



## Memorandum

Project: 253 Main Street  
Acton, MA  
Landscape Plan dated 11/10/2008

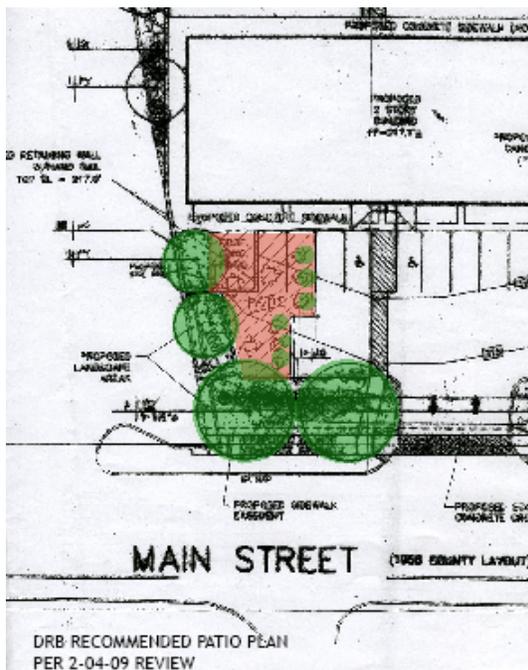
Proponent: Ken Sundberg

Date of Review: 2/04/09

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At the Building Dept.'s request the Design Review Board (DRB) reviewed the Landscape Plan submitted by the proponent Ken Sundberg and makes the following comment:

- The DRB recommends expanding the outdoor patio seating area to enhance look-and-feel of the site and improve its attractiveness as a pedestrian destination, per Acton Master Plan (1998), Kelley's corner Specific Area Plan (1995) and Acton Design Review Guidelines (2007); (see recommended drawing below)
- The DRB notes the Board initiated Zoning change in 2007, at Mr. Sundberg's instigation, to make open patio/café dining feasible in Acton, specifically with this project in mind. (With the Planning Board's assistance this zoning change passed unanimously at 2008 Town Meeting.) See posted Meeting Minutes, 8/22/07, on Town web site.
- The DRB recommends the proponent provide an elevation of the tall block retaining wall at the back of the site, showing scale, type, safety features if necessary, impact on surroundings.



- As noted in DRB Memo 1/07/09, the 51-parking spaces proposed for this project is counter to recommendations in Acton's Master Plan (1998), Kelley's corner Specific Area Plan (1995) and Acton's Design Review Guidelines (2007); its also does not follow the conservative spirit of Acton's Zoning Bylaw. (which requires 17 spaces).
- Finally, according to the Globe article attached 2/05/09, many suburbs are reducing parking requirements to increase property value & tax revenue. (See article attached)

## Towns look to ease rules on parking

By [James O'Brien](#)

Globe Correspondent / February 5, 2009

Everyone loves a parking spot, but sometimes there can be too much of a good thing.

The number of spaces required at retail locations in some Eastern Massachusetts communities is so high, a recent study says, there's more space devoted to parking than to the stores themselves - eating up valuable real estate and adding to the storm-water runoff generated by acres of asphalt.

The scales are tipped in favor of parking once a community requires more than 3.3 spaces per 1,000 square feet of retail space, according to the study, released last month by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

Among area communities, from Newton to Marlborough and Sudbury to Wrentham, most require at least 5 to 6.9 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of retail space, the study said.

Reducing parking requirements would "allow towns to build more on their lots" and hence reap more tax revenue, said Jim Gallagher, the regional organization's senior transportation planner.

And the reduction in storm-water runoff would also be considerable, according to Gallagher. Every parking space, at an average size of 300 square feet, sends 8,000 gallons of dirty storm water spilling into drainage systems or wetlands each year, he said.

Sherborn, Dover, Wayland, and Medfield are among the towns with the highest requirements, at 7 to 10 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of retail.

Gino Carlucci, town planner in Sherborn and planning consultant for Dover, said he would like to see Sherborn lower its requirements, but said the issue "hasn't been pushed because there have been other, higher-priority zoning changes."

Sherborn has a "relief valve," according to Carlucci, since its Planning Board can adjust the requirement.

But in Dover, Carlucci said, changing the parking requirement would involve a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals, a complex undertaking.

"We're in the process of reviewing zoning bylaws in general," Carlucci said, and he noted that the parking requirements "will probably come up."

Daniel Bennett, building commissioner in Wayland, said his town had required approximately 14 spaces per 1,000 square feet of retail space, but the number was cut in half in 2004, and may be cut again.

"You will see the town try to move to a more realistic number," Bennett said, suggesting a target of four or five spaces per 1,000 square feet.

In Medfield, Assistant Town Administrator Kristine Trierweiler said parking requirements are not on the table, but could be considered as part of a study committee's review of downtown development.

Regional planner Gallagher said higher parking requirements are typical of more rural communities, which lack retail development.

Officials in such communities often rely on generic national or regional standards, Gallagher said, which can be "skewed toward the worst day of the year. The tendency is to make sure there is enough parking on, say, the Friday after Thanksgiving, which then sits open for the rest of year."

Steve Magoon, director of community development and planning in Watertown, said his town has resisted the tendency, recognizing "some of the downsides to overbuilding parking spaces, in effect accommodating the day-after-Thanksgiving need over the needs for the rest of the year."

Watertown's retail parking requirements are the lowest among area communities, at fewer than three spaces per 1,000 square feet, requirements that Magoon said are reinforced by an urban layout that encourages walking, biking, and public transportation.

And in Needham, where the number of required retail parking spaces is already relatively low - at roughly 3.5 per 1,000 square feet - a state grant is fueling a study on reducing that figure.

Planning director Lee Newman said "the retail standard has been in place for at least 24 years. We're actually reducing it further in our downtown context to promote mixed-use development, and we're talking about exempting our retail services that are under 800 square feet in area."

But Newman acknowledged that such plans elicited "some conversation that there is inadequate parking downtown." That, she said, could be addressed by a shift in perspective.

"When you look at Needham Center, and the amount of asphalt dedicated to parking, it's not that there is insufficient parking," Newman said, "but how parking is being utilized that is the issue."■

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