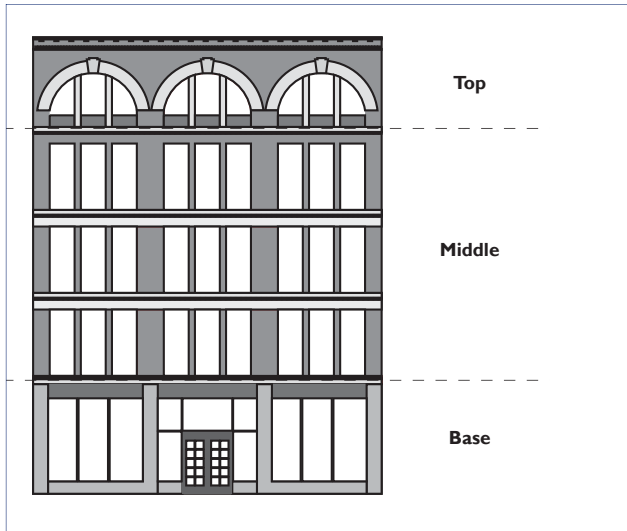
Façade articulation is a series of small setbacks and projections in the overall street wall.

Guidelines

Building façades should emphasize entry ways, windows, corners, and vertical elements, as well as other special features. Generally, the depth of the articulated elements should fall within a range of 0 to 3 feet. Articulation is expected on the Primary Streets and is encouraged on Gateway and Connector Streets.



Façade articulation



Façade composition



Façade composition



Façade: Main Street



Façade: Major Taylor Boulevard

FAÇADE COMPOSITION

Principle

Composition of the building façade should be used to define the scale of the street and to allow the pedestrian to assess the dimensions of the building.

Definitions

Façade composition is the arrangement of the materials and details that distinguish the various components of the building, particularly at the base and top.

Guidelines

Buildings should have façade compositions that distinguish and emphasize the base and top, and reinforce the scale of the street for the pedestrian. This approach should be applied regardless of the style and applied to all districts and street types. The building base should be in proportion to the height of the building (typically, one to three floors). On a corner lot, the most important street defines the proportion of the façade composition.



Street-level windows: Main Street

GROUND LEVEL FAÇADE

Principle

Visual access and active uses at the ground level help ensure a vibrant pedestrian environment.

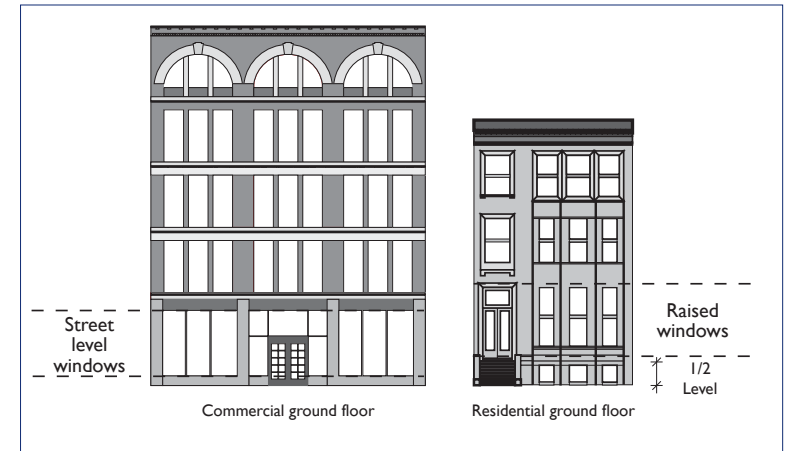
Definitions

The ground level is the primary zone of interaction for pedestrians on the street, and includes the elements of uses, doorways, and window transparency.

Guidelines

The preferred ground floor use relates to the street type. Retail and restaurant uses are preferred in all cases, but should be concentrated where there will be a critical mass of activity and/or should be targeted to key corners.

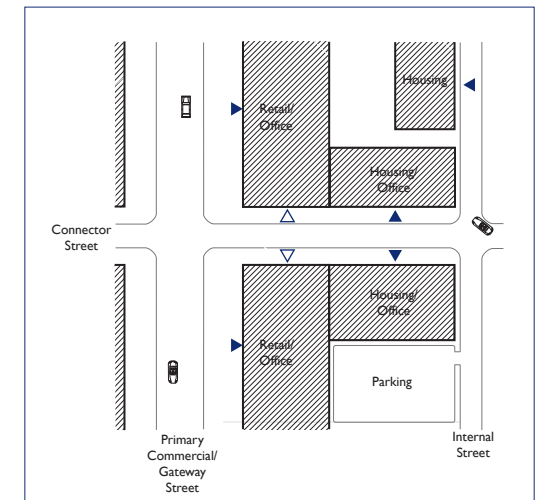
- On Primary and Gateway Streets, the ground floor should act as an extension of the public realm with retail, restaurants, lobbies, civic, and community uses.
- On Connector Streets, the above uses are preferable, but office uses and residential uses are also acceptable.
- On Internal Streets, all of the above uses are preferred, but structured parking is also acceptable.



Window elevation

The main doorway(s) of the building should face the public space and should be oriented to the most important street. Multiple entrances along a façade are recommended. The design of the building should provide visual clues that make entrances easily identifiable. Alignment with key visual axes is strongly recommended, especially where a street terminates on the building façade or for buildings on corners. Important interior spaces, such as lobbies or retail spaces, should be clearly connected to the outdoor environment and visible from the street so they can welcome people and provide synergy to the urban experience.

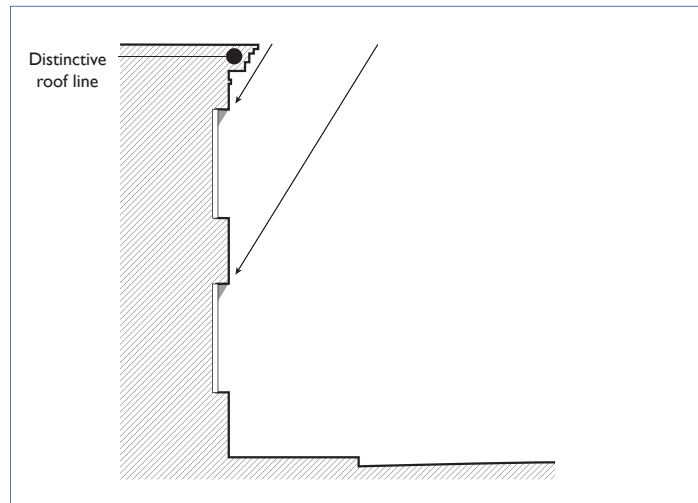
The placement of windows is defined by the use of the ground level. On retail, restaurants, and office buildings, windows should be at street level and should allow pedestrians to see in and sense the activity of the building. On residential buildings with units at the ground level, windows should permit privacy and should be raised half a level above the sidewalk. Internal window coverings -- such as blinds or full curtains -- are highly discouraged. Window security grates, if necessary, should only be installed on the interior of the window and should be visually permeable.



Preferred uses and doorway locations



Window-to-wall ratio



Cornice/window depth



Distinctive roof line: Myrtle Street



1:1 Window-to-wall Ratio: Franklin Street

ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSION

Principle

The architectural expression should be an innovative design that relates to the context of the surrounding buildings.

Guidelines

Building materials vary depending on their context. In the Historic District, the preferred material is masonry with individual windows punctuating the façade. In the Innovation District, the preferred material is precast concrete, glass, and metal panels. In both districts, bronze glass, highly reflective glass, and smoked glass are strongly discouraged.

Windows at the ground level are important in activating a building's ground level usage; therefore, windows at the ground level should occur in a ratio of at least 3:1 between openings and solid wall. Windows above base level should occur in a ratio of at least 1:1 between solid wall and openings, which will result in a pattern of solid wall buildings with punched windows and door openings. In certain circumstances, based on design, articulation, material, etc., lower ratios may be acceptable. The tops of buildings should have expressive roof lines that create a distinctive building silhouette.



Sloped floors not visible from street: Main Street at Federal Square



Ground floor retail: Major Taylor Boulevard

STRUCTURED PARKING

Principle

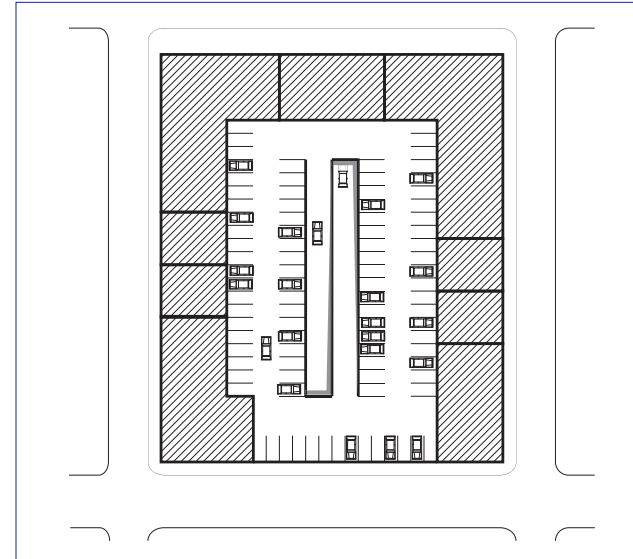
Parking structures should be designed to minimize impacts on the urban fabric.

Guidelines

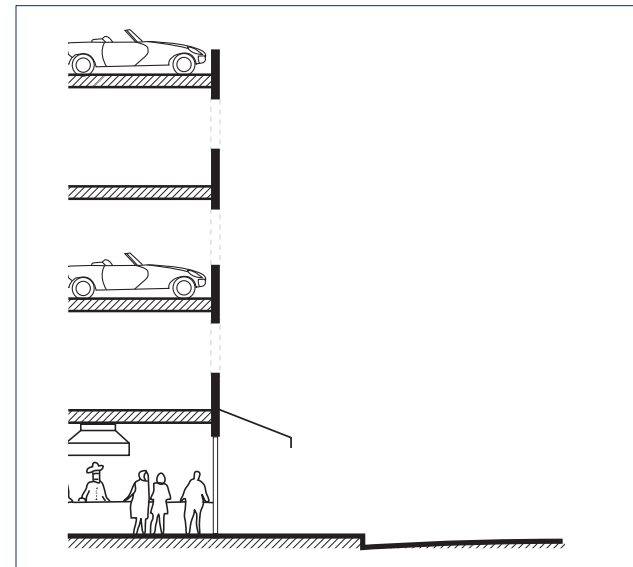
Wherever possible, parking structures should be placed toward the interior of a block, underground, or with the smallest possible façade facing the street. Parking structures at ground floor facing onto streets are strongly discouraged, except on service streets and alleyways.

Where visible, parking structures should have façades that relate to the scale, proportion, and character of surrounding buildings, with a balance of solid wall and window-like punched openings. Large blank walls are discouraged. On façades facing Primary and Gateway Streets, active ground floor uses are encouraged.

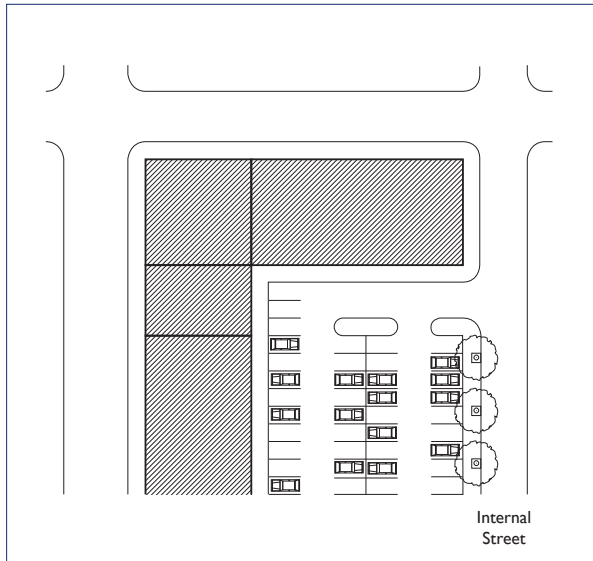
Ramps should be located in the interior of the garage so that sloped floors are not visible from the street. Parking access should be located on internal streets, where possible. Green screens and landscaping are highly encouraged.



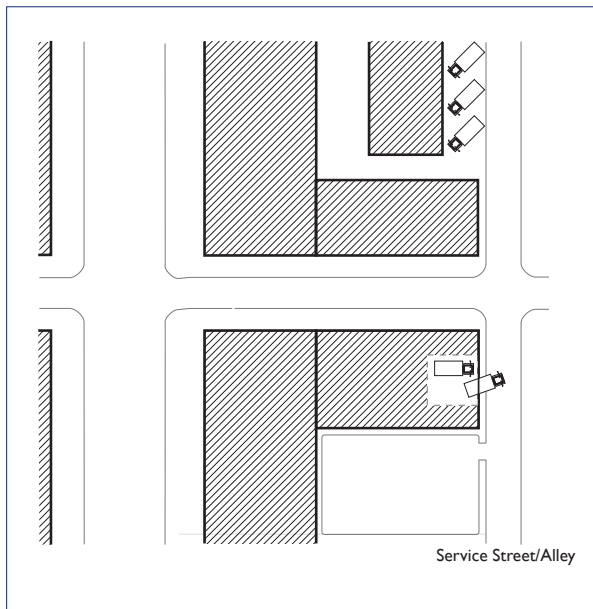
Structured parking on interior of block



Structured parking with active ground floor uses



Surface parking placement



Service locations



Trees along edge of surface parking: Federal Street



Service entrance on Commercial Street

SURFACE PARKING AND SERVICE LOCATIONS

Surface Parking

Surface parking should be minimized and, where it exists, should be behind buildings or have decorative fencing, street trees, and landscape planting along the edge to continue the definition of the street wall.

Service Locations

Building service should be located on service streets and alleys. Interior and/or lower level service, loading, and utility areas are encouraged. Service areas, truck loading areas, mechanical units, transformers, and other utility and accessory structures should be designed to minimize their visual impact.

V. SIGNAGE GUIDELINES

Intent and Purpose

While informed by the Worcester Zoning Ordinance's context sensitive signage regulations, the intent of the sign design guidelines in this section is to provide adequate signage opportunities within the District to meet business and way-finding needs while encouraging signs that:

- 1.) Respect the City's significant cultural, historical, and architectural resources;
- 2.) Protect public investment in streetscape, open space, and public buildings;
- 3.) Complement and enhance a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly environment; and
- 4.) Reduce visual clutter and contribute to a vibrant pedestrian environment.

Property owners and tenants are encouraged to install creative signs using innovative materials and fabrication techniques that are context sensitive by taking into account the character of the building, site, and surrounding area.

The Guidelines shall be applied in addition to all applicable City Ordinances. Exceptions to these Guidelines shall be considered on a case-by-case basis at the City's discretion; provided that the excepted sign meets the overall intent of the Guidelines set forth in this document and conforms to the City's Sign Ordinance. Prior to the creation of any sign, it is recommended that proponents review not only these Guidelines, but also the City's Sign Ordinance to ensure full

compliance.

Permanent Signs

A sign is any device, excluding its supporting structure, consisting of any letter, figure, character, mark, point, marquee sign, design, poster, mural, stroke, stripe, line trademark, banner, insignia, or other reading matter that is used to attract or direct attention of the public to any object, product, place, activity, facility, event, attraction, person, institution, service organization, or business displayed out-of-doors for recognized advertising or identification purposes. All permanent signs require a permit from the City's Department of Inspectional Services.

Temporary Signs

A sign is categorized as temporary if it is intended to be maintained for a continuous period of time less than one year. Typical temporary signs include: for sale or rent notices, building contractor and leasing signage, and signs associated with sales and events.

Fabrication Techniques

In order to provide dimensionally interesting signage, the following fabrication techniques are recommended:

- Use of individually cut out letters, graphics, and logos;
- Use of corrosion resistant materials for all attachment hardware, bolts, and clips;
- Minimize/avoid use of exposed conduit, tubing, or raceways;

- Conceal all conductors, transformers, and other equipment;
- Construct awnings from weather resistant material (real or synthetic); and
- Use of digital/electronic or changeable letter signs at performance venues, subject to City approval of size, location, and lamination.

In addition, installation/removal of signage should be completed in a way that causes no harm to masonry or architectural detailing. Signage should not damage or require removal of historic materials. The use of formed plastic, injection-molded, or easily damaged signage materials is strongly discouraged.

Lighting

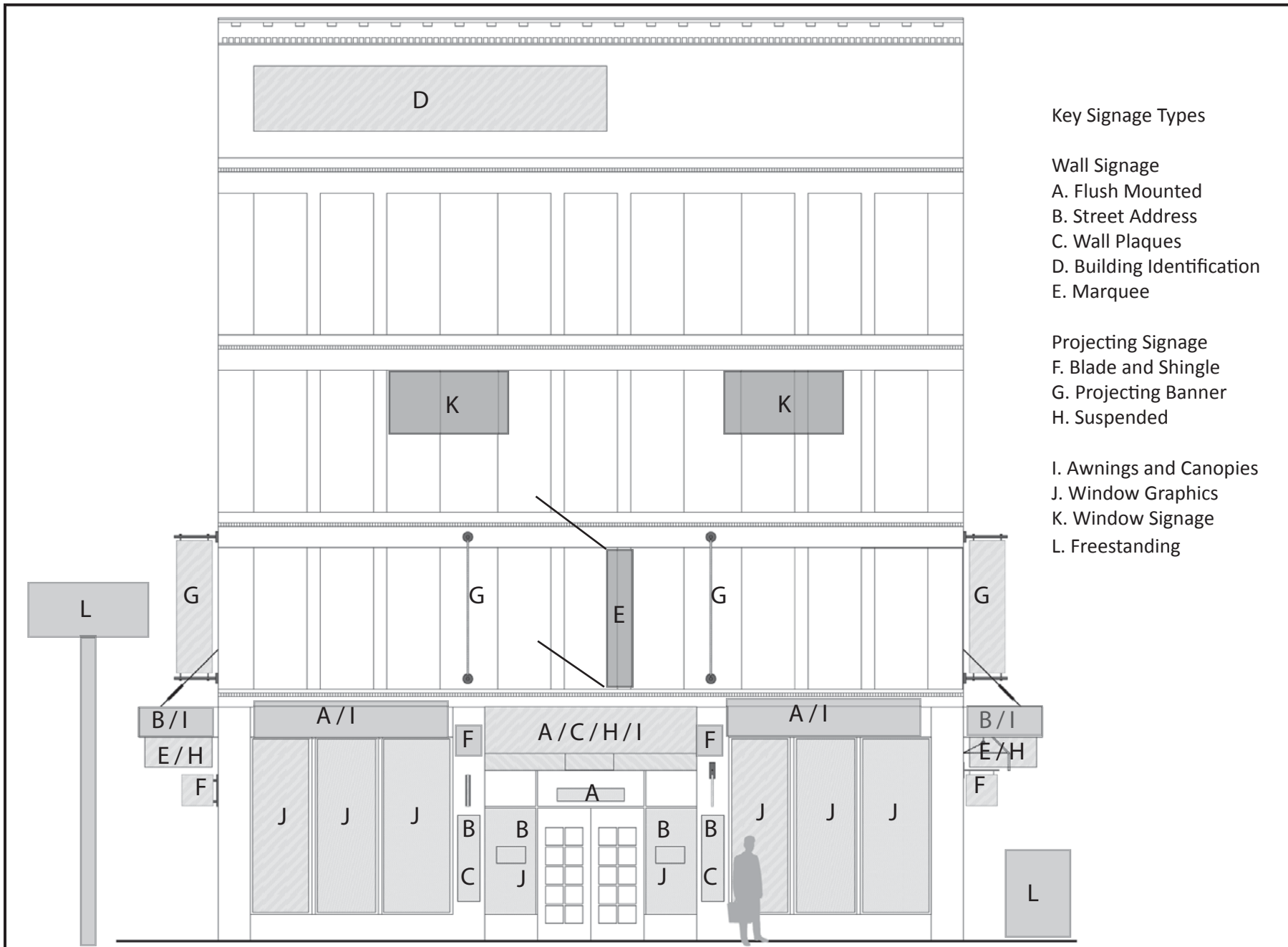
In general, the City encourages the use halo-illuminated signage and lettering as well as face-lighting or external illumination. The use of neon in open-face channel letters is permitted; however signage constructed solely of neon tubes is discouraged. Internally illuminated signs are strongly discouraged.

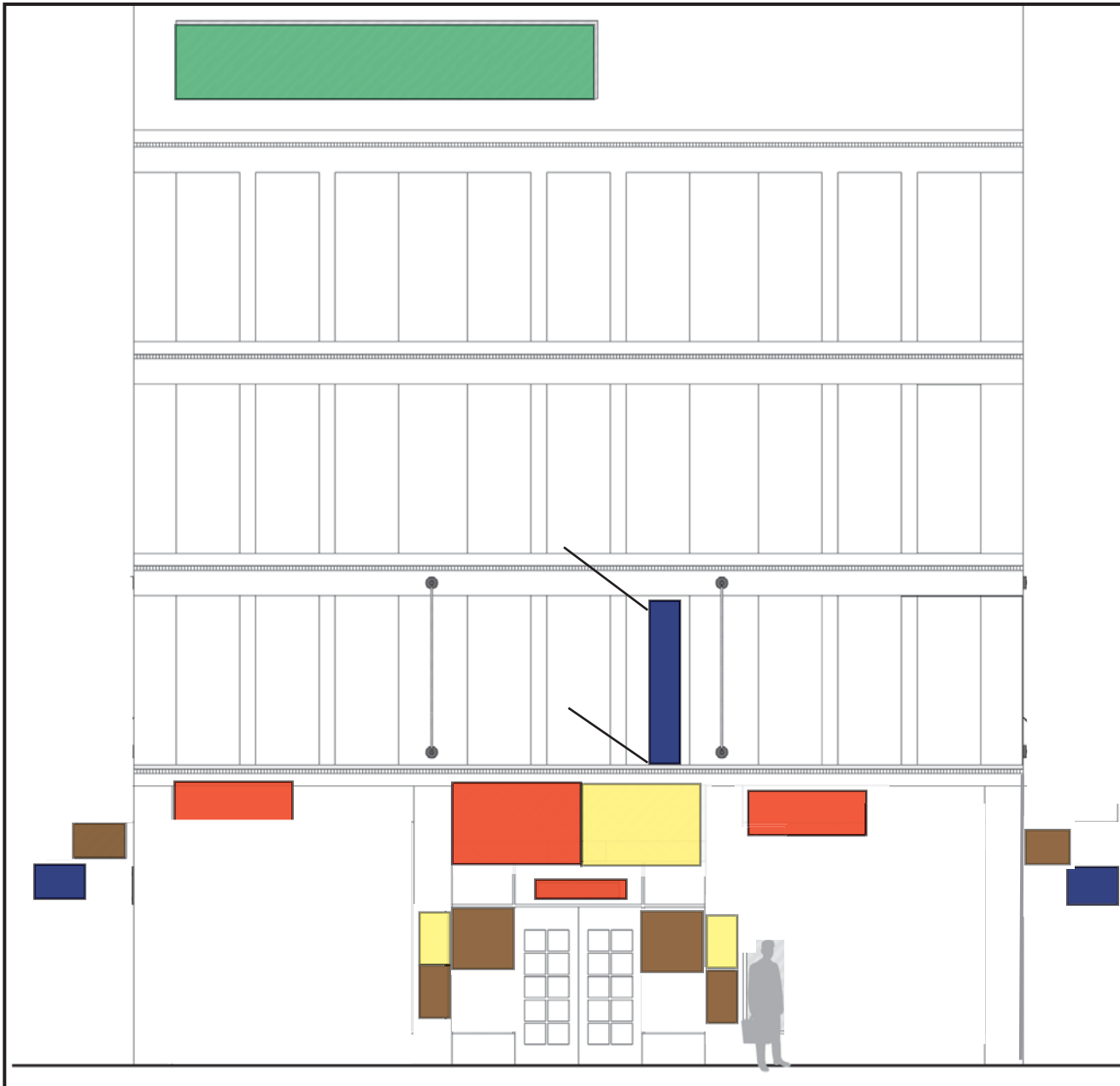
For more information about the City of Worcester's Sign Ordinance, please contact the City's Division of Planning and Regulatory Services at (508) 799-1400, ext. 260 or planning@worcesterma.gov.

EXISTING SIGNAGE IN THE DISTRICT



The signs depicted in this section are for illustrative purposes only and may not reflect the Guidelines set forth by the City of Worcester Sign Ordinance.





Recommended mounting locations (colored areas above)

WALL SIGNS

For the purposes of these Guidelines, the City encourages the following wall sign types:

- Flush Mounted
- Street Address
- Wall Plaque
- Building Identification
- Marquee

Definition

A sign which is applied, painted on, or supported in whole or in part by an exterior wall of a building or structure and does not extend more than 14 inches from the wall and does not extend beyond the ends of the wall to which it is attached.

Guidelines

The maximum area for combined wall signs on a building shall not exceed 1.5 SF per length of the building plus 1.5 SF per building height for buildings over 4 stories or over 50 feet in height.



Debossed mark



Dimensional lettering



Dimensional lettering on panel

WALL SIGN Flush Mounted

Definition

A wall sign consisting of letters or mark mounted parallel to the building's facade that is either mounted as individual letters, or contained in a sign panel.

Guidelines

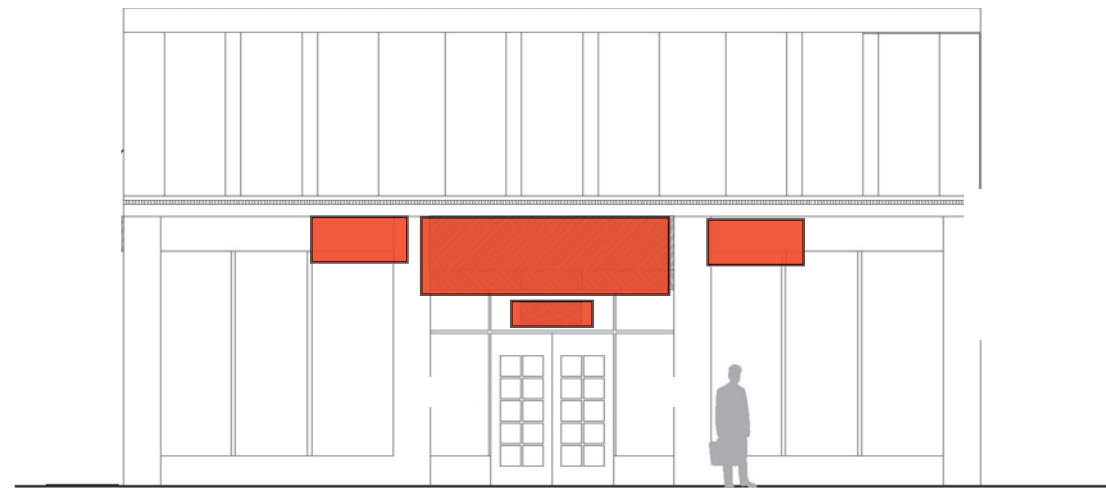
Number of signs: Unlimited

Mounting height: 20-foot maximum, provided it is below the sill line of the second floor windows or the lowest point of the roof, whichever is less.

Depth of sign: Signs shall not project more than 8 inches from a building wall.

Illumination:

1. Natural lighting
2. External spot or flood lighting
3. Halo-lit or backlit letters



Recommended mounting locations (colored areas above)



Address on plaque



Address on building



Address on panel

WALL SIGN Street Address

Definition

Plaque mounted to side of building at pedestrian level, or dimensional letters mounted above door conveying at the minimum the numerical street address of the building.

Guidelines

Number of signs: Minimum of one located at the main entry to the building.

Mounting height: 5 feet on center for wall mounted, horizontally centered above door(s), or on the sides of a canopy. Numerals mounted overhead should be no less than 8 inches.

Illumination:

1. Natural lighting
2. Halo-lit or backlit letters



Recommended mounting locations (colored areas above)



Wall plaque



Wall plaque with historical marker

WALL SIGN Wall Plaque

Definition

Wall signs that consist of small, pedestrian-oriented signs that may convey information such as hours of operation or take the form of directories, menu cases, or convey historical building markers.

Guidelines

Area of sign: Up to 12 SF in area, not projecting more than 3 inches from the building wall.

Number of signs: Two per usable entry.

Mounting height: 5 feet on center above grade or sidewalk.

Illumination:

1. Natural lighting
2. Internal lighting (for menu cases only)



Recommended mounting locations (colored areas above)



Building Identification Signage



Recommended mounting location (colored areas above)

WALL SIGN Building Identification

Definition

Corporate brand identification signage for larger commercial buildings. Due to viewing distances, the permitted sign area is increased. Signage should consist of individual letters and graphic elements applied directly to the building facade.

Guidelines

Maximum area of sign: Total wall sign area not to exceed 1.5 SF per building unit length plus 1.5 SF in height for buildings 4 stories or higher or 50 feet or higher.

Number of signs: Up to two, one per facade.

Mounting restrictions: Roof signs with individual channel letters may be considered through a special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Illumination:

1. Natural lighting
2. External lighting

WALL SIGN Marquee

Definition

A permanent sign painted on, printed on, or otherwise attached to the surface of a marquee generally designed to have changeable copy, either manually or electronically.

Guidelines

Maximum area of sign: 24 SF or 1.5 SF per linear foot of primary building unit length, whichever is greater.

Number of signs: One per side of a building viewable from a different street.

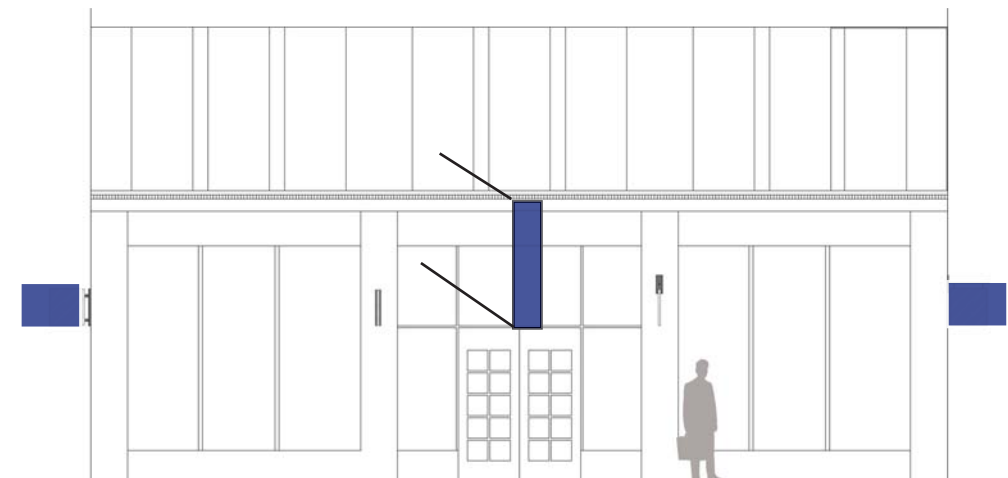
Mounting height: No part of marquee shall project more than 5 feet above the roof or parapet line.



Digital Marquee



Manual Marquee



Recommended mounting locations (colored areas above)



Blade sign



Shingle sign



Reach blade sign

PROJECTING SIGNS

For the purposes of these Guidelines, the City encourages the following projecting sign types:

- Blade & Shingle
- Projecting Banner
- Suspended

Definition

A permanent sign which projects from and is supported by a wall or parapet of a building with the display surface of the sign in a plane perpendicular to or approximately perpendicular to the wall. Projecting signs shall also include: 1) banners that are displayed length wise, where the longer side of the sign is vertical and attached with two or more permanent brackets, one at the top and one at the bottom of the banner, but does not include temporary banner signs; and 2) signs suspended from a building overhang.

Guidelines

Maximum area of sign: Shall not exceed 16 SF.

Mounting height: Shall not extend above roofline or parapet. Provide a minimum of 8 feet of clearance above sidewalk and 14 feet above driveway, alley, or other right of way.

Depth of sign: Shall not extend more than 5 feet from the wall on which the sign is attached. Shall provide 6 inch minimum air space between sign and the building wall.



Recommended mounting locations (colored areas above)

PROJECTING SIGN Blade and Shingle

Definition

A projecting sign mounted perpendicular to a building's facade, the shingle sign is typically suspended beneath an armature, and is able to swing from the axis of the pole, while the blade signs are typically mounted directly to the building facade using a rigid mounting bracket.



Shingle sign



Blade sign



Shingle sign

Guidelines

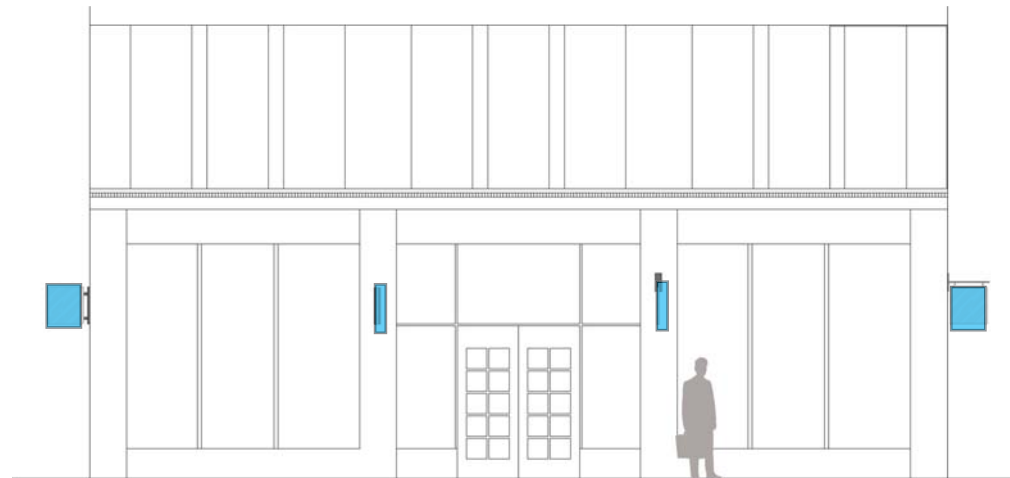
Maximum area of sign: 16 SF.

Number of signs: One per ground floor establishment, plus one for any public building entrance not serving a ground floor establishment. All signs should be centered within architectural elements.

Mounting height: 20 foot maximum, provided it is below the sill line of the second floor windows or the lowest point of the roof, whichever is less, and does not have less than 10 feet of vertical clearance above grade or sidewalk.

Illumination:

1. Natural lighting
2. External lighting



Recommended mounting locations (colored areas above)



Fabric banner applications

PROJECTING SIGN Projecting Banner

Definition

A projecting sign consisting of fabric, or rigid material, mounted with use of poles, typically oriented perpendicular to structure facade.

Guidelines

Maximum area of banner: 32 SF with additional bonus area of 0.5 SF per height of buildings four stories or higher or 50 feet or higher.

Number of banners: Varies, however, banner spacing is based on building size, facade, and the size of the signs. Spacing will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Projection: Banners should not project more than 5 feet into the public right-of-way.

Mounting height: Bottom of banners should be mounted at least 14 feet above grade of sidewalk to avoid intrusion into blade sign or awning zone, and not extend beyond the third story of the structure.



Recommended mounting locations (colored areas above)

The signs depicted in this section are for illustrative purposes only and may not reflect the Guidelines set forth by the City of Worcester Sign Ordinance.

PROJECTING SIGN Suspended Signage

Definition

Letters or mark applied to a panel, hung from the underside of a canopy.

Guidelines

Size: Less than or equal to the distance of a canopy at a usable entry, or less than or equal to half the distance of the canopy for non-entry applications.

Number of signs: Two single-sided panels in the case of a usable entry. One double-sided panel per ground-level tenant at beginning of occupied frontage for building attachment.

Projection: Banners should not project more than 5 feet into the public right-of-way.

Mounting height: Topmost extension of sign to be less than or equal to 6 inches of overhang, bottom should not have less than 10 feet of vertical clearance above grade or sidewalk.

Illumination:

1. Natural lighting
2. External lighting



Suspended sign from a blade sign



Suspended sign from an awning



Suspended sign



Recommended mounting locations (colored areas above)

PROJECTING SIGN Awnings and Canopies

Definition

Roof-like structures, above storefront windows or entries, sometimes containing a mark or signature of a tenant.

Guidelines

Length: Awnings and canopies shall not exceed 20 feet in horizontal length and be centered within architectural elements, such as doors or columns.

Projection: Awnings and canopies should not project more than 5 feet into the public right-of-way, except where located above an operable building or shop entry, in which case the maximum projection shall not exceed 10 feet.

Mounting height: Bottom of awnings and canopies shall be at least 8 feet above grade or sidewalk, except in the case of a movable valance which may be 7 feet above grade or sidewalk.

Design: On multi-tenant facades, use common design elements. Logo or tenant mark shall be limited to the valance of an awning, or the front plane of the canopy. Retractable or open sided awnings are preferred, with or without drop valances.

Illumination:

1. Natural lighting only; backlit awnings are discouraged.



Open sided awnings with valances



Architectural canopy



Recommended mounting locations (colored areas above)



Window display with permanent window graphics

PERMANENT STOREFRONT WINDOW GRAPHICS

Definition

Window graphics can be permanent with the tenant's name and logo or hours of operation. Other permanent window signs shall be considered.

Guidelines

Area: Window signs shall not obscure the interior view of a retail establishment, and should be no greater than 10% of the available window space. All combined permanent and temporary window signs and graphics shall not exceed 50% of the available window space. In no case shall window signs obscure the entire window panel area.

Number of signs: Limited only by area occupied.



Recommended mounting locations (colored areas above)



Window signage

PERMANENT STOREFRONT WINDOW GRAPHICS

Definition

Window graphics can be permanent with the tenant's name and logo or hours of operation. Other permanent window signs shall be considered.

Guidelines

Area: Window signs shall not obscure the interior view of a retail establishment, and should be no greater than 10% of the available window space. All combined permanent and temporary window signs and graphics shall not exceed 50% of the available window space. In no case shall window signs obscure the entire window panel area.

Number of signs: Limited only by area occupied.



Recommended mounting locations (colored areas above)

FREESTANDING SIGNS

Definition

A permanent accessory or non-accessory sign not attached to a building and supported upon the ground, including but not limited to pole, monument, and menu board signs.

Guidelines

Area: The area of a freestanding or ground sign shall be considered to include all the lettering, wording, and accompanying designs and symbols, together with the background on which they are displayed, any frame around the sign and any extensions, excluding the necessary supports or uprights on which the sign is placed.

Maximum number: One double-faced sign per lot. May contain one individual panel or multiple panels.

Maximum size: 24 SF for residential. 64 SF for individual non-residential. Additional square footage allowed based on number of tenants.

Minimum setback/length: 5 feet from any lot line except where a lot with a freestanding sign abuts a residential district or public park, in which case it must be 10 feet.

Maximum height: 12 feet for residential, 20 feet for non-residential with 1 to 2 tenants, and 25 feet for non-residential with 3 or more tenants.



Freestanding signs



Recommended mounting locations (colored areas above)

VI. RELATED INITIATIVES



Public Art

The City of Worcester is committed to expanding its public art. Whether publicly or privately constructed and maintained, art in the public realm enriches the lives of residents and visitors, strengthens the sense of place, and enhances the civic spirit. Public art identifies Worcester as a city that values its streetscape and cultural assets as enhancements to economic development initiatives. Public art indicates a city of vision and pride.

The City will work with both public and private entities to ensure that public art is a key component of Worcester's urban design. Whether integrated into development projects, incorporated into public spaces, or supported by financial contributions, public art will increasingly become a part of the City's planning. Public art reflects and respects its surroundings and also generates interest and excitement.

For more information about the City's public art initiative, please contact the City's Cultural Development Division at (508) 799-1400, ext. 265.



Wayfinding

Wayfinding is the art and science of directing people in motion. An effective wayfinding program presents a simplified layering of selected information that allows the visitor to navigate through unfamiliar territory with confidence and to gain a sense of place in the process. A successful wayfinding system is essential for economic growth as well as cultural tourism. Improving the connection between residents, workers, and visitors, as well as with local activity centers, is a key element of a comprehensive economic development strategy.

Composed of a combination of "districts" and "ways," the City's Wayfinding Initiative creates a grid-like system for easy navigation of Worcester's diverse neighborhoods. The Initiative incorporates a number of elements, including city identifiers, district identifiers, vehicle directionals, and pedestrian kiosks. Public art is an integral part of the new system. The project has identified key art forms that offer residents and visitors a sense of place through a strong and ubiquitous public art component.



Green Building

The City encourages all builders and developers to consider environmental impact with every new development and renovation project. As part of the planning process, the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification guidelines should be consulted to determine the practicality of green construction. Whenever possible, LEED guidelines should be incorporated into design plans to reduce environmental impact and promote energy efficiency and cost savings.

For more information on the benefits of building green, please contact the City of Worcester's Planning and Regulatory Services Division at (508) 799-1400, ext. 260 or planning@worcesterma.gov.



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