



City of Concord  
New Hampshire's  
Capital City



# Main Street Design Guide

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## Purpose and Applicability

Concord's Main Street—sometimes referred to as New Hampshire's Main Street—underwent a transformation in 2015-16. The city received a USDOT TIGER grant, a highly competitive federal grant that funds transportation projects that improve safety, livability, sustainability and the local economy, to reconstruct the street.

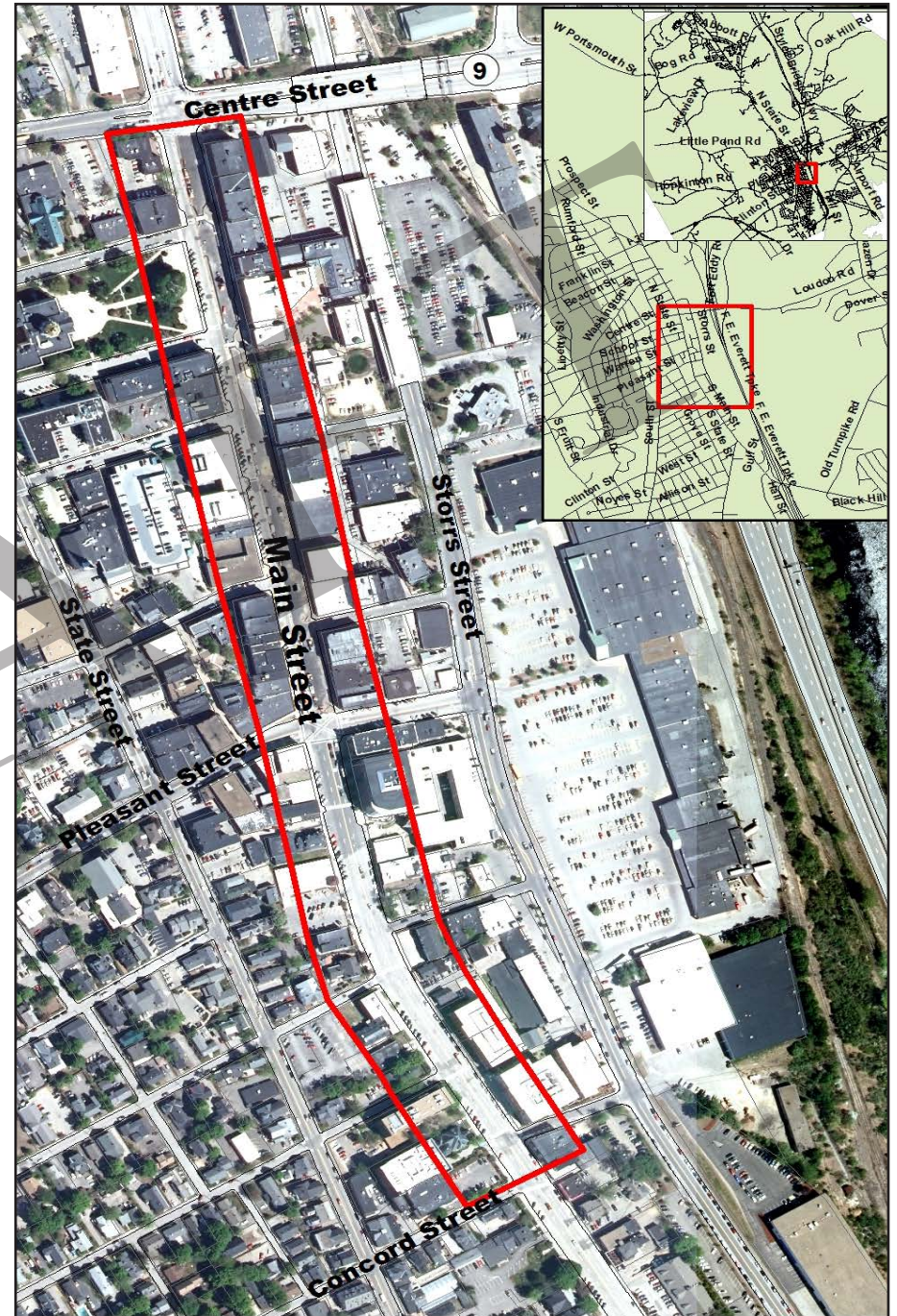
With the input of numerous community and business members, Main Street was redesigned. The project reduced traffic from four lanes to two, widened sidewalks and added pedestrian lighting, landscape features, street furniture and public art. It also provided much needed space for outdoor dining, gathering and community based activities, as well as full access to most storefronts along the street. Overwhelmingly successful, Concord's transformed Main Street has led to increased activity and vibrancy, and the project has received multiple state and national awards.

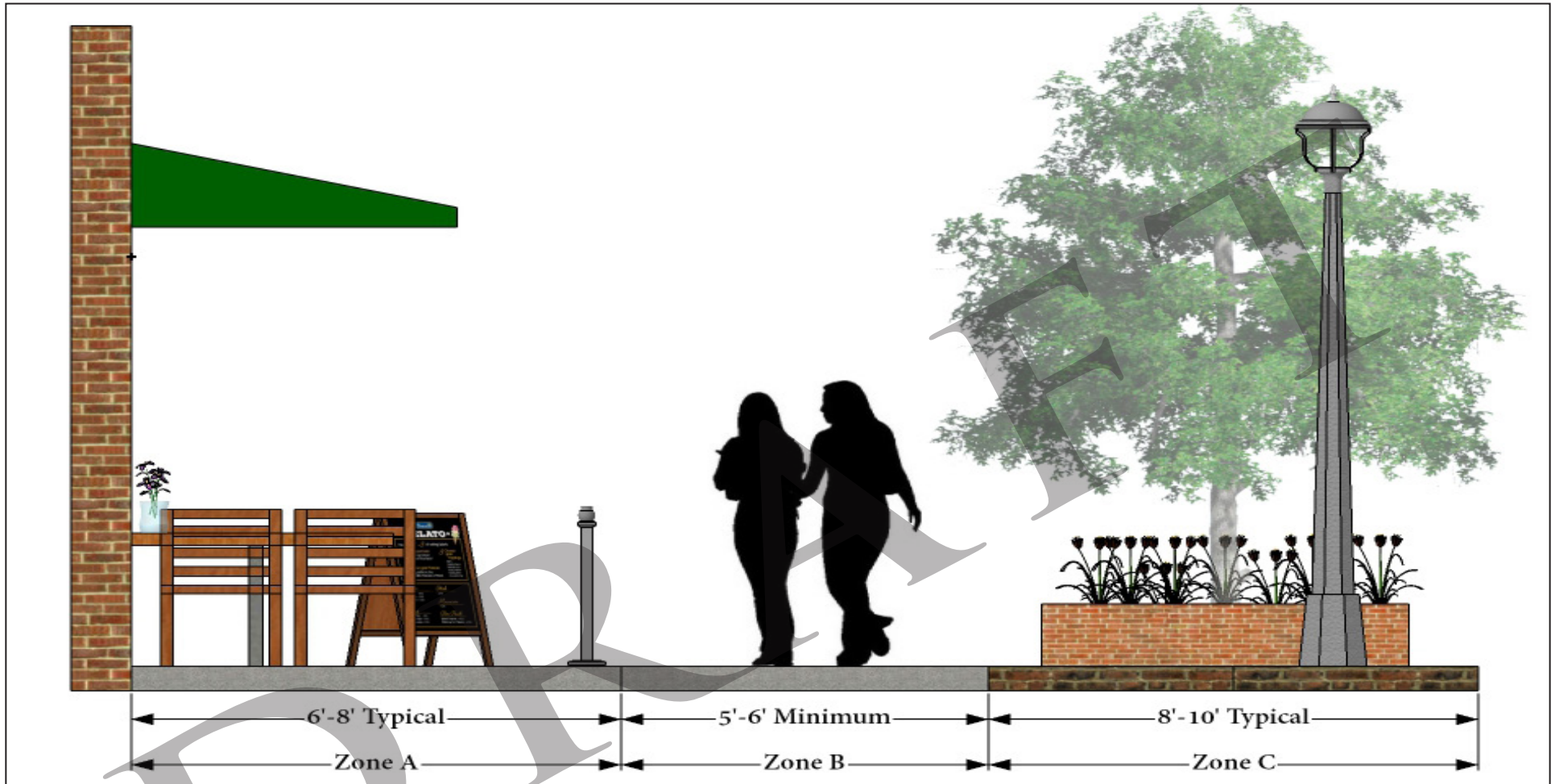
Because Downtown Concord is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, design decisions for the transformation were solidly rooted in Main Street's heritage. Permanent elements, such as paving materials, street lights and planters, reflect the street's character during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, while less permanent features, such as benches, bike racks and trash receptacles, add a contemporary flair. The completed project preserves and enhances Main Street's historic appearance.

This guide is intended to coordinate the use of Main Street's sidewalks by businesses and pedestrians and offers standards to ensure the ADA accessibility goals of the Main Street project are maintained. It also provides guidance to applicants regarding signs, awnings and other overhangs, lighting, public art and spaces, alterations to existing buildings and design of new buildings. Finally, the guidelines are framed to ensure changes to Main Street are made without adversely impacting its distinctive architecture and character.

The guide is for property owners, business owners and other tenants, citizens and the Design Review Committee, an arm of the Planning Board that reviews and makes recommendations to the Board on proposals to renovate buildings, install signs and undertake site work within the Central Business Performance District (CBP). The guide will be used in conjunction with Concord's Architectural Design Guidelines and other city standards.

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**ZONE A.**

The area immediately adjacent to the building is Zone A. It can be used for planters, sandwich boards, seating, and outdoor dining amenities, including but not limited to tables, chairs, stanchions, heating elements, and umbrellas.

The width of Zone A can vary, though it typically extends anywhere from 4 to 10 feet from the building. It is limited by the minimum width requirement for Zone B. For most of Main Street, Zone B is defined by the concrete sidewalk sections, which are either 5 or 6 feet in width. The remaining area is Zone A.

**ZONE B: PEDESTRIAN ZONE.**

Zone B is a linear path intended to comfortably accommodate the movement of pedestrians. It should allow the unimpeded passage of two wheelchairs from opposite directions.

Zone B should be maintained as a pedestrian clear zone a minimum of 6 feet in width where the concrete pavement section is 6 feet, and not less than 5 feet in width where the pavement section is 5 feet, or where there is no pavement section. It should remain unobstructed by signs, outdoor dining, planters, fencing, or any other streetscape amenity.

**ZONE C.**

The area adjacent to the street edge is Zone C. It accommodates public amenities such as benches, street trees, street lights, bike racks, transit facilities, and other street furniture.

Zone C is defined, for the most part, by the edge of the brick pavers, though it blends in some areas with Zone B where no pavers are utilized. Zone C is typically 8 to 10 feet in width but may narrow to as little as 3 feet in some areas. See the following page for guidelines on the appropriate use of Zone C for outdoor dining and signage.

## Private Use of Zone C



Tables and chairs located in Zone C, clear of the pedestrian clear zone and public amenities.



Planters appropriately placed in Zone C without hindering access to the public bench.

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Although Zones are not clearly delineated with paving patterns, dining areas are arranged to avoid encroaching on the pedestrian clear zone or public seating areas.



Pedestrians must walk around the dining area; the pedestrian zone is blocked with a chain, while the alternate route is also blocked with a sandwich board.

### Guidelines

- 5.1 Zone C is typically defined by the brick pavers adjacent to the street edge. Its primary purpose is to accommodate public amenities such as benches, street trees, street lights, bike racks, public art, transit facilities, waste receptacles, wayfinding signage, parking kiosks and other street furniture.
- 5.2 Private business amenities including tables, chairs, planters, and sandwich boards, may be located in Zone C if a 3-foot clear zone can be provided around the public amenities cited above, including future installations of static or performance art, as indicated on the Public Art location map in Appendix A.
- 5.3 No private business amenity should encroach on the minimum 5 to 6 foot pedestrian clear zone of Zone B as defined on page 3.
- 5.4 Other than sandwich boards, no private signage should be placed in Zone C. No signage is permitted in City planters or on City benches.
- 5.5 Private amenities located in the right-of-way must obtain a license from the City.

## Outdoor Dining



Outdoor dining is arranged to allow a linear 5 foot wide pedestrian clear zone and provides attractive, quality amenities.



Bright colors provide visual interest and a playful character; seating is also provided for children.



Outdoor dining enclosure utilizes quality materials, creates a sense of privacy with planters, has substantial base plates for stability, and takes up minimal space.



The outdoor dining area blocks the pedestrian clear zone, too many features create visual clutter, and crowding of the dining area detracts from other users.

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### Guidelines

- 6.1 Outdoor dining amenities, including tables, chairs, planters, signage, stanchions, and any other amenity intended to serve restaurant patrons or delineate an outdoor dining area, may be located in Zones A or C, provided a license has been obtained from the City.
- 6.2 Outdoor dining areas should maintain Zone B as a linear pedestrian clear zone, as defined on page 3, clear of any encroachments.
- 6.3 Outdoor dining amenities should be durable, of quality materials, and designed for outdoor use. Tables, chairs, and umbrellas should be visually appealing and welcoming features of the streetscape.
- 6.4 Picnic tables, including tables with attached seating, should not be permitted in the right of way.
- 6.5 Outdoor dining areas should be well maintained by the business owner. The sidewalk and any affected public amenities should be kept clean and free of food related debris.
- 6.6 To be sensitive to those with sight or mobility impairments, umbrellas should not protrude into the pedestrian clear zone.

## Planters



Planters are out of the way, and provide an attractive colorful feature along the streetscape.



Planter is located in the recessed portion of the frontage, out of the way of the pedestrian pathway, and enhances the store entrance.



Large planters enhance the streetscape without obstructing the pedestrian pathway or other streetscape amenities.



Planters are blocking access to the public benches and impeding circulation around them. They are also creating an awkward space that is unlikely to be used.

### Guidelines

- 7.1 Planters are encouraged as they add color and provide visual interest around storefronts, street furniture, and along the edges of walkways.
- 7.2 Planters should be in scale with the streetscape.
- 7.3 Planters are permitted in Zone A or Zone C, out of the pedestrian clear zone. They should not obstruct access to any streetscape amenity including, but not limited to, benches, bike racks, parking kiosks, and trash receptacles.
- 7.4 Planters can be used to delineate an outdoor dining area provided they do not encroach on the pedestrian clear zone or obstruct any streetscape amenity.
- 7.5 Planters should be attractively maintained with vegetation, and cleared out at the end of the season. Temporary planters should be removed at the end of the season.
- 7.6 Signs are not permitted in any public or private planter or planting bed.

## Sandwich Boards



Sign is appropriately located in Zone C, leaving the pedestrian path clear and unobstructed.



Playful and colorful sign is located correctly, out of the pedestrian clear path



Signs are placed tight against the building keeping the pedestrian zone clear, even though there is no clearly defined boundary indicated by the paving or Zone A.



Sign is placed in the middle of the pedestrian clear zone, blocking free movement and creating an uncomfortable pedestrian space.

### Guidelines

- 8.1 Sandwich boards can direct potential customers into businesses, communicate services and specials, and add visual interest to the streetscape, provided they don't clutter the public space or block the pedestrian clear path.
- 8.2 Sandwich boards should be located in Zone C, typically delineated by brick pavers, or Zone A, tight against the building, and should not encroach on the minimum 5 to 6 foot pedestrian clear zone.
- 8.3 Sandwich boards should not exceed 4 feet in height or 3 feet in width. They should utilize quality materials such as wood or metal where possible.
- 8.4 One sandwich board should be permitted per business located along a street. Where businesses are located off the street, one sign may be located along the street provided no other sign exists for that business, and one sign may be located adjacent to the store entrance. Multiple businesses located off a street should share a sign when possible.
- 8.5 Sandwich boards should reflect the character of the building or business they represent, and should not be illuminated, either internally or externally.



## Building Signage



Colorful, interesting design adds visual interest and is appropriately sized to enhance, not detract from the building facade; lighting is tasteful and minimal.



Size, materials, and color enhance the pedestrian experience and are sufficient for store identification; sign is hung with an attractive metal bracket.

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Simple, yet colorful and creative sign fits well with the existing architecture, effectively identifies the business, and enlivens the public space.



New signage on an historic building is well placed; it respects the architectural features of the facade and is spatially well integrated.

### Guidelines

- 9.1 The purpose of signage is to identify businesses, provide visual interest, and fit compatibly with surroundings. Websites and phone numbers are discouraged to avoid clutter.
- 9.2 Signs should be externally lit to avoid glare and light pollution, and be consistent with the character of the streetscape. Neon signs may be permitted if appropriate for the business or style of store frontage.
- 9.3 Signs should respect the scale of the building and the streetscape. Signs should respect the integrity of architectural features by not disrupting the lines, rhythm, or spacing of unique elements. The installation of a sign should not cause the removal of any historic architectural feature.
- 9.4 Signs should be installed such that they do not damage existing architectural features, and can be removed without damage to the facade. Mounting hardware should be drilled into mortar or wood where possible, not into masonry.
- 9.5 Projecting signs should not extend further than 5 feet into the right of way or exceed 15 square feet in area.

## Awnings & Canopies



Awnings have long been a popular means to provide color and shade. This contemporary example complements the building and storefront.



Canopies can help identify the building entrance and break up lengthy building facades.

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The clear glass of this canopy, placed on a modern building, complements the architecture and creates an interesting statement along the sidewalk.



This well maintained canopy, which is part of the original design for the building, enhances the streetscape and provides shelter from the weather.

### Guidelines

- 10.1 Awnings, canopies, and other types of overhangs may represent a variety of styles and materials as long as they are compatible with the architecture of the building and other streetscape features.
- 10.2 Awnings and overhangs should be centered over entryways or windows to provide shade and shelter from the elements, and/or to identify building entrances and differentiate store fronts.
- 10.3 Awnings should be kept clean and in good repair; they should be replaced when they begin to weather due to the elements or age.
- 10.4 Awnings and overhangs should be fully supported through fixtures attached to the building, and not utilizing poles within the right of way.

## Balconies



Elegantly designed Juliet balconies can provide private amenities without encroaching into the right of way.



This retrofit balcony presents an attractive treatment of the underside.



These inset balconies were part of the building's original design. Furthermore, they do not overhang the public right-of-way.



Balconies are recessed on a newer brick building with metal and glass architectural features that blend well with the balconies and are not within the right of way.

### Guidelines

- 11.1 If appropriately located and designed, balconies can provide a valuable amenity to residents and energize public space.
- 11.2 Balconies should be compatible with the scale of the streetscape, and appropriate with the architectural style of the building.
- 11.3 Retrofitting historic buildings with balconies should only be allowed if architecturally significant features will not be damaged, removed, or obscured. Retrofit balconies on historic buildings must be reversible, such that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the building and its architectural features are unimpaired.
- 11.4 New balconies should not be permitted within the right of way for safety reasons. Balconies may be permitted if they are set into the building, or if the building is set far enough back from the property line that the balcony does not encroach into the right of way.
- 11.5 Balconies should utilize subtle or dark colors and materials that are compatible with the building's architecture. They should be attractive from all angles, including when viewed from below.

## Storefront Lighting



Attractive black fixtures complement the building, architectural features, and signage; lighting is angled down towards outdoor dining areas and the entryway.



Lighting is well coordinated with the awnings, signs, and storefront, creating a unified appearance of the building.

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Fixtures complement the building and sign; electrical conduit is well hidden and blends with the architecture.



Internal storefront lighting adds seasonal charm, brightens the nighttime streetscape, illuminates architectural features, and can increase perceptions of safety.

### Guidelines

- 12.1 Storefront lighting should minimize sky glow to the greatest extent possible by utilizing warm, low wattage bulbs and positioning fixtures to angle down towards the building, signage, or entrances.
- 12.2 Full cut off fixtures should be used where possible, using the minimum amount of light needed to serve the purpose.
- 12.3 Low temperature LED lights should be dimmed when not needed or when activity on the street is low to conserve energy and minimize light pollution.
- 12.4 Lighting fixtures should complement the architecture of the building, with electrical conduit hidden or incorporated into the storefront facade; dark colors for fixtures are recommended.

## Architectural Lighting



Subtle and correctly positioned lighting on buildings can highlight architectural features and enhance the building facade.



Lighting can highlight classic design relationships and create dramatic and inspiring spaces.

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The clock tower becomes more of a sculptural element at night with lighting accents, which are also well integrated with other streetscape features.



Architectural lighting emphasizes the architecture and enhances the distinctive historic character of the building.

### Guidelines

- 13.1 Architectural lighting is intended to illuminate architectural features and enhance the appearance of a building at night. It can also generate a sense of lively activity at nighttime, create a warm and inviting atmosphere, and increase perceptions of safety. Lighting should be coordinated with other buildings, storefronts, and the street.
- 13.2 Architectural lighting on buildings should be carefully positioned to minimize nighttime sky glow and unnecessary glare or light pollution that could be experienced by drivers, pedestrians, or building occupants.
- 13.3 Energy efficient options such as low temperature LEDs are recommended for energy efficiency, color, and minimization of sky glow. Lighting temperature levels should not exceed 4000 degrees Kelvin.
- 13.4 Architectural lighting should be static and not flash, blink, or create moving patterns across the facade of the building.

## Historic Buildings



Prominently displayed building names, typically found near the cornice, can convey intriguing information about earlier occupants and uses.



Architectural features, such as this iron storefront arcade, add character and a unique sense of identity to the streetscape.

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Main Street's historic buildings are richly ornamented and add texture and interest for the passer-by.



These replacement windows reflect the Queen Anne architectural style of the Chase Block.

Downtown Concord, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, has one of the best assemblages of 19th and early 20th century commercial, civic and institutional buildings in New England. Despite near uniformity in height and material, each building is individually and distinctively detailed. Beyond delighting us visually, their architectural features convey the history of downtown, as well as reflect wider trends and events.

### Guidelines

- 14.1 Historic buildings, including their architectural details, fenestration, materials and design intent, should be preserved. Facade renovations should adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's [Standards for Rehabilitation](#).
- 14.2 Storefronts can be renovated to reflect current trends; however, historic structural elements such as iron or granite posts and sign bands should not be removed or covered.
- 14.3 Signs, awnings, window sash replacement, new openings and any other new features that are not part of the historic design intent should complement and not overshadow the building's architecture.
- 14.4 Utility related features, such as wires, air conditioning units, ventilation ducts, and other features impacting the facade, should be hidden or seamlessly integrated with the building's architecture such that no historic features are impacted.

## New Building Construction



New buildings can reference existing architectural styles while still having a modern character.

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A range of colors, materials, window types, and architectural features creates an attractive building with strong lines, well integrated with the street.



Buildings consisting primarily of offices can still maintain an activated streetscape presence with windows, storefronts, and architectural features.



Different or modern architectural styles can be compatible with the community character and create a sense of vitality.

### Guidelines

- 15.1 A new building should be integrated into the character and form of the adjoining streetscape. While it can reference Main Street's historic architecture, it should appear as architecture of its own time.
- 15.2 New buildings should utilize natural materials such as stone, brick, glass, and metal. Materials such as EIFS, vinyl, or stucco should not be utilized for facades.
- 15.3 New building form should be compatible with the massing of existing buildings along the street, and should be located at the property line. Buildings or portions of buildings may be set back from the property line to allow for plazas, dining areas, landscape areas, and other types of gathering spaces. Window and door openings should be pedestrian scaled.
- 15.4 Layout and site design for new buildings should incorporate shared access spaces such as alleys that can be retrofitted as active pedestrian or shared use spaces.
- 15.5 New buildings should be oriented towards the street, with the ground floor architectural features relating to the scale of the pedestrian. All vehicular uses such as drop off areas must be located off side streets, or otherwise integrated with the functions of the street.

## Public Spaces



Vendors appropriately utilizing available spaces are valuable local amenities that animate the public realm.



Plaza areas provide space for gathering, street performers, outdoor dining, art installations, and other amenities to enhance the public realm.



Small landscaped spaces are valuable amenities that provide a welcome change for seating and gathering areas.



Attractively landscaped area with paved walkway is an inviting, semi private intimate space to rest, have lunch, or meet.

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### Guidelines

- 16.1 Public space is inherently incorporated into the urban streetscape. When well designed, public space is multi- functional, attractive, and encourages use of the public realm.
- 16.2 Public space can be on City property, such as the right of way or public plazas; on semi-private property, including plazas, dining areas or shared alleys; or private property, including green spaces, or other areas utilized by clients, customers or residents.
- 16.3 Multi-functional and attractive public space should be incorporated into new construction projects to the greatest extent possible.
- 16.4 Activities in public space should be planned such that they do not interfere with normal pedestrian flow, business activity, or regular use of the area.



## Public Art



Landscape bed on private property provides space for a playful stone sculpture and seasonal installations.



Classic stone and bronze sculpture provides visual interest and a historic character.

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Contemporary public art can enliven the streetscape and offer year round interest.



Colorful murals can enliven an otherwise unattractive or homogeneous facade, breaking up large expanses of uniform shapes or materials.

### Guidelines

- 17.1 Public art may consist of permanent sculptures of a variety of durable and attractive materials located on public or private property.
- 17.2 Public art may also consist of temporary or seasonal installations of community or professional projects.
- 17.3 Public art, whether permanent or temporary, should be spatially well integrated into the streetscape such that it is considerate of the location of other public amenities, and the use of other spaces, such as outdoor dining areas.
- 17.4 Public art, whether permanent or temporary, should be relatively compatible with existing architecture and the character of the community.
- 17.5 In the event that new public art installations are proposed, private amenities may need to be relocated if they are utilizing a space that has been designated for public art as indicated in Appendix A.

