

# CITY OF WORCESTER DESIGN GUIDELINES



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## INTRODUCTION

### Implementation

The Design Guidelines have been established to set forth a clear policy for achieving the highest level of design. Any person contemplating a rehabilitation or signage project while pursuing any of the City of Worcester financial assistance programs must consult these Guidelines to determine conformance. Currently the City of Worcester offers the following financial assistance programs relevant to the implementation of these Guidelines:

- Façade & Awning Incentive Grant Program.
- Quinsigamond Village Storefront & Façade Improvement Grant Program.
- Microloan Program.
- Creative Economy Deferred Loan Program.
- HUD Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program.
- Economic Development Incentive Program.

### Purpose

The Design Guidelines protect and enhance the existing building stock 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 the areas targeted by the City's financial assistance programs. Worcester's embrace

of widely accepted design principles will add value to projects and increase the return on investments for property owners in the targeted areas.

### Goals

The Guidelines focus on the pedestrian environment and the public experience of the street as they focus on massing, scale, and style, while encouraging design creativity. The Guidelines will promote good design that raises the value of real estate, 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.



## DESIGN GUIDELINES

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 program responds to its site context and minimizes adverse impacts to the pedestrian environment.

The Guidelines will ensure each building acknowledges surrounding buildings and site characteristics, enhances the pedestrian environment, and contributes to the civic pride of the city 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 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 on the site to reinforce the street.
- **Street wall Height/Step Backs:** Apparent height from 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.



# BUILD-TO LINES

## Principle

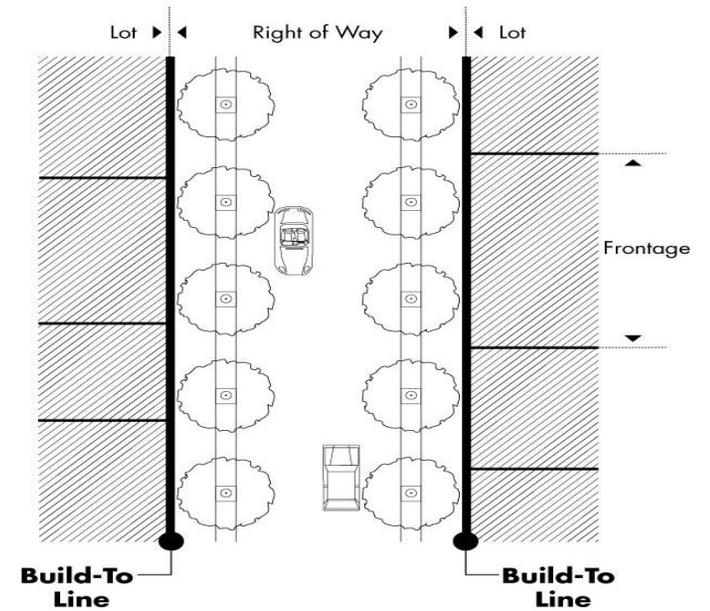
Streets and public spaces should be strongly defined by a consistent street wall in order to create an outdoor room with three-dimensional qualities.

## Definitions

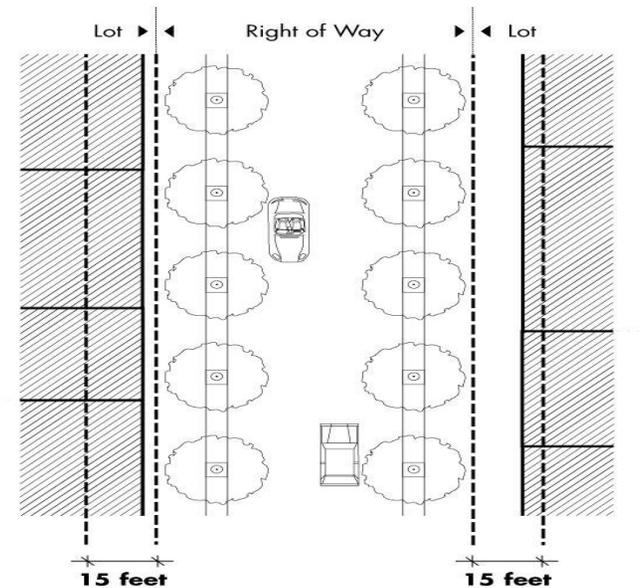
Build-to lines indicate the placement of the building in relation to the street and, together with other buildings, establish the street wall. This standard only applies to the measure of the lot line that coincides with the public right-of-way for a thoroughfare.

## Guidelines

Whenever 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 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 streets, all of which are intended to be pedestrian in character. Access and service functions should occur on alleyways and service streets.



## Build-To Zone



# STREET WALL HEIGHT

## Principle

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

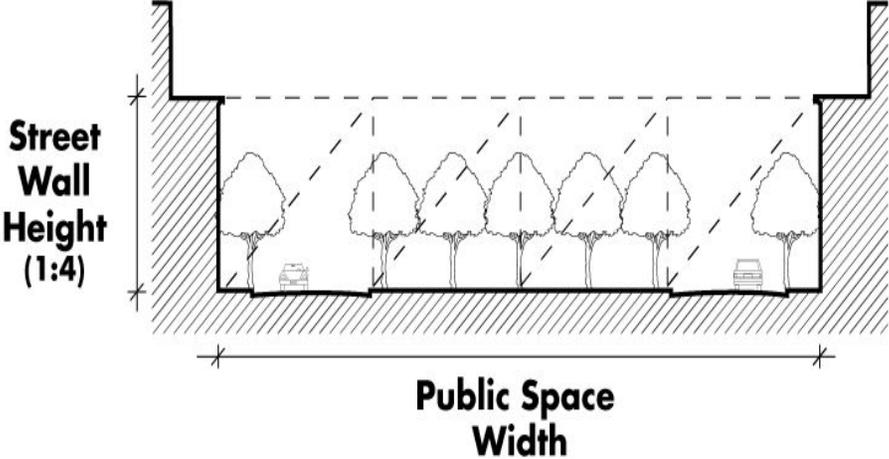
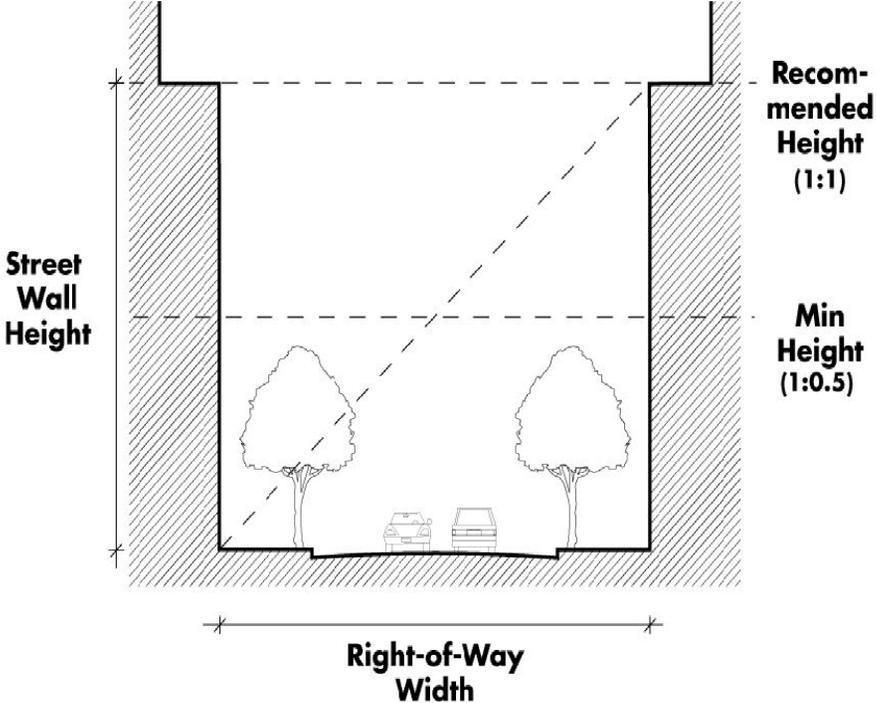
## Definitions

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 precedent exists 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. As a maximum, the height of the street wall should only exceed one and a half times the width of the right-of-way 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 1:4 ratio.

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



# 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

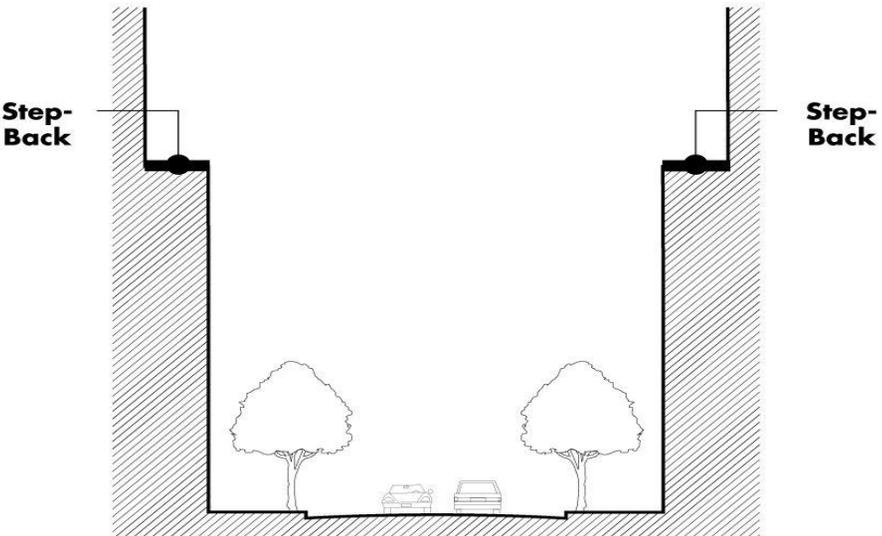
Step-backs occur at the upper levels of the building where the upper plane of the building is recessed from the street wall plane.

## Guidelines

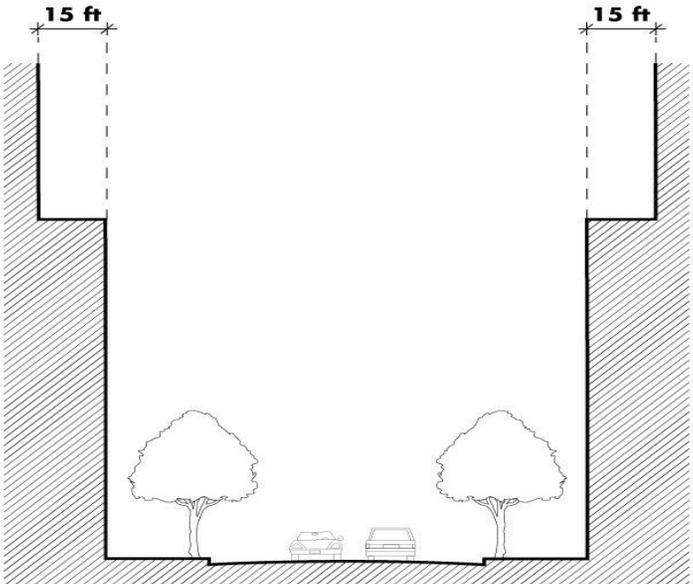
A minimum step-back of 15 feet is encouraged if the building exceeds the recommended height of the street wall. This allows for the first stepped-back level to be fully hidden from the street, which will highlight the portion of the façade on the build-to line. With step-backs, the total height of the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



## Step-Back



## Minimum Step-Back



# PROMINENT ELEMENTS

## Principle

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

## Definitions

Prominent locations include:

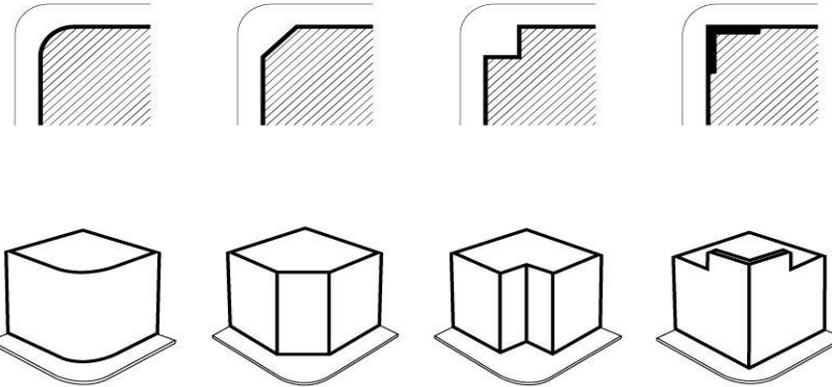
- Building façades that terminate view corridors.
- Corners of buildings, especially at gateway locations.

## Guidelines

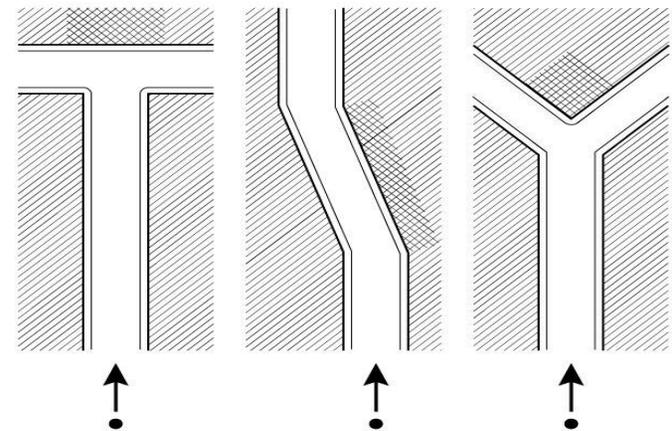
Distinct profiles should be created on prominent locations. Examples include increasing the height of the façade in relation to the street wall, emphasizing the shape or form of the prominent portion of the façade, highlighting an entrance treatment, varying the build-to line on a corner with a diagonal,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



## Corners



## Prominent Locations



# 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

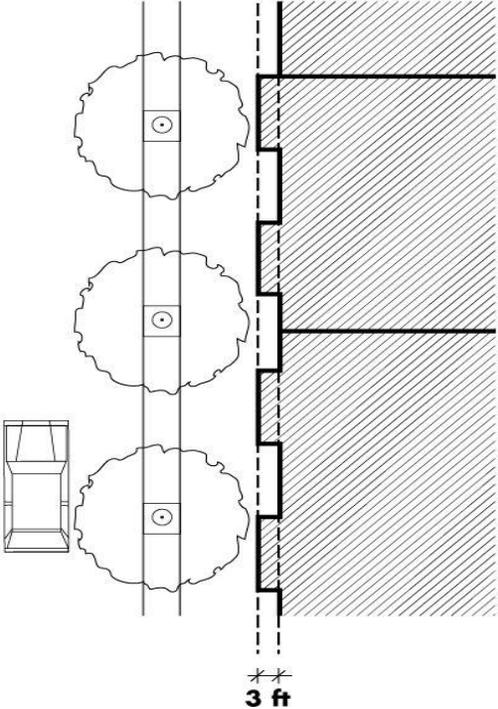
Façade articulation is a series of small setbacks and projections in the overall street wall.

## Guidelines

The façade of buildings should emphasize entry ways, windows, corners, and vertical elements of the building façade, as well as other special features. Generally, the depth of the articulated elements should fall within a range of zero 0 to 3 feet. Articulation is expected on the primary streets and is encouraged on smaller streets.



# Facade Articulation



# 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.

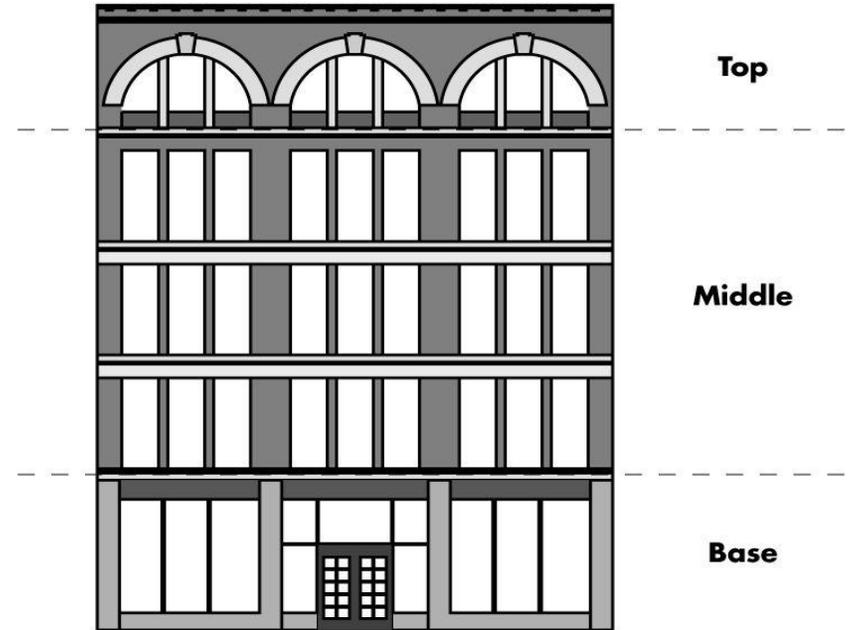
## Definitions

Façade composition is the arrangement of the materials and details to distinguish the components of the building, particularly its base and top.

## Guidelines

Buildings should have façade composition that distinguishes and emphasizes the base and top and reinforces 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.

Covering existing architectural features or materials with inferior elements when performing exterior rehabilitations is highly discouraged. The City reserves the right to reject any proposal that in its sole opinion does not enhance the building's original architectural identity or whose proposed casings are deemed inferior by the City.



## 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

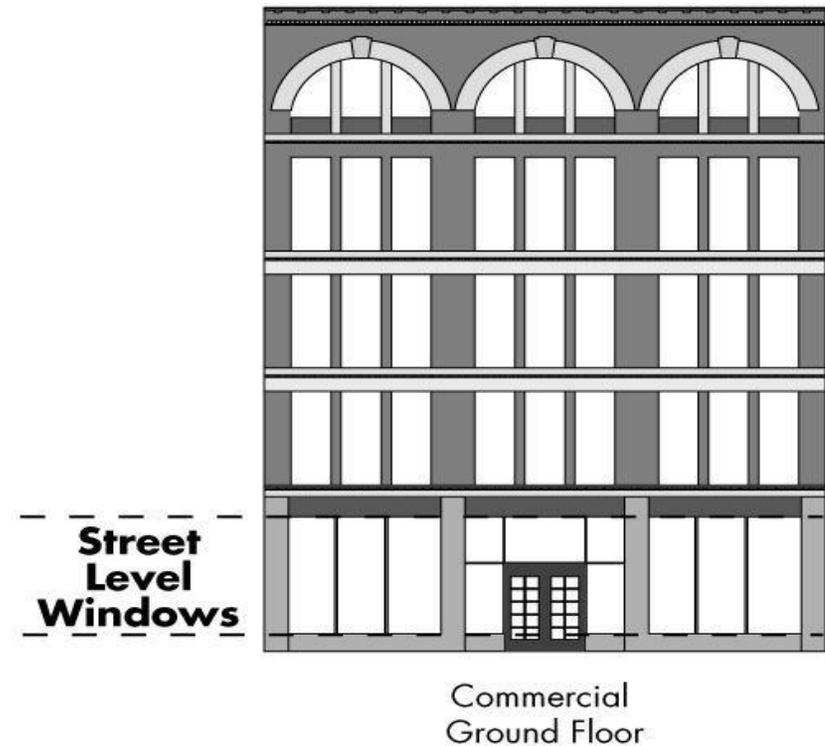
The preferred ground floor use relates to the street type. Retail and restaurant uses are preferred in all cases, but should be concentrated where there will be a critical mass of activity and/or should be targeted to key corners.

- On primary streets, the ground floor should act as an extension of the public realm with retail, restaurant, lobbies, civic, and community uses.
- On smaller streets, the above uses are preferable, but office uses and residential uses are also acceptable. (In some instances, structured parking is also available).

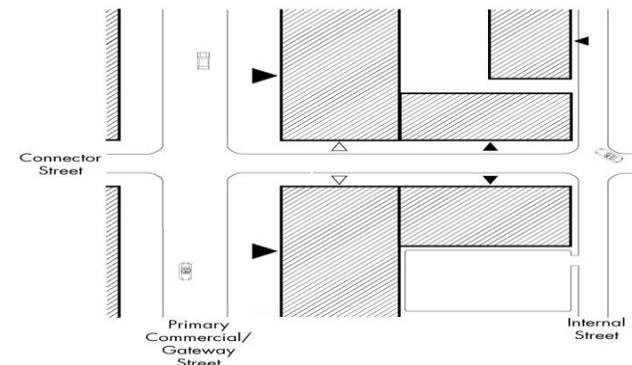
The main doorway(s) of the building must face the public space and should be oriented to the most important street. Multiple entrances along a façade are recommended. The design of the building should provide visual clues that make entrances easily identifiable.

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.



### Doorways



## WINDOWS

### Principle

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.

### Definitions

Windows serve many purposes. They bring light and heat into a building. Windows provide passers-by with views into shop displays and activities, as well as providing views out for people indoors. Different types of windows suggest different types of activities occurring within. For example, large areas of glass often indicate retail stores, while smaller wood-frame windows often suggest residential or office space.

### Guidelines

Windows at the ground level are important in activating the building's ground level usage which is beneficial to pedestrian traffic; therefore, windows at the ground level should occur in a ratio of at least 3:1 between openings and solid.

The design of window openings should be compatible with the original design of the building and/or its other doors and windows. A building is much more attractive when its windows are aligned horizontally. Window opening locations that were set in the building's original design should be respected. Original window and door frames should be saved and restored when possible. If new windows are installed, they should match existing ones or be compatible with a building's overall appearance.

The best image for a window display is the merchandise itself.

Empty or cluttered windows can confuse and detract from the experience of shopping, while pleasing displays benefit all merchants on the block.

1. Keep storefront window sills to a height within 36" (where practical) of the sidewalk, for a view inside.
2. Match new windows with existing original windows in style, materials, glass type and color, size and hardware, and line up horizontally.
3. Retain structural column lines and original window openings; these are required to keep the building up and give the overall facade a balanced appearance.
4. If aluminum frame windows and doors are used, these should be anodized for durability.
5. Store windows should give attractive views inside. Do not use window display space to inventory products unless the "creative" intent is to attract customers. Do not block windows with shelving or display cases serving the interior.
6. Use attractive display panels, curtains, or interior shutters where privacy is required at the storefront level.
7. Repair or replace wood-frame windows in older buildings to maintain the scale and character of the original building.
8. Use double-glazing wherever possible to improve energy efficiency within the building and to eliminate condensation (moisture buildup) on inside glass surfaces in cold weather.
9. Use safety glass (tempered or laminated) in locations the codes define as hazardous, around doorways and near walking surfaces.
10. Although not recommended, if security gates in windows and doors are required, the renovated storefront shall be constructed with a completely internal security system. All internal roll down gates must be composed entirely of open mesh.

## ENTRANCES & DOORWAYS

### Principle

A traditional storefront door looks substantial yet inviting to the customer. Doorways can be gracious and welcoming or dark and unfriendly by their designs and materials. Stores today can also have special entries and doorways to enhance the corridor appearance.

### Definitions

A door is more than a place to enter. It is a person's first point of contact with a store, a place where shoppers form a strong impression. Doors should be attractive and comfortable to operate. Entering a store should be a pleasant experience.

### Guidelines

A recessed entry alcove invites shoppers to browse and protects against the weather. It is important that customers feel a special invitation as they approach and open the door. Doorways should be attractive. Colors, materials, style, and shape should complement the building.

6. Doorways should be recessed wherever possible, to protect the entry from weather. Entry alcoves should be well-lit at night.
7. Entrance floors must have non-slip surfaces and be pitched to drain away from the building. Wood and carpet pose maintenance problems and should be avoided as exterior flooring materials.
8. All elements of doorways and entrances must comply with ADA Standards and Building Code.



1. Wood or glass doors are recommended for storefront entrances, rather than solid metal or clad doors.
2. Doorways leading to upper floors should be set off from entries to street level shops.
3. Hardware should be attractive and easy to use.
4. Rear and side doorways should also be well-designed, particularly when leading to a public parking area or pathway.
5. Exterior doors should swing in the direction of exit travel when entry alcoves are recessed. Doors should not impede pedestrian traffic when open.

## DECORATIVE DETAILS

### Principle

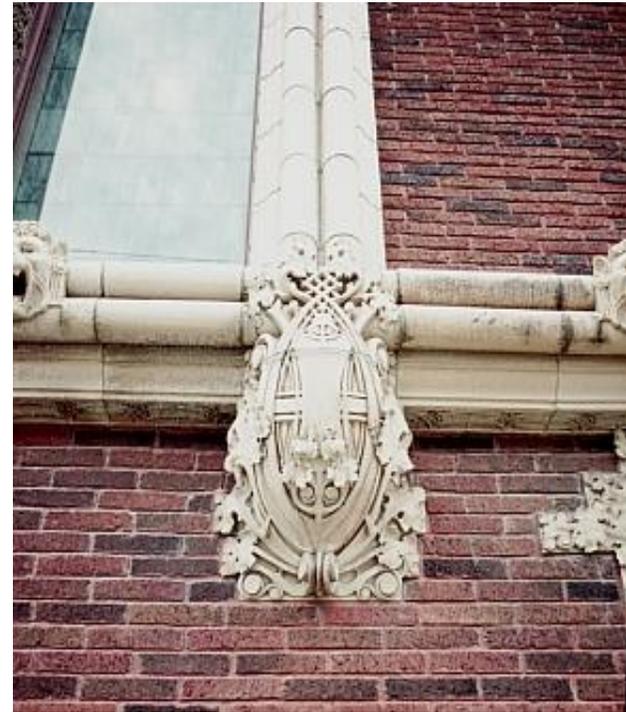
Details seen on many buildings, such as tiled entrance floors, leaded glass windows, strong cornice lines, brick arches, concrete scrollwork, arched entrances, pilasters and period stonework, set design themes for the neighborhood.

### Definitions

Decorative details are elements of craftsmanship, often omitted in contemporary buildings. These details are evidence of pride in one's workmanship and in the neighborhood, and their restoration shows that caring and pride is still present.

### Guidelines

1. Decorative details should be accented with a cleaning.
2. Style new details to match older details, use similar and compatible materials. Victorian details should be matched to Victorian-era buildings and Colonial details to Colonial-era buildings.
3. If a piece of special detailing cannot be used in the renovation, make use of it somewhere else in the building. (This is particularly appropriate if parts of a matched set are missing, and the loss creates a sense of imbalance on the building).
4. New surface materials should be compatible with older materials on a building.
5. Storefronts should not overlap adjacent storefronts.
6. Maintain building column lines at the first-floor level.



## COLOR

### Principle

Color can unify different parts of a facade and bring order to an entire streetscape. It is a practical and inexpensive way to upgrade the appearance of a building and enhance the surrounding area. There are a number of natural places for color: awnings, signs, displays, panels, doors and trim.

### Definitions

Color is the property of objects created by reflected light.

### Guidelines

Use dark colors where dirt build-up is a problem. Use light colors to brighten dark areas of a building. Consider the effect color has on mood: bright colors suggest vitality and action while earthy tones suggest dignity and tradition. Color schemes for commercial buildings differ by region of the country. They also differ according to the period when the building was constructed. The older buildings from the early- to mid-1800s used soft, neutral tints. In the late 1800s, darker, richer shades were used. In the early 1900s the colors reverted back to the lighter, calmer colors once again.

Worcester's buildings consist of a mix of all of these periods. Colors should be focused on those trends according to the building's design. Brick and brownstone, limestone and buff-toned brick, along with a traditional color palette are time-tested colors to be utilized for renovations and new construction.

1. In general, painting over masonry surfaces (brick and stone) is not allowed. However, where a masonry wall has been extensively patched, it may be best to paint for

2. a uniform surface.
2. Use color to set off decorative details from the basic tone of a building.
3. Trim and moldings should be compatible across a building façade.
4. Two to three colors are recommended for each building facade: a basic neutral or earth tone building color with darker or lighter accents.
5. Bright colors shall be limited to use as accents: trim details, awnings, and signs.
6. Gold is an appropriate accent color; gold leaf was frequently used for lettering in Victorian-era signs. Green is also an appropriate color to accent red brick buildings.
7. Select colors on materials and under lighting conditions where they will be used. For historic buildings, research the original paint colors and finishes. Repaint with those colors or with colors appropriate to the building period.
8. Use anodized-aluminum window and door frames rather than mill-finish, as the latter becomes dull and pitted with exposure to the elements.



## SIGNAGE GUIDELINES

### Intent and Purpose

Applying Design Guidelines to signage is intended to facilitate the commercial success of retail tenants and ensure signage solutions that will contribute to a vibrant pedestrian environment. Tenants are encouraged to create exciting and unique designs through the use of innovative materials and fabrication techniques. These Guidelines should be applied in coordination with other City Boards and Commissions that have jurisdiction over the permitting of signage. The enforcement of the Signage Guidelines is based in part on the City Zoning Ordinance. Exceptions to the Guidelines may be allowed or even encouraged as appropriate under the City's discretion.

### Maximum Signage Square Footage

The total area of all signage for each building frontage is recommended not to exceed one (1) square foot for each foot of lineal street frontage. For larger commercial buildings the formula may increase to one and one half (1.5) square feet of sign area for each lineal foot of street frontage. In all cases, individual signs are limited in square footage, as described in the following Guidelines.

### Permanent Signs

- All signs and fastening devices shall be purchased and installed by the tenant.
- The tenant must obtain its own sign permits.
- Signs should not be refaced without consultation with the City.
- It shall be the responsibility of the tenant to provide proper and continual maintenance for its sign(s) and sign structure(s).

- Sign text shall be limited to the name under which the tenant operates for business, as stated in the lease. Additional words, advertising describing products, services, logos, or target customers are discouraged.

### Temporary Signs

Typical temporary signs include political signs, for sale or rent notices, building contractor and leasing signage, and signs associated with sales and events. The following Guidelines are suggested as general parameters:

- For sale or rent signs: One sign not exceeding 15 square feet for individual tenants or one sign not exceeding 60 square feet if related to the whole building.
- Building contractor or leasing signage: One sign per building frontage, based on the formula of one square foot of sign area per foot of lineal street frontage, with a 100 square foot maximum.
- Sales and event signage: up to 20% of the window glass area and must be removed after 15 days.
- Political and non-commercial notices should not exceed ten (10) square feet in area.

### Fabrication Techniques

- Use of individually cut out letters, graphics, and logos are encouraged. Intent is to provide dimensionally interesting signage. The City reserves the right to limit the use of logos.
- Installation should not damage or require removal of historic materials, and should be done in a manner such that signs can be removed without harm to the masonry or architectural detailing.
- All electrical components shall bear the UL label.

- Exposed conduit, tubing, or raceways should not be installed.
- All conductors, transformers, and other equipment should be concealed.
- All attachment hardware, bolts, and clips shall be of corrosion resistant materials, to prevent staining of the building surfaces.
- Formed plastic, injection-molded, or easily damaged signage materials are not permitted.
- Location of all openings for conduit and sleeves in sign panels of building shall be indicated by the sign contractor on drawings submitted to the City. Installation should be in accordance with the approved drawings.
- No sign-makers' labels or other identification should be on the exposed surface of signs, except those required by local ordinance which should be located inconspicuously.
- Cinemas may have digital/electronic or changeable letter signs, subject to City approval of size, location and illumination.
- Awnings should be constructed from fabric (real or synthetic) and made of weather resistant material.

## Lighting

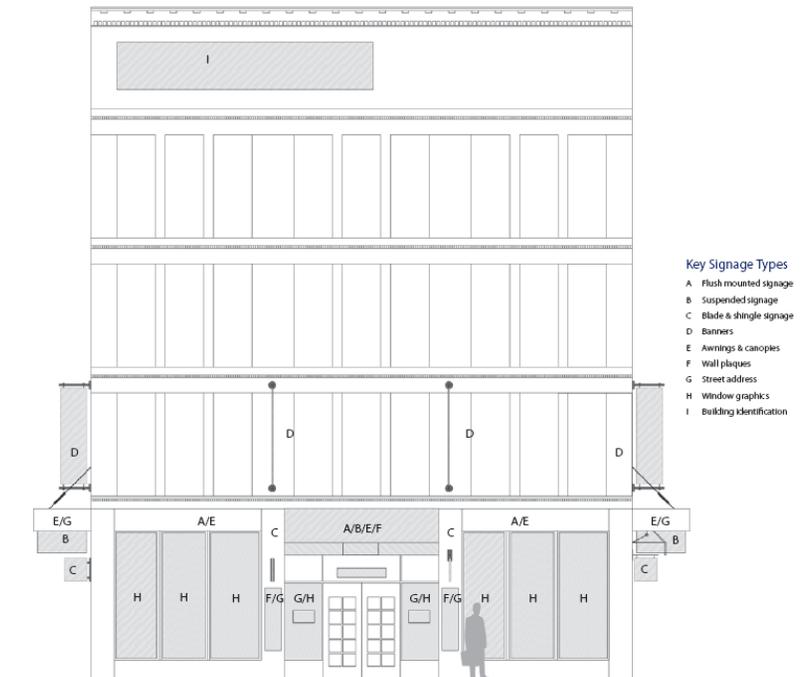
Sign illumination is described in the following individual sign type descriptions. In general, all sign types should comply with the following:

- Halo-illuminated signage and lettering is encouraged.
- Neon used in open-face channel letters is permitted. Signage constructed solely of neon tubes is discouraged.
- Face-lighting or external illumination is encouraged.
- Internally illuminated signs are strongly discouraged.

## Prohibited Signs and Conditions

The following signs are not permitted:

- Signage placed within a public right-of-way.
- Audible signs.
- Non-accessory signs other than permitted temporary non-accessory signs.
- Signage projecting above or mounted to roof.
- Offsite signage.
- Backlit awnings.
- Translucent (or internally illuminated) plastic sign faces.



## FLUSH-MOUNTED SIGNAGE

### Definition

Letters or mark mounted parallel to the building's façade that are either mounted as individual letters, or contained in a sign panel.

### Guidelines

Maximum area of sign: 60 square feet.

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: Wall signs should not project more than eight (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 (shaded areas above)



## SUSPENDED SIGNAGE

### Definition

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

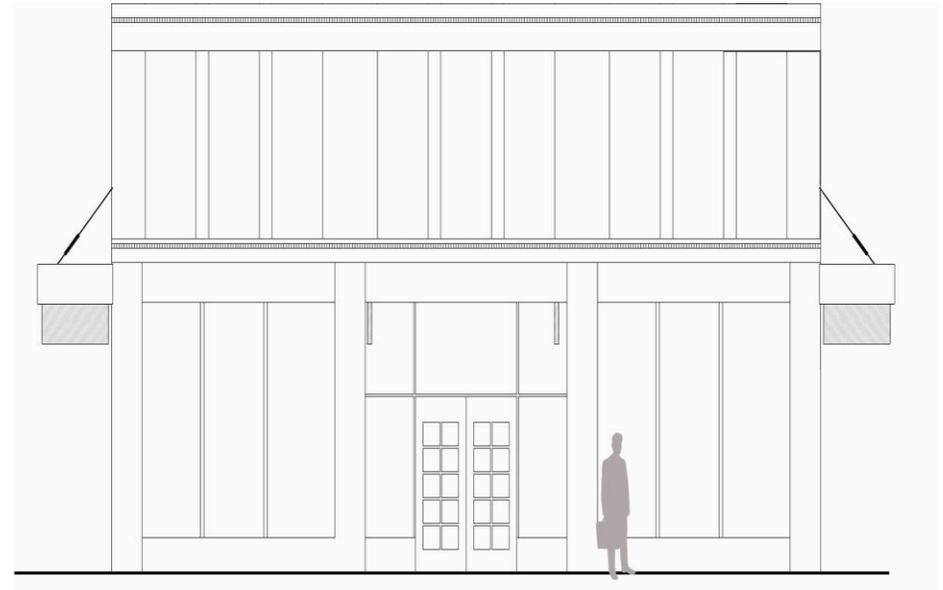
### Guidelines

**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 (2) single-sided panels in the case of a usable entry. One (1) double-sided panel per ground level tenant at beginning of occupied frontage for building attachment.

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

**Illumination:** Natural or external lighting only.



Recommended Mounting Locations (shaded areas above)



## BLADE AND SHINGLE SIGNAGE

### Definition

Mounted perpendicular to a building's façade, 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 façade using a rigid mounting bracket.

### Guidelines

Maximum area of sign: Not more than six (6) square feet of area for a rectangular or square shaped sign and no more than twelve (12) square feet of area for a decorative shaped sign.

Number of signs: One (1) per ground floor establishment, plus one (1) 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 ten (10) feet of vertical clearance above grade or sidewalk.

Illumination: Natural or external lighting only.



Recommended Mounting Locations (shaded areas above)



## BANNER SIGNAGE

### Definition

Fabric or rigid material mounted with use of poles, typically oriented perpendicular to structure façade.

### Guidelines

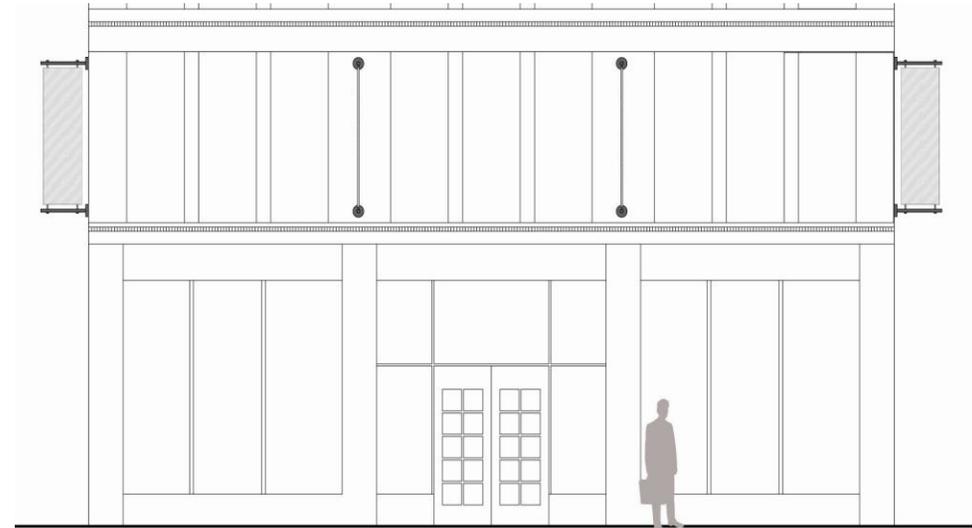
Area of banner: Less than or equal to 25 square feet.

Number of banners: Varies; however, banners should be spaced no closer than 20 feet apart and centered within architectural elements.

Projection: Banners should not project more than three (3) feet into the public right-of-way.

Mounting height: Bottom of banners should be mounted at least 14 feet above grade or sidewalk to avoid intrusion into Blade Sign or Awning Zone and not to extend beyond the third story of the structure.

Illumination: Natural or external lighting only.



Recommended Mounting Locations (shaded areas above)



## AWNINGS & CANOPIES

### Definition

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

### Guidelines

**Length:** Awnings and canopies should 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 five (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 ten (10) feet.

**Mounting height:** The bottom of awnings and canopies should be at least 8 feet above grade or sidewalk, except in the case of a movable valance, which may be seven (7) feet above grade or sidewalk.

**Illumination:** Natural lighting only; backlit awnings are discouraged.

**Design:** On multi-tenant façades, use common design elements. Logo or tenant mark should 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.



Recommended Mounting Locations (shaded areas above)



## WALL PLAQUES

### Definition

Small, pedestrian-oriented informative 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 6 square feet in area, not projecting more than 3 inches from a building wall.

Number of signs: 2 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 (shaded areas above)



## 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

Area of sign: Less than or equal to 3 square feet in area.

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

Mounting height: 5 feet on center for wall mounting, 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 (shaded areas above)



# PERMANENT STOREFRONT WINDOW GRAPHICS

## Definition

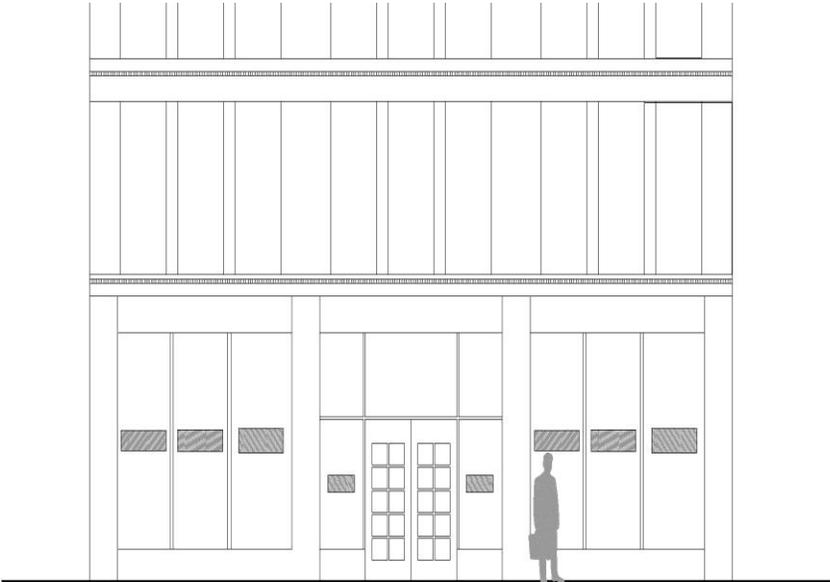
Window graphics can be permanent with the tenant’s mark or hours of operation.

## Guidelines

Area: Window signs should not obscure the interior view of a retail establishment and should be no greater than 10% of the available window space.

Number of signs: Limited only by area occupied.

Illumination: Ambient.



Recommended Mounting Locations: Permanent Window Graphics (shaded areas above)



# BUILDING IDENTIFICATION SIGNAGE

## 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 façade.

## Guidelines

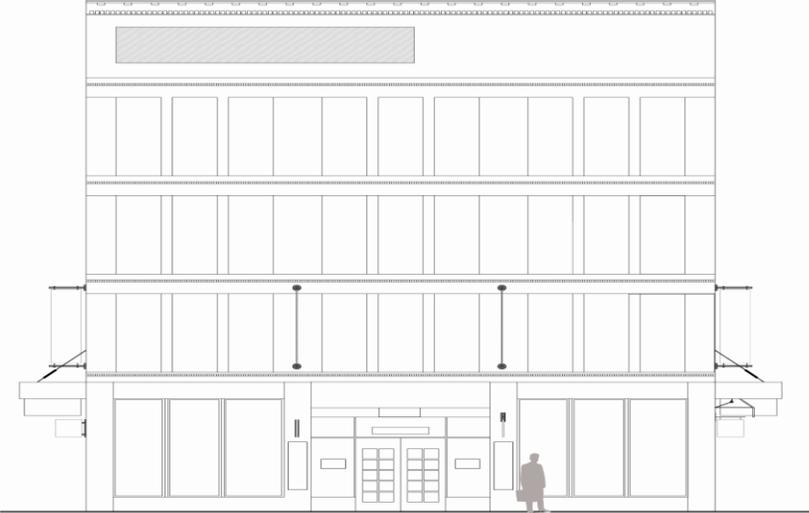
Maximum Area of Sign: 100 square feet.

Number of Signs Permitted: Up to two, one per façade.

Mounting Restrictions: Roof mounted signage is strongly discouraged. No part of the sign should extend above the roofline.

### Illumination:

- 1. Natural lighting.
- 2. External lighting.
- 3. Halo lit.
- 4. Internal illumination (discouraged).



## SITE IMPROVEMENT

Landscaping provides the streetscape with shade, shelter, and color. Trees purify the air and soften the harder environment of the corridor. Un-built corridor spaces are prime candidates for a program of landscaping and site improvements.

While the sidewalks and streets fall under the City's jurisdiction, there are site improvements that can easily be handled by a building owner or merchant. For example, bike racks and benches are encouraged and frequently used.

Street furniture includes benches, planters, trash receptacles, low walls, lamps, signs, bike racks, and information kiosks. Furniture makes a street feel comfortable and eases its use. A neighborhood improvement plan should include landscaping and street furniture any place where people wait, gather, or relax.

Maintenance of all these assets will ensure the continuation of an inviting appearance. All store merchants can improve their facades easily with window boxes filled with fresh flowers from spring through fall.

Any streetscape improvements must be made in accordance with the City of Worcester Department of Public Works and Parks Streetscape Policy, including but not limited to street furniture, sidewalk materials, and plantings.

**\*ADA Standards (Handicapped Access)**

The Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) establishes standards for making buildings accessible for people in wheelchairs and with other disabilities. Compliance with MAAB is required in order to obtain a building permit for renovation work. MAAB establishes a threshold for accessibility upgrades, related to the cost of other work being done on a building over a 24-month period:

If the work being performed amounts to less than 30% of the full and fair cash value of the building and:

- a. If the work costs is less than \$100,000, then only the work being performed is required to comply with 521 CMR or;
- b. If the work costs \$100,000 or more, then the work being performed is required to comply with 521 CMR. In addition, accessible public entrance and an accessible toilet room, telephone, and drinking fountain (if toilets, telephones and drinking fountains are provided) shall also be provided in compliance with 521 CMR.

If the work performed amounts to 30% or more of the full and fair cash value of the building the entire building is required to comply with 521 CMR.

These requirements generally mean, for storefront renovations in the corridor, that doorways must be widened, hardware changed, and steps eliminated from entrances. A variance for non-compliance from MAAB may be sought, but only if this work cannot be done for hardship or preservation reasons.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1991 has a similar but different impact on storefront renovation. The ADA is enforced through the legal system rather than the building permitting process. Any disabled person who is prevented from

using a public accommodation can make a claim against the owner, and the matter is resolved in court. The ADA permits programmatic changes in place of full compliance, where compliance would not be possible. This includes personal assistance to help someone in a wheelchair enter a building. Such assistance is not a guarantee that claims will not be brought, however the intent of the ADA is that disabled persons receive the same treatment as non-disabled persons regarding access to buildings and services.

Access codes address visual and audio deprivations as well. Consider the needs of your customers, and provide special graphics, translations, and/or tones to alert people to important information in a building.

\* All ADA information contained on pages 18 and 19 of these standards has been extracted directly from the MAAB Architectural Barriers Code Publication #521-CMR, Sections 2 and 3, which may be purchased through the State Bookstore by calling (617) 727-2835.

1. Provide ramps or elevators rather than steps where a floor level changes by more than 1/2 inch. Ramps must have flat landings five (5) feet deep at both ends.
2. Ramps must be 48 inches wide, with a slope not steeper than 1:12 (12" in horizontal NUI for every 1" in vertical rise). Ramps must have 2 handrails, at 19" and 34" above the ramp, on each side.
3. Doorways shall have a flat wall, at minimum 18" wide, on the pull-side of the hardware, so that a person in a wheelchair can move out of the way while the door is opening.
4. Mats, carpets, and thresholds shall not be higher than 1/2 inch. Door mats shall be securely anchored at edges to avoid tripping.
5. Doors shall be 36 inches wide, with a 34-inch clearance in the open position.

6. Hardware closing speed and operating pressure shall comply with access code requirements.
7. Exterior doors shall open under a maximum pressure of 15 pounds, or compensating devices shall be installed.
8. Public toilet rooms shall be sized, and fixtures chosen, for use by people in wheelchairs. Provide wall-mounted sink with guarded pipes.
9. Graphic signs and Braille lettering should be considered to aid in use by the visually handicapped. Use International Symbols (shown below) wherever possible.
10. If parking spaces are provided, at least one shall be sized and designated for handicapped persons. Provide a sign, and stripe the space at 12 feet wide. The accessible space shall be located near the building entrance, so people do not have to walk in areas of traffic.
11. In larger parking lots, van parking is required in addition to handicapped space.