

KELLEY'S CORNER, ACTON

Design Guidelines



January 2016

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4	SITE IMPROVEMENTS.....	4:1
A	SITE COMPOSITION	4:1
1	Building Location	4:1
2	Site Circulation	4:1
3	Parking Areas & Access Drives	4:1
B	PEDESTRIAN AREAS.....	4:1
1	Sidewalks.....	4:2
2	Plazas	4:3
C	SITE AMENITIES	4:4
1	Furnishings	4:4
2	Bollards.....	4:4
D	SITE LANDSCAPING	4:5
1	Landscape Character and Disposition.....	4:5
2	Screening and Buffers.....	4:5
3	Landscape Preservation.....	4:7
E	PARKING AND LOADING.....	4:7
1	Layout and Organization	4:7
2	Interior Landscape	4:7
3	Parking and Loading Screening and Buffering.....	4:8
F	WALLS AND FENCING.....	4:9
1	Walls	4:9
2	Fencing.....	4:9
G	SITE LIGHTING.....	4:9
1	Lighting Fixtures.....	4:9
2	Light Bollards	4:10
H	STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND SITE DESIGN	4:10
5	RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING	5:1
6	GLOSSARY OF TERMS.....	6:1

FIGURES

- Figure 1. Multiple Building Styles Composing a Traditional Town Center District 2:2
- Figure 2. Building Massing and Scale..... 2:3
- Figure 3. Using Roofs and Massing to Create Distinctive Single Story Buildings 2:4
- Figure 4. Building Massing to Reduce Apparent Scale 2:5
- Figure 5. Transparency along the Ground Level of Façades Facing Streets ... 2:6
- Figure 6. Frequent Entrances 2:7
- Figure 7. Examples of Non-Compliant Buildings 2:8
- Figure 8. Examples of Compliant Buildings 2:9
- Figure 9. Menu Signs and Banners 3:1
- Figure 10. Location of Signs on Façades 3:2
- Figure 11. Signage Bands and Traditional Town Center Buildings 3:3
- Figure 12. Individual Letter Signage with Indirect Lighting 3:4
- Figure 13. Channel Sign 3:4
- Figure 14. Parking Location 4:2
- Figure 15. Pedestrian Connections, Sidewalks and Plazas 4:3
- Figure 16. Bench Styles..... 4:4
- Figure 17. Shaping the Landscape on Sites 4:5
- Figure 18. Buffer Plantings 4:5
- Figure 19. Integrated Landscape and Site Design..... 4:6
- Figure 20. Parking Lot Landscaping 4:8
- Figure 21. The Landscape Context..... 4:8
- Figure 22. Light Fixture Types 4:9

1 INTRODUCTION

These *Design Guidelines* address the character and quality of building, site and signage design in Kelley's Corner. They complement other regulations, including the Kelley's Corner Zoning District (KC) and the Master Plan Overlay District (KC-MPD). The *Guidelines* will be used in concert with other Town reviews and actions to enhance the value, economic success and aesthetics of the area. They provide useful information to assist the designers of projects in advance of formal reviews, and will be employed by the reviewing entities as the criteria for their findings and recommendations.

A Existing Design Context

These Guidelines address an existing design context of sites, buildings and signage within the parcels of land in Kelley's Corner. The site development patterns, architecture and signage reflect diverse responses to parcel sizes, uses, and locations that have resulted in visual discontinuity. This document seeks to shift the characteristics of the existing design context to be compatible with the mixed use vision and town center qualities sought by the Town. The design context includes both the buildings and sites within the Kelley's Corner zoning districts and in adjacent areas across both Massachusetts Avenue and Main Street that are in different zones.

Existing Building and Site Design Patterns

Kelley's Corner has a diverse collection of buildings and site improvements that reflect the evolution of the district.

Most of the commercial sites, buildings, and signage were designed to fulfill business goals to be visible and convenient for passing motorists. Kelley's Corner has a large amount of commercial property occupied by single-story buildings. The typical commercial buildings are generally nondescript and rely on signage and surface parking to entice visitors and shoppers. The buildings are typically served by front yard parking and vehicle circulation that fills most of the remaining available land. Landscaping on many sites is limited to decorative plantings or green spaces in areas that could not be cost-effectively used for other purposes.

More recent commercial projects have responded to the design standards provided in zoning regulations and have located parking on the sides and rear of contemporary single-story buildings set within a landscaped front yard setback.

Some commercial, residential, and other uses in areas adjacent to the special Kelley's Corner zones have adapted sites and buildings that were created for significantly different purposes. These include the colonial-era Hosmer House museum, the former residence at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and

Main Street which provides office space, and the former school building at 433 Massachusetts Avenue which is now multi-family housing. The sites for these buildings typically incorporate landscaping that is more significant than for those sites that are used for businesses.

Most of the existing housing in these adjacent areas were designed for their current use. The sites and the architecture correspond to the building types (townhouses) and compact site layouts that were typical in the era of their construction.

Building Scale and Form

The building size and proportions correspond to the uses for which they were designed. The larger existing commercial buildings and the former school are predominantly flat-roofed buildings and range from one to three stories. Some of the commercial buildings and buildings designed as housing in adjacent areas along Massachusetts Avenue have pitched roofs.

Existing Architectural Styles

The architectural styles within Kelley's Corner are varied and diverse. Kelley's Corner includes a substantial amount of utilitarian buildings with decorative elements and signage corresponding to the current retail tenancies. Some buildings reflect modern International style architecture and its derivative influences. These styles are defined by elements such as ribbon windows, flat roofs and minimal embellishment. Representative examples of these styles include the filling stations and a multi-story retail and office structure. Nearby buildings that help form the design context range from an example of early Colonial and Georgian architecture to derivative Colonial and Neo-classical revival styles.

Existing Signage

The predominant commercial signage in the area consists of monument signs (ground signs within landscaping), wall mounted building signage, and a limited amount of marquee signage at the existing filling stations.

B. Principles of Design

These *Design Guidelines* are meant to apply to those portions of sites, buildings and signage that are subject to public view from public areas and in public use. This includes views from public streets and ways, but also applies to internal site circulation areas intended for public access under normal operations including paths, drives and parking areas.

These *Guidelines* have been prepared to reflect the following underlying design principles which are linked to public purposes for the district in which they will be applied.

- Create a coherent environment with elements that reinforce the pedestrian scale and a pleasant pedestrian environment for those who shop, work, visit or live in the area, which promotes civic life and a sense of community.
- Provide a more consistent pattern of building façades and building locations that appear to relate to one another and reinforce the civic edge of the streets.
- Promote a mixed-use environment expressed through varied building forms and site areas that reduce the apparent scale of large buildings or parking areas.
- Reduce and restrict the visibility of public parking from the streets and public ways.
- Promote the provision of excellent, attractive connections within sites and to adjacent sites for pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle access.
- Provide for signage that is appropriate for the business uses in the area but that are not intrusive or out of scale with the establishments that they serve.
- Transform Kelley's Corner over time. Initial redevelopments should begin a transformation of Kelley's Corner in the direction of a new town center. As redevelopment progresses, sites and buildings should respect the changing scale, configuration and form of redevelopment of adjacent-properties and harmonize with their context.

C. Organization and Use of the *Guidelines*

Organization

These *Guidelines* are organized to facilitate their use. They are composed of three main sections, corresponding to the three different types of improvements that may be subject to design review. The design and its subsequent review may consist of one or more of the following categories, depending on the type and extent of a proposed project:

1. Architecture - This section of the *Guidelines* concerns new buildings or alterations of existing buildings that are subject to design review. Topics include the approach to the architectural style of buildings, and how building forms should be shaped including the overall massing, orientation and roofs. Guidance is provided for the design of the vertical surfaces of building (façades). This section also describes appropriate approaches to locating and concealing mechanical equipment.
2. Signage - This section of the *Guidelines* concerns both site signage and building signage.
3. Site Improvements - This section of the *Guidelines* describes how sites should be composed and improved. It describes how buildings should be located and how parking and site circulation should be laid out. It then

provides specific guidance on the design of site components, including the pedestrian areas, site amenities, landscaping, parking and loading, walls, fencing and lighting. The final segment of this section considers design characteristics of stormwater management.

Two additional sections have been provided to facilitate the use of these *Guidelines* and provide further information. *Resources for Further Reading* is a list of helpful references and publications that may be useful to proponents and designers of project for Kelley's Corner. The *Glossary of Terms* defines key words and phrases that are typically used in design and design reviews.

Using the *Guidelines*

These *Guidelines* are intended to support the Town's design review process for projects and properties within the Kelley's Corner zoning district that regulates development within the area. Applicable projects may include any improvement that would trigger public review and approval under the zoning by-law and any project that requires a building permit for exterior alterations or new construction, or site or signage approval by the Town. The applicability of these *Guidelines* should be confirmed by the proponent of a project in relation to the regulatory procedures and practices within the Town prior to seeking Town approval.

The *Guidelines* are intended to complement applicable zoning. In the case of a conflict between the *Guidelines* and zoning, the zoning standard will prevail.

Prospective proponents should use this document prior to beginning the design of their projects and consult with the appropriate Town staff regarding their project and the concepts included in the *Guidelines*. Project designers should review these *Guidelines* and participate in consultation with the Town staff as may be appropriate for their project.

The Town staff and the entities designated to apply these *Guidelines* should consistently refer to the text of this document as the basis for their advisory or mandatory findings and recommendations. Designs complying with the *Guidelines* should be approved. However, the reviewing bodies should interpret them flexibly and advance approvals in instances where unique conditions require alternate approaches. The reviewing bodies should also flexibly apply these *Guidelines* when unanticipated design approaches emerged that better achieve the underlying design principles than could be accomplished through strict adherence.

These *Guidelines* should be periodically reviewed and revised as appropriate to recognize additional topics or incorporate revisions to ensure that they address the appropriate Town interests in design.

2 ARCHITECTURE

A Architectural Style

The “architectural style” of a building refers to the cultural and artistic conventions that are used in its composition. These conventions serve to communicate the role and relationship of a building. Architectural styles categorize buildings within broadly understood connotations associated with other buildings and the eras in which they are built or modified.

The use of architectural style is a form of cultural communication about the purpose, role and value of a building as it is understood by shoppers, visitors, tenants and residents. As a result, the intentional use of styles can increase the market appeal, economic value and civic qualities of individual buildings and an entire district.

There are standard classifications used to define architectural styles that are commonly employed among architects and urban designers. There are many useful resources regarding the elements and characteristics of these styles. An architectural style can be expressed through virtually any aspect of a building, including its shape, materials, composition of windows and doors, details, decoration or other elements. Some buildings express clear and consistent stylistic approaches that are easy to recognize. In other cases, a building can contain blended elements of multiple styles.

It would be both inappropriate and impractical to restrict the range of architectural styles in Kelley’s Corner. Most mixed-use districts in New England evolved over time and include a collection of diverse architectural styles. The diversity is an asset, creating a sense of variety and individuality for buildings.

1 New Buildings

- a) Sources – The architectural style of new buildings may be drawn from either traditional models or from contemporary design practices applied consistently in the design. A single building design should express a clear, recognized style that is related to historic or contemporary precedents in Acton or other similar communities, rather than a random mix of several styles.
- b) Multiple Storefronts – In the case of buildings that have multiple tenancies and storefronts, design an overall architectural framework that is visually apparent and that helps link the component parts, but different architectural styles may be expressed for the different tenancies and storefronts.
- c) Multiple Buildings– In the case of projects with multiple buildings, the use of multiple building styles should be encouraged to reflect different uses or other differentiating characteristics of the

FIGURE 1. Multiple Building Styles
Composing a Traditional Town Center
District

Most New England town centers have been composed over a period of time and have different building styles within them, reflecting diverse architectural trends and preferences. This variety is an asset and is appropriate for Kelley's Corner. Successful town centers in communities like Concord have a combination of building styles that span different eras.



buildings. Styles should not be used to create uniform, repetitive complexes of similar buildings.

2 Additions and Alterations to Existing Buildings

- a) Compatibility – Design additions and alterations to existing buildings to be compatible with the architectural style of the original building. New building additions may be designed as an extension of the existing architectural style or be a reflection of their own time, but should reflect a balance with existing patterns of materials, forms, architectural elements, or common details.
- b) Integration – Integrate additions and alterations to existing buildings into the existing building composition and façade organization. New architectural components should fit within existing building and structural frames and relate to existing architectural components so as to avoid compromising existing features of architectural detailing or style.

B Building Massing

Building “massing” refers to the overall shape of a structure that is enclosed by its exterior walls and roof. Building massing is also referred to as the building or architectural “form”. A form that can be readily understood from public vantage points is considered “legible” because it provides clues to its use and role in the composition of a district. The appropriate massing or form of a building is not independent from its site and location. The “orientation” of



FIGURE 2. Building Massing and Scale
By breaking down the massing of a building so that it has several composite forms, the overall sense of scale is reduced, contributing to a district that is distinguished by its variety. (Image: The Architectural Team)

a building considers how the massing is organized in relationship to its surroundings.

In general, the building massing within Kelley's Corner should be varied to create a range of building sizes, configurations and roof forms. Repetitive forms for multiple buildings on large sites should be avoided. Variations in the forms of buildings will provide for a more varied scale that are typical of mixed-use districts.

To reinforce the coherence of the entire district, building massing should respond to the scale, configuration and form of adjacent buildings that comply with these *Design Guidelines*. Buildings should be oriented to address the primary street frontage of the site and respond to distinguishing site features, such as primary intersections or views.

1 Forms

- a) Legibility – Design building massing to provide a consistent and legible organization of forms that reflects the use of the building, articulates the ground floor from upper levels of buildings in multi-story structures, responds to the context and site conditions, and treats the organization of the building consistently.
- b) Scale – Design building massing of large buildings as several components rather than as simple boxes to create variety and decrease the apparent scale.
- c) Emphasis – Design building forms to place emphasis on important contextual features, such as a prominent street corner or intersection, adjacent and nearby buildings that provide a positive character, or open spaces. When such a contextual feature exists, the building form should address that feature to create a legible relationship. For example, at a prominent street corner or intersection, the building form should address both street frontages of the intersection and emphasize the corner.

FIGURE 3. Using Roofs and Massing to Create Distinctive Single Story Buildings

In contrast to the low, flat roofed “strip commercial” buildings that are typical of auto-oriented districts, single story buildings in Kelley’s Corner should have a more distinctive character provided by enhanced height and pitched roofs.



- d) One-story Buildings – To create a sense of place and district character that is different from auto-oriented strip commercial development, the façades and forms of one-story buildings along public streets and ways should include tall façades and pitched roofs. These buildings should conceal roof-top mechanical systems within the roofs so that they cannot be viewed from public vantage points.

2 Orientation

- a) Primary Frontage – Building massing and orientation should address and define the edges of adjacent streets and public spaces. Building orientation and placement should reflect the context of adjacent sites by respecting established primary streets. Buildings should be set relatively close to either a public street and its sidewalk or a private access drive and associated sidewalk. Building entrances, storefronts and windows should be oriented to the primary public street frontage or frontages along private drives that serve the same role within larger developments.
- b) Pedestrian Activity – Design building massing and orientation to define and activate adjacent street edges, open spaces and public spaces through the placement of the building on the site, location and configuration of building entries, and active ground floor uses. Building massing should be used to frame pedestrian spaces and provide a sense of definition and enclosure to public street frontages and public open spaces.



FIGURE 4. Building Massing to Reduce Apparent Scale

The apparent scale of a building should be reduced from public vantage points by expressing different shapes or parts of the structure. In this example, there is a distinct street level or base of the building. A square form has been created at the corner, and other shapes have been created with varied roof lines. Massing variations can be accomplished in many ways, and are preferable to a single, monolithic box. (Image: Wayland Joint Ventures)

3 Roofs

- a) Roof Form – Variation of roof forms is one of the most visible methods to create variety within the range of building forms in Kelley’s Corner. The use of pitched or flat roofs should be consistent with the architectural style of the design. Although variation of roof forms in the district is desirable, multiple roof forms in a single building is not desirable if they serve as a decorative element that is inconsistent with the underlying building style. False roofs such as applied mansards should be avoided.
- b) Roof Features – Large expanses of visible roofs should be interrupted by a variation in the roof form, roofline or other roof or building features. Roof features that may be used to reduce the scale of large expanses of open roof areas include dormers, cupolas, parapets, cornice lines, skylights, atriums, chimneys or enclosed mechanical penthouses. Traditionally steeply-pitched roof forms are encouraged as part of the New England vernacular or buildings that employ related, traditional styles. This type of roof pitch generally falls within the range of 8:12 to 10:12 (vertical: horizontal).

C Façades

A “façade” is the vertical face or wall of a building that is available for public views. A flat and uniform façade has no significant variation in the composition of its shape or the components within it such as the windows, doors or decorative elements. However, a façade is “articulated” if it provides horizontal or vertical variation or significant shifts in the patterns of the elements that compose it. In general, façade designs should vary from building to building and should respond to site orientation and context.

FIGURE 5. Transparency along the Ground Level of Façades Facing Streets

It is important to provide a significant amount of clear glazing and visual access into the ground level of buildings façades that line streets and public ways. In commercial and retail-oriented districts, the ability to see into the shops and businesses creates an essential sense of activity and interest. (Image: Arrowstreet Architects)



However, each façade should be composed of its own stylistic integrity and design logic. The chosen style of the façade should be suited to the architectural style, massing and scale of the building. In the case of large, multi-building developments, expressions within a style should vary among the constituent buildings. Repeating the same façades on multiple buildings can create a sense of monotony rather than the variety and sense of unique place that is associated with traditional New England town centers.

1 Façade Composition

- a) **Articulation and Scale** – The overall building scale should be modulated and reduced through articulation of the façade elements. “Articulation” refers to the distinctive treatments of components of a façade through changes in color and material, organization of windows and doors, providing varying setbacks or projections, or using architectural trim and decorative elements. Façades should be articulated in a manner consistent with its architectural style. The configuration of architectural components should relate to the pedestrian environment and reinforce the ground floor level of the building. Façade treatments and articulation should wrap the corners of the primary façade to be part of the design of secondary façades. Buildings located at a corner site with streets or ways on both sides should be designed with two primary façades.
- b) **Pattern of Doors and Windows** – Windows and openings should be organized in a pattern and rhythm that is balanced and appropriate to the style, context and scale of the building. The proportion, scale, rhythm and number of openings should relate to the interior uses, but create an exterior pattern that relates to the overall building form and massing. Doors and entries should be framed by other openings and be the focal point of a balanced façade composition.



- c) Transparency – Building façades facing the primary frontage should have at least 25 percent of the overall façade area devoted to transparent windows and at least 40 percent of the ground floor façade area devoted to transparent windows. In a multiple story, mixed-use building, ground level articulation should clearly differentiate the ground floor from other upper floor uses with a difference in the scale and type of window openings and a more transparent treatment of the ground floor.

2 Façade Components

- a) Entries and Doors – Primary pedestrian entry doors should be the focal points of the primary façade. Secondary service and loading entries should be located on secondary façades and be integrated into the design of the façades.
- b) Materials – Building materials should be selected to be consistent with the style in which it is designed. Materials should be of a high quality; materials with known maintenance or deterioration issues should be avoided. Building materials that typically are composed of modules or assembled with component parts are preferred relative to uniform, monolithic materials. Materials such as masonry, precast concrete, glass, metal, ceramic tile, wood and other surfaces can consistently perform well if they are manufactured for exterior use and properly installed.

FIGURE 6. Frequent Entrances

To create a pedestrian-friendly shopping and business-oriented district, multiple entrances along the street or primary sidewalks are preferable to long stretches of façades that have few or no entrances at all. Covering the entrances or recessing them within the building façade is a practical way to express the entrance location and provide a transition between the interior and the exterior. (Images: Concord, Massachusetts and Niagara on the Lake, Ontario.)



FIGURE 7. Examples of Non-Compliant Buildings

These are examples of buildings that would not meet the guidelines and principles contained in this document. The building massing is largely undifferentiated and expresses a single, monolithic form with very limited articulation of the façade. In the case of the housing example, the lower floor level along the street has limited windows and does not have entrances that would create a sense of activity and invitation. The strip mall building format provides no other differentiation than signage.

- c) Windows – Window openings should create a pattern through the use of separate openings or be composed within an architectural pattern of window framing members consistent with the architectural style in which it is composed. In general, larger windows or storefront window systems are appropriate for use on the principal frontages of the ground floors of buildings with retail or commercial uses. Other window patterns may be used, but should match the overall building form and massing. Window patterns may be used to balance the overall building massing and form. For example, windows with a vertical orientation can offset a horizontal building massing and balance the visual impact.
- d) Awnings, Canopies, and Marquees – Awnings, canopies and sign marquees may be used to provide visible and functional features on a building façade. Awnings and canopies should be placed on the façade to relate directly to doors and windows. The placement of these features should not obscure façade details. Multiple awnings on the same building should be consistent in size, profile, location, material, color and design.
- e) Ornamentation – Ornamentation may be used as part of the architectural composition and articulation of the façade, but should be authentic to the style of architecture for which it is employed. If used, ornamentation should be integrated into the design and composition of façades rather than as arbitrary applications.
- f) Color – Color should be used to highlight or emphasize architectural or façade features. Color should be used to focus attention in targeted locations, such as signs, awnings, architectural details, features, entries or windows. Extensive areas of prominent, distinctive colors that serve to brand a building or promote its visibility to motorists should not be employed.



- g) Lighting – Building lighting should use shielded fixtures that avoid spilling light and glare onto neighboring properties, structures, or streets, or upwards into the night sky. Building lighting should prioritize illuminating building entries, display windows, signs or other building accents.

D Mechanical Equipment

Mechanical equipment should not be visible from public frontages or the public streets or ways in the district. Screening should be used to disguise visibility of mechanical equipment. Rooftop placement of mechanical equipment should be screened along public frontages from ground level view. Screening may be accomplished by appropriate placement on the roof to eliminate view angles to the equipment, increasing the height of a roof parapet, concealing equipment in the building attic, or building a screen wall around the equipment on the roof. Mechanical equipment that should be placed at grade should be screened for ground level views from public frontages. Screening may be accomplished either by appropriate placement behind the building to eliminate view angles to the equipment or by building a screen wall around the equipment on site, integrated with the site landscape.

FIGURE 8. Examples of Compliant Buildings

These are examples of buildings that would meet key guidelines and principles. The building on the upper left is a retail and commercial building in Wellesley that is on a street corner, with a large grocery store and retail center behind it. The building on the upper right combines housing with retail uses on the ground level. In both cases, the buildings have an articulated form and primary façade, with multiple entrances and transparent windows inviting views into the business on the ground level. The materials are varied and are used appropriately for the different components of the buildings in keeping with the chosen styles. (Images: Linden Square, Development Management Associates; Thayer Street Housing, Cube 3 Architects)



An aerial view of Kelley's Corner (Image: Microsoft Corporation, Bing Aerial Photo)

3 SIGNAGE

A Relationship to Town's Zoning Bylaw

The Town of Acton's *Zoning Bylaw*, Section 7, Signs and Advertising Devices, provides detailed standards for allowable and prohibited signage types, signage illumination, and the number and type of signs permitted in each zoning district, including the Kelley's Corner Business District (zone KC). It also explains which signs may or may not require a Special Permit from the Planning Board.

Definitions for signage types can be found in the bylaws.

1 Signage Types in Zoning Bylaw

- a) Exterior Signs – These are divided into Wall Signs, Projecting Signs, and Awning Signs
- b) Freestanding Signs – These are signs that are not attached to buildings; they are sometimes referred to as monument signs or ground signs.
- c) Temporary Signs – These are signs that are allowed for limited purposes and time periods.
- d) Off-Premises Directional Signs – These are regulated signs that promote a business or destination but are not located on its site.
- e) Temporary Special Event Signs – These are a specific range of signs that are allowed for limited purposes and time periods.
- f) Signs Types That Do Not Require a Sign Permit – These include Agricultural Signs, Construction Signs, Directional Signs, Directory Signs, Fuel Pump Signs, Government Signs, Identification Signs, Landmark Signs, Menu Signs, Multifamily Dwelling Signs, Residential Development Signs, Political Signs, Religious Signs, Sale/Rent/Lease Signs, Traffic Signs, Window Signs that cover less than 25 percent of the window, Neon / LED Window Signs not exceeding 10 square feet or 25 percent of the window area, Yard / Garage sale Signs, and “Open” Signs.

2 Intent of Design Guidelines for Signage

- a) Supplemental Role – The intent of the following signage guidelines is to provide additional assistance in shaping the appearance and character of signs in order to foster a high-quality, pedestrian-friendly environment at Kelley's Corner. These *Guidelines*



FIGURE 9. Menu Signs and Banners

Hanging signs and temporary chalkboard signs with menus are appropriate for pedestrian-scaled signage it enlivens the streetscape and promotes the businesses. This type of sign must be well-maintained and composed of quality materials. The signage should be tailored to the specific business establishment and not include generic signs (such as “Open”) or signs that promote a brand.

supplement the zoning requirements, and are not intended to conflict with any aspect of the zoning.

- b) Note on Capitalization – Words that are capitalized below, such as “Projecting Sign”, refer to a word that is specifically defined in the Zoning Bylaw, Section 7.

B General Guidelines for all Signage Types

In general, well-designed signs increase the visual quality and character of the business being served as well as the image of Kelley’s Corner as a whole. Because they are viewed publicly, signs can either add or detract from the community image. Additionally, well-designed signage helps to unify the street-front or building façade by creating an organized pattern of information. Signage design can activate a building’s façade by introducing color and texture.

1 Role of Signs

- a) Identification – The primary function of a sign is to identify a property or business and direct customers clearly and easily to the desired location.
- b) Harmony – Signage design should reflect the architectural qualities of the buildings and the Kelley’s Corner area. Within a Business Center or block, signs should be compatible with the buildings they serve in terms of type, size, color, and material. In a multiple-storefront building, the signage should be of a size, location, material, and color that harmoniously relates storefront bays.
- c) Restraint – While the Town’s Special Permits may allow a business to erect more than one sign, the overall number of signs should be limited to that necessary to clearly and visibly convey the name of the establishment, institution, or use and the character of the goods or services being offered from street approaches. Too many signs not only compete with each other and create repetitive advertising,

FIGURE 10. Location of Signs on Façades

Wall signs and other sign types should be integrated into building façades to create a harmonious appearance. They should be near the main entrances of the establishments that they promote for example, and not conceal windows or architectural features.





FIGURE 11. Signage Bands and Traditional Town Center Buildings

The architecture of commercial and retail buildings in town centers provides a zone that is above the ground level and below second story windows that becomes a consistent and convenient place to locate signs. This zone can then be adapted to the signage for different tenants over time, and include either wall signs or projecting signs of various types.

but also detract from the appearance of buildings and the overall Kelley's Corner area.

2 Location and Placement

- a) Integration with Site – At the site scale, signage should be integrated into the overall site design and be complementary in colors and materials with the buildings and landscape.
- b) Freestanding Signs – Freestanding Signs should generally be limited to buildings that have a significant setback or are otherwise not visible from the street or sidewalk, or where other signage is not appropriate to the architecture.
- c) Integration with Buildings – At the building scale, signs should not obscure architectural features of the buildings such as columns, windows, or recessed entries, but rather should be placed in a logical portion of the façade. Wall Signs typically should be placed in the sign band or entablature that extends in a consistent zone across the façade above the windows and doors. Wall Signs for buildings with multiple tenants should use a consistent height and line for the sign band of any wall signs.
- d) Signage above the Second Story – For buildings over one story in height, signage above the sills of second story windows should be confined to painted letters on window glass, and should only advertise the organizations therein.

2 Legibility

- a) Hierarchy – Where a building or business includes more than one sign, the sizes, placement, and design of signs should create a logical hierarchy of information from large, easy to read content



FIGURE 12. Individual Letter Signage with Indirect Lighting

This storefront uses contemporary, individually fabricated letters that are mounted within the signage band of this building. The lighting for this attractive sign is then provided by “gooseneck” fixtures that are an indirect source of illumination at night.



FIGURE 13. Channel Sign

“Channel signage” refers to the shape of the letters for this sign type. The letters have a “U” shaped cross section. Lighting can be placed in the back of the letters for some installations and illuminate the surface behind the sign, so that the letters stand out as a profile against the lit background.

for drivers to finer-grain, more detailed designs for pedestrians on adjacent walkways.

- b) **Appropriate Size** – The size of lettering on signs should be appropriate to the intended audience, whether motorists or pedestrians. For example, lettering on Directional Signs, such as those indicating the locations of parking lots, should be very clear and simple so as to be legible to drivers on the far side of the adjacent street, easy to read amidst other distractions while driving. Lettering on Wall Signs on a building façade near a street should be legible to pedestrians on the opposite sidewalk. Lettering on Hanging Signs and Window Signs, on the other hand, should be smaller because it only needs to be legible from an adjacent sidewalk or plaza
- c) **Reflectivity** – Matte, flat materials should be used for opaque sign backgrounds to reduce reflective glare and enhance legibility.

3 Materials and Design

- a) **Durability** – All permanent signs should be of durable materials compatible with the materials of the building served. Their weight and form should convey a sense of substance and permanence.
- b) **Dimensionality** – To encourage visual interest in Wall Signs, dimensional signs that create shadow lines (such as carved relief signs or Individual Letter Signs) are encouraged.
- c) **Openness** – For the best quality appearance, Window Signs and signs in glazed entry doors should be screened or painted directly onto the glass. Such signs should be “airy,” with letters and graphics generously spaced so as to preserve the view into the ground-floor space.
- d) **Compatibility** – Typefaces used in signage should be compatible with the building architectural style, and with any other signs used in the same building or multi-building development.
- e) **Colors** – No more than two or three colors should be used on a sign. High color contrast between the lettering and the background should be employed to maximize legibility. For Awning Signs and Wall Signs, lettering and logos should be provided in one color only, selected to enhance contrast and readability against the background. For example, white or light lettering should be used against dark background colors; while black or other dark, muted colors should be used against lighter-color backgrounds.

4 SITE IMPROVEMENTS

A Site Composition

The composition of the site should provide for an efficient and organized layout of buildings, parking areas and vehicular circulation, with a particular emphasis on pedestrian connectivity.

1 Building Location

- a) Reference – See Building Massing (Section 2B).

2 Site Circulation

- a) Relationship to Entries – Building’s primary entries should be directly connected to sidewalks or public pedestrian areas by walkways. Walkways should also connect parking areas with secondary building entrances.
- b) Minimized Vehicular Conflicts – Walkways, parking areas, and drives should be planned so that there is minimal vehicular crossings of pedestrian areas.

3 Parking Areas & Access Drives

- a) Parking Location – Parking areas should be located in the rear or along the sides of buildings. Parking area located along the sides of buildings should be setback at least ten feet from the front face of the building.
- b) Loading Location – Loading areas should be located at either the side or rear of each building and should be designed to avoid traffic conflicts with vehicles using the site or vehicles using adjacent sites.
- c) Shared Access Drive – Parking areas should be accessed by shared drives whenever possible. A well-organized system of access drives will reduce pedestrian crossing areas, limit gaps between development frontages and ensure a more efficient flow of traffic.

B Pedestrian Areas

Developments within Kelley’s Corner should focus on creating an attractive pedestrian friendly environment. Pedestrian connections, plazas and seating areas are encouraged whenever feasible.

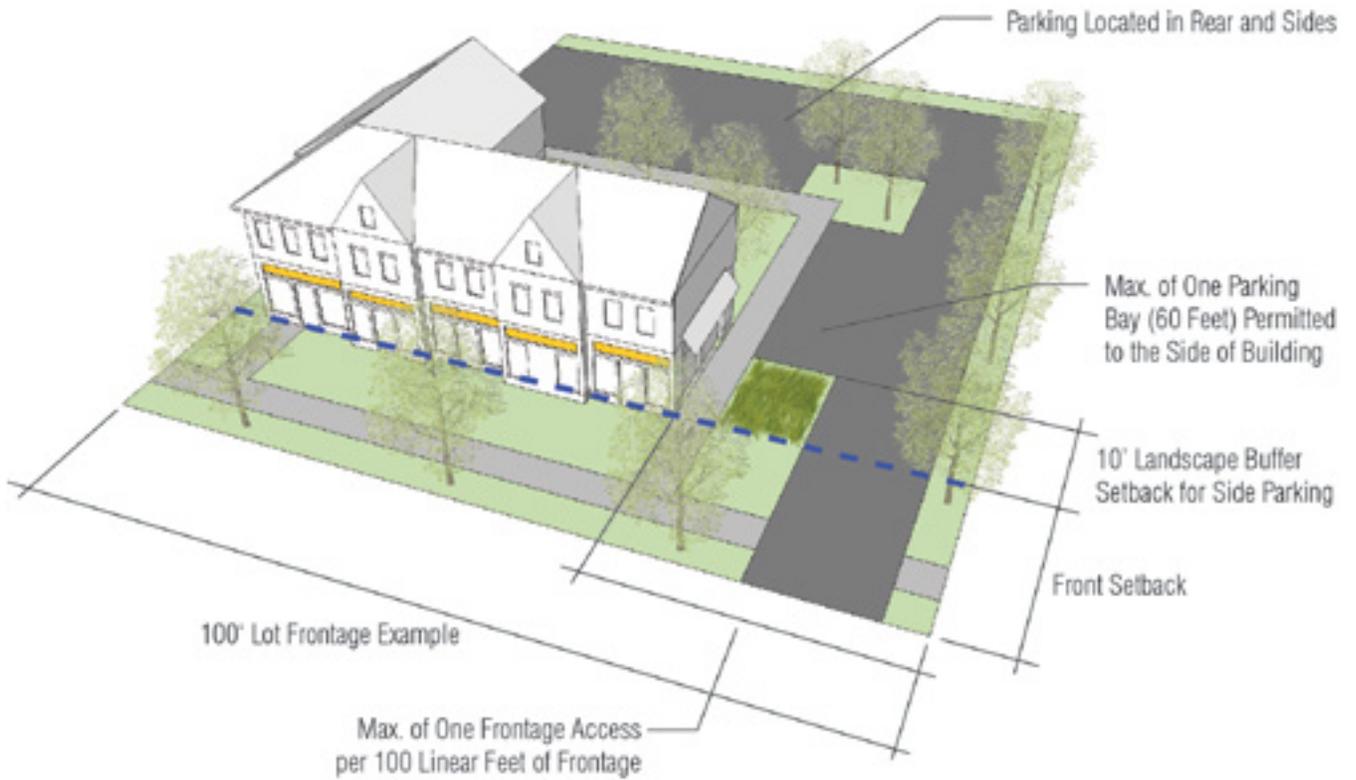
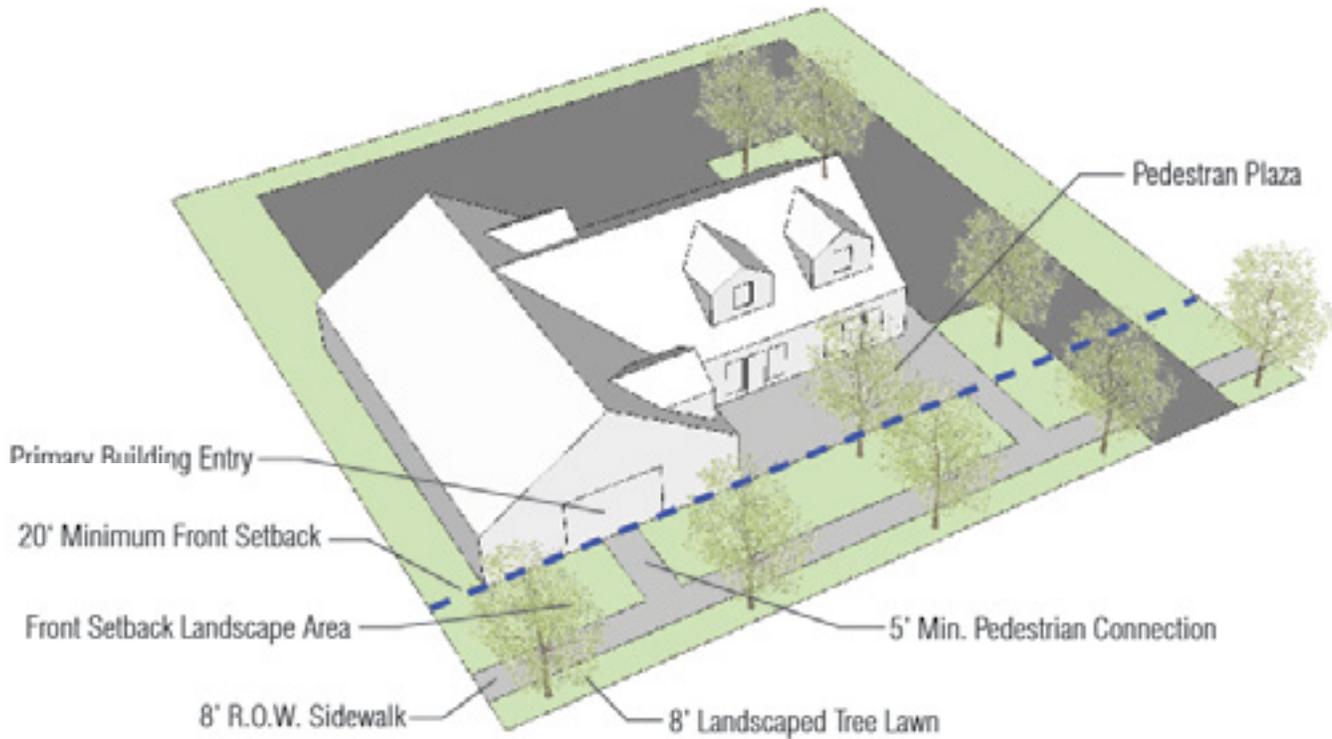


FIGURE 14. Parking Location

This diagram indicates how parking should be located to the side or rear of buildings. The portion of the frontage disrupted by driveways should be minimized.

1 Sidewalks

- a) Sidewalk Classification – Primary sidewalks are those pedestrian paths along public streets and ways and link them to the primary entrance of a building. Primary sidewalks include those paths link primary parking areas to the front doors of buildings or link buildings to plazas. Secondary sidewalks include connections between parking areas, connections to side doors, maintenance areas or service areas.
- a) Sidewalks along Streets and Ways – A sidewalk should be provided along the lot’s frontage on a street or streets. The sidewalk should be at least 8 feet wide if it is along either a public street or way or along major private accessways that serve multiple buildings and sites.
- b) Pedestrian Connections – Pedestrian walkways with a minimum width of five feet minimum width should be provided to establish connections between the sidewalk and primary building entrances and between parking areas and secondary entrances. Accessible walkways should be encouraged between adjacent facilities and parcels wherever practical.



- c) Crosswalks – In areas where walkways cross significant vehicular circulation routes, safe crossings should be provided that include designated painted or decorative crosswalks.
- d) Hierarchy – The site design should create identifiable and practical hierarchies among site elements. The traveled ways and walkway designs should distinguish among those intended for principal public access and use, and those that provide for internal circulation or service requirements.
- e) Materials – Primary sidewalks surfaces should be comprised of brick, concrete unit pavers, concrete, or a combination of these materials. Secondary sidewalks may be comprised of suitable durable materials including asphalt.

FIGURE 15. Pedestrian Connections, Sidewalks and Plazas

Pedestrian connections should link sidewalks to building entries and pedestrian plazas.

2 Plazas

- a) Size – The sizing of pedestrian plazas is intended to complement the scale of nearby interior buildings. Guidelines for pedestrian plazas are as follows:
 - * 500 square foot minimum plaza for lots where the net floor area is less than 30,000 square feet.

- * 1000 square foot minimum plaza for lots where the net floor area is between 30,000 and 100,000 square feet.
 - * 2,000 square foot minimum plaza for lots where the net floor area is greater than 100,000 square feet.
- b) Location – Pedestrian plazas should be located in the front or sides of a building and should be accessible, well lit and provide opportunities for seating. The pedestrian plaza should not be separated from the building by a drive or parking area.
 - b) Design and Materials – Pedestrian plazas should be located in the front or sides of a building within view of a public or private street or way that serves as a principal access route for vehicles. It should be handicap-accessible, well lit and provide opportunities for seating. The pedestrian plaza should not be separated from the building by a drive or parking area. A plaza may contain up to 50% of its area with landscaped beds and features, but the balance of the space should be paved with patterned concrete, brick, or concrete unit pavers.

C Site Amenities

Amenities provide convenience for pedestrians and create a settings for resting, sitting, eating and social encounters with others. Site amenities such as public seating, bike racks and other site furniture should be properly integrated into the site design. The amenities should be of a style consistent with the adjacent or nearby architecture and be located in spaces that relate to the desired patterns of uses, such as near entry walkways.

1 Furnishings

- a) Bicycle Facilities – Bicycle facilities should be placed in appropriate locations in close proximity to building entrances and parking areas. Durable materials and finishes should be used.
- b) Benches – Benches should be six or eight feet in length. Benches should have backs and arms if they are intended to provide a principal orientation for those seated on them.
- c) Trash and Recycling Receptacles – Trash receptacles should be approximately 36 gallons in capacity and constructed from black powder coated steel or other durable materials

2 Bollards

- a) Placement – Bollards should be placed sparingly and used when it is necessary to protect pedestrian areas or site elements from vehicles.



FIGURE 16. Bench Styles

Benches should be located where they will be convenient and comfortable as a place to sit and watch the activity on the site. The bench style does not need to match any of the benches in the public streetscape, but should be chosen for their durability, comfort and design compatibility with the other site and architectural elements

- b) Style – Bollards be constructed from 3.5-inch diameter black powder coated tubular steel and not exceed four feet in height from the ground surface.

D Site Landscaping

Site landscaping is critical for making a site comfortable and at a human-scale. Additionally, it can help frame building entries and demarcate important site circulation relationships.

1 Landscape Character and Disposition

- a) Use of Native Vegetation – The plantings should favor native species that thrive naturally without irrigation and are not invasive species listed by the federal and state environmental agencies. The choices of landscape materials should also consider their value in improving habitat. Native plantings should be chosen to withstand weathering and public use, with particular attention to durability and ability to withstand salted runoff from winter roads.
- b) Placement – Tree pits, raised planters and potted plants are acceptable to accommodate tight spaces in pedestrian ways. Plantings and landscape treatments adjacent to private buildings at the edge of any open space should be designed to soften but not hide the buildings and encourage public access up to the edge of the public space. Landscaping that has year round interest and complements the architecture is encouraged in areas where the development faces the roadway.
- c) Hierarchy – The site landscaping should utilize tree species and landscaping patterns to strengthen hierarchies among site circulation and elements. Primary pedestrian and vehicular access ways should be demarcated with landscaping that differentiates them from the rest of the site. A mix of species is encouraged throughout the site. However, trees of a similar form, character and consistent spacing is encouraged along primary access ways.

2 Screening and Buffers

- a) Sidewalk Edge Landscaping– The front yards of development along street edges and primary sidewalks should be landscaped or have pedestrian plazas, unless there are no setbacks. The landscape materials should be consistent with they architectural style of the



FIGURE 17. Shaping the Landscape on Sites

In general, informal planting patterns are more appropriate than repetitive or highly geometric patterns, in keeping with the landscape traditions of New England town centers - even where the architecture is formal. The more formal planting arrangements such as repetitive rows of trees in this image should occur in the streetscapes and public spaces that will emerge in Kelley's Corner.

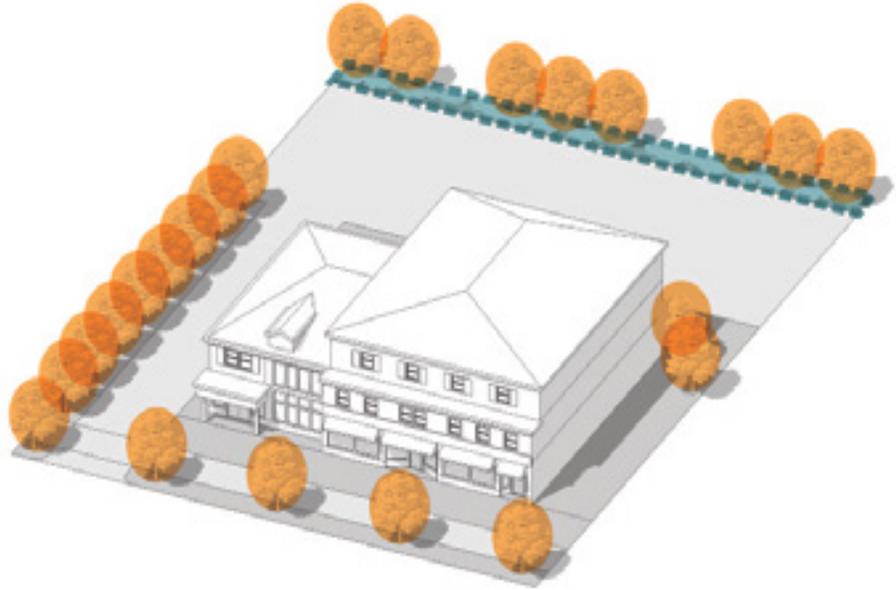


FIGURE 18. Buffer Plantings

Sidewalk landscape buffer - the use of multiple species of varying heights can create a more interesting and durable buffer than a single row of identical plants.

FIGURE 19. Integrated Landscape and Site Design

Landscaping within a site should form an integrated, cohesive design that is consistent with the use of the site, creates a deliberate relationship with its edges, and is compatible with the architectural styles of the buildings.



buildings and complement the public streetscape and landscape improvements that may exist or be planned for the future. Low height shrubs, perennials and ground covers should be used where it is critical not to block views businesses features.

- b) Property Perimeter Buffer – Where nonresidential properties abut a residential property, a minimum strip of land at least five (5) feet wide should be planted with a mix of evergreen and deciduous shrubs and/or trees suitable to visually screen the development.
- c) Additional Screening – Dumpsters, storage areas and utility structures, except for renewable energy systems, shall be screened from view from public sidewalks, streets and adjacent properties by dense evergreen landscaping, fencing, walls or a combination thereof.

3 Landscape Preservation

- a) Maintain Existing Vegetation – Site development should be designed to incorporate, and limit disturbance and removal of existing trees.
- b) Existing Tree Replacement – Where preservation of existing vegetation is not possible and would compromise the development of the site, substitution of replacement landscaping is acceptable. For each healthy tree that is greater than 16” in caliper DBH is removed on the site, two native replacement trees should be planted. For each healthy tree that is between 10” and 16” in caliper DBH is removed on the site, one native replacement tree should be planted.

E Parking and Loading

Adequate and convenient parking is a necessity for existing uses and future development in Kelley's Corner. While an appropriate amount of parking should be provided, parking areas should be located to the side or rear of developments and integrated into the overall layout of the site. Expansive parking areas void of landscaping should be avoided.

1 Layout and Organization

- a) Location – Vehicular driveways and parking lots may be located to the side and rear of buildings or to the rear of a pedestrian plaza.
- b) Layout – No more than one entry drive per 100 linear feet of frontage should be permitted. A maximum of one parking bay (60 feet) is permitted to the side of a building on any one lot. The layout and organization of the parking areas should follow the requirements set forth in section 6 of the Zoning Bylaw.
- c) Shared Access Drives and Parking – Shared access drives and parking is encouraged wherever appropriate.

2 Interior Landscape

- a) Minimum – Where off-street parking for 20 or more cars is required, a minimum portion of the parking area should be landscaped so that there are landscaped areas within the parking lot and/or immediately adjacent to and within 5 feet of the perimeter of the parking area as a proportion of 24 square feet for each parking space.
- b) Dimensions – The minimum width of each said area should be 6 feet, and the minimum area should be 54 square feet. The required landscaped area need not be contiguous, but it is recommended that no parking space be located more than 90 feet from a landscaped area.
- c) Further Requirements –The plantings should follow the requirements established in the Town's Zoning Bylaw.

3 Parking and Loading Screening and Buffering

- a) Parking Areas – Parking areas should be screened from adjacent buildings with landscaping if they do not serve such adjacent development.
- b) Loading Areas – All commercial loading areas should be screened with combinations of architectural and landscape elements. The

FIGURE 20. Parking Lot Landscaping

Parking lots should be landscaped at the perimeter and within the lots.



combination should appear to be an integrated part of the building architecture and not an adjunct or add-on to the building.

- c) Landscaping – Where screening is intended, a minimum strip of land at least five (5) feet wide should be planted with a mix of evergreen and deciduous shrubs and/or trees suitable to visually screen the development without creating a discernible ‘wall’. Screening plantings should follow the requirements set forth in Section 6.7.8 of the Zoning Bylaw.

F Walls and Fencing

Walls and fencing are critical vertical landscape elements that may be needed for retaining grade or serving as buffering unwanted views.

1 Walls

- a) Materials – Wall construction along primary façades, streets and ways should be composed entirely of stone or a consist of a stem wall with stone veneer with an ashlar pattern. It should also be composed of a color composition that is of a character inherent to New England or consistent with the architecture of buildings on the site.
- b) Height – Walls greater than five feet in height should not be installed, unless they serve as retaining walls. Where a significant grade should be retained, terraced walls are encouraged.



FIGURE 21. The Landscape Context

Native stone retaining walls and other features that are similar to other sites and places in Acton are encouraged.

2 Fencing

- a) Locations – Fencing should not be used between the primary building façades and the street or way that they face. Fencing can

be used to aid in the screening of loading and parking areas from adjacent properties.

- b) Materials – Fencing should be of a material and style that relates to the site architecture. Slatted chainlink fence should not be used.
- c) Height – Fencing height should not exceed six feet.

G Site Lighting

Lighting should be provided to supply the minimum illumination needed for safety and security for vehicles and pedestrians. Parking areas, pedestrian connections and plazas should be lit to an acceptable level without excessive dim or bright zones.

1 Lighting Fixtures

- a) Location – Pedestrian lights should be placed along primary walkways and near parking areas. The location of the light poles should be integrated with other site furniture elements and trees. Lighting should be located or shielded to prevent light from intruding upon adjacent residential uses.
- b) Style – Pedestrian lights should be of a style compatible with the architectural style of nearby buildings and be of appropriate scale with a pedestrian environment. Pedestrian lights should not exceed a maximum of 16 feet in height.
- c) Fixtures – Lighting fixtures should minimize light pollution and be Dark Sky Association compliant. Additionally, direct light emitted by an outdoor light fixture should not emit directly by a lamp, off a reflector or through a refractor above a horizontal plane through the fixture's lowest light-emitting part. The lighting color temperature for light fixtures should not be greater than 4000 kelvin.

2 Light Bollards

- a) Location – Light bollards should be placed along secondary walkways and in close proximity to building entries and plaza areas.
- b) Style – Light bollards should be of a traditional style and with a full or semi cutoff fixture.

H Stormwater Management and Site Design

There are many different methods that can be used to comply with regulations that govern the management of stormwater on a site. Current practices include sustainable, Low Impact Development methods that utilize landscap-

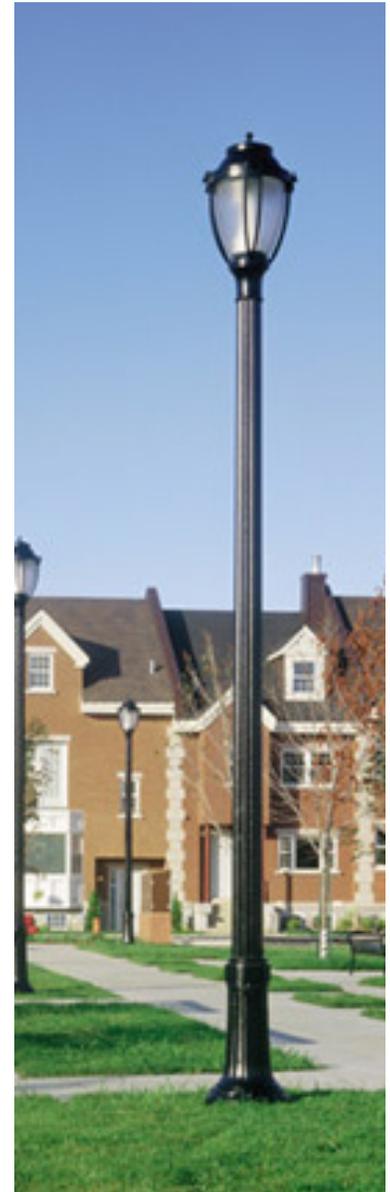


FIGURE 22. Light Fixture Types

Site lighting fixtures should be compatible with the architectural styles on a site and be different from the fixtures on the public streets and ways.

ing, site grading and natural filtration systems to direct, retain and disperse water from buildings, pavement and open spaces. Projects should integrate appropriate stormwater management methods into the overall site design using methods that are consistent with the aesthetic goals for the site, as well as contributing to the environment management of the district.

The Low-Impact Development (LID) approach combines a hydrologically functional site design with pollution prevention measures to compensate for land development impacts on hydrology and water quality. LID site planning strategies and techniques provide the means to achieve stormwater management goals and objectives; facilitate the development of site plans that are adapted to natural topographic constraints; maintain lot yield; maintain site hydrologic functions; and provide for aesthetically pleasing, and often less expensive stormwater management controls. Fundamental LID Site Planning concepts include:

- Using hydrology as the integrating framework
- Management of stormwater in the smallest units possible
- Controlling stormwater at the sources
- Using simple, nonstructural methods wherever possible
- Creating a multifunctional landscape

Specific LID controls called Integrated Management Practices (IMP's) can reduce run-off by integrating stormwater controls throughout the site in many small, discrete units. IMP's are distributed in a small portion of each lot, near the source of impacts, virtually eliminating the need for a centralized best management practice (BMP) facility such as a stormwater management pond. A developed site can be designed as an integral part of the environment maintaining predevelopment hydrologic functions through the careful use of LID control measures. LID can achieve stormwater control through the creation of a hydrologically functional landscape that mimics the natural hydrologic regime by:

- Minimizing stormwater impacts to the extent practicable. Techniques include reducing imperviousness, conserving natural resources and ecosystems, maintaining natural drainage courses, reducing use of pipes, and minimizing clearing and grading.
- Providing runoff storage measures dispersed uniformly throughout a site's landscape with the use of a variety of detention, retention, and runoff practices.
- Maintaining pre-development time of concentration by strategically routing flows to maintain travel time and control the discharge.
- Implementing effective public education programs to encourage property owners to use pollution prevention measures and maintain the on-lot hydrologically functional landscape management practices.

5 RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING

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Density By Design. Wentling, James and Lloyd Bookout. ULI. 1988.

Essential Elements of Sustainable Urban Districts. Cherry, Nathan and Kurt Nagle. Grid/Street/Place: APA Planners Press.

The Illustrated Book of Development Definitions. Moskowitz, Harvey and Carl Lindbloom. Center for Urban Policy Research. 2004.

The Language of Cities & Towns: A Visual Dictionary. Thadani, Dhiru. Rizzoli. 2010.

The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture. Fleming, John and Honour, Hugh and Pevsner, Nikolaus. (Fifth edition), Penguin Books, 2000.

Planning and Urban Design Standards. American Planning Association. . John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2006.

What Style is it? Poppeliers, John, S. Allen Chambers, and Nancy B. Schwartz. Preservation Press: National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C., 1983.

6 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Many traditional terms are used to describe portions of buildings and storefronts. This Glossary has been prepared to explain such terms that are used in these *Guidelines* and which are frequently used in professional design discussions. Where noted, certain terms are taken directly from the Acton *Zoning Bylaw*. For definitions of signage-related terms, refer to the *Zoning Bylaw*, Section 7.2.

- **ARCHITECTURAL STYLE** – The cultural and artistic conventions that are used in the composition of a building and serve to communicate the role and relationship of a building within broadly understood connotations linked to other buildings and the eras in which they are built .
- **ASHLAR** – Pattern composed of stone or resembling stone or cast masonry arranged in rectangular patterns.
- **AWNING** – An element projecting from and supported by the exterior wall of the building, constructed of fabric on a supporting framework, for the purpose of providing shelter or shading windows or doors.
- **BAY** – For façade design, a bay is the expression of an internal structural division of a building in the façade, and is defined by architectural elements such as columns, pilasters, windows, or recessed and projecting masses.
- **CANOPY** – A permanent roof-like shelter extending from and supported by the exterior wall of the building, constructed of some durable material such as metal or glass.
- **CORNICE** – An element at the top edge of a wall where it meets the roof, which usually is profiled to overhang the wall.
- **CLERESTORY** – Generally, a window placed high within the ground floor portion of a building, typically much wider than tall, which admits light into the interior while maintaining privacy from the street. Also refers to a secondary band of windows above large storefront windows, which follow the same pattern of openings.
- **COMPOSITION** – The deliberate arrangement of design elements to meet aesthetic and practical purposes.
- **DORMER** – A roof-covered projection from a sloped roof.
- **ENTABLATURE** – The upper panel of moldings and bands which lie horizontally above columns. Entablatures are important elements of classical architecture. They are a common area to provide the most prominent signage for a building. **Façade** – Any visible side of a building which faces a street or open space.
- **FENESTRATION** – The door and window openings in a building façade.
- **FORMAL** – Design composition having a clear geometrical organization with a significant degree of symmetry and repetition

- **FRONTAGE** – [from Zoning Bylaw] A continuous LOT line along the sideline of a STREET. The sideline of a STREET is defined by the front boundary lines of LOTS along a STREET and not necessarily the pavement edge of a STREET or sidewalk.
- **GABLE** – The vertical surface that connects two or more sloped roofs.
- **INFORMAL** – Design composition with a disparate parts that are not arranged in a highly repetitive or symmetrical manner.
- **LANDSCAPED AREA** – The part or parts of a lot developed and permanently maintained in grass and other plant materials, in which the space is open to the sky and is free of all vehicular traffic, parking, loading and outdoor storage.
- **MANSARD** – A roof with steeply sloping sides, rising to a relatively flat roof at the top.
- **MARQUEE** – Similar to a canopy, but also serves as a location for signage.
- **MASSING** – The overall form of a building.
- **PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED** – Describes the design aspects of sites, buildings or signage in which the views from pedestrian walkways and accommodation of pedestrian access and activities by pedestrians are the primary consideration.
- **PIER** – An upright support for a superstructure, such as an arch or bridge. Specific to facades, it often refers to a raised column-like element used to frame windows or bays.
- **TRANSOM** – A short window or panel above a door that has the same width as the door and has its own frame. Transom windows were traditionally operable, but are more frequently fixed elements in contemporary storefronts and building entrances.
- **SETBACK** – The minimum horizontal distance between the street or way line and the line of the building.
- **SYMMETRICAL** – Having a regular or balanced arrangement of elements on opposite sides of a center or axis.
- **VALANCE** – A valance is the front “skirt” panel of a fabric awning, typically between five and ten inches in height, used to hide the structural panels of the awning. Valances are often used as a surface for simple lettering displaying the name of the associated retail business.
- **VEHICLE-ORIENTED** – Describes the design aspects of sites, buildings or signage for which the views from the public streets and accommodation of vehicles is the primary consideration.

