

Town Center Design Guidelines

Overview

A revitalized and vibrant Town Center has the potential to produce many benefits, including the efficient use of infrastructure, an increased tax base, historic preservation, the fostering of civic spirit and engagement, and the creation of a thriving small business community. The Town Center Overlay District was created to promote the development of a pedestrian-oriented Town Center consisting of a diverse mix of residential, business, commercial, office, institutional, educational and cultural uses.

Designs that promote the historic value and nature of the Center are encouraged. Adaptive reuse of historic buildings, rather than razing and rebuilding, is encouraged as a way of preserving the Town's character. Infill development of underutilized and vacant lots are highly encouraged and recommended. The use of Town Center design concepts will help minimize impacts on public services, maximize the use of public infrastructure, and allow a mix of residential and compatible commercial and civic uses that will provide employment opportunities, spark new investment and foster economic growth.

The goal of the Design Guidelines is to encourage both the Town of Tewksbury and current and future property owners in the Town Center to appreciate and enhance the character of the physical environment of the neighborhood by preserving its most valuable design elements, both in terms of aesthetics and function, and by using those

attributes in the design of new buildings and public spaces.

The purpose of creating Town Center Design Guidelines is to create a distinct focal point that provides an authentic identity for the community. Tewksbury's Master Plan provides goals, calling for a well designed, pedestrian friendly and community-oriented Town Center. The Town Center Design Guidelines are intended to help new projects contribute to the community and complement adjacent development.

Town Center

The Town Center encompasses the Town Hall, the library, and other older school and building sites. The Town Center should promote a sense of place by creating an identifiable village center with pedestrian activities, traditional building form, mixed uses, and greater coherence of architectural treatment and design. These design guidelines should foster and encourage the following:

- Traditional building form;
- Subordination of parking in relation to buildings;
- New standards of signage and overall aesthetics;
- High quality landscaping and pedestrian amenities;
- On-site lighting in traditional and pedestrian scale;
- An improved "sense of entry" to the Town Center; and

- Protection of older buildings that contribute to the Town Center's image.¹

Master Plan Goals

The Town's 2003 Master Plan provides the following goals relative to the Main Street corridor and the Town Center:

- Promote a traditional village center in the area surrounding Town Hall;
- Promote a coordinated approach to land use on Route 38, aiming for small-scaled development of high-quality design, consolidated curb cuts, attractive landscaping, lighting and parking;
- Recognize and protect Tewksbury's character-defining roads, natural and built assets and unique local landmarks;
- Give preference to reuse and redevelopment of existing structures and infill development over new growth, assuring that reuse activities respect the architectural integrity of historic buildings; and
- Encourage pedestrian and bicycle access throughout Tewksbury by providing a safe network of roads, sidewalks and trails.

Design Guideline Goals

- Restore the Town Center as an area of civic, business and entertainment activity, while preserving and protecting its historic character and resources;
- Foster a pleasant pedestrian environment with amenities such as sidewalks, street trees, landscaping

¹ Tewksbury Master Plan 2003, Chapter 1 Goals and Key Recommendations, Page 1.9.

and businesses with attractive window displays;

- Create a unified appearance, a sense of place, and community identity;
- Reuse vacant and underutilized properties;
- Encourage a diverse mix of uses including residential, business, commercial, office, institutional, educational, and cultural and entertainment activities for workers, visitors, and residents;
- Encourage live/work units such as apartments over first floor commercial uses;
- Provide diverse housing opportunities;
- Provide centrally located parking that encourages people to leave their cars and walk through the Town Center;
- To provide a consistent architectural scale and promote the historic nature and value of the Town Center;
- Provide adequate lighting to ensure safety and security;
- Encourage signage that is clear and at an appropriate scale for the Town Center; and provide a comprehensive sign program that is consistent for the Center area; and
- Attract new investment and foster economic development.

Main Design Elements

The Design Guidelines cover the following design elements for the Town Center:

- Building Design Guidelines
- Storefronts
- Doorways and Entrances
- Windows
- Materials and Color
- Utility and Building Structures
- Signage
- Lighting
- Parking and Access

- Sidewalks
- Crosswalk
- Bicycle Circulation and Racks
- Landscaping Plantings
- Landscape and Open Space
- Landscape Material Suggestion
- Bollards
- Fences
- Seating and Benches
- Trash Receptacles
- Screening of Utilities and Service Areas
- Traffic Signals

General Design Principles

The following Principles are some key components that are found within the Design Guidelines:

- Sites should be developed in a coordinated manner, complementing adjacent structures through placement, size and mass.
- Paving, street trees, pedestrian lights, benches, signage, etc., along streets should be consistent to help create an identifiable character for the Town Center.
- Crosswalks, preferably of textured pavers or brick should be provided at all intersections.
- Whenever possible, utilities should be located underground.
- Development should consider the needs of pedestrians by providing well-defined pedestrian walkways that link to public sidewalks and walkways. Pedestrian amenities such as seating, street trees, landscaping, seasonal flowers, banners, and lighting are encouraged to create interest.
- Primary building pedestrian entrances and storefront windows should face

onto the primary street, not the parking lot.

- Parking areas should be partially screened from view of adjacent streets.
- Shared parking should be encouraged with either parking located on the side or rear of structures
- Sidewalks should be constructed throughout the Center area and should be made of concrete with decorative textured pavers or brick, and should be a minimum of 6 feet wide.
- Street light maximum height should be 14 feet.

Building Design Guidelines

Buildings in any neighborhood tell that area's story and define it. The architectural treatment of building structures, including materials and style, should be compatible with the Town Center's historic architectural character and context. Like most Town Centers, Tewksbury is not the product of any one historical era, but reflects architectural styles that were built over a period of two hundred years. The underlying guideline for new development and redevelopment is to consider one's neighbors and nearby structures and reinforce the existing historic character through sensitive, compatible design. These characteristics include simplicity in design and details, natural materials, and a modest scale that blends development with the landscape. When renovating or reusing a residential building for commercial use, the building's residential characteristics should be maintained.

The intent of the following guidelines is to encourage proposals that will fit within and contribute to the established or planned architectural character of the Town Center. In the case of new construction, precise

replication is not desirable, instead utilizing similar colors, materials, and textures, as well as repeating pattern, rhythms and proportions found within the architecture of other buildings in the Center is encouraged to achieve a unified appearance.

Storefronts

The following design elements provide the opportunity for developing attractive and cohesive storefronts:

- All new commercial buildings should front the street and sidewalk with parking in the rear.
- New buildings should be at least two (2) to three (3) stories, allowing for offices and shops on lower floors and residential space on upper floors.
- Maintain the distinction between upper and lower floors; with larger windows on the first floor and residences with smaller windows on the second and third floor.
- Provide large display windows on the first floor to encourage pedestrian interest.
- Do not cover or remove store-front windows with paint or other materials.
- Use street level details to help attract pedestrian traffic and customers.
- Storefront designs should be in keeping with a building's overall design. Storefront elements such as windows, entrances, and signage -- provide clarity and lend interest to façades. It is important that the distinction between individual storefronts, the entire building façade, and adjacent properties be maintained.



Retail and shops on lower level, with offices and residential on upper levels.

Doorways and Entrances

Primary entrances should be clearly marked and provide a sense of welcome and easy passage from exterior to interior. Whenever possible, they should be located on the front of buildings, unless parking is provided in the rear of the building.

- Side entrances should be located as close to the street front as possible.
- Recessed doorways are encouraged because they provide cover for pedestrians and customers in bad weather and help identify the location of store entrances. They also provide a clear area for out-swinging doors and offer the opportunity for interesting paving patterns, signage, and displays.
- Loading and service entrances should be located on the side or rear of buildings, whenever possible. They should be screened from public ways and adjacent properties to the greatest extent possible.

Windows

Windows have an enormous impact on the overall appearance of a storefront and should be used to display products and services, and maximize visibility into the storefront.

- Windows should have clear glazing. Mirrored or reflective glass should not be used.
- Where appropriate and desired, a building's original window pattern should be retained. Avoid blocking, reducing the size, or changing the design of windows.
- If ceilings must be lowered below the height of storefront windows, provide an interior, full-height space immediately adjacent to the window before the drop in the ceiling. This lets more light into the storefront and allows the retention of larger windows.
- Replace reflective or dark tinted glass with clear glass, if possible. In general, dark glass alienates pedestrians from the business activity inside a storefront and reduces the impact of window displays.
- Avoid installing opaque panels, such as metal, wood, and/or other materials, to replace clear glass windows.
- Windows with multiple, small-paned windows should be avoided unless they are historically appropriate to the building style, or integrate well into the overall design.
- Do not use Plexiglas or other replacement materials instead of glass.

Materials and Color

The architectural materials and colors used in the Town Center should respect the historic character of the Town Center and meet the following criteria:

- The materials of building elements in the Town Center, such as roofs (where exposed to view), exterior walls, trim, and other miscellaneous

elements, should be durable, yet also possess a traditional character. Wood clapboards, brick, stone, wood-trim, and shingled or slate roofs are consistent with the existing town center architecture. Roof colors should be limited to black, brown, slate grey or natural wood.

- Corrugated metal siding, metal roofing, stucco, vinyl siding and plywood siding should not be used for exterior surfaces.
- Paint colors should be consistent with the period architecture of each individual structure within the Town Center. The Colonial style used light colors with lighter trim. Colonial colors include white, ivory, yellow, and light grays. Victorian styles used many colors, generally with a dark body (olive green, maroon, navy blue) and decorative trim. For additional assistance in color selection, refer to historical color paint palettes, such as Benjamin Moore's palettes. Neon and bold colors should not be used.

Utility and Building Structures

A building's mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems should be concealed completely from view from the street or sidewalk. If such equipment cannot be concealed, efforts should be taken to minimize their visual impact on building façades.

- Utility and powerlines should be installed underground. This requires less utility maintenance and allows for street trees to grow mature canopies.
- Install utility connections and meters toward the rear of the building, cover

with landscaping, or conceal in decorative enclosures.

- Rooftop equipment should be hidden by a screening device, such as a parapet so as not to be visible from the street and sidewalk.
- Avoid placing air conditioning units in windows or any other openings facing onto the street. Units located in non-window openings are acceptable if they are flush with building walls. They should be screened with a decorative grill or any grill appropriate to the storefront design. Air-conditioning units should not drain onto pedestrians passing below.

Signage

Signs communicate location, type of business, image of business and character of the Town Center. The Town Center business community should work together to create a unified image for the Town Center as a whole. Quality sign design includes the following factors: scale, layout, composition, materials, color, letter size (18 to 24 inches), graphics and logos, typeface, borders, installation, placement, lighting, and context.

- Signage should be of a high quality of design and materials, consistent with the historic character of the Town Center, and compatible with the architecture of the buildings.
- When multiple tenants share one site, signs should be integrated as one unit to create shared identity for the property to the extent permitted and practical, or be designed as a package so that signs are complementary in style and design.
- Sign materials and colors should reflect traditional Colonial and Victorian styles. Wood signs fit best into the Town Center. Such

signs can be painted, carved, or have raised wood letters. Other options include metal (copper, bronze, brass, stainless steel) for backing or lettering. The use of plastic signage is discouraged in the Town Center.

- Sign colors should be muted, with the background and lettering contrasting. A sign with a dark background and lighter color lettering is preferred for aesthetic purposes and is generally easier to read. Possible color schemes include black with gold lettering, or dark green or navy with white lettering.
- Exterior signage should be externally illuminated.
- Internally lit or backlit signs are not allowed. The fixtures should be decorative or camouflaged.

The following sign types are not allowed:

- Signs employing moving or flashing lights
- Signs employing exposed electrical conduits
- Ballast boxes or other equipment
- Signs with luminous plastic letters
- Audible signs
- Cardboard signs
- Backlit translucent awnings
- Roof mounted temporary type signs
- Cabinet signs that are typically constructed of extruded aluminum with slide-in lexan face, vinyl lettering and internally illuminated fluorescent lighting.



Signs with too much information can be confusing. Secondary information can be placed on windows or doors. Projecting signs, which are very attractive, are encouraged when their scale and design complement the façade.

Lighting

Street lighting must be provided on all streets located in the Town Center district, which will create a distinctive character and provide a valuable aesthetic function. Aesthetically pleasing lighting will not only increase the overall appearance of the Town Center, it will also enhance safety for both pedestrians and motorists. The following elements should be considered when creating lighting design:

- All street lights should be “dark-sky friendly.”
- Avoid lights which glare onto streets, public ways, or onto adjacent properties.
- Generally smaller lights, opposed to fewer, high-intensity lights, should be used. Street lights should be installed at intervals of no greater than 75 feet.
- All efforts to reduce glare from street and parking area lights should be taken. Diffusers and refractors should be installed to reduce unacceptable glare, particularly adjacent to residential areas. (Please refer to Section 5330 of the Town’s Zoning Bylaw)

- Accent lights on architectural and landscape features are encouraged to add interest and focal points.
- Pedestrian-scale lighting along the street and in public places is encouraged. Pedestrian-scale lighting should be 14 feet or less in height and of a character compatible with the historic nature of the area and complementary to the building architecture.



- Parking area lighting should not exceed 18 feet in height and should be shielded to minimize glare and spillage into the surrounding properties.
- Street lighting should be located at the same distance from the street edge along the length of the entire street. Street lights should not be installed within the sidewalk.
- Fixtures should exhibit an aesthetic as well as functional purpose.
- The preferred street lamps for the Town Center area are traditional in style, decorative, and similar in design to other furnishings.



Gooseneck lights are a popular historic lighting treatment.

- Exterior lighting should highlight building elements, signs, or other distinctive features rather than attract attention to the light fixture itself. Lighting that attracts attention to itself, such as neon tubing surrounding display windows, is prohibited.
- In order to maintain an attractive image, exterior building lighting should be appropriate to the building's architectural style.
- Building lighting should provide an even illumination level. Flashing, pulsating, glaring or similar dynamic lighting is prohibited.
- Scrolling message boards are prohibited.

Parking and Access

The following design elements are intended to ensure the overall efficiency of parking development within the Town Center.

- Parking areas should be treated as an accessory to the building. Parking lots should be located at either the rear or side of buildings. If parking areas cannot be provided at the rear or side of the building, screening should be provided using fencing, stonewalls, or plantings.

- Curb cuts for parking areas and driveways should be minimized through shared entrances, exits and/or driveways, whenever possible. Cross access easements may be utilized to allow legal use of shared driveways over properties under separate ownership.
- Shared parking areas for businesses with complementary hours of operation are encouraged.
- Parking areas should be landscaped beyond the requirements of the Zoning Bylaw. A suitable landscaping plan should be developed based on the characteristics and dimensions of the parking area.
- Reduction of impervious surfaces should be encouraged through vegetated islands and Low Impact Development guidelines.
- The perimeter of all parking lots should be screened with trees, shrubs, and/or berms, thus reducing negative impacts on the surrounding landscape.
- Ensure all parking areas/lots are properly designed to ensure adequate snow storage.

Sidewalks

The sidewalk is a key element in a traditional neighborhood as it allows and encourages pedestrian movement. The design and layout of the pedestrian network needs to be considered with the same degree of importance as the street network.

- Sidewalks should be constructed of concrete with the use of decorative textured pavers resembling brick, or brick, and should be a minimum of 6 feet wide. The concrete must be 7% ($\pm 1\%$) air-entrained, fiber-reinforced and able to withstand severe

exposure, in conformance with Section M-4 of the Blue Book published by the Massachusetts Highway Department. Wherever possible, a curb zone should be provided that is sufficiently wide (typically 3 feet) to accommodate street trees, street lighting, and landscaping.

- ADA compliant curb ramps are required for all sidewalk construction. At all accessible curb ramps, the break in slope along the main pedestrian way and along the top of the flared sides must be paved with tactile warning pavers to indicate to visually impaired persons that a break in slope is occurring and that they are entering the accessible curb ramp. All accessible curb ramps shall have a maximum slope of 1:12 along both the route of travel and the flared sides.
- Throughout the Center, granite curbing with a minimum of 6" reveal should be installed to help distinguish walkways from roadways. Granite curb has been chosen for its durability and natural aesthetic, and should be in accordance with MassHighway standards, vertical or sloped, depending upon use and location.
- Where applicable, planting strips with the addition of trees to separate the sidewalk from the street are encouraged.

Crosswalks

Crosswalks are an essential element in intersection design and serve to designate the path of travel for a pedestrian. Pavement markings remind turning vehicles and bicyclists of potential conflicts with pedestrians. All crosswalks should be designed as outlined below and further

detailed in the MassHighway *2006 Project Development and Design Guide*, as amended.

- At intersections, the alignment of crosswalks should be perpendicular to the vehicle traffic pattern where possible.
- The crosswalk nearest to the intersection should be aligned with the edge of the sidewalk nearest to the road.
- When used without other intersection treatments, crosswalks alone should not be installed within uncontrolled environments when speeds are greater than 40 mph.
- Where crosswalks are provided across a street with a stop line or with traffic signals, there should be minimum 4-foot spacing between the outer edge of the crosswalk and the nearest edge of the stop bar. Reflectorized thermoplastic paint should be utilized to improve visibility.
- Intersections of sidewalks with streets should be designed with clearly defined edges. Crosswalks should be well lit and clearly marked.

Bicycle Circulation and Racks

Bicycle circulation should be accommodated on streets and/or on dedicated bicycle paths. Bicycle racks or loops should be provided at a variety of locations throughout the Town Center. The size and holding capacity will vary according to location, however, they should be of similar design and black in color to complement other street furnishings.

- Where feasible, any existing bicycle routes through the site should be preserved and enhanced.
- Bicycle racks should be provided within 25 feet of the building

entrance and should be placed so as to not obstruct views or cause a hazard to pedestrians or drivers.

- Bicycle loops are an alternative to racks, which offers flexibility without being intrusive to the streetscape.



Bike loops provides an aesthetically pleasing alternative to the streetscape.

- Stationary bicycle racks should be utilized with either in ground or bolt down installation, and should be of steel construction with a mar-resistant black finish.

Traffic Signals

Given the historic character of the Town Center, attention should be paid to the visual impact of traffic signals in the Center.

- Ornamental/fluted post and mast arms should be utilized, as span wire are visually obtrusive and inappropriate.
- All traffic signal equipment, including mast arms, signal heads, posts, controller cabinets, service meter boxes, hardware and brackets should have a black-coated finish.
- New traffic signals and upgrades to existing traffic signals should include accommodations for pedestrians.

Landscape Planting Goals

A well-landscaped streetscape and Town Center will draw people, customers and potential merchants. Enhanced landscaping

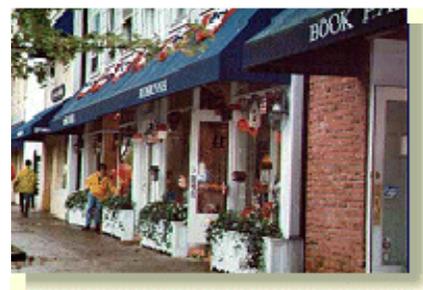
can add natural feel to the Town Center, dress up buildings, hide unsightly features, and provide a buffer between properties. The landscape goals strive to:

- Achieve a high-quality landscape that features a variety of plant materials.
- Utilize landscape materials to strengthen and unify the Center's identity.
- Promote the selection of plant materials which are relatively hardy, require little maintenance and avoid invasive species.
- Add color, texture and interest to the Town Center.

Landscape and Open Space

The landscape design should contribute to the overall appearance of the Town Center as well as the existing or planned streetscape.

- The use of trees and other plantings with special qualities (e.g. spring flowers or remarkable fall color) is strongly encouraged to unify the Town Center and create unique character.



Integrated plantings and street trees can provide shade to pedestrians and make the Town Center more appealing. Picture: East Hampton, NY.

- Providing plantings, planters and flower boxes will help break-up paved areas and enhance or dress-up an ordinary building façade.

- While flowers add to an attractive landscape, it is suggested that easy-to-maintain plants such as native perennials be use.
- A variety of landscape materials, trees, evergreens, shrubs, groundcovers, and seasonal flowers should be provided for color and visual interest. Creative use of plant materials such as climbing vines or trellises is also encouraged, as are individual planting beds, trees and hanging baskets.
- Landscaping improvements should include amenities such as street furniture, civic art, fences, stone walls, fountains and courtyards.
- Street trees should be planted an average of 24 to 30 feet on center with tree grates. Cast iron tree grates are recommended because they provide the advantage of being easily expandable without losing their structural integrity. Over the years, as tree trunks become larger, the opening can be enlarged in increments to accommodate tree growth. If possible, electrical outlets should be provided within the grate area to allow for holiday lighting opportunities.



Planting street trees and adding planting strips would make streets more attractive and would improve pedestrian safety by creating a buffer between the sidewalk and street.

- Sidewalks and walkways should complement the landscaping. Install

durable and attractive walkways such as brick, slate, stone or textured concrete. Avoid asphalt.

Landscape Material Suggestion

Trees are of great importance to the character of the Town Center and removal or damage to healthy, significant trees should be avoided whenever possible. Planting of new or replacement trees along roadways, to add shade and interest to parking areas, and soften architectural mass is encouraged.

Bollards

Bollards serve to protect pedestrian walkways, signage and utilities from vehicular traffic without creating accessibility barriers. They are also used to help define the edges of an outdoor gathering space. The materials used to construct bollards should be durable and adequate to deter vehicles, and should reflect the materials chosen for the immediate surroundings. All bollards should be removable in order to accommodate emergency vehicle access. Through correct spacing and scale, bollards can continue the character of adjacent buildings or structures.

- Bollards should be placed close enough together to prevent vehicles from entering, yet far enough apart to maintain universal accessibility; 6'-8' on center is recommended.
- Two types of bollards are recommended within the Town Center: granite and cast iron. Designers are encouraged to select the appropriate style for each individual setting.



Granite

Cast Iron

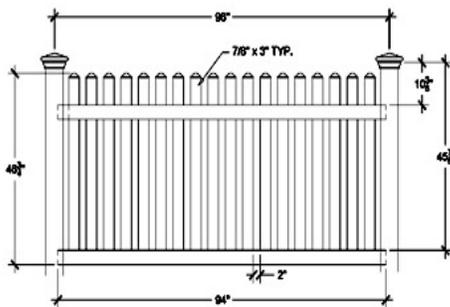
Fences

Use of appropriate fencing material can also influence the character of a neighborhood surrounding the Town Center. Where appropriate, homeowners in the Town Center district should use fencing materials that relate to the materials of their housing and surrounding buildings

- Wood picket fences, decorative iron fences, and stonewalls are preferred.



Fences similar to this found in Nantucket, MA, add a sense of safety and aesthetic appeal.



- Stockade fences, concrete walls and chain link fences should not be used.

Seating and Benches

Pedestrian friendly environments require amenities. Street furniture, including benches, should be provided throughout the Town Center to encourage community interaction. It is important that the benches be similar in design and color, but their size and mounting features may differ based on location, available space, and base surface. The actual bench design should emphasize comfort, simplicity of form and detail, ease of maintenance, durability, and resistance to vandalism.



Benches provide pedestrians with places to eat and rest. Benches also help delineate the edge of sidewalks and parking areas.

- Benches should be placed at busy pedestrian nodes or gathering places.
- Standard size 4, 6, or 8 feet one-piece benches with armrests and contoured backs should be used.
- Benches should be stationary and all mounting hardware and fasteners should be low profile, vandal resistant and finished to match the unit.
- Benches and seating, including outdoor café seating, should be placed so as to not obstruct views for vehicles, sidewalks for pedestrians, or signs or displays for businesses.
- Drinking fountains can be an attractive feature for the streetscape; however they must be ADA compliant.

- Kiosks can be utilized to provide information and directions to pedestrians and can identify the location of a particular site or attraction. Kiosks can also be helpful for posting Town events.

Trash Receptacles

Trash receptacles serve as a reminder that litter belongs in the bin rather than on the ground. Trash receptacles should be located throughout the Town Center in conjunction with other street furnishings. While individual sizes may vary due to location and anticipated usage, they should share a common design and color with other furnishings. Receptacles for recycling purposes should also be provided.

- Trash receptacles and recycling bins should be conveniently located for pedestrian and customer use in suitable areas, particularly in pedestrian nodes and gathering places. Restaurants with outdoor seating should provide additional trash receptacles near seating areas.
- These receptacles and bins should be permanently attached to deter vandalism and have sealed bottoms with sufficient tops to keep contents dry.



Cast Iron

Recycling Receptacles

Utility and service areas should be concealed completely from view from the street or sidewalk.

- Service elements such as loading docks and mechanical equipment should be located away from the street front wherever possible.
- When elements such as utility meters, mechanical units and service areas cannot be located away from the street front, they should be situated and screened from view with landscaping or decorative enclosures, and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.

Screening of Utilities and Service Areas