

**TOWN OF READING
DOWNTOWN SMART GROWTH DISTRICT
DESIGN STANDARDS & GUIDELINES**



October 2, 2009

Approved by DHCD – October 31, 2009

Updated by CPDC December 9, 2019 / February 2020

Approved by DHCD – March 3, 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Purpose
3. Applicability
4. Definitions
5. Application Requirements
6. Guiding Principles
 - 6.1 Neighborhood Character and Historical Context
 - 6.2 Mixed Use Development 6.3 Human Scale Design to Enliven Downtown 6.4 Connectivity and Relationship to Surrounding Neighborhoods
 - 6.5 Streetscape Character and Landscape Elements
 - 6.6 Smart Growth and Sustainable Development
7. Building Design Standards
 - 7.1 Massing
 - 7.2 Appearance
 - 7.3 Entries
 - 7.4 Fenestration
 - 7.5 Materials
8. Site Design Standards
 - 8.1 Sidewalks
 - 8.2 Driveways and Parking
 - 8.3 Landscaping
 - 8.4 Lighting
 - 8.5 Utility Areas and Utilities
 - 8.6 Drainage and Storm Water Management
9. Signage Design Standards
 - 9.1 Exterior Signs
 - 9.2 Primary Storefront Sign
 - 9.3 Storefront Cantilevered Sign
 - 9.4 Awnings
 - 9.5 Prohibited Sign Types

10. Additional Considerations for District Edges and Transitional Areas

10.1 Purpose of Section 10.0

10.2 Definitions

10.3 Applicability

10.4 Design Principles

10.5 Design Considerations for Transitional Areas

1. INTRODUCTION

These Design Standards and Guidelines complement the Town of Reading Zoning Bylaw (ZBL) Section 10.5, and establish the design requirements for development within the Downtown Smart Growth District (DSGD).

2. PURPOSE

The Design Standards and Guidelines include both binding design standards for compliance and non-binding guiding principles. The Design Guidelines shall be used by the CPDC in their review and consideration of development proposals pursuant to ZBL Section 10.5.

3. APPLICABILITY

These Design Standards and Guidelines apply to all proposed development within the Downtown Smart Growth District that is subject to Plan Approval under the provisions of ZBL Section 10.5.

The CPDC, at its discretion, can approve reasonable and justifiable minor deviations from the Design Standards if, in its opinion, such deviations contribute to the goals articulated in Section 6 more effectively than literal compliance with specific requirements. Applicants should clarify how proposed deviations further the goals of the Town as defined by the Guiding Principles.

These Design Standards do not exempt applicants from obtaining all required permits and complying with all applicable building codes, laws, and regulations in force.

4. DEFINITIONS

Definitions in ZBL Section 10.5.2 apply to these Design Standards and Guidelines. Where referenced, the Primary Commercial Streets in the DSGD shall be Main Street, Haven Street and High Street.

5. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Application for development within the District shall comply with the application requirements set forth in the Downtown Smart Growth District Bylaw (Reading Zoning Bylaw Section 10.5) and shall include all information noted below:

- a. Completed application form and application fee.
- b. Development narrative including all uses, breakdown of square footage for each use, number of housing units and zoning summary.
- c. Locus map with lot identification.
- d. Existing site plan, including all existing structures, trees, topography, and easements, prepared by a licensed surveyor.

- e. Certified list of abutters signed by the Town Assessor, including two sets of stamped and addressed envelopes to all abutters.
- f. Photos of adjacent properties and other properties impacted by the development project.
- g. Proposed site plans, indicating project boundaries, building footprints, on-site and remote parking areas (where applicable), drainage, and topography. All plans shall be prepared by a professional engineer.
- h. Proposed architectural plans, including floor plans for all levels including the roof, and building elevations for all sides including courtyards and interior lot elevations. All plans shall be prepared and stamped by a registered architect.
- i. Landscape plan showing existing and proposed landscaping.
- j. Massing perspective sketches or renderings illustrating the key elements of the development proposal within its context
- k. Proposed exterior lighting plan with photometric information
- l. Proposed storm water management plan with rainwater calculations, and O&M Plan.
- m. Parking Plan, including utilization of municipal lots, on-street parking, and shared parking arrangements, detailing on- and/or off-site accommodations to address the parking needs for proposed commercial spaces and employees
- n. Traffic Study that accounts for all recently approved commercial, mixed-use and multi-family housing projects in and within a half-mile radius of the Downtown Smart Growth District
- o. Shadow Studies, if required pursuant to Section 10.5.5 herein
- p. Sample boards and color palettes for all exterior building materials
- q. Evidence that the Development Project complies with the cost and eligibility requirements of Reading Zoning Bylaw Section 10.5.10.
- r. Development Project plans that demonstrate compliance with the design and construction standards of Reading Zoning Bylaw Section 10.5.10.3.
- s. A form of the Affordable Housing Restriction that satisfies the requirements of Reading Zoning Bylaw Section 10.5.10.5.

The documents shall clearly differentiate between existing and proposed work by use of screened lines or color. Changes and revisions to subsequent submittals shall be prominently noted.

6. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

6.1 Neighborhood Character & Historic Context

These Design Standards and Guidelines are intended to serve as a guide to facilitate development that will enhance the character of the downtown. The creative use of forms, materials and unique uses that give vitality to Reading's Downtown is encouraged. Legibility of spaces is especially encouraged to clearly define the public, semi-public, semi-private, and private zones; residential, retail, commercial and public uses; usable open spaces and enclosed building volumes; and vehicular and pedestrian areas.

New development should be compatible with nearby buildings and streetscape patterns, and should be designed to reflect the traditional New England vernacular. The design of buildings within the DSGD should capture this varied approach to design while remaining true to historic New England form. When complete, the DSGD should appear to be a 21st Century New England Village with roots in traditional New England architectural style. Where appropriate, buildings are encouraged to be next to the sidewalk to reinforce the street line. Locating buildings along the street line creates an intimately scaled rhythm of façade features.

In addition, the adaptive reuse of historic buildings is encouraged. Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties should not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material, and when such design is compatible with the surrounding environment. The industrial history of the DSGD as well as the commuter rail station can be considered a suitable source for design inspiration.

6.2 Mixed Use Development

Downtown Reading has historically contained a mix of uses: residential, office, retail, mass-transit, and governmental. The DSGD is envisioned to enhance the historic mix of uses, and to complement the residential land uses in design and scale. New mixed-use development should contribute to the overall mix of uses within the District, support architectural design that marks Reading's identity, and respect existing single-family, 2-family and 3-family residential uses without unduly encroaching upon them.

Mixed use development promotes a neighborhood or community focal point. It further allows for a mix of housing types and sizes that accommodate households of a broad range of ages, sizes, incomes and physical abilities. To encourage creative design and dynamic neighborhoods, housing may be provided adjacent to or above commercial uses such as shops or offices.

New residences, restaurants, and commercial development will bring people to downtown to shop, live, work, and engage in civic and cultural activities. Mixed-use development will add to the employment, residential, commercial and cultural

opportunities that enrich downtown Reading and create the livable and vibrant environs that the “Smart Growth” District is intended to promote.

In the DSGD the Primary Commercial streets shall be Main, Haven, and High.

6.3 Human Scale Design to Enliven Downtown

The DSGD is intended to encourage compact developments in order to promote a more efficient use of land, reduce dependency on vehicles for travel, and reduce the costs of providing public infrastructure and services. Development should be designed for the human scale, accounting for the relationship between the dimensions of the human body and the proportion of traveled ways, public spaces and buildings. Design should consider how various site features relate to the pedestrian, and should include paths and destinations and comfortable seating areas spaced periodically within walking distance of one another. The height of buildings, the design of street lights and signs, sidewalks, and other features should be determined based on what will create a pleasant environment for the pedestrian at the street level.

Individual site design should create identifiable and practical hierarchies among site elements such as building types, uses, landscape and streetscape treatments, and open spaces. Buildings and ground floor uses should be oriented toward the street, and entrances and outdoor amenity spaces are intended to invite and engage the public. Each Development Project should contribute to the successive increase in active and shared outdoor spaces within the DSGD, providing a clear purpose of social and community interaction, and fostering participation in civic activities.

6.4 Connectivity and Relationship to Surrounding Neighborhoods

A primary goal of the DSGD is to provide a broad range of residential housing types at moderate density in or close to the downtown to support local businesses in terms of customers and employment base. Increased density is incorporated in a variety of development forms ranging from townhouses to multi-family buildings and mixed-use developments. These building types and development forms are also intended to provide a positive transitional area for surrounding neighborhoods and to avoid abrupt transitions where possible. Overall site design should account for and include sensible and anticipated architectural transitions between the adjacent property uses. Surrounding neighborhoods should also be protected from unwanted traffic and visual intrusion, and negative impacts to the pace and scale of their environments.

The DSGD should provide an interconnected network of circulation systems that facilitate walking, bicycling, and driving within the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Streets should be designed to establish a satisfactory level of service for vehicular travel, and promote the safe and efficient use of different transportation modes. A connected street pattern should limit the need for dead-end streets in order to create multiple routes for pedestrians, bicyclists, and

motorists. Private networks of sidewalks and bikeways should complement the public street network, and the overall transportation network should invite and encourage pedestrian activity. Streets should be narrow and should incorporate “traffic calming” techniques, such as differentiated paving, smaller turning radii, and/or street trees, to slow traffic speed and promote pedestrian safety. Such measures may include, but not be limited to: signage, streetscape material changes, raised sidewalks and crossings, and access restrictions.

6.5 Streetscape Character and Landscape Elements

A basic principal of design applicable to the DSGD is the inclusion of prominent, attractive gateway treatments. Design should consider the initial visual impression of the site for people driving or walking to and from the DSGD including from Main Street, the downtown core, and surrounding neighborhoods. The street network, sight lines, mix of uses, public spaces, signage, building height, materials, lighting, landscaping, and setbacks/step-backs should be chosen to create and reinforce a specific sense of place for gateway areas.

Landscaping and streetscaping should be arranged in such a way as to act as a unifying element between buildings, sidewalks, streets, pathways and public spaces. Special attention should be given to street trees which in general should be located between the curb and sidewalk and should be continuous except where the design of adjacent public spaces supports an exception.

Overall composition and location of landscaping should complement the scale of a Development Project and its surroundings. In general, larger, well-placed contiguous planting areas are preferred to smaller, disconnected areas. Smaller landscaped areas and open spaces should be integrated throughout a Development Project with an emphasis on functionality.

6.6 Smart Growth and Sustainable Development

Many Smart Growth and Sustainable Development principles are inherent to the overall DSGD, such as pedestrian-oriented design, traditional neighborhood development, and efficiency of building systems. Development Projects should protect and enhance the overall health, natural environment, and quality of life in our community. Both site design and construction of buildings should result in efficient use, reuse, and recycling of resources.

Sustainable construction techniques and materials should be incorporated into new construction in the DSGD. Renovation or adaptive reuse of existing buildings should seek to sensitively improve energy efficiency and reduce water use within building components and systems. Low Impact Development (LID) techniques are encouraged, where possible and as is practical, to reduce the concentration of stormwater runoff and maintain existing stormwater flows, reuse roof drainage, and minimize runoff from hardscaped areas.

The Town of Reading supports design and planning approaches that adhere to the principles of Smart Growth and Sustainability and offer measurable long-term

benefits. The CPDC will highly favor projects that intend to seek certification under, or that strive to achieve the goals of, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System and the LEED-Neighborhood Development Rating System.

In addition, the CPDC encourages applicants and property owners to work cooperatively to pursue “creative re-parcelization” where it would benefit the overall success of the downtown. This could include assembly of multiple parcels into single ownership, forming a partnership between multiple landowners, and land swaps between landowners, including the Town.

7. BUILDING DESIGN STANDARDS

7.1 Massing

7.1.1 Front Façade Setback

A minimum of 60% of front facades at ground level shall be located at the minimum setback line to reinforce the street line. When the space between the façade and setback line is specifically designed for pedestrian uses, such as outdoor dining, the maximum setback shall be permitted. Stepped back portions of the front façade at ground level are encouraged to articulate entries and provide variety.

7.1.1.1 – The 60% of front facades located at the minimum setback line does not need to be continuous and can be an aggregate total.

7.1.1.2 – Stepped back portions do not need to be under cover of the upper level floors.

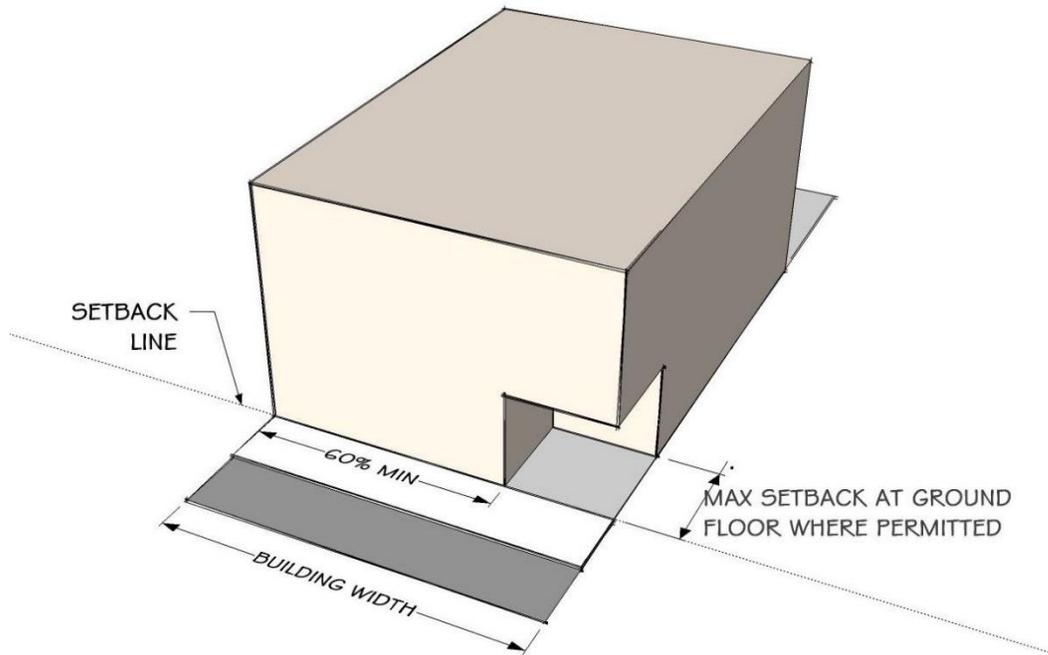


Figure 7.1.1 Front Façade Setback

7.1.1.3 This requirement may be waived for the appropriate ground level uses and building design.

7.1.2 Building Step-Back Requirements

The front and rear facades of four-story buildings shall step back a minimum of five (5) feet from the primary building face at either the second or fourth floor levels over 50% of their length (Diagrams A and B below), or alternative strategies for scaling the building height to the pedestrian must be offered. Where buildings are directly abutting a Residential District, the side yard or rear yard step-back shall be such that the maximum building envelope is bounded by a line projected from the property line at a 2 to 1 ratio (63.4°) (Diagram C below). Where buildings are directly abutting a single-family, 2-family or 3-family residential use, the side yard or rear yard step-back shall be at the 2nd or 3rd floor and shall be a minimum of ten (10) feet (Diagram D below).

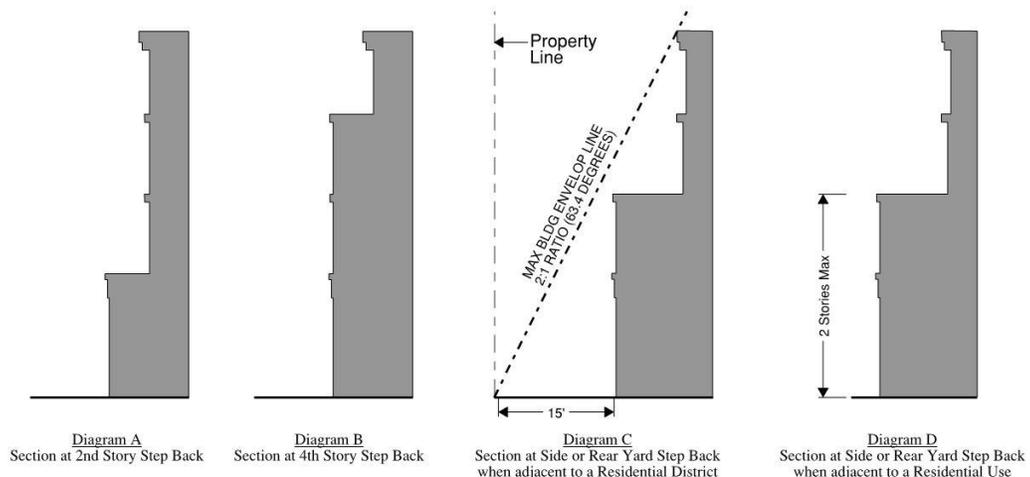


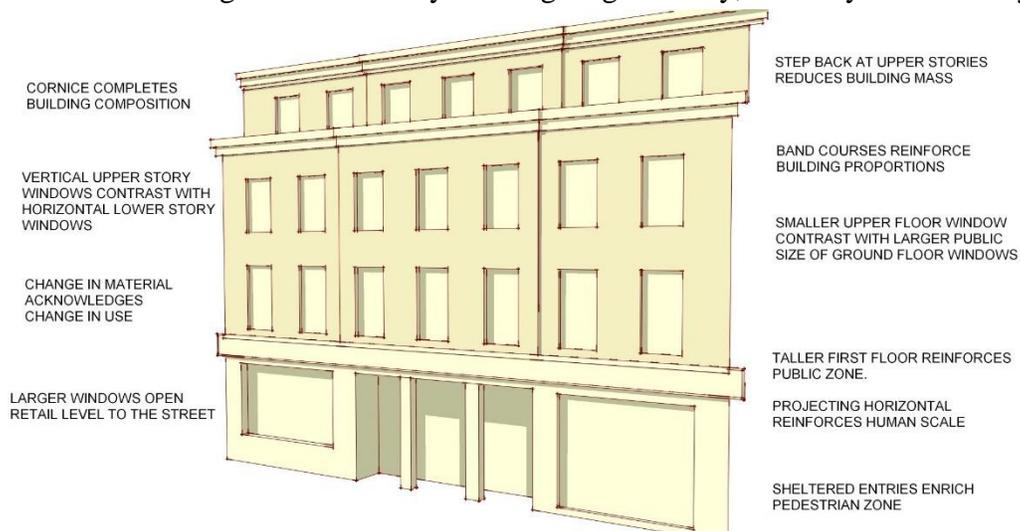
Figure 7.1.2 Building Step-Back Requirements

7.1.3 Mixed use buildings shall use proportions – a dominant horizontality for commercial, and a dominant verticality for residential – to give legibility to building uses.

7.1.4 Special functions with public significance such as theaters, educational uses, and exhibition spaces, shall be differentiated in form to articulate their role in the downtown environment.

7.2 Appearance

7.2.1 Projecting bays, recesses, and cornices are encouraged at all floor levels to define proportions noted above. Building façades over 40’ in length are required to have a change in plane articulated by projecting or recessed bays, balconies, or setbacks. Building facades directly abutting single-family, 2-family and 3-family



residential uses shall incorporate elements with proportions appropriate to the scale of the neighborhood.

Figure 7.2.1

7.2.2 Horizontal elements such as belt courses, projecting cornices, canopies, and step backs should be combined with vertical elements such as recesses, projecting bays, parapets and vertically aligned windows, to create facades that may evoke but do not imitate the historic buildings of Reading. Projected elements 2 feet and less may be located within the setback areas. Projections into the public right-of-way shall comply with the requirements of the Massachusetts State Building Code 780 CMR.

7.2.3 Façade elements shall continue around to all sides of buildings visible from the street, and, as appropriate, to all sides of buildings that face directly abutting single-family, 2-family and 3-family residential uses. Elements can be simplified at the rear of buildings to clarify a front/back hierarchy.

7.2.4 Rooftop mechanical equipment shall be set back from building facades so that it is not visible from street views or directly abutting residential properties, screened from view behind parapets or enclosed within architectural elements that integrate it into the building design. Screening elements shall incorporate sound control devices or construction that mitigates equipment noise. Roofs shall not be visible from street views, except that mansard roofs may be used at the top floor of three- or four-story buildings, and sloped roofs shall be permitted for residential-only projects. For any building, the roof shall not exceed the walls in respective visible proportion from the street views.

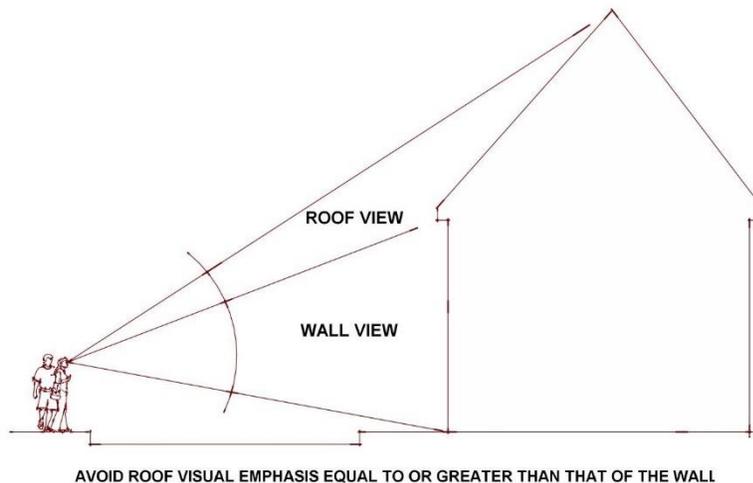


Figure 7.2.4

7.2.5 Existing building facades with architectural significance are to be incorporated into new construction wherever feasible. Protected buildings can be changed only with the approval of the Reading Historical Commission.

7.2.6 Franchise Architecture, distinctive building design that is trademarked or identified with a particular chain or corporation and is generic in nature, shall not be allowed in the DSGD. To maintain the unique character of Downtown Reading, buildings shall not be branded using an architectural style of a company. Franchises or national chains may adapt their architectural style to follow these Design Standards and Guidelines, to create a building that is compatible with Downtown Reading.

7.3 Entries

7.3.1 Entries are to be clearly articulated with projecting canopies or recesses for convenience, way-finding, and to activate the street front and pedestrian spaces. Residential and commercial entries shall be separated as required in ZBL Section 10.5.



ENTRANCES CLEARLY ARTICULATED AND DIFFERENTIATED

Figure 7.3.1

7.3.2 Retail and commercial entries shall face a public sidewalk and be primarily transparent to reinforce the public nature of the ground floor uses. They shall be flanked by primarily transparent façade elements to reinforce this perception.

7.3.3 Lighting and signage shall be integrated into the entry design to reinforce the public nature of the entry.

7.3.4 Entries to upper floor residential and commercial uses are encouraged on commercial streets, but shall not interrupt the perceived continuity of the commercial streetscape.

7.4 Fenestration

7.4.1 Fenestration shall reinforce the dominant horizontality for commercial uses and dominant verticality for residential uses to give legibility to different uses.



Figure 7.4.1

7.4.2 Ground floor commercial and retail uses shall be a minimum of 60% glass. The view into the first floor commercial or retail windows shall be maintained with a view into the sales floor or seating area. View windows shall

not be blocked. Merchandise displays shall not include full-height backdrops that block the view.

Transom windows above view windows and doors are encouraged. Upper floor residential and commercial uses shall be differentiated from the public nature of the street-front uses. Glass shall be clear, or reflective only to the extent that such reflectivity reduces interior heat. Mirror glass is not permitted. No appliques or other such deliberate screening shall be permitted. Signage on glass shall be as permitted in Section 9.

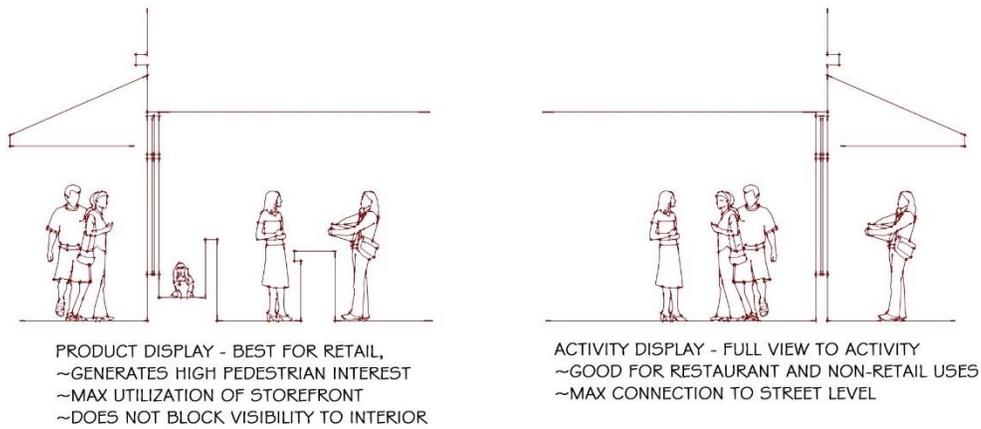


Figure 7.4.2

7.4.3 Protecting ground floor fenestration and defining commercial street fronts with overhanging awnings or canopies is encouraged. Operable windows and doors onto balconies and terraces at upper floor uses are encouraged.



Figure 7.4.3

7.5 Materials

7.5.1 Allowed exterior finishes include, but are not limited to: brick, stone, cast stone or other finished masonry, cementitious panels, glass, metal, wood, and cellular PVC trim.

7.5.2 Prohibited materials include vinyl siding and EIFS, although these materials may be used on facades not visible from the primary commercial streets or from directly abutting single-family, 2-family and 3-family residential uses, provided such materials are detailed and installed in such a manner as to be consistent with the intent of these Design Standards and Guidelines.

7.5.3 Changes in materials are encouraged to reinforce the massing requirements noted above. When changes in materials or colors occur, they shall articulate the difference between public and private uses, upper floors and lower floors.

7.5.4 Materials shall continue around to all sides of buildings, which are visible from the street, public parking areas or from directly abutting single-family, 2-family and 3-family residential uses. Elements can be simplified at the rear of buildings to clarify a front/back hierarchy.

7.5.5 Blank facades are not permitted. Changes in material, which are accompanied by a change in plane, vertical and / or horizontal elements shall be used to provide a pedestrian scale in areas where windows and doors are not functionally required.

8. SITE DESIGN STANDARDS

8.1 Sidewalks

8.1.1 New sidewalks shall not interrupt the continuity of existing sidewalk materials and dimensions. However, recessed entries and widened sidewalks devoted to outdoor uses, such as dining, can receive special materials and articulation that give spatial definition to these functions.

8.1.2 Amenities that increase the comfort of pedestrian movement along sidewalks such as lighting, projecting canopies, and street trees, are required.

8.1.3 Usable open spaces adjoining sidewalks that create activated pedestrian areas for dining, farmers markets, etc., are encouraged, especially those in the vicinity of public uses such as the commuter rail station.

8.1.4 Improvements to adjacent crosswalks, curbing and sidewalks to accommodate increased pedestrian activity associated with new developments are encouraged.

8.2 Driveways and Parking

8.2.1 Driveways and loading zones shall not interrupt the continuity of sidewalks and pedestrian spaces. Curb cuts shall be located away from the primary commercial streets whenever possible, preferably on side streets and alleys.

8.2.2 Parking lots shall not face primary commercial streets or be located in front of buildings. Whenever possible, parking areas should be located under or behind buildings; however, consideration and sensitivity shall be given and mitigation made for adverse visual impacts upon directly abutting single-family, 2-family and 3-family residential uses.

8.2.3 Parking lots behind buildings shall be aggregated across property lines wherever possible to maximize the efficiency of the paved space and minimize the number of curb cuts and driveways.

8.2.4 Below grade parking is encouraged, especially where existing changes in grade make on-grade access possible while allowing economical structuring of buildings above. Ramping must be incorporated within the building envelope or below grade, or along a side or rear yard setback.

8.2.5 Parking areas and loading zones that face directly abutting single-family, 2-family and 3-family residential uses shall be screened from view by fencing, plantings or both and conform to landscaping requirements in paragraph 8.3 below.

8.2.6 Shared parking plans for proposed developments shall be developed in cooperation with the Town of Reading and shall be compatible with the Town's parking policy.

8.2.7 All parking areas and driveways must be designed to maximize pedestrian and vehicular safety. No driveways are to be located within 50' of an intersection unless a waiver is granted by the Select Board.

8.3 Landscaping

8.3.1 Providing street trees that continue the planting plan established by the Town of Reading is encouraged.

8.3.2 Landscaping at retail frontages should be minimal and not interfere with the connection between the sidewalk and interior uses. Landscaping to define commercial entries or outdoor dining areas shall not interfere with the continuity of the sidewalks. Landscaping to define residential entries shall not compete with or overwhelm the continuity of the retail frontages.

8.3.3 Landscaping in surface parking areas is required – one tree in a minimum 50 square foot planting area for every 5 cars. Landscaping to buffer surface parking lots from directly abutting single-family, 2-family or 3-family residential uses is required.

8.3.4 Landscaping that creates usable public open space, or continues existing public open space, is encouraged, providing it does not interrupt the continuity of retail frontages or disengage buildings from the sidewalk in commercial areas.

8.3.5 Wherever possible plantings shall be native species that require minimal irrigation and fertilizer. Planting of invasive species is prohibited.

8.3.6 When feasible, healthy existing trees with a minimum 6" caliper and large canopy shall be preserved.

8.4 Lighting

8.4.1 Façade lighting and architectural lighting shall articulate building uses and entries and reinforce the public nature of the sidewalk and building frontage.

8.4.2 Lighting along street fronts shall reinforce rather than compete with the continuity of the Town's street lighting. If the sidewalk includes street trees, streetlights shall be located between the trees so that the tree canopy does not interfere with illumination coverage.

8.4.3 Lighting in parking areas and at the side and rear of buildings should be designed to cut off light at the property line.

8.4.4 Lighting should contribute to public safety by lighting entries, exits, and adjacent open spaces, as appropriate.

8.4.5 Lighting incorporated into signage, or illuminating signage, must conform to the sign requirements of the ZBL.

8.4.6 All lighting shall be oriented downward and otherwise conform to “dark skies” standards. Uplighting is permitted to light a primary entrance when the light fixture is mounted under an architectural element (e.g. roof, cornice, walkway, entryway or overhanging non-translucent eaves) so that the uplight is captured.

8.4.7 Light poles and light fixtures shall be no higher than 15’ above grade.

8.4.8 Lighting for commercial uses shall be designed to shut off at the close of business. At the discretion of the CPDC, lighting along Primary Commercial Streets may be on longer in order to activate the streetscape.

8.4.9 Prohibited lighting includes neon or other edge-glowing sources, mercury vapor, low pressure sodium, high pressure sodium, searchlights, and flashing or changing light sources.

8.5 Utility Areas and Utilities

8.5.1 Dumpsters, mechanical equipment and utility meters shall be located in low visibility areas and areas that minimize the impact to directly abutting single-family, 2-family, and 3-family residential uses, and shall not interrupt the continuity of the sidewalk and building facades.

8.5.2 When dumpsters and mechanical equipment cannot be located within buildings they shall be screened by elements compatible with the architecture of the building.

8.5.3 Where possible and feasible, shared loading areas, dumpsters, and mechanical equipment shall be incorporated into the design.

8.5.4 No above ground electrical lines or utility cables will be permitted.

8.5.5 Burial of overhead utility lines adjacent to new development will be required.

8.6 Drainage and Stormwater Management

8.6.1 Stormwater management systems shall incorporate “Best Management Practices” (BMPs) as prescribed by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, in addition to employing Low Impact Development (LID) strategies. BMP/LID means and methods should be carefully integrated within the site design approach with the goals of decentralizing stormwater

management systems to the greatest extent practicable and minimizing the environmental impacts of the new development. The specific goals of the BMP/LID measures should be mitigation of post-development downstream impacts and achieving the highest level of water quality for all storm water runoff.

8.6.2 Systems and the designed approach for stormwater management should include elements such as infiltration chambers, landscaped swales, vegetated rain-gardens, infiltration trenches, dry-wells, permeable pavement and other runoff controlling features that in combination serve to achieve BMP/LID goals.

8.6.3 A Stormwater Operations and Maintenance Plan shall be submitted *at the time of application* for all Development Projects to ensure compliance with the District By-Law. The plan shall include a map of the proposed system, and shall specify the parties responsible for the system, easements required, and a schedule for maintenance tasks.

8.6.4 All water from roofs and paved areas shall be retained on site, where possible, and recharged into the ground, or incorporated into a recovery system for use as on-site irrigation, graywater flushing, etc.

8.6.5 Pervious paving is recommended, along with landscaping and pervious landscaped areas.

8.6.6 Sites shall be graded as necessary to prevent ponding of water.

9. SIGNAGE DESIGN STANDARDS

9.1 Exterior Signs

9.1.1 Signage shall be provided to identify residential and non-residential uses. Signs shall be made of natural materials or have a natural appearance.

9.1.2 A residential-only development or the residential component of a mixed-use development project shall be permitted one sign at each principal entrance to the site. The sign shall identify the name and address of the development and shall not exceed 16 square feet.

9.1.3 Each mixed-use development project in the District may include a primary storefront sign, a storefront cantilevered sign, a display window sign and an awning, or some combination thereof.

9.1.4 Signs on buildings should not obstruct elements such as cornices, arches, lintels, pediments, windows, pilasters, etc.

9.1.5 Signs in the District should be designed primarily to be visible to pedestrians or slow-moving vehicular traffic. Wording should be kept to a minimum and the use of logos is encouraged.

9.1.6 No sign-maker labels or other identification (including UL label), are permitted on the exposed surfaces of signs, except as may be required by the building code. If required, such labels or other identification shall be in an inconspicuous location.

9.1.7 Awnings that are used to provide signage should be standardized by height above grade, type, size, materials, colors, illumination and method of installation, across the building façade and within the block to the largest extent practical.

9.2 Primary Storefront Sign

9.2.1 A primary storefront sign shall be located within a sign band beginning approximately 8 to 15 feet above the finish floor level. When a tenant has elevations fronting on different sides of a building, the tenant may have a primary storefront sign on each façade. Wall signs in multi-tenanted buildings shall be placed within the same sign band. The placement of wall signs on individual buildings shall respect the sign band on adjacent buildings.

9.2.2 The total sign area for the primary storefront sign shall not contain more than two square feet of sign area for each linear foot of storefront. Sign area shall be calculated by creating a box around the main body of the primary sign. The storefront lease line width multiplied by two equals the maximum sign area in square feet, and may not exceed 75 square feet.

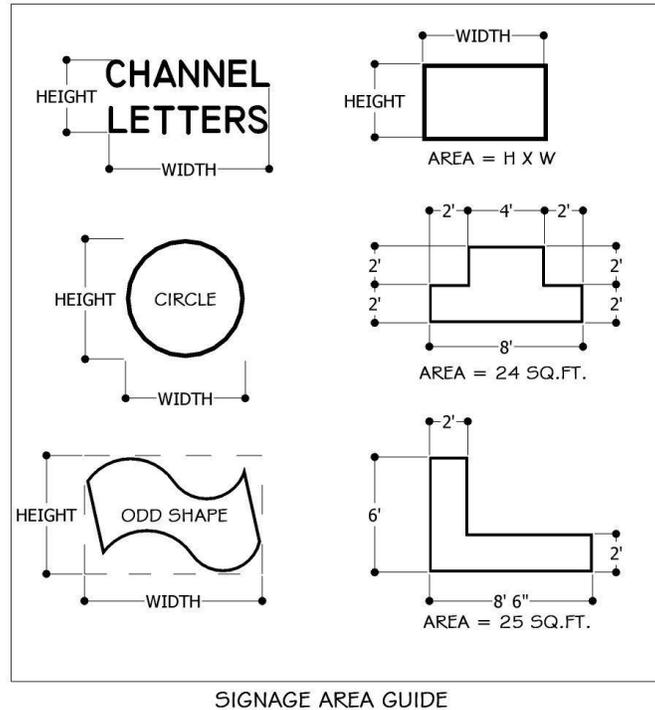


Figure 9.2.2

9.2.3 Signage above the sills of the second story windows shall be confined to painted or applied letters on the window glass, provided that such signs advertise the organizations therein. Signage is not permitted on continuous, horizontal “curtainwall” type windows in upper stories.

9.3 Storefront Cantilevered Sign

9.3.1 Each tenant will be allowed to construct and install a cantilevered (“blade sign”), installed perpendicular to the building façade, not in excess of eight (8) square feet as measured on one face of the sign. Any such storefront cantilevered sign shall not count toward the total allowable area of signage on a single façade.

9.3.2 One storefront cantilevered sign will be allowed per tenant on each elevation of a building with a customer entrance. The sign shall be attached to the tenant storefront at a minimum 8’ 6” above finish floor level.

9.3.3 Each storefront cantilevered sign may be externally illuminated with two integrated lights (one light on each sign face or panel). The sign may be square,

round, elliptical or other shape. Complex shapes and three-dimensional letters or figures are encouraged. Formed plastic, injection molded plastic, and internally illuminated panels are prohibited.

9.3.4 Signs on the inside or outside surface of display windows may be permitted provided, however, that such signage shall not cover more than ten percent (10%) of the display window area and shall be lighted only by building illumination (white, non-flashing).

9.4 Awnings

9.4.1 Awnings shall be made of fire resistant, water repellent marine fabric (e.g. canvas) or may be constructed of metal or glass. Vinyl or vinyl-coated awning fabric will not be permitted.

9.4.2 Patterns, graphics and stripes are encouraged.

9.4.3 Continuous, uninterrupted awning spans are not permitted. Fixed awnings shall not span numerous bays, windows or store fronts. The awnings should be harmonious with one another and should delineate storefronts on a multi-tenant building.

9.4.4 Internally illuminated awnings are not permitted, except that down lighting that is intended to illuminate the sidewalk may be provided under the awning. All lighting under a canopy shall be cutoff or recessed, with no lens dropping below the horizontal plane of the canopy. The light source shall not illuminate or cause the awning to “glow”.

9.5 Prohibited Sign Types

The following sign types are prohibited in the DSGD:

9.5.1 Signs employing luminous plastic letters are prohibited.

9.5.2 Signs or lights that move, change, flash, or make noise are prohibited. Such prohibition shall include commercial balloon devices, high powered search lights and signage expressed or portrayed by emitted light, digital display or liquid crystal display. Where permitted, indicators of time or temperature may move.

9.5.3 Box style cabinet signs or “can” signs are prohibited, whether internally illuminated or not.

9.5.4 Signs utilizing paper, cardboard, Styrofoam, stickers or decals hung around, on or behind storefronts, or applied to or located behind the storefront glazing are prohibited.

9.5.5 Any imitation of official traffic signs or signals, or use of such words as “Stop,” “Look,” “Danger,” “Slow,” “Caution,” or “Warning” is prohibited.

9.5.6 No red or green lights or any lighting effect utilizing such colors may be used on any sign if, in the opinion of the Chief of Police, such light or lighting would create a hazard to the operation of motor vehicles.

9.5.7 Directories shall not be located outside of the buildings.

9.5.8 Roof, pole or pylon signs are prohibited.

9.5.9 Inflatable figures and/or signs are prohibited, whether movable or stationary.

10.0 ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DISTRICT EDGES & TRANSITIONAL AREAS

10.1 Purpose of Section 10.0

The purpose of Section 10.0 is to outline a set of conditions that capture a given area at a given time in order to allow neighborhoods to change, and to provide flexibility for developments to adapt to contextual changes while also giving consideration to existing single-family, 2-family and 3-family residential uses and historic sites in the downtown and on the District edges. Section 10.0 sets forth Guiding Principles for such consideration where these distinct and unique neighborhood conditions exist.

10.2 Definitions

District Edge: the outermost edge of the Downtown Smart Growth District, where it is directly abutting another building lot and not bounded by a significant man-made (i.e. railroad, major street) or natural (i.e. river, wetland resource) feature.

Transitional Area: a site proposed for development or redevelopment under Chapter 40R that meets any of the following criteria: (1) is located at the District Edge, (2) is directly abutting a lot containing a historic or cultural resource listed on the Town of Reading's Historical and Architectural Inventory, or (3) is directly abutting a lot containing a single-family, 2-family or 3-family dwelling, either within or outside of the District.

10.3 Applicability

The Guiding Principles outlined in this Section supplement those in Section 6 and should be taken into consideration – in parts or as a whole based on overall project design and context – whenever any proposed development or redevelopment site is located at the District Edge and/or can be considered a Transitional Area. Guiding Principles identify the Town's goals and aspirations for the District and are intended to provide focus to a Project's planning and design. To the extent these Guiding Principles include binding Design Standards, such standards are indicated by the word "shall".

10.4 Design Principles

10.4.1 Building height shall be measured from the pre-development site grade.

10.4.2 Proposed setbacks, step backs and façade treatments should address directly abutting properties.

10.4.3 Massing and scale should be complementary to nearby buildings, should reinforce the compatibility and relationship between structures, and should be harmonious with the nearby architectural character.

10.4.4 Buildings shall be no greater than 80' in length without a physical or material break to allow for light and views. On blocks with a variety of uses, building heights, and setbacks, buildings shall be designed to foster a repetition of existing streetscape patterns (i.e., solid-void-solid-void).

10.4.5 The proposed use should consider the impact of all vehicular circulation, including but not limited to occupant parking, fire and safety apparatus, loading and deliveries, and employee and customer vehicles. Functional elements should be located so as to ensure safety, provide sufficient clearances, minimize disruption to traffic patterns and respect the privacy of abutters.

10.5 Design Considerations for Transitional Areas

10.5.1 If directly abutting a historic structure or structure with a significant design feature, then consideration should be given for the preservation of views and the visual prominence of said structure or feature.

10.5.2 If directly abutting a single-family, 2-family or 3-family residential use, then consideration should be given for locating the majority of the proposed density of the project away from said residential use.

10.5.3 If directly abutting a single-family, 2-family or 3-family residential use, then consideration should be given for how the project can address and engage the existing residential fabric (i.e., comparable materials, complimentary architectural typologies, inviting landscaping, etc.).

10.5.4 If directly abutting a single-family, 2-family or 3-family residential use, then consideration should be given for how the project can be sensitively screened or buffered from the existing residential fabric in order to protect the privacy of abutters (i.e., a combination of setbacks, step backs, landscaping, etc.).

10.5.5 If directly abutting a single-family, 2-family or 3-family residential use, then consideration should be given to shadows, and the applicant shall submit stamped and sealed shadow studies. Projects should be designed so that no building casts an unacceptable shadow on an existing single-family, 2-family or 3-family residential use. In addition, shadows cast on public spaces, such as sidewalks and parks, should be kept to a minimum.

10.5.6 If directly abutting a single-family, 2-family or 3-family residential use, then consideration should be given to noise from mechanical systems, and abatement measures such as landscape buffers shall be incorporated into the design of the minimum required setback.