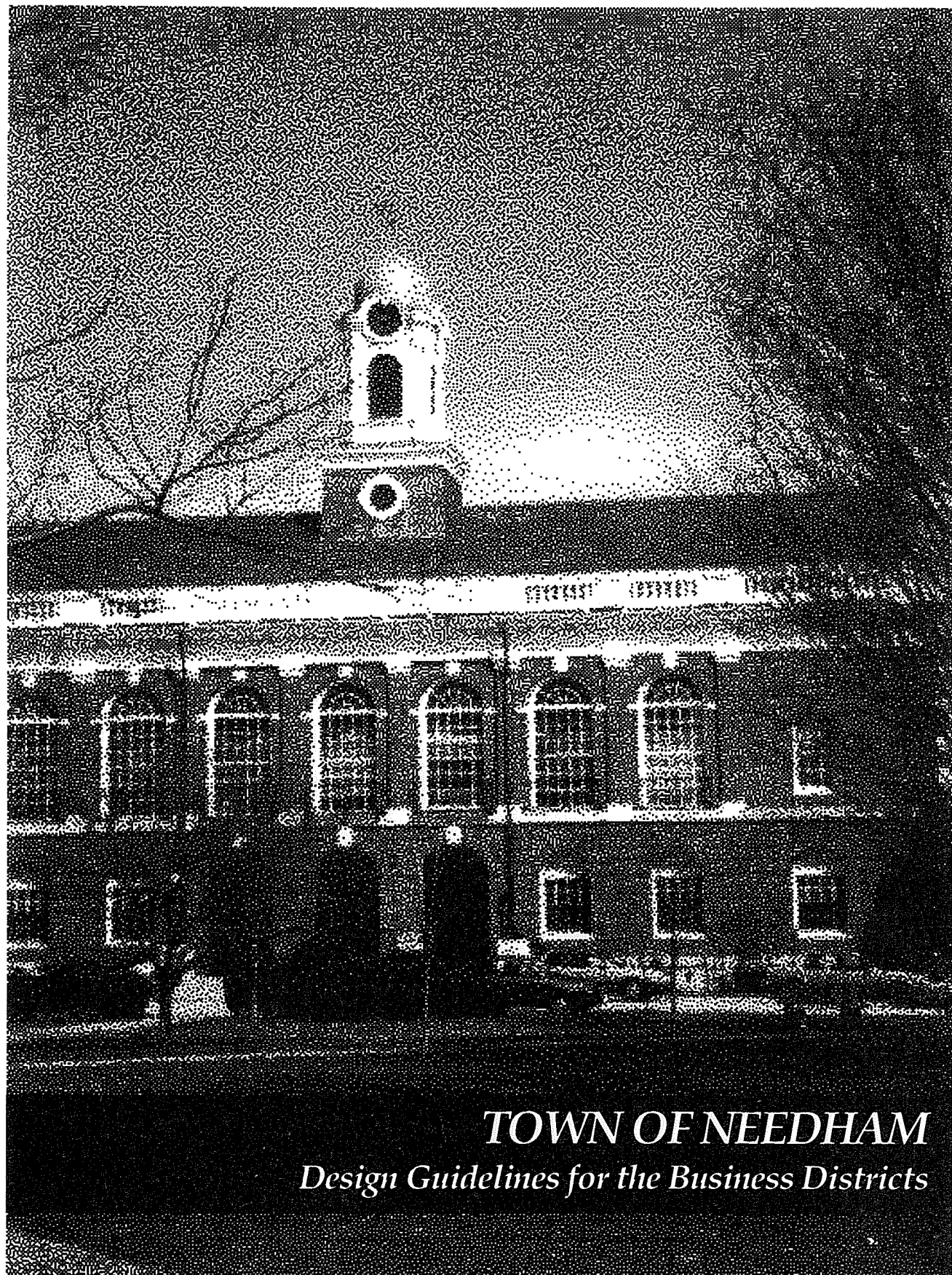




TOWN OF NEEDHAM
Design Guidelines for the Business Districts

Credits

Design Guidelines Partnership

Paul K. Cooley, Needham Business Association, Design Review Board
Gene Bollinger
David Gerber, Planning Board
Maurice Handel
Lars Jensen
David Kunhardt, Planning Board
Dori Mock, Design Review Board
Greg Petrini, Needham Business Association
Robert Wear, Design Review Board

Needham Planning Department

Lee Newman, Director of Planning

Department of Public Works

Richard Merson, Director of Public Works
David Greenwood, Town Engineer
John Cusick, Park Division Superintendent

Consultant

David Dixon/Goody Clancy • planning & urban design
a division of Goody, Clancy & Associates
David Dixon, Kathryn Firth, David Spillane

Financial Contributors to the Design Guidelines Study

Harvey Alexander/Century 21
Bank of Boston
William Barrett
Boston Foundation for Architecture
Bostonia Industries Inc.
Louise Condon Realty, Inc.
Dewolfe - Lynn Akers Burnham
Donrob Associates
Family Federal Savings Bank
Michael A. Heffernan
Hunneman & Co./Coldwell Banker
Robert E. Kettlety
Lewandos, Inc.
John J. and Dorothy E. McQuillan
Frederick O. J. Muzi
Needham Co-operative Bank
L. Petrini & Son, Inc.
James M. Sullivan
Rev. Gordon C. Swan
Jay S. Tracy, Jr.
James Trudeau
Town of Needham

Town Beautification Committee

Additional Acknowledgements

Many people contributed to the work of the Partnership, directly and indirectly, in addition to those listed in the Credits. The Design Guidelines Partnership especially wishes to recognize the persistent and unruffled work of Lee Newman, Planning Director; the support and encouragement of the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee; the early leadership of John Edgar, past president of the Needham Business Association; the Needham Historical Commission; *The Needham Times* for publication of surveys and articles; Continental Cablevision; the over 300 residents who responded to the surveys; the Town of Lexington Planning Department for inspiration and advice; the Boston Foundation for Architecture for its substantive guidance as well as its grant support for public participation; and additional early contributions of former Design Review Board members Patti Davis, Bill Grover and Joan Kutcher.

Workshop Participants

Ross Atkin
Jane Baker
Dr. Jeffrey Becher
Elaine Becker
Enrique Bellido
Patti Berkey Boyd
Laura Broad
Russell S. Broad, Jr.
Therese Burke
Alan Burt
Lisa Cherbuliez
Margaret Coles
Kevin Comick
Bill Concannon
Paul K. Cooley
Peter Cooper
Roy Cramer
John Cusick
Carol de Lemos
John Gaffney
Frank Gallelo
David Gerber
George Giunta, Jr.
Susan Glazer
Florence Graves
Sam Graves
Joann Green
David F. Greenwood
John Griffin
Maurice Handel
Michael Heffernan
Jane Howard
Louis Hutchins
Lars Jensen
Peter Katsikaris
Robert E. Kettlety
Paul Killeen
Jeffrey Kleiman
Anne Komer
David Kunhardt
Dan Matthews
David Matthews
Robert Melia
Rick Merson

Dori Mock
Steven Mock
Otto Molter
Lee Newman
Michael Niden
Robert G. Noreau
Roy Nutile
Feza Oktay
Janet O'Shea
Nick Pappas
Gary W. Petrini
Greg Petrini
Lynn Petrini
Joseph Pichetti
Kevin Pichetti
Bill Powers
Sheila G. Pransky
Beth Rich
Deborah L. Roberts
Carol S. Rockwood
Albert Rossi
Jeff Sakowitz
Herbert Schofield
Ellen Sherman
Robert Smart
Betsy M. Tedoldi
William Tedoldi
John Terry
Roger Toran
Mary Lou Twickler
Jean Veigas
Diane Von Roesgen
Charlie Wagner
Jack Wallace
Robert Wear
Sherrie Weinstein
Kathy Whitney
Nancy Wright

GUIDELINES

FOR

PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT

DESIGN GUIDELINES for BUSINESS DISTRICTS

TOWN of NEEDHAM

MASSACHUSETTS

August 15, 1995

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
-------------------	---

GUIDELINES FOR PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT

How to Use the Guidelines	5
---------------------------------	---

Design Guidelines:

1. Buildings and Facades	7
2. Storefronts	19
3. Signs	29
4. Maintenance	37
5. Additional Guidelines for Neighborhood Business Districts	41

GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

1. Needham Center	47
2. Avery Square Business District	59
3. Other Smaller Neighborhood Business Districts	61

APPENDIX

Glossary of Terms	63
Filing an application for a project permit: the Review Process	65



"One of Needham's greatest assets is its strong sense of community, which is reflected in a strong Town center. Downtown Needham is the focus of local government, as well as commercial, social and civic life. The attractive, green Town Common in front of the classic backdrop of the Town Hall is at the heart, with sunny, tree-lined streets radiating out in five directions. A variety of stores, services, and restaurants are within easy walking distance. The walk itself is pleasant, with many enticing opportunities to see inside businesses and places to stop, sit and visit with friends. The sidewalk is shaded by awnings or trees.

Needham is conveniently connected to Boston by road and rail, but it also has a distinctive, small-town civic sense, where people take care of one another. Needham is adjacent to wealthier towns but is more affordable and less formal, chosen for the schools, services, environment and community spirit it offers. The buildings in all of Needham's commercial centers are in keeping with the Town: modest in scale, some classic and charming in form, evoking New England town buildings but not imitating them, or one another. All areas have a blend of houses of worship, educational, recreational open space and commercial uses. It is the stores, businesses and restaurants that bring the Town freshness, color and individual differences of style and variety. No business tries to outdo its neighbor with the size or garishness of signs; instead, all businesses strive for success through quality, service and value. The design of Needham thereby reflects the full range of civic, religious, commercial, recreational and intellectual pursuits of its people."

This book of Design Guidelines has been produced to assist in the achievement of this Vision.

The Design Guidelines Partnership

"...We will hand on this city not only not less, but greater, better and more beautiful than it was handed down to us."

from The Oath of the Athenian

INTRODUCTION

These Design Guidelines have been developed to encourage good design that can contribute to the attractiveness and long-term vitality of the commercial areas of Needham. The Guidelines are intended to provide helpful advice to businesses and Town Departments which are contemplating undertaking improvements within these areas. They provide a framework for making improvements to business properties and streets in all commercial areas of the Town—including Needham Center, Avery Square (Needham Heights business district) and other smaller commercial areas.

The Guidelines are also a reference for the design review process carried out by Town Boards. Familiarity with the Guidelines can assist project applicants to understand the Town's design goals and thus facilitate a smoother, more efficient review process.

In addition to the major commercial centers, of special concern is the design of buildings in "gateway" areas. Gateways are the main points of entry to Needham and its downtown—they provide an introduction to the Town and create a first impression of the community. Businesses in "gateway" locations—Highland Avenue, Dedham Avenue, Great Plain Avenue and other main routes into Needham—have a special role and responsibility in enhancing the attractiveness of the Town.

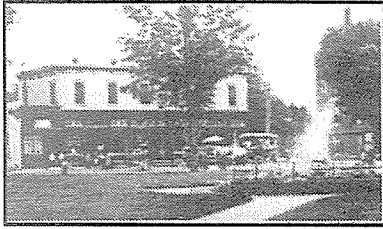
A Partnership Between the Town and the Business Community

These Guidelines are the result of a working partnership of the Town government, residents and the Needham business community. The Guidelines have been developed through an open and inclusive process of public discussion, workshops and review that has benefited from input from a broad range of individuals and groups within the Town. The Guidelines reflect agreement within the community that the attractiveness of the business districts is very important to the community as a whole and essential to commercial competitiveness. The Guidelines also reflect a commitment on the part of the Town to play an important role in initiating public improvements that ultimately complement improvements undertaken by businesses.

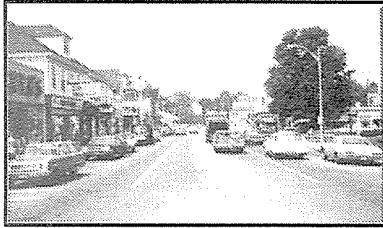
This document is divided into two main parts:

- Guidelines for Private Development
 - encompassing buildings and facades, storefronts and signage
- Guidelines for Public Improvements
 - encompassing street furnishings, Town-owned parking lots and the Town Common

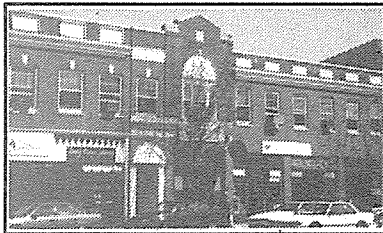
It should be noted that the Guidelines are recommendations and are not inflexible requirements. Their purpose is to assist the private-public dialogue on matters affecting the appearance of the Town's commercial districts to the end that Needham can build and enhance its character.



By 1900 Needham had developed an attractive downtown centered around the Town Hall and Common.



The pedestrian character of Needham became less welcoming in the 1970s.



The last decade has been a time of renewed civic pride. Improvements to buildings and storefronts have begun to enhance the Town Center.

The Evolution of Needham's Commercial Areas

The current character of the Town's business areas reflects their growth and change through three major cycles:

- *The Formation of the Town's Identity.* Needham originated as a farm town. With the introduction of the railroad in 1863, the downtown as we know it today, centered around the Town Hall and the Common, began to be formed. Stores and other businesses extended along a tree-lined Great Plain Avenue. From its earliest days, the Common, with its shade trees and fountain, set a gracious tone for the business area. By the 1930s the downtown had established a mature identity and included many of the most notable buildings that characterize the area today.
- *Post-War Development and Visual Deterioration.* Needham experienced a flourish of development after World War II, fueled by widespread growth of automobile ownership. While the car offered new personal mobility, by the 1970s it had contributed directly to an erosion of the pedestrian character and the visual attractiveness of the downtown. The car-oriented aspect of the Town allowed the downtown and the neighborhood centers to become overwhelmed by signage as less attention was paid to the pedestrian. Great Plain Avenue became more like a through street than a traditional, pedestrian-friendly, Main Street.
- *Resurgence of Civic Pride.* During the last decade the Town and the business community have worked hard to recapture the civic identity of the Town Center and the other neighborhood centers. Significant improvements to several downtown buildings have occurred. The Town and the business community have cooperated on a tree planting program to begin to reestablish the pedestrian amenity of the streetscape and the tree-lined character of Great Plain Avenue. Expanded public parking areas have been developed to facilitate the long-term success of the business district. Commuter rail service was reactivated in the late-1980s. Improvements to signage and downtown storefronts have already begun to enhance the attractiveness of the Town Center and the neighborhood business districts.

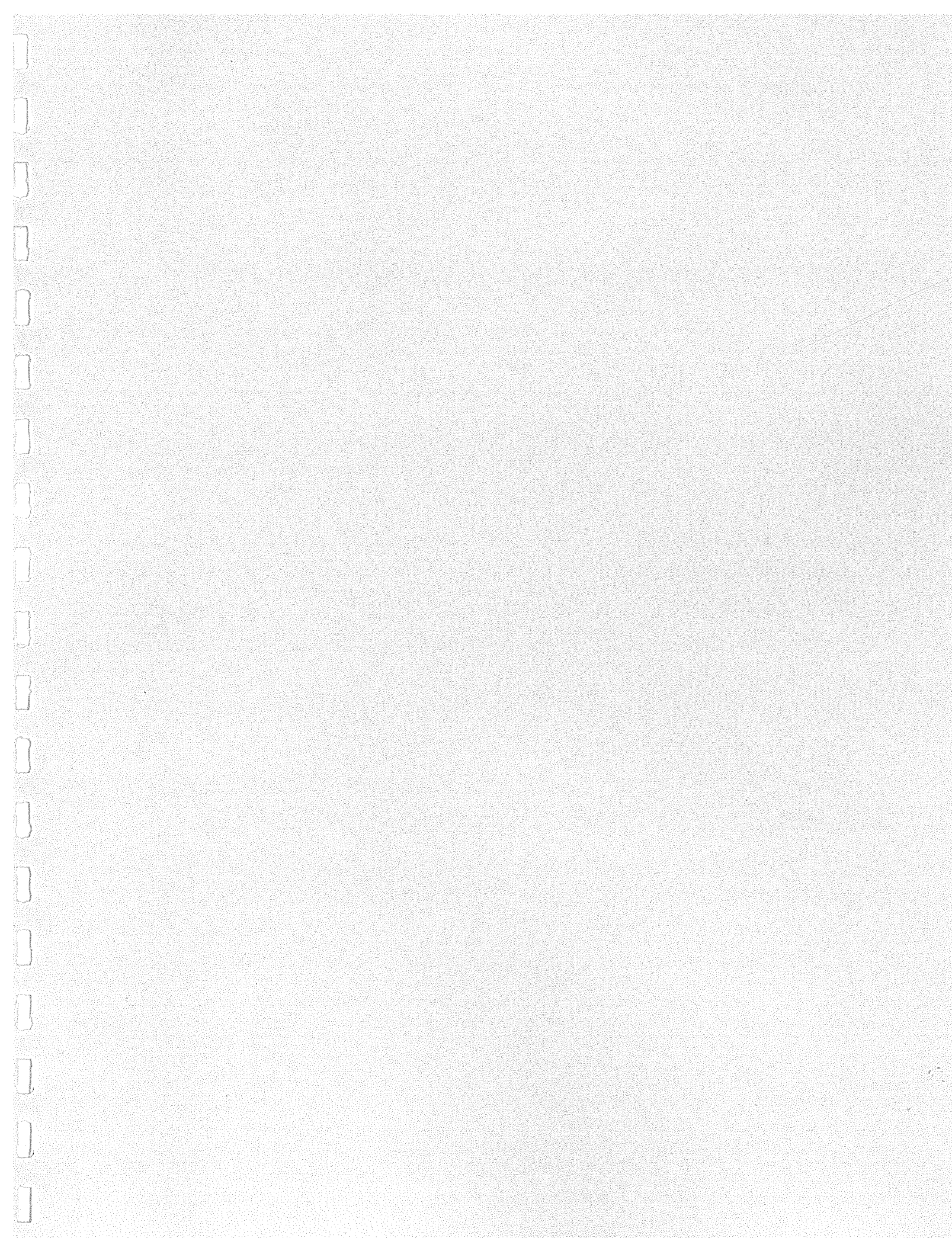
Building a Vision

The basic elements of the downtown's character were already well established almost a century ago. The downtown's unique identity and success derives from the fact that its commercial district is focused around a civic building and a public space - the Town Hall and the Common. Today's challenge is to enrich its commercial and civic identity and the sense of pedestrian amenity while maintaining a visual balance between the Town's business function and its landmark buildings.

The vision for the future of downtown builds on four major themes:

- *Extend the visual sphere of influence of the Common and the Town Hall.* The Town Hall and the Town Common act as a hub for Needham, linking together both its civic and commercial realms. Improvements to the Common itself and pedestrian connections to adjacent areas should provide opportunities for expanded public use and enjoyment of one of downtown's most important assets.
- *Enhance the downtown's pedestrian character and supplement its amenities.* Desirable improvements include enhancing the Town Common, the provision of additional seating and new trash containers, additional tree planting, better marking of crosswalks, consideration of sidewalk widening, the use of more attractive lighting and improved pedestrian connections to parking areas.
- *Encourage greater visual diversity and interest in the design of signs and storefronts, and in improvements to the "backs" of buildings.* The first floors of buildings provide the greatest opportunity for stronger individual expression and innovation. Particular opportunities exist for expanded use of awnings as well as more creative signage, including attractively designed projecting signs, improved window displays and display lighting, and the enhancement of the connection between the interior and exterior of stores.
- *Balance commercial diversity with civic identity.* While greater diversity and interest is a major goal, the character of design improvements to businesses must also respect and complement the dignity of the Town's civic buildings within a visually coherent framework.

Together these themes provide the overriding goals and principles for the Design Guidelines which are the subject of this document. The following section outlines the Guidelines for Private Development. The second section of this document (beginning on page 47), Guidelines for Public Improvements, addresses those improvements which can be made by the Public sector.



HOW TO USE THE GUIDELINES FOR PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT

The first part of this book delineates the Guidelines for Private Development. These are intended to assist you with the design of your project and, in turn, should make the entire approval process flow more smoothly.

How the Guidelines Apply to Each Commercial District

The Guidelines for Private Development are divided into five sections as listed below. The first four sections refer primarily to Needham Center and Avery Square. However, they embody principles which are valid for the neighborhood business districts. Section 5 contains Additional Guidelines for Neighborhood Business Districts and addresses the unique, auto-oriented conditions found in these districts. These Guidelines apply to Chestnut Street, Bird's Hill, Charles River Village, Hillside Avenue, Hemlock Gorge and the Memorial Park and Corporate Center Areas. The five sections are:

1. Buildings and Facades
2. Storefronts
3. Signs
4. Maintenance
5. Additional Guidelines for Neighborhood Business Districts

How Each Section of the Guidelines is Organized

The opening statement in each section summarizes the overall objective of the section. Individual guidelines follow and expand on this overall objective. *Italicized text* is used to provide general information on existing conditions and to provide the rationale for specific guidelines. These guidelines are numbered (1.1, 1.2, etc.) and are shown in bold face text. Following the **bold face text**, plain text is used to expand on the guideline and supplement it with more specific advice.

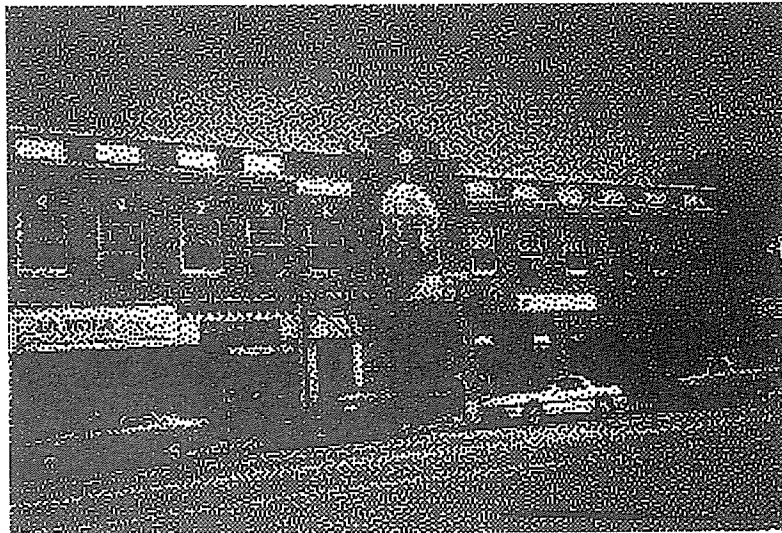
The Town's Review Process

Described below are the first steps to follow in the Town's review and approval process. These apply to Needham Center, Chestnut Street, Avery Square and Neighborhood Business Districts. For limits of these Districts refer to the Zoning Map of the Town of Needham, available at the Needham Planning Board offices. For a more detailed description of the process please refer to the Appendix.

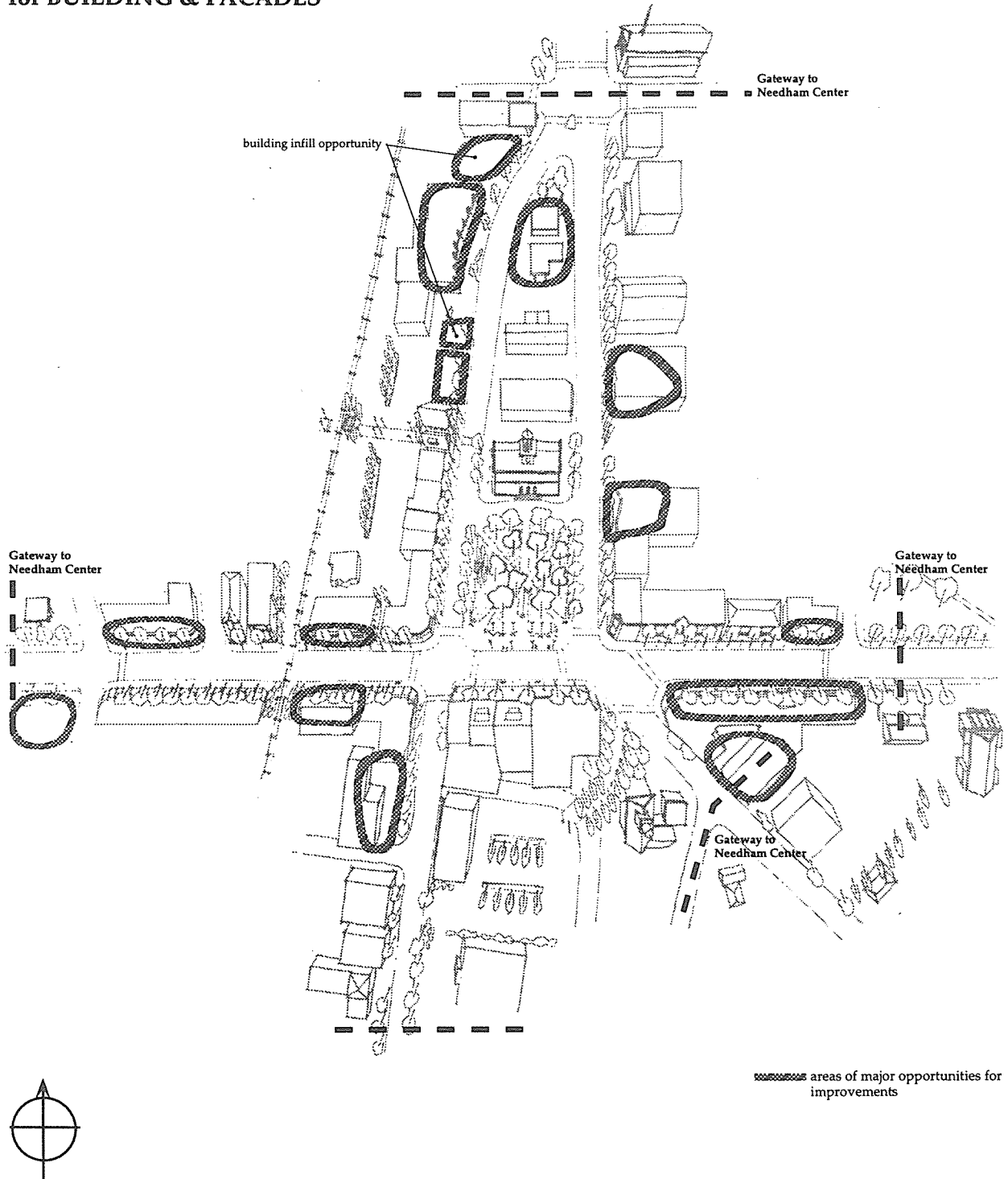
- Step 1: If you are unfamiliar with the various by-laws governing buildings and improvements, a good place to start is the Building Department where you can get advice on what approvals you require.
- Step 2: Consult the Guidelines. Whether your project is a new building, a renovation to an existing building or simply a modification to a storefront or sign, become familiar with the design objectives. It is recommended that you consult a design professional - an architect, landscape architect, or a graphic designer - and that the professional you work with becomes familiar with the Guidelines and other relevant Town regulations.

- Step 3: Before you finalize a preliminary design concept, discuss your ideas with the Design Review Board (DRB). The DRB encourages applicants to discuss proposals in their earliest stages at informal meetings. These are intended to save applicants unnecessary effort early on and to expedite final approvals later. When your design is completely worked out, you will need to present your proposal at one of the DRB's regular public meetings. These meetings are generally held on the first and third Wednesday of every month at 7:30 p.m. in the Town Hall. At this meeting you will need to have with you sufficient exhibits—plans, drawings, photographs, etc.—to explain fully and clearly your proposal.
- Step 4: For a project which requires a zoning variance, obtain an application from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) after first applying to the Building Inspector. For a project requiring a special permit, obtain an application from either the ZBA or Planning Board as required by the zoning ordinance. You may wish to discuss such projects with the Planning Director.
- Step 5: Proposals for building construction or erection of signs will require the submission of final plans to the DRB and the Building Department for issuance of a Building Permit.

1. BUILDINGS & FACADES



Needham Center
PRIVATE IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES
for BUILDING & FACADES



1.0 Buildings and facades should be compatible with the size and character of the Center's buildings, and should encourage active street life.

Needham Center's unique character derives from the close and harmonious relationship between its civic and commercial buildings. The commercial buildings act as a backdrop to the dignity of the Town Hall and frame the Town Common. Each building has a unique role to play in maintaining and enhancing this harmonious balance. These Guidelines provide a framework for maintaining this balance and enhancing the attractiveness and vitality of the Center.

The Town has many fine older commercial buildings which contribute to the character of the individual commercial areas and the Town as a whole. Where the content of these Guidelines appears to be in conflict with a successful restoration effort, the Design Review Board will work with the applicant to ensure that a successful restoration can be accomplished.

In addition to the Center, these Guidelines also relate directly to the Avery Square Business District in Needham Heights, which shares the Center's pedestrian character.

SITE PLANNING AND PARKING AREAS

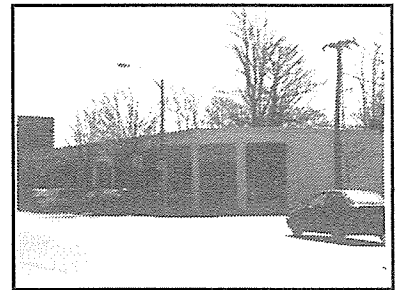
Both Town-owned and private parking areas within the Center are located behind buildings. The Town's Zoning By-Law includes requirements for the design and landscaping of parking areas.

1.1 Locate buildings in ways that respect prevailing site planning patterns, with parking behind the building.

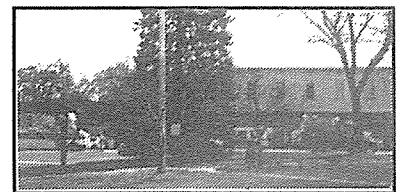
Within the downtown, buildings should be located at the edge of the sidewalk. Where commercial buildings are located in transitional areas between the Center and surrounding residential areas (for example, at Chestnut Street near Great Plain Avenue) buildings should, in general, be set back from the street. In these instances setbacks may match existing buildings and thereby provide space for landscaping at the front of a building, or adhere to an overall streetscape concept for the area. The setback area should not be used to provide parking. (This is consistent with the Zoning regulations and the *Chestnut Street Landscape Design Recommendations of 1988*). Parking should be located behind buildings and be screened from the street and from adjacent residential areas. Minimize the width of curb cuts for access drives. For information regarding the backs of buildings refer to Guideline 1.8.

BUILDING HEIGHT

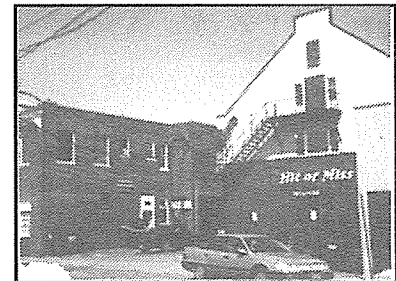
Greater building height can serve to define more strongly the character of the streets and provide a sense of enclosure. The ratio between building faces on opposite sides of a street and the buildings' heights will determine how "room-like", or enclosed, the streetscape feels. One story buildings on either side of a wide street create an environment with little sense of enclosure and therefore tends to be less inviting to the pedestrian. Most buildings at the heart of the commercial area are between one and two-and-a-half stories in height.



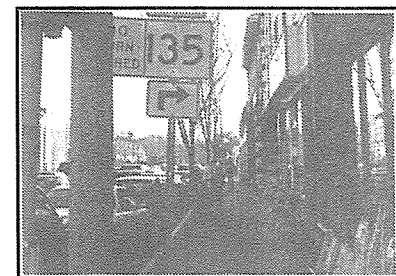
Single story buildings account for about half of the structures in Needham.



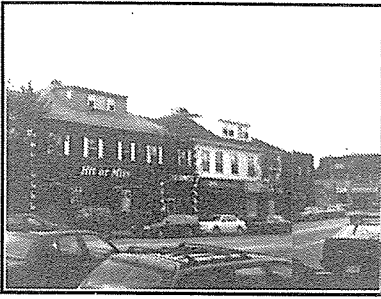
Avery Square Business District is centered on Needham Heights Common. Similar to Needham Center, commercial buildings are built to the edge of the sidewalk.



The backs of buildings face onto parking lots and have the potential to serve as "secondary retail facades".



Buildings located at the edge of the sidewalk in Needham Center provide the potential for a vital, pedestrian-oriented streetscape.



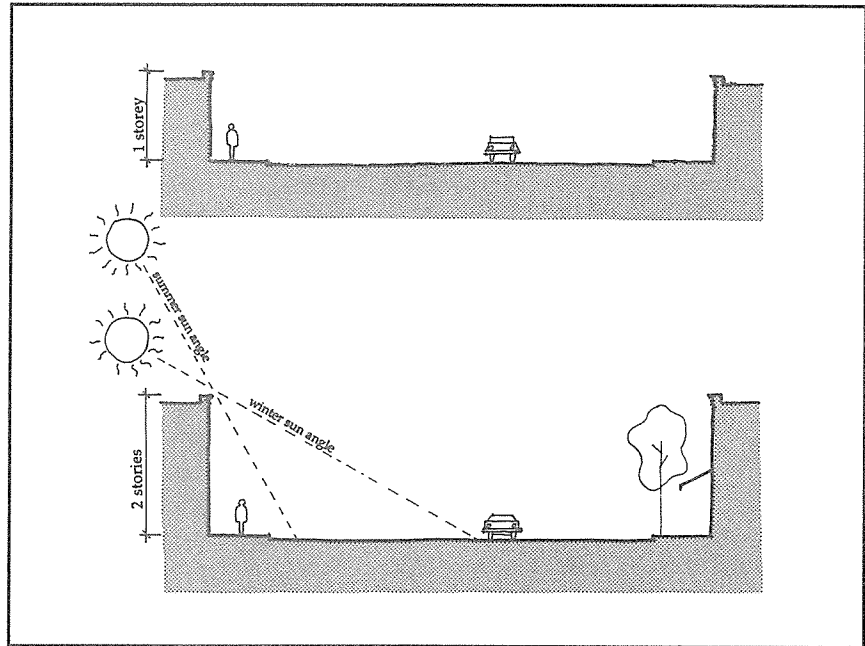
Slightly less than half of the commercial buildings in downtown Needham are built to the current height limit of 2 1/2 stories (35 feet).

Needham has opportunities for expanding and intensifying its existing Center by encouraging a two to two-and-a-half story building height. The south side of Great Plain Avenue and the west side of Chapel Street are examples of areas where higher buildings would positively transform the sense of the public environment. The more people are engaged in business activity and living in the town center, the more lively the streets will become. Public improvements including street trees and pedestrian-scale light fixtures further reinforce the pedestrian-friendly sense of enclosure. The area between the sidewalk, the public environment, and the top of the first story of the abutting buildings, the private realm, plays a large part in creating a successful streetscape.

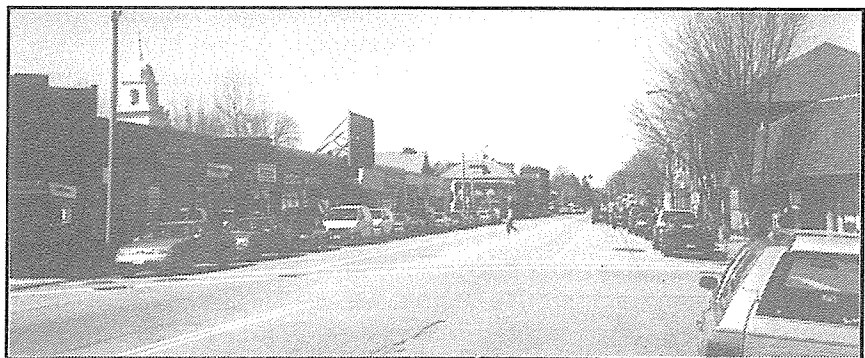
In addition, a consistent building height of two-and-a-half stories within the commercial areas can help to promote visual harmony between new and older buildings, and can signal the entry into Town as the building height increases from that in the surrounding residential areas.

1.2 Building heights up to the allowable two-and-a-half stories should be considered in the case of new projects, as greater height can enliven and further define the public environment.

The street section illustrates how the street may be perceived as a "room".



Parts of Great Plain Avenue currently have little sense of enclosure, being flanked by low buildings on either side across a broad expanse of street.



Note: increasing the density of buildings in the Center may raise important issues which relate to the provision of off-street parking and which would need to be resolved.

COMPOSITION OF THE BUILDING FACADE

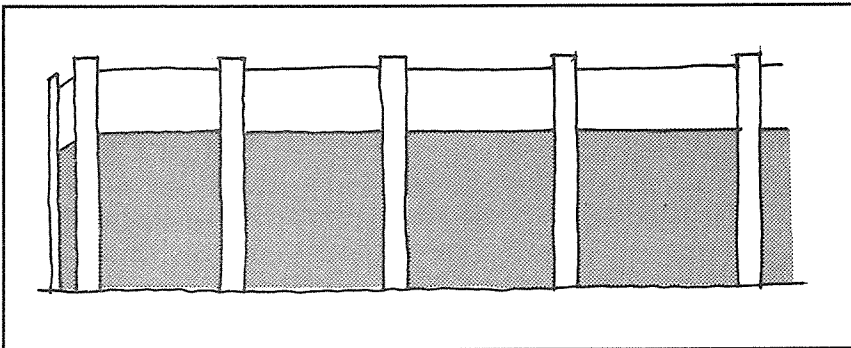
Architectural cohesiveness needs to be encouraged to allow the character of Needham to develop positively.

Building facades in Needham Center are often divided into smaller bays by a clear frame of vertical piers, which usually—but not always—reflects the location of structural columns or walls. The repetition of bay units of similar sizes helps to establish a common visual theme, scale, rhythm and texture among buildings of different eras. Larger stores comprise a number of similarly sized bays, smaller stores occupy a single bay.

The distinction between the character of different floor levels helps to highlight the special importance of the first floor within the commercial area. Typically, the different floor levels of commercial buildings in Needham Center have distinctly different characters reflecting different uses. In general, the prevailing pattern comprises a street level made up of storefronts which contain large glazed display windows and relatively little wall area. Upper levels are occupied by office uses, and windows are smaller than those of the first floor.



Regularly spaced vertical piers provide a frame and break the facade into smaller sections.



Separation is provided between stores and the building scale is made appropriate to the street.

1.3 Buildings should be compatible in design with the composition of the Center's older commercial architecture; distinguish and coordinate the design of upper and first floors, and divide facades into smaller bays.

(i) Use a "frame" to divide the facade into smaller bays and give definition to each store.

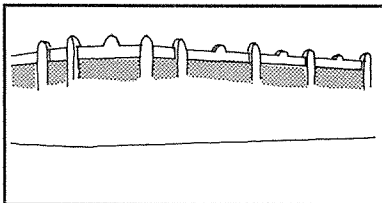
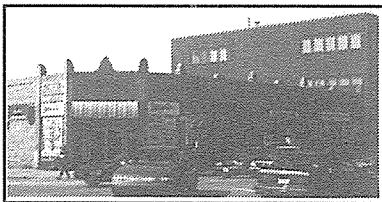
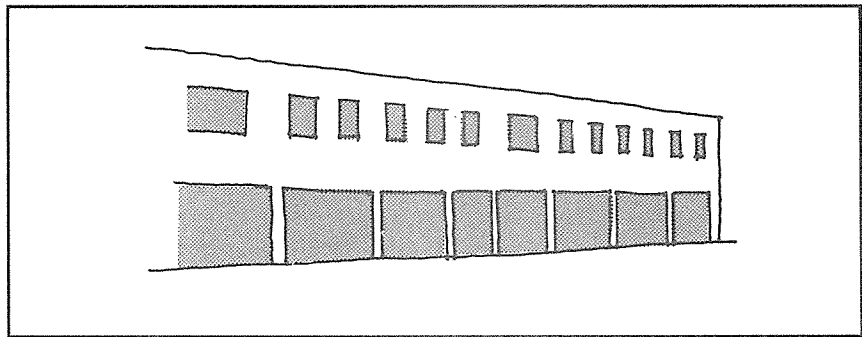
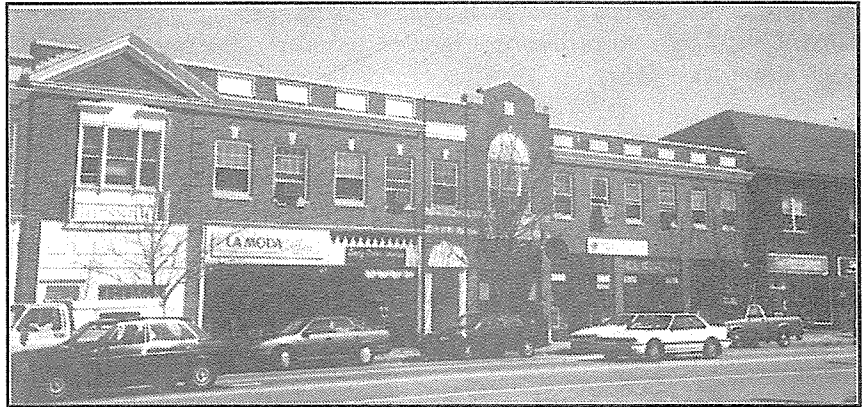
Clearly distinguish between "frame" and "infill" elements through changes in color and/or materials, or by slightly recessing infill elements, or by a combination of these and other methods. Consider providing a space where an awning could be attached.

(ii) Divide the building's height into street-level and upper levels.

Distinguish between the character of the first floor and the upper stories.

Windows and other elements on the upper stories should be designed to relate to the design of the first floor. Upper level windows can be designed to focus attention on important entrances, storefront windows or other important features on the ground floor. For this reason, continuous horizontal strip windows are not recommended, particularly when they continue across a number of first floor stores. These windows can obscure the distinction between individual storefronts.

At the first floor, level piers frame predominantly glazed storefronts. The second floor has a larger portion of wall within which windows are located.



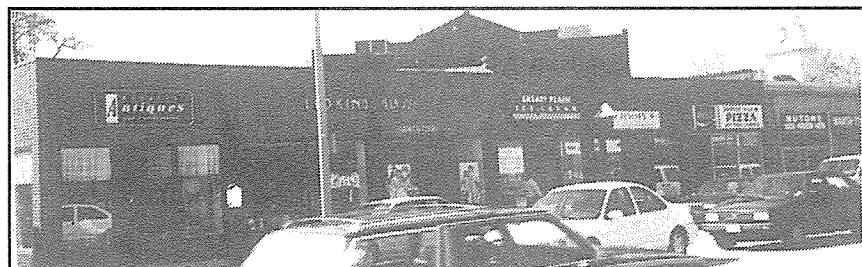
A simple cornice at the top of the building helps to frame the storefronts and marks the top of the facade.

(iii) *The proportions and sizes of individual elements - doors, windows, bays and horizontal facade divisions - should respect the proportions and scale of the Center's older commercial architecture.*

A typical bay width within the Center is 15 feet. Access points to commercial establishments at the street level should be provided at least every 30 feet.

(iv) *Define the top of the building.*

A building can be enhanced by the use of a cornice - a decorative and functional "top" for the building where it meets the sky. The cornice serves to frame the building facade horizontally and contributes to the visual cohesion of the overall streetscape by establishing common lines between buildings.



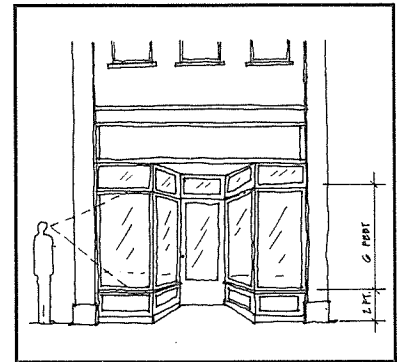
This building appears less complete without a cornice.

SPECIAL TREATMENT OF THE FIRST FLOOR

The design of street level facades and store window displays requires special attention to maintain and enhance the Center's lively pedestrian environment. Large windows help to develop strong visual connections between the interior and exterior, allowing people to peer into the store or restaurant and see some of its merchandise or the kind of atmosphere inside.

1.4 Provide large display windows along the first floor to maintain strong visual connections between the interior and exterior.

- (i) A minimum of 70% of the linear frontage of the first floor facade should comprise doors and windows with clear glass. At least 50% of the area of entrance doors should also be clear glass.
- (ii) Sill heights for any windows included in this calculation should not exceed 2 feet above street level.
- (iii) Tops of windows should be at least 8 feet above grade.



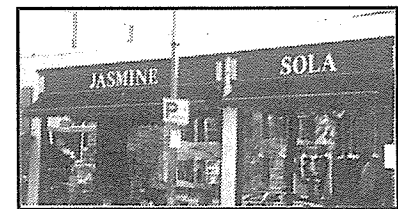
First floor treatment: at least 70% of the width of the facade should be windows and doors in clear glass. Sill heights should not exceed 2 feet, with the tops of the windows at least 8 feet above the street.

PROVIDING FOR SIGNS

Signs should be an integral part of the design of the building and need to be considered from the outset. Signage may change several times over the life of the building and this needs to be taken into consideration.

1.5 Include a zone for signs on the building within which each storefront can have an individual identity.

Provision of a sign band on the front facade, typical of older commercial buildings, is encouraged. The sign band can be defined by a change in facade color and/or material or a change in relief on the facade without altering material or color. In buildings with multiple stores, the sign band should be broken across the width of the building. Articulation or division of the sign band so that each section clearly relates to an individual store is strongly encouraged.



Provision of a sign band allows a designated space within which each store can express its individual identity. In this example a change in material from painted brick to wood indicates the sign location.

MATERIALS AND COLORS

The use of a limited number of materials and well-placed, but not opulent, trim can lend commercial buildings a simplicity and distinction able to accommodate changing storefronts and complement the streetscape. There are four types of materials used in Needham Center. Almost all buildings are either: brick with stone trim; brick with wood trim, usually panelized; wood with wood trim or brick and stucco.

1.6 Use materials and colors which are compatible with the character of the building and the Center.

- (i) *Materials:* New construction should in general conform to one of the types described above and use materials and trim details in a manner akin in spirit to those existing buildings in which the Town takes pride. Careful attention to small scale details is encouraged to add to the visual interest of the pedestrian level streetscape.

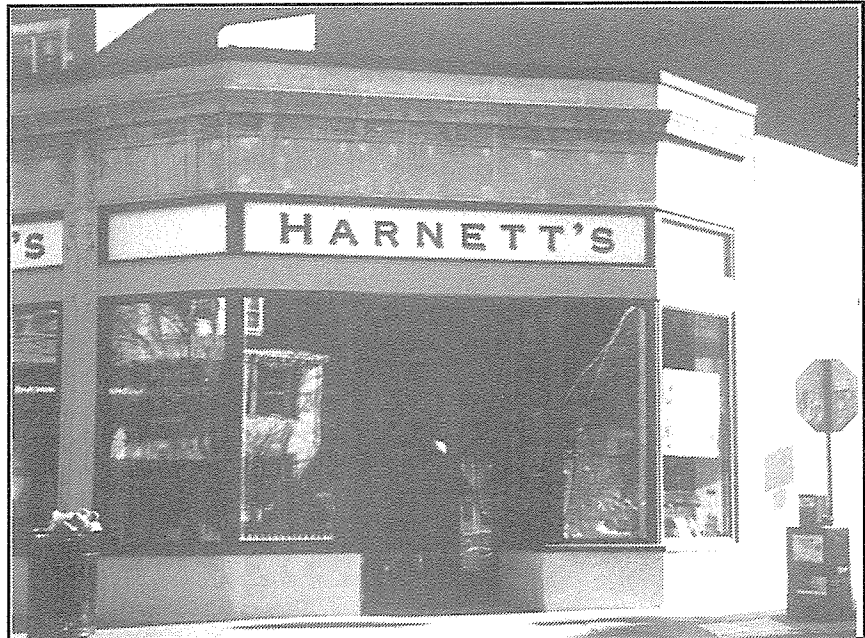
(ii) *Color:* Good use of color takes cues from the architecture of the building. Limit the number of colors selected. Highlighting numerous details in different colors may look too busy. Major building elements, such as piers, columns and signbands, should be painted the same color throughout the building. It should be kept in mind that signage, when applied, will add yet another layer of visual complexity to the facade. Masonry has its own natural color and should rarely be painted, except under special circumstances.

RENOVATION AND RESTORATION

Identify and preserve important architectural features which contribute to the quality of the building and the Center as a whole. Such features include columns, cornices, lintels, bay windows, transom windows (a window band sometimes located above the shop window and door), panels, distinctive woodwork and copper and slate roofs. Do not cover up distinctive original features of the building such as architectural brickwork or wood decoration; work with them - they are an asset. Remove such concealments if previous tenant/owner installed them.

1.7 Preserve and enhance facades and character-defining architectural features of high quality or historic buildings. Do not cover up distinctive original features of the building.

Facades are enhanced when their architectural features are respected. This sign sits well within the sign band, the entrance is recessed, and the display area complements the storefront frame.



FACADES: KEY ISSUES FOR GOOD DESIGN

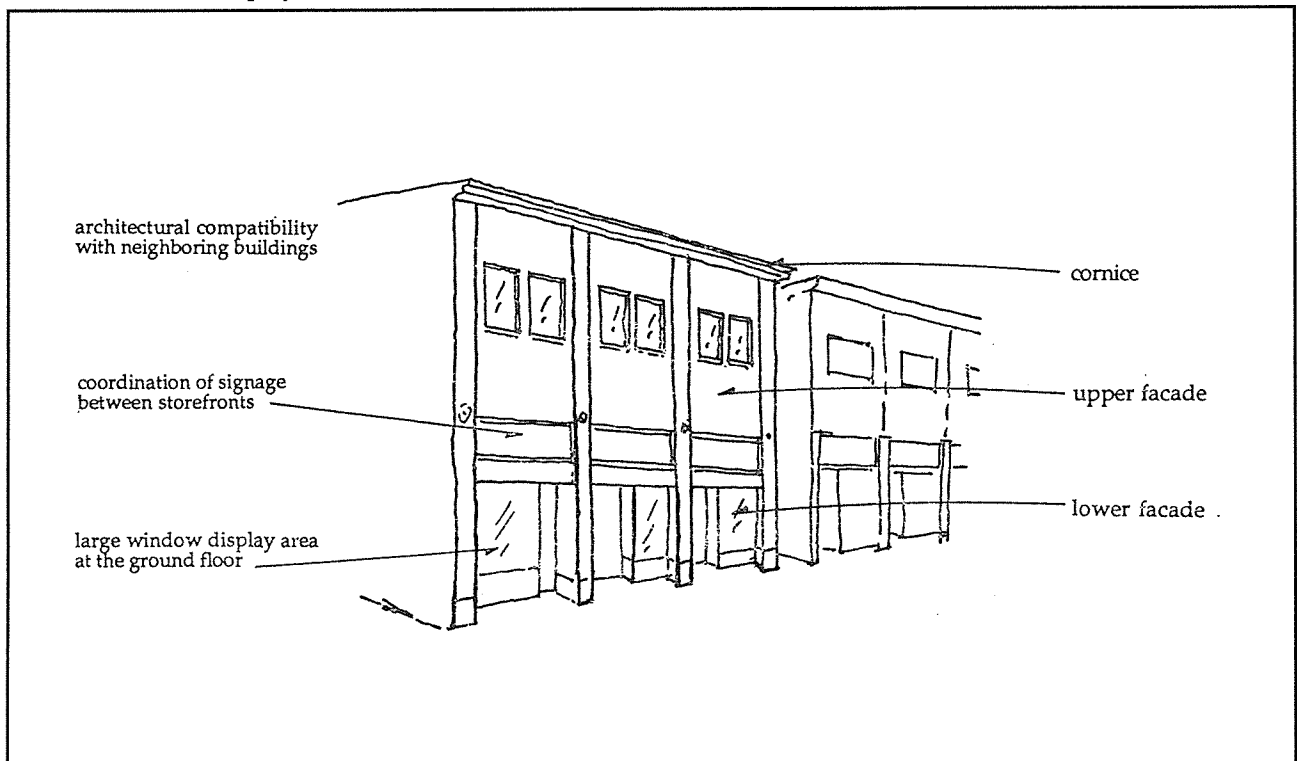
- Facade divisions
- Relationship of upper and lower floors
- Coordination of signage
- Dimensional character
- Relationship to adjacent facades

DO's

- Use clear, appropriately spaced, vertical divisions of the facade to emphasize individual stores.
- Coordinate the design of upper and lower story elements - emphasize individuality of stores and highlight other important elements on the first floor such as entrances.
- Coordinate the location and scale of signage among stores within a building.
- Use awnings and recessed entrances to add to the character and visibility of display areas, provide a sheltered area for pedestrians to browse and add a 3-dimensional quality to the facade.
- Restore appropriate architectural facades where they have been covered or modified by previous tenants.

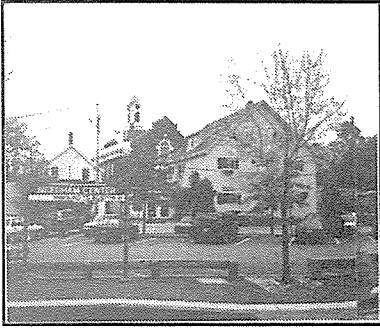
DON'Ts

- Avoid strong horizontal emphasis in facades which contain multiple stores - this can obscure the identity of individual stores.
- Do not ignore the relationship between upper and lower facade elements.
- Avoid major differences in sign sizes and locations in buildings with multiple storefronts.
- Do not recess display windows more than 12".



The Do's and Don'ts of Facades

BACKS OF BUILDINGS AND ALLEYS



Stores facing Chapel Street parking lot at the MBTA Station do not yet realize the full potential of their "second fronts".

Most parking areas within the Center are now located behind buildings. The result of this development pattern is that the backs of many buildings which were originally not intended to be seen are now potentially secondary "fronts" for businesses. All the surfaces of a commercial building have the potential to contribute to the success of the business within. The backs of many commercial buildings which face onto parking lots are without doors or windows and fail to take full advantage of this potential. This missed opportunity contributes to the bleak character of parking lots. This is particularly an issue at the Chapel Street parking lot where the MBTA commuter train arrives. This lot is a gateway to Needham Center and those businesses at its perimeter have the opportunity to benefit from their siting. New development and rehabilitation of existing buildings could realize the potential of these opportunities.

1.8 Backs of buildings that face onto parking and other publicly accessible areas should be designed as a "second front" and should include entrances, signage and display windows whenever possible.



This unembellished alley is a lost opportunity. It can provide a route to those stores flanking it as the pedestrian walks to or from the parking lot or MBTA stop.

(i) *Sidewalks*: Incorporate designated walkways to provide an unimpeded pedestrian transition from the parking lot to the building and to connect individual entrances. Sidewalks can also be used to ensure the provision of barrier-free accessibility into the rear entrances and to draw customers into those stores.

(ii) *Signage*: Locate signs above, and relate them to, a specific door and/or window. Rear signs should not exceed 18" in height and may not exceed 50% of the maximum allowed area of the principal wall sign as defined by the By-Law (refer to the *General By-Laws, Sign By-law, Article 6*). Vivid colors and striking signage are particularly necessary to highlight store entrances from the parking lot. Service entrances, on the other hand, should be clearly marked but not emphasized.



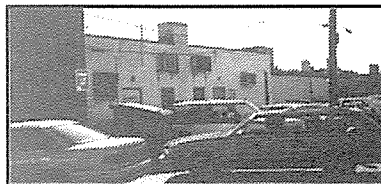
A canopy welcomes people arriving by car at the rear of this cafe.

(iii) *Windows*: A minimum of 25% of the linear frontage of the first floor rear facade should comprise doors and windows with transparent glass. Sill heights for any windows included in this calculation should not exceed 3 feet above street level. Tops of windows should be a minimum of 7 feet above the ground.

(iv) *Planting*: Provide planting in planter boxes and on trellises to enliven a rear entrance. Consider locating planter boxes to either side of the entrance to create an air of formality. Seasonal planting can add a special liveliness. Careful maintenance is required for all landscape materials.

(v) *Awnings or canopies*: The use of awnings and canopies is strongly encouraged at the back entrances of buildings.

(vi) *Alleys*: These passages should be recognized as valuable pedestrian routes to and from stores and, therefore, should receive embellishment using lighting, planting and interesting wall surface treatment.



An unscreened dumpster contributes to the negative image at the backs of buildings, near where potential "second fronts" may be located.

1.9 Provide Screening around Dumpsters.

Dumpsters should be located in parking lots behind buildings and should be screened from the parking lot, from the street and from adjacent residential areas.

STEPS FOR IMPROVING THE BACK OF A BUILDING:

EXISTING CONDITIONS

- Blank Wall
- Solid Door
- Bricked up Windows
- Unscreened Dumpster (not shown)
- Poor Lighting/No Lighting
- Poor Signage/No Signage

FIRST STEPS: Lower Cost Improvements

- New Sign
- New Awning
- Door With Window
- Improved Lighting at Entrance
- Plants Grouped around Door

MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS

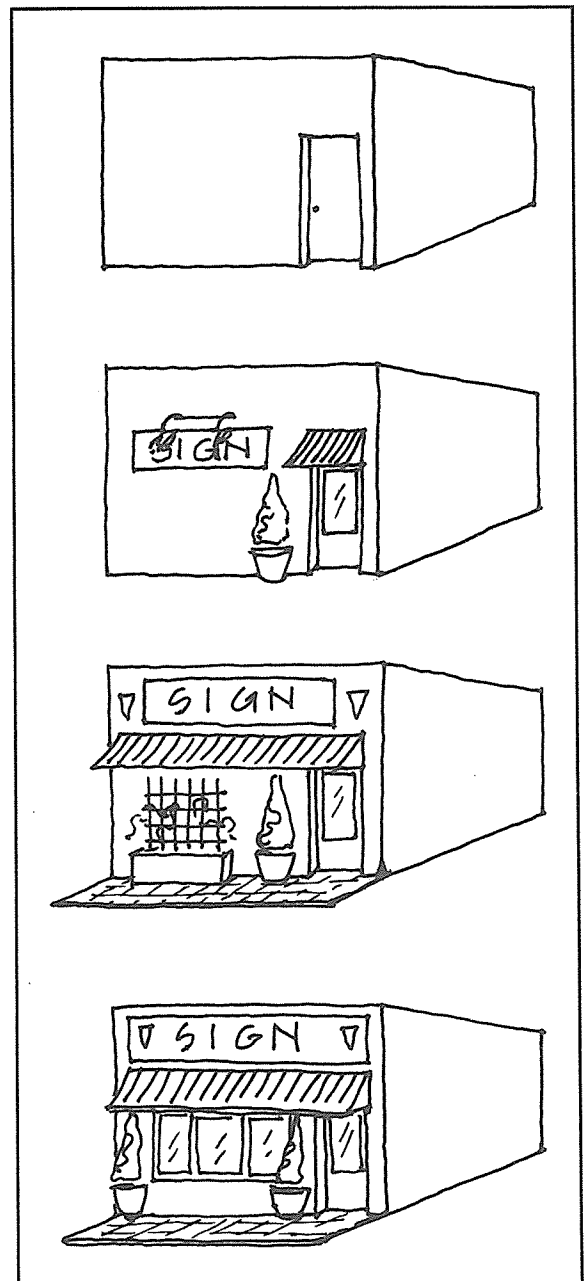
- Large New Sign
- New Full Width Awning
- Improved Lighting along Wall
- Door With Large Window
- Major Planting on Trellis
- Reinstate Bricked-up Openings
- Add Sidewalk

COMPREHENSIVE IMPROVEMENTS

- Comprehensive improvements to establish a second "front" facade
- Add major storefront display area and important entrance

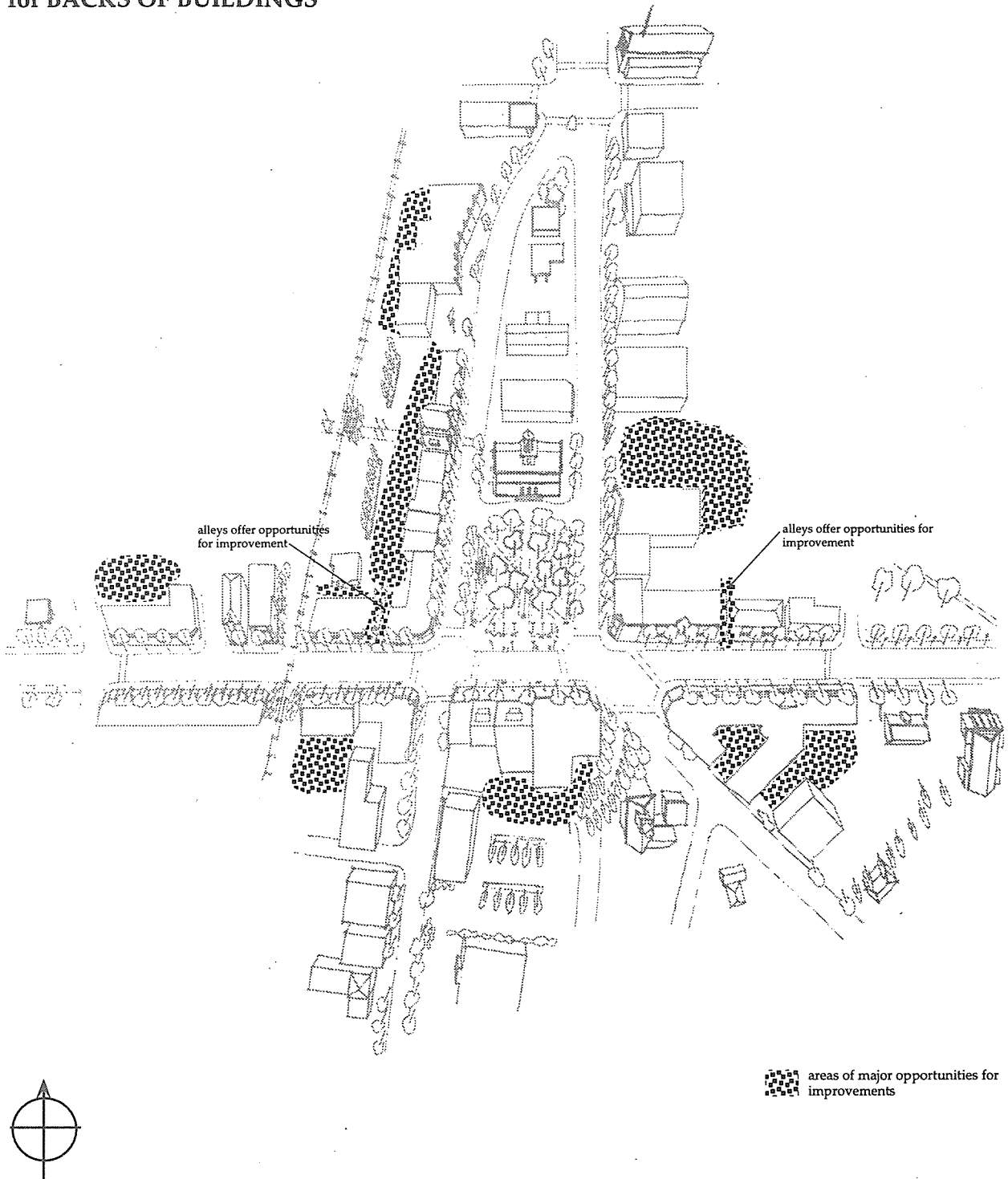
BACKS OF BUILDINGS : KEY ISSUES

- Back entrances as a "second front"
- Signs, display windows, planting and awnings
- Sidewalks along rear facades
- Screening around dumpsters

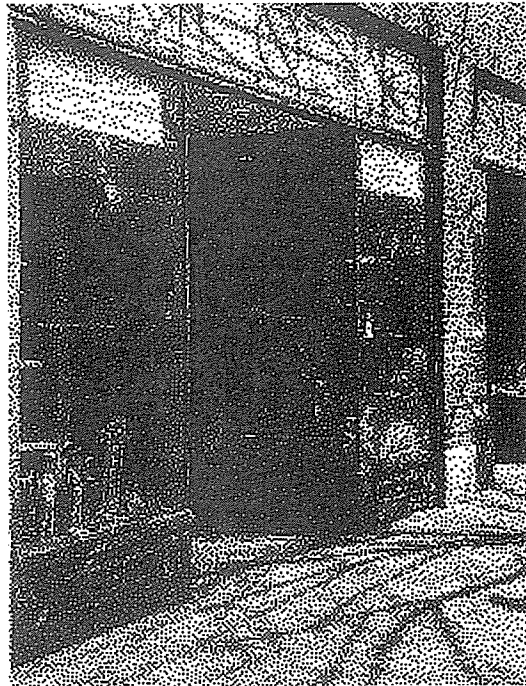


There are several steps that may be taken to improve the back of a building.

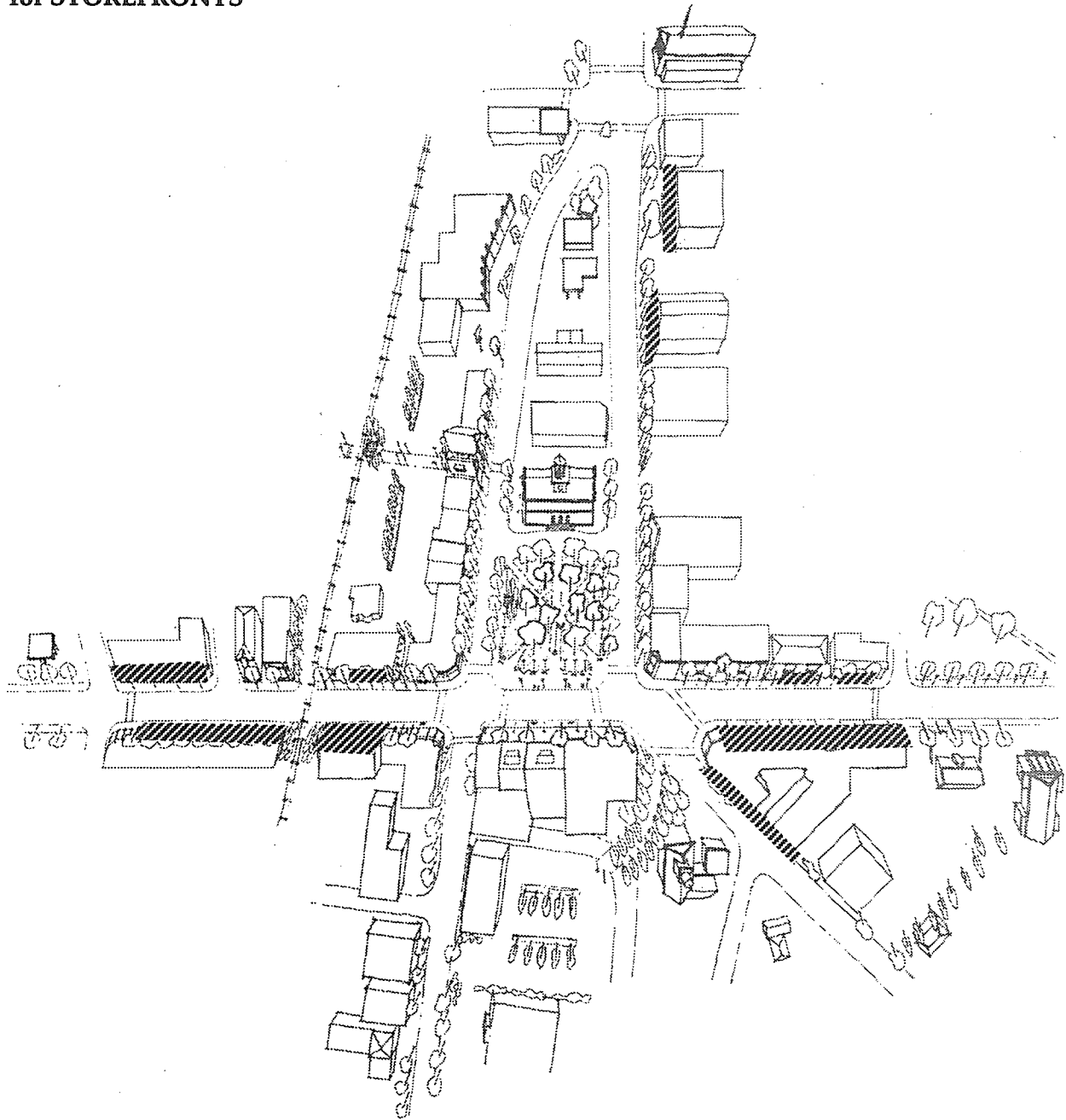
Needham Center
PRIVATE IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES
for BACKS OF BUILDINGS



2. STOREFRONTS



Needham Center PRIVATE IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES for STOREFRONTS



 areas of major opportunities for improvements

2.0 Storefronts should be open and welcoming and help to establish an individual identity for the store.

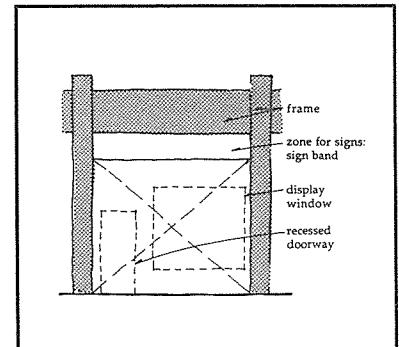
The storefront and the storefront frame are the key elements in the design of the first floor facade. The storefront is an opportunity to establish the individuality and character of each business, drawing attention to a business and the goods or services it provides. The storefront frame is a common element among the Center's storefronts, providing a common theme which helps to establish a cohesive quality for the commercial area. By providing a clear separation between stores, the frame allows each store to establish its own special character and identity.

THE STOREFRONT FRAME

The frame is the basic structural framework of the building within which the storefront should be set. The frame usually includes a zone, or band, within which signs should be located.

2.1 Contain the storefront within a frame.

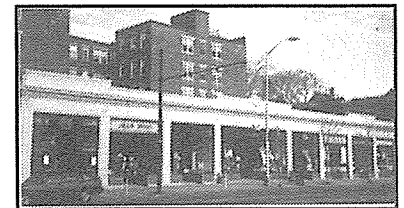
- (i) Use changes in color, materials or alignment to distinguish the storefront from the frame and establish an individual identity for each store.
- (ii) A storefront should be designed to fit inside a framed opening and not extend beyond it. To accentuate this sense of containment, a storefront can be set back slightly (6" to 12") from the front surface of the building.
- (iii) Ensure that frame elements are the same color and texture throughout the building. Where masonry is used as the frame material it should only be painted under special circumstances.



The storefront is contained within the building frame.

2.2 In the case of a larger storefront, use a frame to create divisions within the storefront.

- (i) Divide larger storefronts into smaller sections to help assimilate larger commercial facades into the visual texture of the Center. Frame divisions which are too large disrupt the rhythm of the Center's commercial architecture; divisions which are too small make good display difficult or impossible (refer also to Guideline 1.3).
- (ii) In multiple storefront buildings the frame should have a consistent finish.



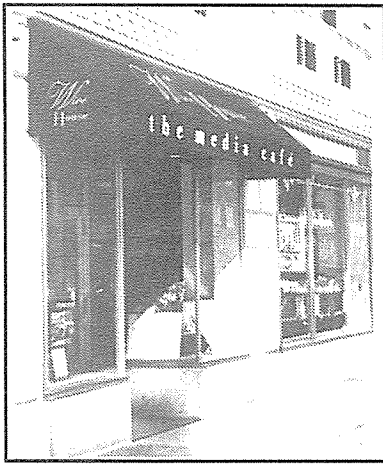
A large storefront is divided into smaller sections providing each store with its individual identity. The frame is in a consistent material of stucco.

STOREFRONT DISPLAY AREA

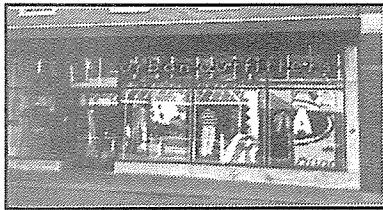
The display area establishes the individual identity of the store.

2.3 Establish an individual identity for each storefront. Doorways should be recessed, whereas windows should not.

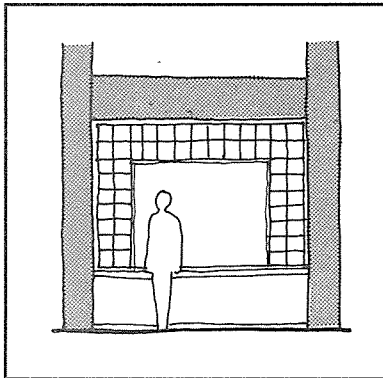
- (i) *Window height:* The window sill should be no higher than 2 feet above street level, and the top of the window should be no lower than 8 feet above grade.
- (ii) *Storefront window location:* Windows which are deeply recessed



The recessed doorway helps to accentuate the flanking display windows.



Display windows that have their sills only inches above the sidewalk may be appropriate for some types of merchandise.



Small panes at the top or sides of display windows can lend a historic flavor without obscuring visibility.

within the frame reduce the visibility of the storefront from the street, particularly when seen in perspective. In certain cases it may be desirable to recess the storefront by a small dimension to establish a clear distinction between the storefront frame and the storefront itself, allowing the storefront to establish a more distinct identity. In general, however, storefronts should not be recessed by more than 6" to 12".

(iii) *Recessed doorways:* Inset doorways where possible. They add an attractive three-dimensional quality to the storefront, and when combined with a well-designed storefront can enhance the visibility of window display by increasing angled views. In addition, they ensure that outward-opening doors do not obstruct the sidewalk and interfere with pedestrians. Recessed doorway areas provide an opportunity to include special paving at the entrance to the store. Doorway designs must also provide barrier-free accessibility (refer to A.D.A. requirements).

2.4 Provide large, transparent glass display windows; ensure that the fenestration pattern reveals, not conceals, the window display.

(i) *Glazed Area:* A minimum of 70% of the linear frontage of the first floor facade should comprise doors and windows with transparent glass. Sill heights for any windows included in this calculation should not exceed 2 feet above street level. Tops of windows should be a minimum of 8 feet above grade. At least 50% of the area of entrance doors should be glass.

(ii) *Fenestration:* Avoid the use of very small glass panes at eye level which obscure the window display, unless the storefront is undergoing a historic rehabilitation where small panes originally existed. If small panes are desired, use in combination with large panes; use small panes at the top, at the sides and/or bottom to frame an unrestricted view through the larger pane.

(iii) *Interior Lighting:* Window displays should be highlighted with strong, incandescent light fixtures. The angle of their placement is critical to ensure that they spotlight the merchandise and do not either point toward the window shopper or cause distracting reflections on the storefront window.

WINDOW DISPLAY

The power of a display window is in its ability to catch the attention of passers-by; a display should have a clear focus. Creative ideas could entail choosing a theme for the display or recognizing a special event, holiday, season or sale. Using display windows as stock space, or filling them with everything sold in the store does not usually entice the shopper to come in. Highlight a minimal number of products and change displays frequently.

(i) *Merchandise display:* Use repetition for impact. Show multiple numbers of one product or show all products of the same color, etc. Use humor; try visual puns; put products in an unusual setting or with unusual props. For example, paint all the props the same color to make them look abstract. This will also make your featured product stand out.

(ii) *Display base:* Use simple materials for display base and backgrounds. For example, fabric wrapped tightly around homasote board and stapled on the back of the boards is inexpensive and easily changeable.

(iii) *Visibility:* Create the visual focus of your display at eye level. Consider the size and amount of detail of merchandise to be displayed when deciding at what height it should be placed. If your display window has many small glass panes divided by mullions, ignore them. Place your display behind the panes. A good display, well lit, will allow passers-by to ignore all the small divisions in the window plane.

(iv) *Signs:* Avoid attaching anything directly to the window glass, including signs telling customers you accept charge cards. Hang signs far enough back from the glass so that they can be lit via the display lighting system. This will draw the shoppers' eyes into your store...the first step to bringing them inside.

(v) *Lighting:* Strong, incandescent lights (preferably moveable) are necessary to highlight displays. Consider using low-voltage track lights. The initial cost is higher, but lamps give off less heat and use 2/3 less electricity to operate.

OUTDOOR DISPLAYS

Outdoor displays can contribute to creating an enticing storefront and enlivened streetscape. The storefront design should be strong on its own and not be dependent on the use of outdoor displays. Outdoor merchandising provides an opportunity for seasonal and special displays.

2.5 Use outdoor displays, planters and other outdoor elements to enhance the storefront and the streetscape. Displays should neither clutter the sidewalk nor obstruct pedestrian traffic.

SIGNAGE

Refer to the detailed guidelines on sign design beginning on page 29. The Needham Sign By-laws, obtainable from the Office of the Town Clerk, provide regulatory information.

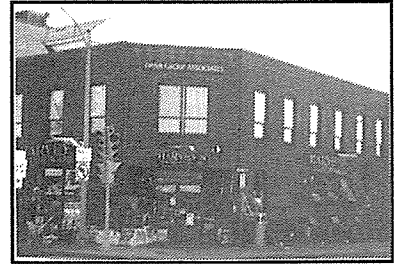
2.6 Signage should be integrated with the design of the storefront and facade. In buildings with multiple storefronts, coordinate an approach to signage.

Types of signs:

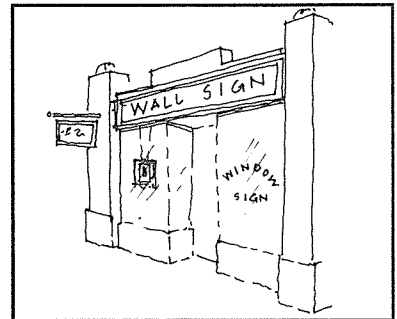
- Wall Sign: should fit within sign band dimensions where there is a sign band (maximum of 2 square feet per linear foot of facade).
- Projecting Sign: should be small and is usually best mounted at the end of the signband, or directly over the entrance (maximum of 4 square feet).
- Window Sign: can consist of letters on glass, letters etched in glass, letters on board or neon behind glass.
- Flashing or chasing signs: prohibited by Needham By-Laws.

(i) Align the tops and bottoms of wall signs with other signs on the building. Locate signs within the sign band where one exists. Hang projecting signs at a consistent height.

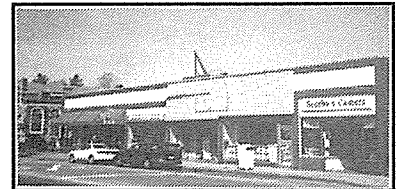
(ii) In buildings with multiple storefronts, coordinate the approach to signage throughout the building. Use signs of similar size, proportion and materials for each store. Varying the color of individual signs adds variety. Even good individual signs can, when poorly coordinated with signs for other stores in the building, detract from the character of the commercial area.



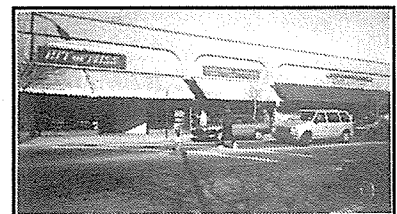
This outdoor display changes seasonally and enlivens an otherwise bland facade.



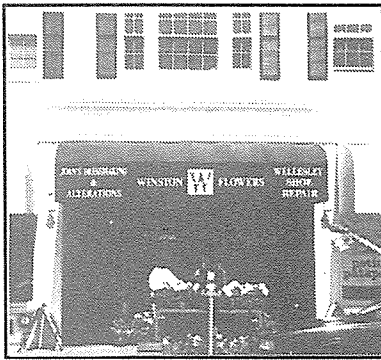
Different signs should be used for different purposes and should not obscure the frame or window display.



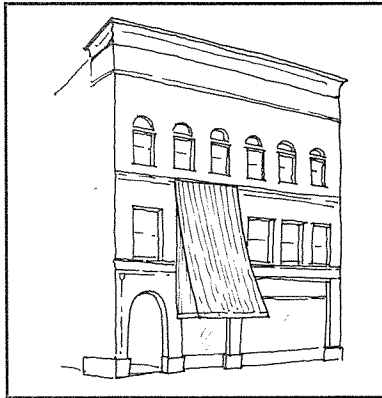
Excessive and/or poorly designed signage can be distracting and detracts from the character of nearby attractive signs and awnings.



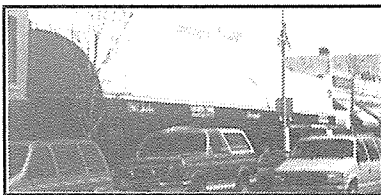
A coordinated approach to signage enhances both the individual stores and the streetscape. The signs are legible without being homogeneous.



Locate the awning below the wall sign and ensure that it does not cover up any significant architectural details



Awnings should be proportioned to suit the building to which they are affixed and should not obscure its architectural features as is depicted above.



The use of a single awning for all stores along a multiple storefront building can result in a dull and homogeneous appearance. It becomes difficult to distinguish one store from the next.

(iii) Consistently use signs with either light letters on a dark background or dark letters on a light background for all signs on a building. The former generally gives the greatest emphasis to the words.

AWNINGS

Awnings are a traditional and relatively inexpensive way to embellish a storefront or building. They convey merchants' concerns for their buildings, their customers and their business districts. Awnings can provide a location for a sign or, in fact, become a sign. They also serve the practical functions of shading a sunny storefront, keeping the interior cooler, providing a shaded and sheltered place for the passerby to walk and protecting display windows from exposure to the sun. At the rear of buildings awnings can provide a very cost effective way of highlighting entrances and improving the general character of parking areas.

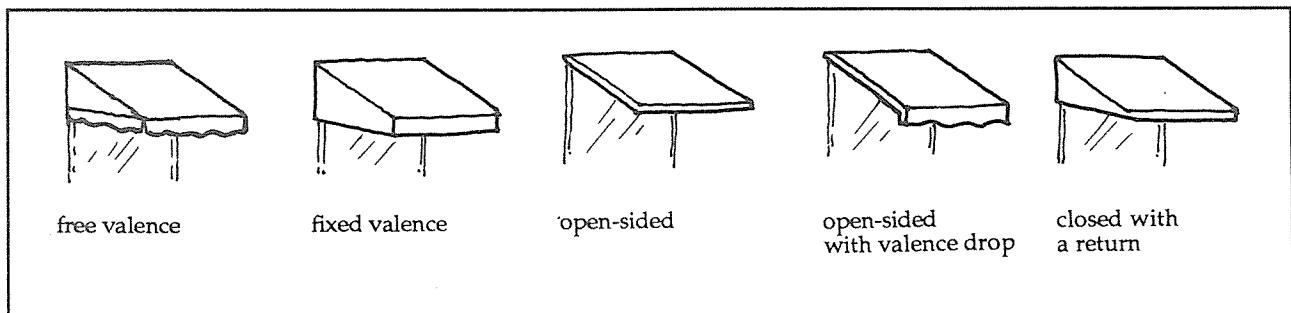
2.7 The use of awnings is encouraged.

(i) *Location:* Awnings should not cover important architectural details. Usually, older buildings were designed with a specific place to attach an awning, including proper blocking to mount the frame securely and often a protective hood or pocket to protect the awning in its retracted position. New awnings should be located in these positions wherever possible.

(ii) *Type:* Retractable awnings look more traditional, allow for greater flexibility in dealing with heat, light and the loads imposed by wind, rain and snow and are more easily protected at night. In general they are most suitable for the main streets and their use is encouraged. Either fixed frame or retractable awnings may be used in parking areas.

(iii) *Style and Coordination:* Color and style should be coordinated with the storefront and the building facade. Use of a single awning for all stores within a multiple storefront building is discouraged. Awnings should be proportioned to suit the building to which they are affixed. The vertical drop of an awning is a critical element in determining whether it will appear properly proportioned when installed. Too short a vertical drop will make the awning appear insignificant within its opening. Too long a drop will start to obscure a large portion of the display window, especially when viewed from afar.

(iv) *Fabric:* Awning fabrics come in a variety of colors, patterns and finishes. Stripes or accent bands can easily be sewn to a solid color for a custom look. Fabric awning covers need to be replaced every two-three years, depending on color and fabric content. Internally illuminated, pre-formed awnings are discouraged.

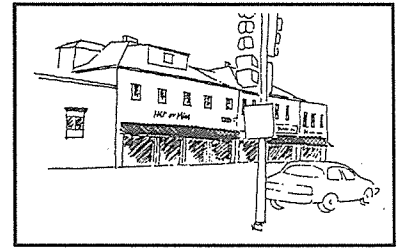


There are a variety of awning types from which to choose.

AIR CONDITIONERS

The location of air conditioners requires careful attention to incorporate them into the building design. Air conditioners should not project from the storefront over the sidewalk or the store entrance where it is likely to drip on customers and detract from the visual appeal of the storefront.

- 2.8 Provide space for a recessed air conditioner where necessary, preferably located at the rear of the building, not visible from the street.**



Awnings are an inexpensive way to enhance the streetscape.

STOREFRONT MATERIALS

Materials should reinforce the open and welcoming character of the storefront.

- 2.9 Use materials which are compatible with the character of the building and the Center.**

- (i) Solid panels below or above the window should be expressed as infill and set within the frame of the storefront.
- (ii) Framing members may be of metal, although wood is generally better since it allows for thinner framing members and more detail.
- (iii) Glass should be transparent, not reflective. Opaque or colored glass is only acceptable in unique circumstances.

COLOR

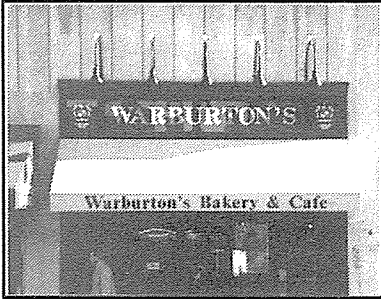
Color can be an important contributor to Needham's character. While variety and experimentation with color schemes is not discouraged, they should respect the prevailing character of the Center.

- 2.10 Use color to bring an additional dimension to the storefront.**

- (i) Take cues from the architecture of the building; coordinate and integrate the colors selected for the storefronts with the overall color of the building. Limit the number of colors selected; use several shades of the same color or similar colors for a rich look. A storefront painted in neutral colors can be an effective way to highlight signage and merchandise displayed in the window.
- (ii) In a building with more than one storefront, shared elements should be painted the same color; for example, if there is a continuous sign band, it should be painted one color for its entire length. Piers and columns that are part of the building's architecture should also be the same color. With the exception of concrete block, natural masonry materials such as cast stone, brick and clay tile should not be painted. If the existing masonry storefront piers have been painted, investigate the restoration of the original finish.
- (iii) Coordinate colors between neighboring stores. Separate storefronts within the same building do not necessarily all have to be the same, but they should complement each other so that all elements of the building can reinforce one another.

(iv) Bright or strong colors should generally be reserved for accents-on doors, to highlight interesting details, or in signs and graphics. Highlighting details in too many different colors can look too busy. Too many colors or colors that might clash can detract from the desired effect and obscure the underlying character of the building's architecture.

LIGHTING



Exterior light fixtures light the main signage and become an integral part of the storefront itself.

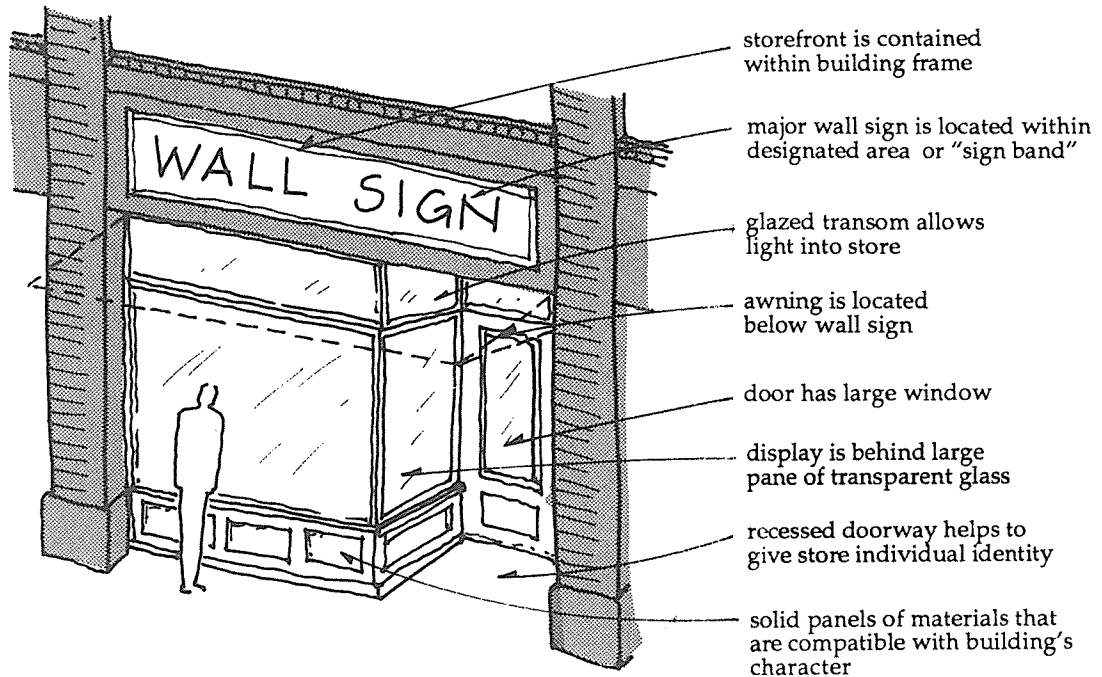
The exterior lighting scheme is important to the success of storefront design. Lighting which highlights the sign and display area is often more effective than general lighting of the entire store. When a larger building has a number of storefronts, exterior lighting should be coordinated since different light sources have different colors. Ensure that recessed entries are well lit for safety and visibility.

2.11 Storefront lighting should specifically highlight the main signage and the window display.

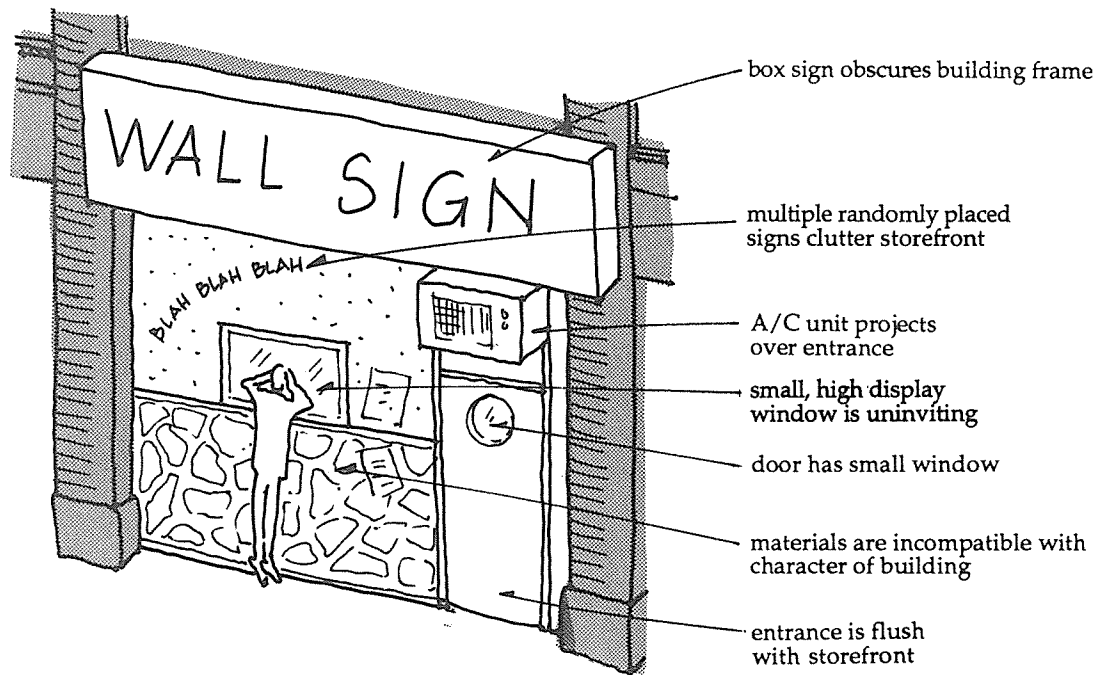
STOREFRONTS: KEY ISSUES

- Individual store identity and variety
- Cohesiveness between storefronts
- Cohesiveness between the storefront and building
- Cohesiveness between the building and the streetscape.

"GOOD" STOREFRONT DESIGN



"BAD" STOREFRONT DESIGN





3. SIGNS





3.0 Signs should be compatible with the building, neighboring buildings and the character of the Center as a whole. Signs should be carefully located within the sign band where one exists to avoid obscuring important architectural features.

Signs should be designed to present a clear message about the business they serve. With careful consideration, and high quality design, signs can add a new level of visual refinement to the streetscape. Signs are also one of the least expensive and most effective ways to enhance a storefront.

Signs must be carefully considered in relation to neighboring signs and the facades of the buildings in the Center as a whole. Signs for a row of storefronts in the same building should all be of similar size, material and proportion. They should all be located similarly on the building. While it is not necessary for such signs to be all the same color or design, they should look like a family - in this way they reinforce, rather than compete with, each other.

The sign alone should not attempt to convey the entire story a merchant wants to relay. Too many different signs can overwhelm viewers. The end result is that none of the intended messages are conveyed. It is the careful combination of sign, building, storefront and window display working together that has the greatest impact.

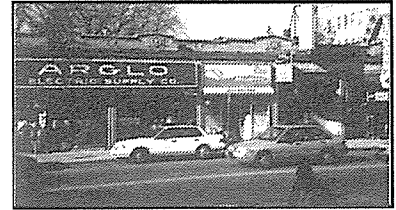
There are four basic types of signs: wall, projecting, window and freestanding. Their use depends upon their context within the Town. Within the core commercial area, on building facades along Great Plain Avenue, Chapel Street and Highland Avenue and on the backs of commercial buildings facing parking lots, wall signs, projecting signs, and window signs are appropriate to use. At the edge of the commercial area, freestanding signs can be used to provide effective signs for buildings of residential character. Different guidelines apply to each category of sign and these are outlined in the subsequent sections.

WALL SIGNS

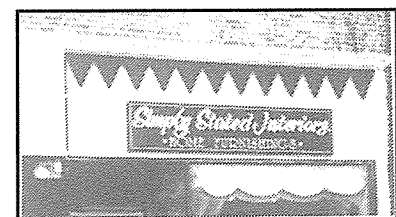
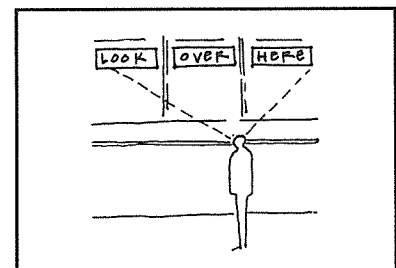
Of all types of signs, wall signs need to be seen from furthest away and should contain simple information such as the name of the store and the type of business.

3.1 Use the wall sign as the primary business sign. It is viewed from furthest away, often from across the street, and should be legible from that distance. Wall signs should be carefully sized to fit in with the building's facade design and should avoid obscuring important architectural features.

(i) Types of signs: Board signs use a background board, generally rectangular in shape, which contains the letters, graphic image and logo, where applicable. Individual letters mounted directly on a building can also create appealing signs. Neon signs as the major wall sign are discouraged.



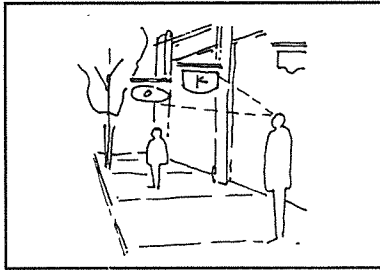
Too many signs on one storefront create visual clutter and ultimately the legibility of any one sign is obscured.



Board sign: an example of a well-placed, clear wall sign.



Individual letter sign: individual letters contrast in color and material with wall surface for maximum legibility.



A projecting sign should complement the storefront and may further express the character of the type of store or the Town itself.

(ii) *Size and placement:* The size of a wall sign depends on the width of the street as well as the size of the business. Locate the sign within the sign band where one exists. Do not cover up important architectural details such as cornices, piers and other elements. The top of the sign should not exceed the underside of the sills of the upper level windows, the lowest portion of the roof, or the top of the parapet in the case of single story buildings with parapets - whichever is lowest. Wall signs in Needham Center may not exceed 12" in thickness. Internally illuminated wall signs are discouraged in Needham Center. Box signs with a white background are usually dull during the daytime and glaringly bright at night and are, therefore, not very readable. If an internally illuminated box sign is required, it should have lightly colored letters on an opaque background for greatest legibility.

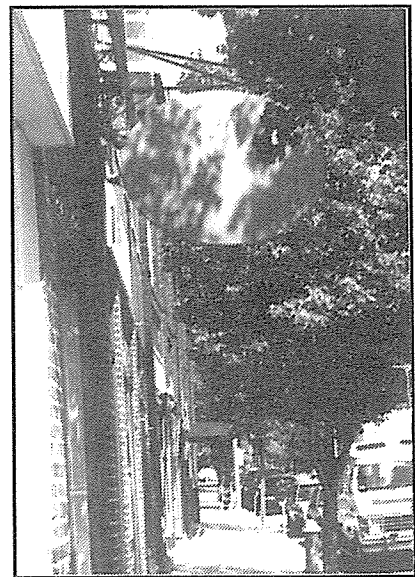
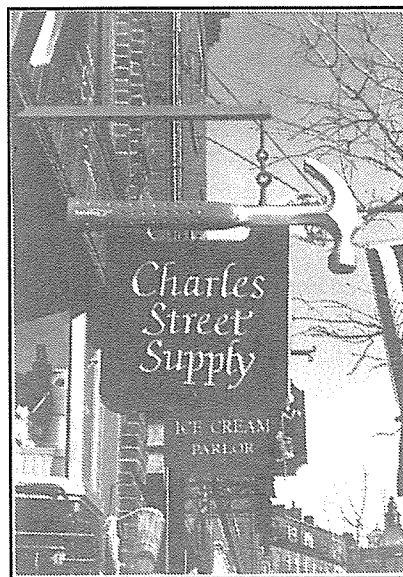
(iii) *Lettering:* Signs on main facades should generally use letters which range from 8" to 14" high. Smaller letters for smaller stores and larger letters for larger stores are recommended. Internally illuminated individual letters are not encouraged.

PROJECTING SIGNS

The Town of Needham recognizes the special character that high quality projecting signs can add to the streetscape. These signs should be small and unique in character. Projecting signs are seen from a closer distance than wall signs. They are viewed from medium/short range - and especially by pedestrians on the sidewalk.

3.2 Use projecting signs where appropriate in order to complement the storefront and to catch pedestrians' attention as they walk along the street.

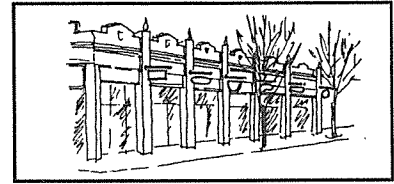
(i) *Types of Signs:* Often, a three-dimensional object or special shape makes the most effective projecting sign. Merchants can use these signs to express what is unique about their merchandise or their business - for example, a hammer-shaped sign for a hardware store, or an eyeglasses-shaped sign for an optometrist. Projecting signs are not, usually, considered the predominant sign for any business. Internally illuminated projecting sign boxes tend to look heavy and are strongly discouraged.



(ii) *Size and placement:* Projecting signs should be small - no bigger than 6 square feet in area - and eye catching. Signs should be located so that if the underside of the sign projects over the sidewalk, it is at least 8 feet above grade. Signs should not project more than 6 feet from the facade of the building or half the width of the sidewalk, whichever is less. They should not block visibility of neighboring signs.

(iii) *Lettering:* Letters should be 4" to 10" high.

(iv) *Special Concerns:* The information on a projecting sign need not duplicate the information on the wall sign - it should augment the primary sign, describing the business in a different, more visual, way. The design should be carefully coordinated with the building, the storefront and the design of the primary wall sign. The bracket from which the sign hangs is part of the overall sign design. If several stores within a building are to have projecting signs, their design and placement should be considered together and in general, they should be hung at the same height.



A streetscape can be positively enhanced through the use of projecting signs.

WINDOW SIGNS

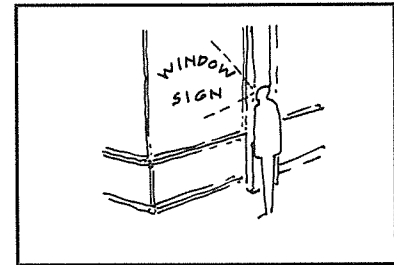
Window signs are seen from short range - from in front of the store.

3.3 Use window signs to provide more detailed information and to complement the window display. Signs painted on storefront glass are a traditional and effective way to present this information.

(i) *Types of signs:* Lettering may be hand painted directly on glass, etched in the glass or applied with vinyl, die-cut letters. White, light colors or gold leaf are most legible for graphics on glass. Paper signs taped to glass never look good; temporary signs should be hung about one foot behind the glass, fixed to a rigid backing board and highlighted with display spot lights. Neon signs are allowed, but work best if they occupy a minimum amount of the display window.

(ii) *Size and location:* Signs painted on second floor windows are seen from a greater distance than those on first floor windows, and the letter size and amount of information must be adjusted accordingly. Lettering on first floor windows should cover no more than 20% of the glass area. Lettering on second floor windows should cover no more than 25% of the glass area.

(iii) *Lettering:* The size of the lettering may vary from 1/2" to 8". The amount of information to convey, the importance of the information, the design of the display area and the design of the storefront should all be considered in determining the height of letters.



GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SIGN DESIGN

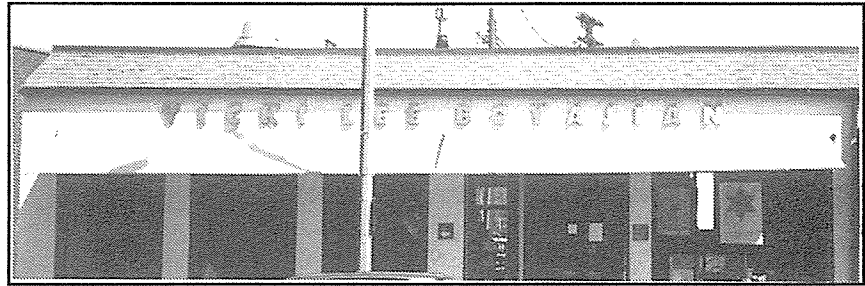
The following section contains general guidelines regarding materials, colors and lighting, as well as some suggestions regarding window display.

MATERIALS FOR SIGNS

(i) *Wood:* Wood can be used for backing or lettering. Wood is particularly useful for a sign that has carved, recessed or dimensional lettering or decoration. Use wood that allows the grain of the wood to contribute to the design. Large pieces of wood can crack or check as they age; exterior plywood (with protected edges) can help solve this problem.

(ii) *Metal:* Metal can be used for backing or lettering. Copper, bronze, brass and stainless steel offer richness and durability. Gold and silver leaf, properly applied, can last for fifty years or more.

Individual stainless steel letters can create a clean, long-lasting and sophisticated sign.



(iii) *Glass:* The transparency of glass allows graphics or lettering painted on its surface to float in space while also allowing a view beyond. Glass can be etched or sandblasted and lit from the top or bottom edge for dramatic effects. Glass may also be entirely backpainted with a solid color after lettering has been applied.

(iv) *Plastic:* This is likely to be most successful when used for individual letters. In large amounts, plastic can look flimsy and cheap. If used as a backing, it must be made rigid and can be placed in a frame. Vacuum-formed plastic faces in metal frames are generally inappropriate.

COLORS

(i) *Coordination:* Coordinate sign and building colors so that the entire face of the building works together to look attractive and draw attention. Too many colors used together on a sign (or on adjacent signs) tend to overwhelm the viewer. It is best to limit the number of colors on a sign to three or four. Any additional colors should be used sparingly as accents.

(ii) *Contrast:* Make sure that there is enough contrast between lettering and background colors. In general, lighter letters on a dark background are more legible than dark letters on a light background. This applies to signage applied to glass as well as board backing. If a building contains a number of shops, it is best if all signs have dark backgrounds and light letters or, light backgrounds and dark letters. Lack of this basic uniformity destroys the rhythm of a building's facade.

LIGHTING

Well-lit signs are particularly important for stores that stay open at night. Properly angled, bright lighting in display windows is also effective. Illuminated signs also attract attention after-hours and lend a warmth to a business district. Exterior lights can be controlled by timers or photo-electric cells. A full understanding of the lighting options for signage can help discourage the use of internally illuminated sign boxes.

(i) *Incandescent light:* Usually spots or flood lights attached to the building facade and spaced at intervals can illuminate the full area of a sign. There are a variety of exterior fixtures that can be used as a decorative element—from those with neutral, small housings to elaborate, fluted, gooseneck fixtures.

(ii) *Fluorescent light:* Properly shielded with hoods, a series of fluorescent fixtures can more uniformly light signs than incandescent spots. They are typically cooler in color, but new tube types can closely match the quality and color range of incandescent lights, which many people still prefer. Fluorescent fixtures typically look more utilitarian than incandescent ones and blend less easily with historic building facades; therefore, the provision of a valence to conceal the fixture is appropriate.

(iii) *Backlit signs or letters:* Micro-fluorescent tubes or neon behind solid letters or signs can provide a pleasant glow around an establishment's name.



A coordinated lighting system should be used for multiple storefronts of a single building.

General Notes:

- If a building has a series of storefronts, the lighting for their signs should be coordinated. If all storefronts have signs lit externally with hooded fluorescent lights, for example, all the lamp colors should be the same - all warm white, all cool white, etc.
- Although up-lighting signs from below is dramatic and allows fixtures to be more easily hidden, mounting fixtures above signs and lighting down avoids many weather and water-related problems.
- Bare bulbs, while appropriate for theaters, should be avoided on most buildings. Glare from unshielded lights makes adjacent signs or displays difficult to see.
- Overly bright signs, especially at night, can actually cause passers by to look away rather than read them.

4. MAINTENANCE



4.0 Maintenance of buildings, signs, storefronts, landscaping and parking areas plays a central role in defining the character of the commercial areas of Town.

While these guidelines set out objectives for design, effective long-term maintenance will ensure that improvements, once made, remain a permanent feature of the Town. Regular maintenance of buildings and landscape elements will ensure long-term savings through avoidance of costly repairs. Regular repainting, for example, preserves a building from more costly repairs which may be necessary if it is delayed excessively. In addition, a new coat of paint can add a noticeable freshness to a building and so contribute to the area as a whole.

Dumpster areas, awnings and signs require frequent maintenance. Maintenance of plants is also particularly important to ensure their continued health.

Property owners and store owners are strongly encouraged to step back and review their property every six months with this checklist in hand:

- Is any paint peeling or faded?
- Has the window display been refreshed recently?
- Is the glass clean?
- Is the primary sign faded or dated?
- Is there any window advertising that is out of date?
- Is the awning in one piece? Is it faded or frayed?
- Does the exterior lighting work?
- Is there any rusted metal that should be treated?
- Is the dumpster enclosure clean? Painted?
- Are there trees, plants or planters that need pruning, fertilizing, or replanting?
- Are there other changes that would enliven the storefront and make it more inviting?

In short, does the building or store, front and back, still convey the image of a successful business that is proud of what it offers and wants to attract customers?

5. ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICTS



5.0 A series of smaller Neighborhood Business Districts have the potential to play a more significant role in the lives of the Town's individual neighborhoods, as commercial centers and potentially as public meeting places.

The previous four sections provide Guidelines directly relevant to Needham Center and Avery Square - pedestrian-oriented business districts.

The following Guidelines address the unique issues related to a series of primarily auto-oriented business districts. These include Chestnut Street Business District, Charles River District, Bird's Hill, Hillside Avenue, Hemlock Gorge, Memorial Park Area and Corporate Center Area (refer to the map opposite page 1). These areas are younger than the Center and Avery Square. The Guidelines in this Section are the primary Guidelines for these areas; however, they should be read in conjunction with the Guidelines in Sections 1-4 to provide additional relevant guidance.

The physical character of the outlying districts does not currently match their importance in neighborhood civic life. Many have a somewhat visually impoverished character. They should evolve to become visually pleasing hubs within their own residential areas and, where appropriate, act as gateways to the Town.

Major problems include a lack of street trees and other landscaping, inadequate sidewalks, buildings which do not relate to surrounding neighborhoods, poorly-designed parking areas and chaotic storefronts and signs.

While the most recent development is generally of higher quality, the majority of existing commercial development dates back to the 1970s and earlier, and presents most or all of the problems listed above. Recent improvements to the Town's Zoning By-Law now ensure that future development projects contain adequate landscaping along streets and transitional screening to protect surrounding residential uses. However, other issues of visual quality, such as building design, storefronts and signage, are not directly addressed in zoning.

These guidelines set basic standards and objectives for the neighborhood business districts both by supplementing current zoning as it applies to new development projects and by spelling out desired improvements to existing developments.

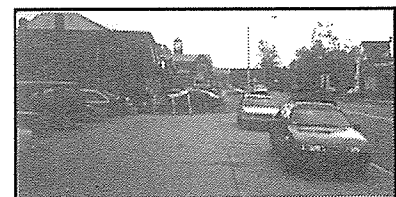
SITE PLANNING

PARKING LOTS AND SITE LANDSCAPING

Perhaps the most significant visual problem in the outlying commercial areas is the bleak and obtrusive character of parking areas and other paved asphalt areas - especially when located in highly visible locations such as the intersection of major streets and the entrance to a district. Well-designed, landscaped parking lots can do a great deal to improve the quality of the various business districts. They should be subdivided by internal landscaped divisions and screened from the street and adjacent residential areas (see Guideline 1.2). Trash receptacles should be incorporated into the design scheme to deter littering. The absence of landscape screening around parking lots or at boundaries between residential and other uses, leaves these areas with a bleak and unfriendly feeling.



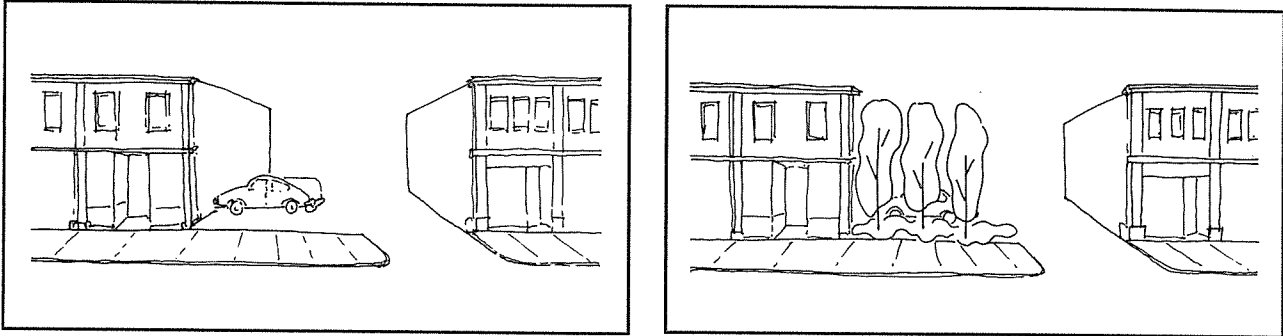
This rather barren environment tends not to be inviting to pedestrians.



The absence of landscaped screening between parking and the sidewalk contributes to the lack of appeal of this strip.

5.1 Site Planning should aim to establish a consistent and cohesive character within the commercial area and create a welcoming environment for pedestrians and neighbors.

5.2 Provide perimeter landscaping around all commercial lots where they abut the street or residential lots.



Screening parking and services along the street edge improves the general streetscape environment.

5.3 Provide fencing and landscape screening between the parking lot and the street. Include internal landscape divisions in larger parking lots. Minimize curb cuts.

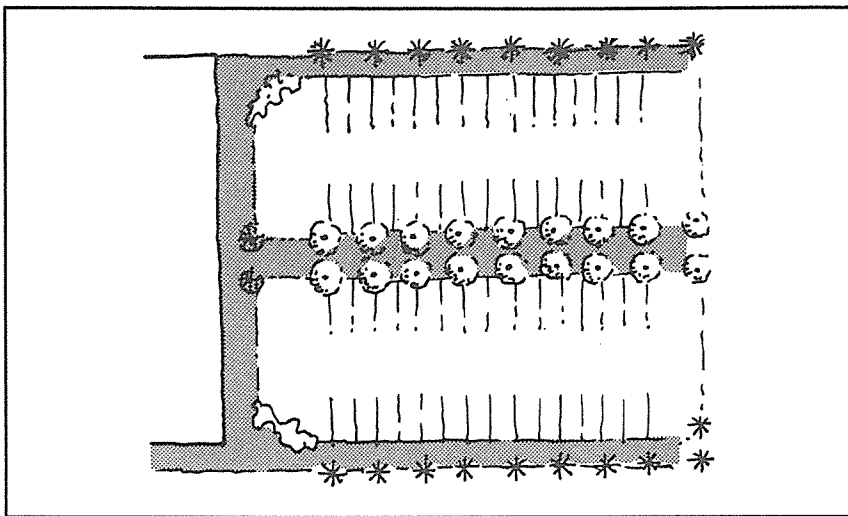
(i) *Curb cuts:* Only one curb cut should be included for businesses with less than 150 feet of frontage, and a maximum of two curb cuts should be included for businesses with longer frontages. In general, the maximum width for curb cuts should be 25 feet.

(ii) *Internal landscaped islands:* Islands and planting schemes should take into account snow plowing. Shrubs which grow to a maximum of approximately 4 feet should be selected to allow for visibility across the lot.

SIDEWALKS

The provision and quality of sidewalks determines whether or not an area is considered welcoming by pedestrians. Sidewalks should provide well-lit, barrier-free, accessible, expedient walkways which lead to front and rear store entrances, and through to the main commercial streets.

5.4 Provide good pedestrian connections along the sidewalk and in front of stores. Provide sidewalk areas in larger parking lots where possible.



Create pedestrian connections from parking to sidewalks and rear store entrances and provide appropriate area landscaping.

LIGHTING

Over-sized parking lot lighting, often providing excessive light levels, can contribute to the unfriendly character of outlying commercial districts. Badly designed lighting can be a nuisance, throwing unwanted light on surrounding residential properties. It can also affect the safe vision of motorists on the street. Carefully chosen pedestrian-scale lighting fixtures, with baffles where necessary, can avoid these problems and look good in daylight.

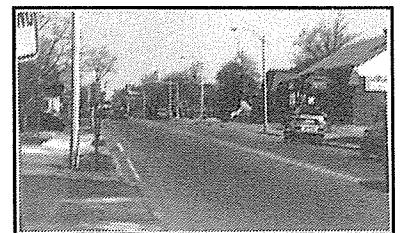
Lighting should be focused directly on the lot, avoiding "spill" onto adjacent properties and the street. All direct rays from such lighting must fall entirely within the lot. Light levels should be sufficient to ensure easy vision and a sense of security within parking areas. Avoid overly bright lighting. In general, lighting should be concentrated on stores and signs and walkway areas, not on the parking lot as a whole.

5.5 In parking lots, use pedestrian-scale light fixtures designed to shine entirely on the lot. (Refer to the Town's Zoning By-Law for specific requirements.)

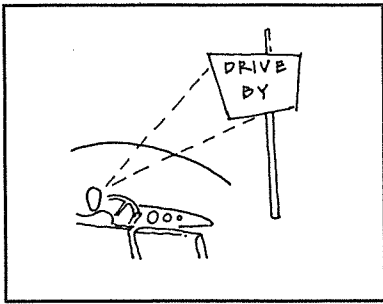
BUILDINGS AND SIGNS

BUILDING DESIGN

5.6 Building design should be compatible with buildings in adjacent residential areas in size, scale, materials and colors; they should also incorporate an appropriate location for wall signs. Building style should be in keeping with a predominantly residential New England community.



Buildings should take into consideration surrounding character and the idea that in many cases, neighborhood business districts act as gateways into the Town.



Wall signs should be readable from the parking lot and coordinated with one another.

FREESTANDING SIGNS

Freestanding directory signs are encouraged for multi-tenant buildings in outlying commercial areas. While freestanding signs need to be large enough to be seen from cars, they should not be so large that they detract from the desired pedestrian character of these areas. Information contained on the sign needs to be kept very simple with easy-to-read lettering. The overall area of the sign should not exceed 32 square feet; signs larger than this look like billboards and are to be avoided. Freestanding signs should be located at the entrance to the parking lot. There should only be one sign per group of buildings. (See Sign By-Law in the Town of Needham General By-Laws Section 6.5.3.3.)

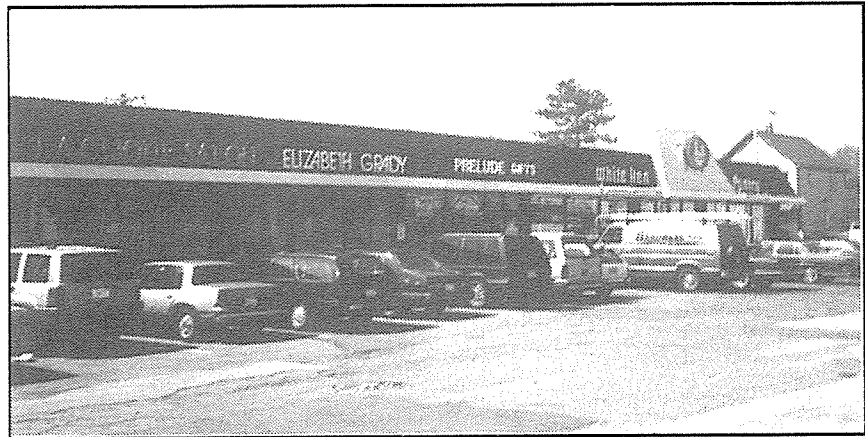
5.7 Freestanding directory signs, located at the auto access point to the parking lot, should be scaled to be read from the street by pedestrians and drivers.

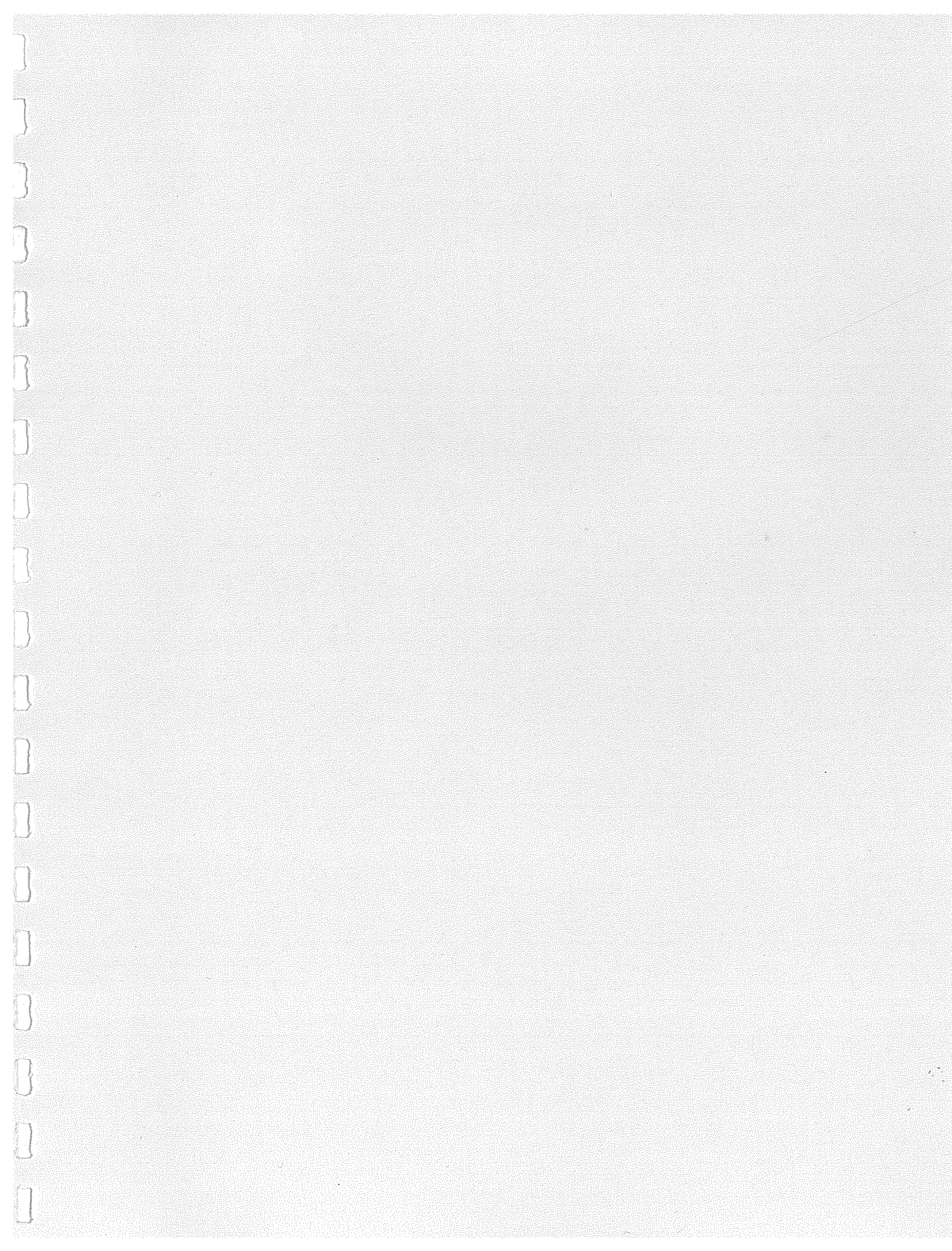
The freestanding sign should be clearly legible from a car, while signs attached to the building should be smaller in size and intended to orient people from within the parking area.

WALL SIGNS

5.8 Wall signs on multi-tenant buildings should be compatible with one another and should be scaled to be read from the parking lot.

All wall signs in a multi-tenant building should be coordinated with one another. They should display a consistent character of design. Refer to Section 3.1 for details regarding types of wall signs, their proportioning, size and placement and the optimum size for lettering.





GUIDELINES

FOR

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

NEEDHAM CENTER

Public Improvements are integral to the success of any overall business district improvement plan and will need to parallel and complement improvements undertaken by property owners. It is recommended that Public Improvements be focused initially on the Town Common and its nearby surrounds. This strategy is based on an understanding that funds may be limited and, therefore, comprehensive improvements throughout the downtown cannot be implemented immediately. Concentrating efforts in this way will ensure that visible and tangible improvements are made in the short-term. However, this first round of improvements should be seen as an initial phase in the longer-term implementation of public improvements throughout the downtown area. As outlined in the Vision Statement, initial goals should include the improvement of streetscape amenities, pedestrian connections and the enhancement of the Town Common in recognition of its integral role in the life of the Town.

Recommendations are illustrated on the axonometric drawings - the text lists them in the order of how they might be implemented over time. Obviously, these suggestions should be regarded as flexible and able to accommodate any changes beyond these Guidelines that might positively impact the public realm.

STREETSCAPE CHARACTER

LIGHTING

Lighting is a complex issue and a full discussion of it is beyond the scope of these Guidelines. Different light fixtures are appropriate for different locations. Street lighting, parking lighting and park lighting should reflect the varying characters of their contexts. Of specific interest to these Guidelines is the way pedestrian-scale light fixtures can transform the character of streets. The function of these fixtures goes beyond the provision of light - their scale relates more to the pedestrian than the car and can therefore signal a pedestrian-oriented center and encourage drivers to slow down.

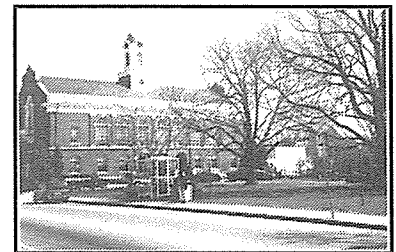
Recommendation: Use pedestrian-scale light fixtures in place of cobra head lights to light sidewalks and major public spaces.

Locations for new pedestrian-scale (10 to 15 feet high) light standards:
(please refer to the illustration on page 48)

1. around the three sides of the Town Common
2. along Great Plain Avenue - from Pickering Street to Glendoon Street
3. along Chapel Street from Great Plain Avenue to north of the Town Hall
4. along Highland Avenue from Great Plain Avenue to just north of the Town Hall
5. at pedestrian connections discussed below

Suggested Specification:

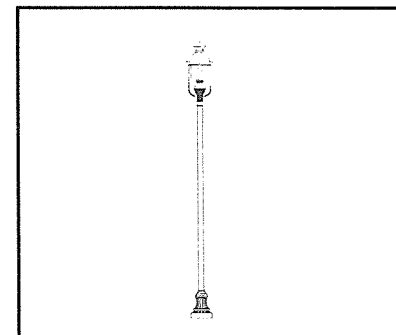
"Towne Square" ALN 412CGR5 : manufactured by Architectural Area Lighting
distributed by Omni Light, Burlington, MA 617-331-2300



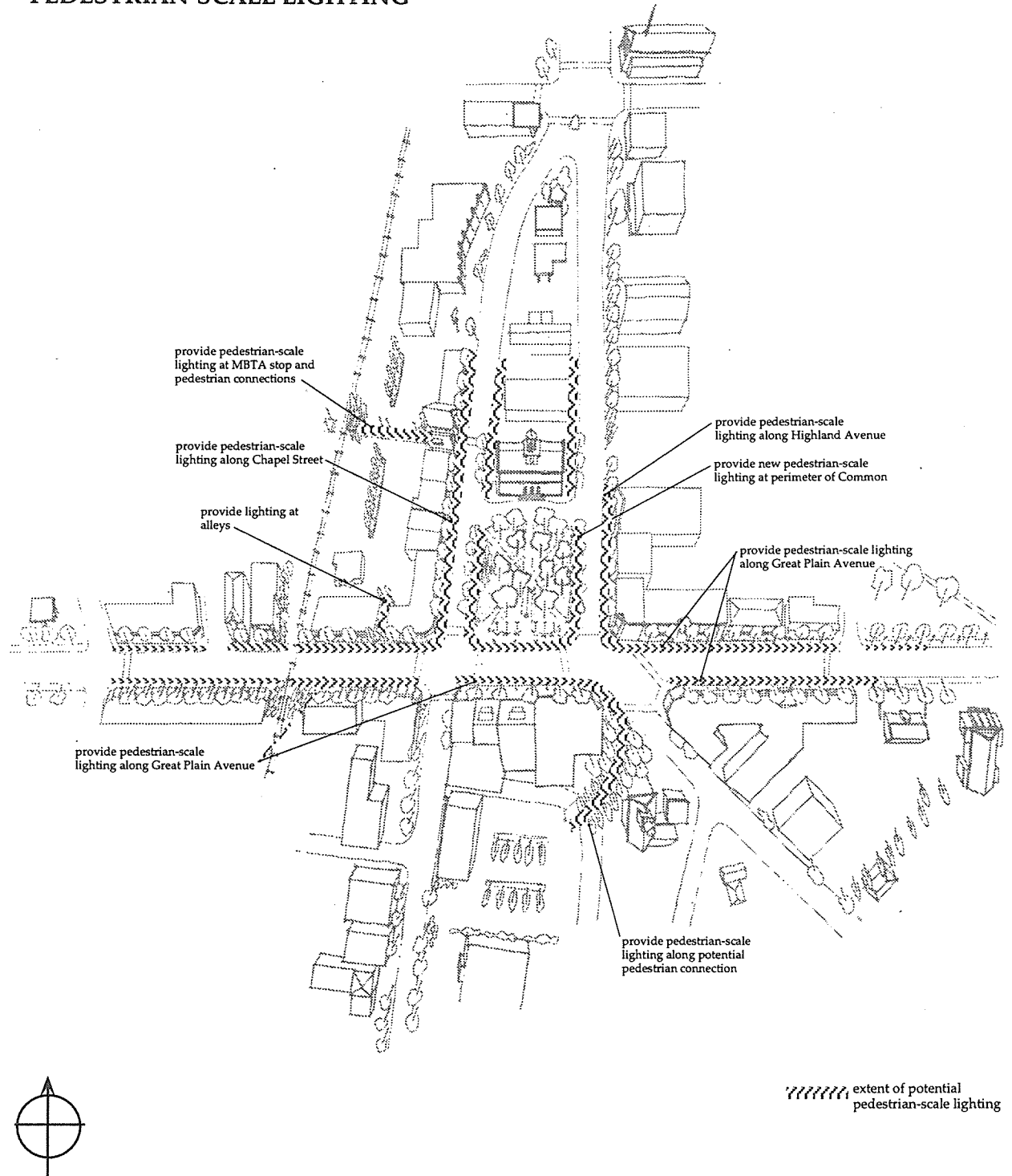
New pedestrian-scale light fixtures around the Common would enhance it and its surrounds.



Pedestrian-scale lights would start to transform Great Plain Avenue's streetscape.



**Needham Center
PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES:
PEDESTRIAN-SCALE LIGHTING**



PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS - Sidewalks, Alleys and Walkways

Adequate and welcoming pedestrian connections are vital to a vibrant Center. Connections should be designed or enhanced so that people feel comfortable and safe walking between destinations. Merchants benefit from well-used pedestrian ways as people are more likely to window shop as they promenade.

(i) Sidewalks

Wide sidewalks allow for pedestrian-oriented street activities and amenities. This includes the provision of street furniture, specific street events or displays and outdoor cafes. Sidewalks should be continuous and interrupted by a minimum of curb cuts.

Recommendation: Widen sidewalks where possible to allow for greater pedestrian street activities and amenities.

Locations where increased sidewalk width should be further evaluated:
(refer to illustration on page 50)

1. Chapel Street along the Common
2. Highland Avenue along the Common
3. along Great Plain Avenue along the edge of the Common
4. Great Plain Avenue, south side, between Chestnut Street and Dedham Avenue
5. along Chapel Street, west side
6. along Great Plain Avenue, south side, from Pickering Street to Maple Street
7. along Great Plain Avenue, north side, from Pickering Street to Glendoon Street

Note: widened sidewalks in each of these areas would add to the Center's attractiveness. However, additional study is recommended before a final decision is made. Key additional considerations will include the potential impact on parking, pedestrian safety and maintenance/snow removal activity.

Other sidewalk improvements to be implemented wherever possible:

- Minimize curb cut dimensions where vehicular access is required across the sidewalk.
- Add sidewalks to the back of buildings, if they are accessible to the public.

Sidewalk Materials:

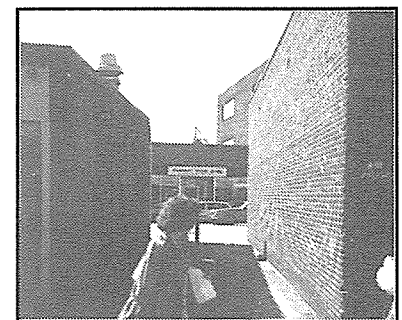
Brick sidewalks are very attractive but, unfortunately, very expensive. If they are to be considered anywhere it should be at the perimeter of the Common and at the sidewalks opposite the Common along Great Plain Avenue, Chapel Street and Highland Avenue. This would help to extend the grounds of the Common and, in turn, the civic center of the downtown.

(ii) Alleys and Walkways

Pedestrian alleys and walkways provide an intimacy not found on regular town streets; however, they must be perceived as safe in order to offer residents alternative routes and short-cuts. They should be well-lit and can incorporate planting, street furniture and interesting wall and ground surface treatment.

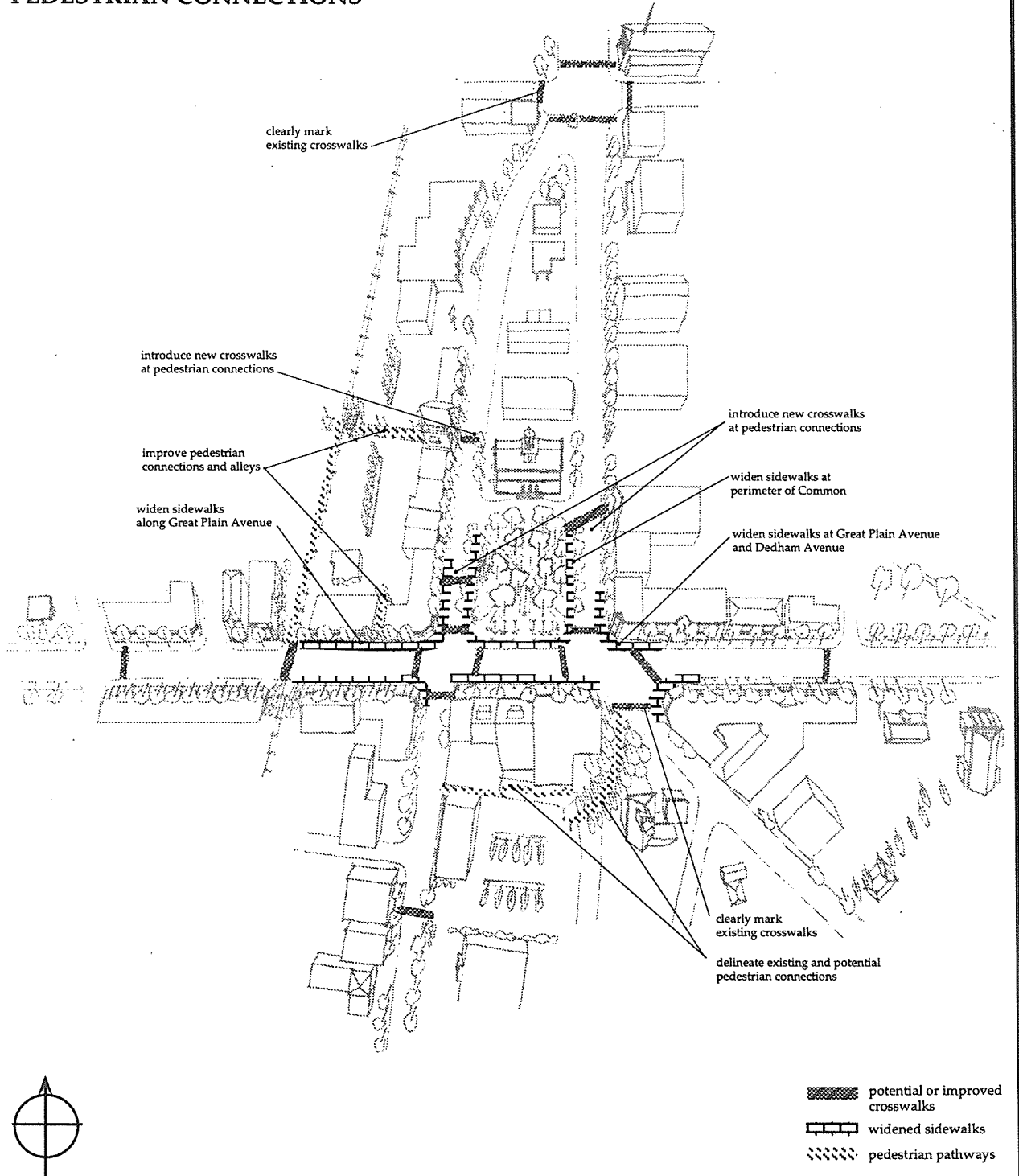


The existing narrow sidewalks limit the possibilities for introducing tree planting and street furniture.



Existing alleys such as this one running from the Chapel Street lot to Great Plain Avenue can become much more pleasant pedestrian connections.

Needham Center
PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES:
PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS



Recommendation: Improve pedestrian amenities and safety along alleys and walkways.

Locations for improved alleys and walkways:
(refer to illustration on page 50)

1. from MBTA stop at the Chapel Street lot, through the alley, to Town Hall and Town Common
2. from MBTA stop at the Chapel Street lot, past the old railroad station to the alley to the south, to Great Plain Avenue
3. the MBTA stop to the western portion of the Chapel Street lot, parallel to the railway tracks, to Great Plain Avenue
4. potential connection: from the Chestnut Street lot to Dedham Avenue
5. the Chestnut Street lot to Chestnut Street

How to make improvements to alleys and walkways:

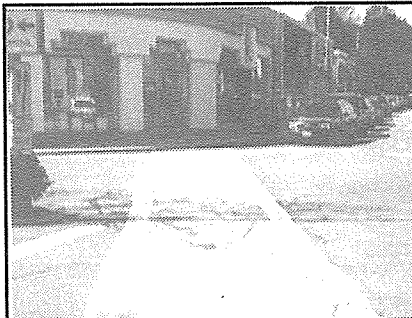
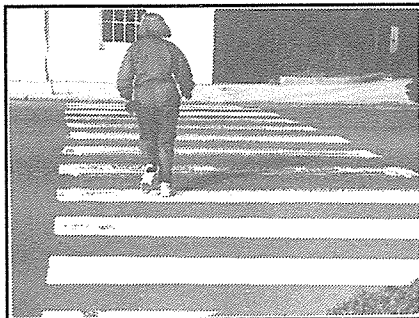
- Provide lighting along the entire length of an alley or connection.
- Provide landscaping and mark the extent of a passage with trees and lower bushes.
- Vary surface materials. Use high quality paving that extends along the length of a passage and/or connection.
- Provide street furniture such as benches, trash receptacles and planters.
- Use signage to indicate the route to and from parking lots/streets/ the Town Hall.
- Ensure improvements will permit effective snow removal and emergency access.

(iii) Crosswalks

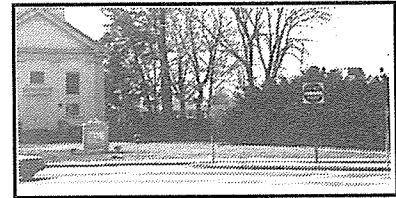
Recommendation: All crosswalks should be clearly marked to improve their visibility to drivers and improve pedestrian safety.

Locations for improved crosswalk markings:
(refer to illustration on page 50)

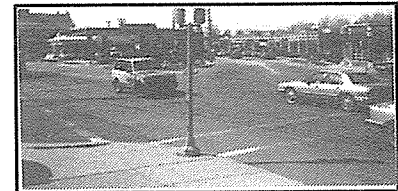
1. Great Plain Avenue and Chapel Street/Chestnut Street intersection
2. Great Plain and Highland Avenue/Dedham Avenue intersection
3. Highland Avenue at Town Hall
4. Highland Avenue, at Chapel and May Street
5. Great Plain Avenue at Pickering Street
6. Great Plain Avenue at Maple Street and Glendoon Streets
7. Great Plain Avenue at the MBTA tracks
8. potential new crosswalk: aligned with the alley leading from the Chapel Street lot across Chapel Street



The commonly traveled route alongside the rail tracks could be made more pleasant with the addition of various pedestrian amenities.



Opportunities exist to provide new pedestrian pathways such as a connection between the Chestnut Street parking lot and Dedham Avenue.



Currently, crosswalks are not always clearly marked.

Crosswalks can be marked inexpensively with a pattern or a color.

How to improve crosswalks:

- Contrast the surface treatment with the asphalt. Paint crosswalks in a color or a pattern that stands out against the asphalt.
- Use a contrasting material, such as brick pavers set in the asphalt.
- Introduce a slightly raised surface.

LANDSCAPING

Trees and other planting can expand the landscaped character of the Center, particularly of the Town Common. Existing landscaping should be preserved.

(i) Trees

Tree-lined streets can greatly enhance the character of a town. Trees lend a pedestrian scale to the street, and provide shade and a welcome contrast to a street edge of buildings. Needham is clearly already aware of these assets, as demonstrated by the public-private tree-planting program which took place several years ago.

When planting trees along a street, they should be aligned with the dividing wall between stores to minimize the obstruction of signs. In the same vein, street trees which will eventually provide a canopy at approximately the height of the second floor line should be selected. It is a good idea to mix the tree species both for the sake of visual interest and longevity. Coniferous trees can be planted at the perimeter of "pocket" parks and on the islands of parking lots. The use of coniferous trees ensures some year-round greenery in the Town.

Recommendation: Plant additional street trees to create a consistent, tree-lined streetscape throughout the Center.

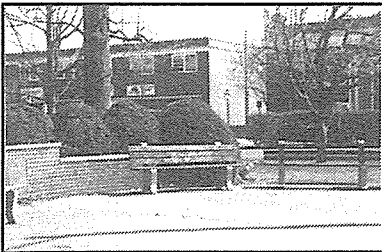
Locations for Street Trees:
(refer to illustration on page 53)

1. Chapel Street, west side
2. the perimeter of the Town Common along three sides
3. Great Plain Avenue, south side
4. Great Plain Avenue, north side
5. Highland Avenue, from Dedham Avenue to north of Town Hall
6. Highland Avenue parking lot
7. Chapel Street parking lot at the western side of the railroad tracks

(ii) Shrubs and flowering plants

Shrubs can be used to supplement tree planting at pedestrian connections and in the islands of parking lots. They can provide additional parking lot and service area screening and beautification. However, when used within parking lots, shrubs generally should not exceed four feet in height in order not to obscure visibility across the lot.

Recommendation: Expand the use of shrubs and flowering plants.

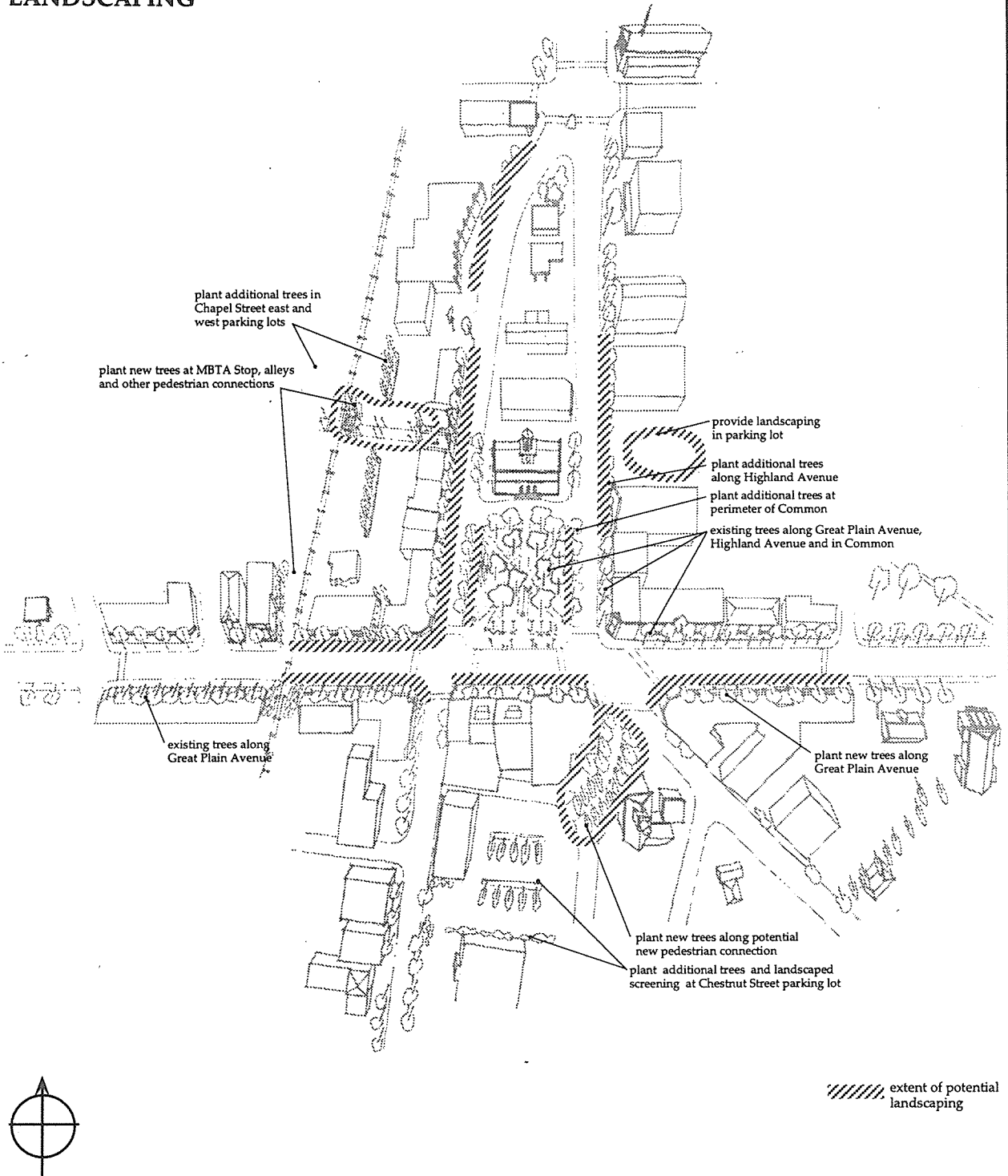


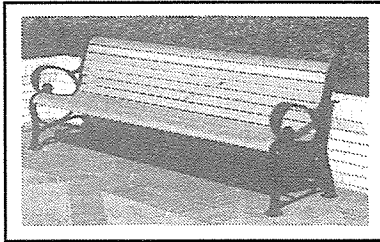
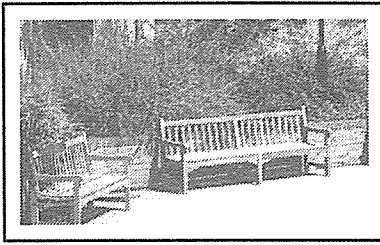
More opportunities for seating and public gathering need to be delineated as they constitute an important aspect of a Town's civic and public life.

STREET FURNITURE

Street furniture plays an important role in conveying the character of the Town. It should be selected according to style as well as comfort and durability. The street furniture depicted in this book reflects New England or contemporary "styles". They have classic, simple lines and are of a high quality workmanship. It is important that the character of the various streetscape elements be coordinated.

**Needham Center
PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES:
LANDSCAPING**





Durability, maintenance, vandal resistance, long-term availability, comfort and style should all be considered when selecting street furniture. (Glenham bench is shown in the upper picture, TimberForm in the lower.)

(i) Benches

Locate benches such that they encourage the enjoyment of specific open or outdoor spaces, whether at the Town Common or along the sidewalk. Bus stops and MBTA stops should be provided with ample seating. Seating and lighting can be used to signal pedestrian connections. The orientation of benches is critical. They may be used to facilitate gathering, people-watching, sun-tanning or respite from the heat in the shade, and should be located with these activities in mind. Benches should be fixed to the ground. Their character should be coordinated with that of other streetscape elements, such as light fixtures, trash receptacles and planters.

Recommendation: Provide additional benches and other seating areas to encourage expanded use and enjoyment of the Center.

Locations for benches:
(refer to illustration on page 57)

1. Great Plain Avenue at the edge of Town Common*
2. the perimeter of the Town Common*
3. the center of the Town Common*
4. the south side of Great Plain Avenue along the block opposite the Town Common
5. various locations along Great Plain Avenue: coordinate locations with merchants
6. Chapel Street opposite the Town Common

*Note: the placement of street furniture may be contingent upon the sidewalk width.

Suggested Specifications:

Glenham Teak Garden Bench
manufactured by Barlow-Tyrie
distributed by Clappers, 1125 Washington Street, West Newton, MA 02165
617-244-7900

TimberForm Restoration Bench #2118-6 with arm rests
manufactured by Columbia Cascade
distributed by Dr. Play, 603-893-2552

(ii) Trash Receptacles

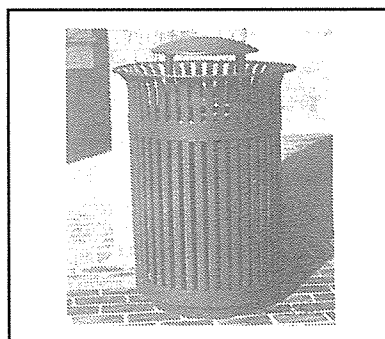
Recommendation: Use more attractive trash receptacles. Select a single type of receptacle to be used throughout the Center.

Locations for trash receptacles:

- In general, one trash receptacle should be located near every bench or group of benches (preferably downwind from each bench).
- Provide trash receptacles approximately every 60 feet along sidewalks.

Suggested Specification:

TR-65
distributed by American Site Furniture,
Concord, MA. 1-800-366-3080



Durability, capacity, service and appearance must be considered when selecting a suitable trash receptacle. Above is a recommended simple and unobtrusive trash receptacle.

(iii) Bicycle Racks

Bicycle racks and posts are important if the Town is to be successful in encouraging residents to use bicycles in the Center. Racks are best at locations which are specific destinations, whereas posts are adequate for general use along the streets.

Recommendation: Provide bicycle racks throughout the Center to encourage the use of bicycles among residents.

Locations for bicycle racks and posts:
(refer to illustration on page 57)

1. Provide a 4 or 6-bike rack at commuter rail stations at Needham Center, Needham Junction and Needham Heights.
2. Provide a 4 or 6-bike rack at the Highland Avenue parking lot (e.g. across from the east door of Town Hall) and the Chestnut Street lot behind Great Plain Avenue.
3. Provide single bike posts every 60 feet at sidewalk edge along Great Plain Avenue.

Suggested Specifications:

Rack: 4 or 6 bike capacity, Bike Security Racks Company, Rumney, NH
1-800-545-2757

Post: Bicycle Ring (ref. Cambridge) manufactured by Alloy Castings, East Bridgewater, MA 508-378-2541

Other street furniture includes planters, newspaper holders and bollards. These items should be used to complement the streetscape functionally and aesthetically.

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE - new opportunities

The Town Common is clearly Needham's primary public open space. However, opportunities should be sought for other smaller, secondary, outdoor spaces that can provide areas for repose, recreation or gathering. Some of the suggestions for public space are in areas that are privately owned and, therefore, would require special arrangements to allow public access to and use of the property.

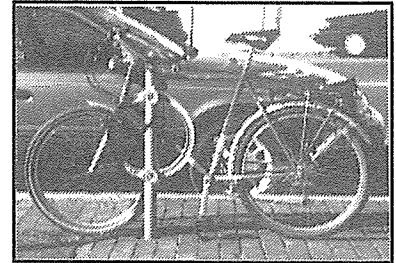
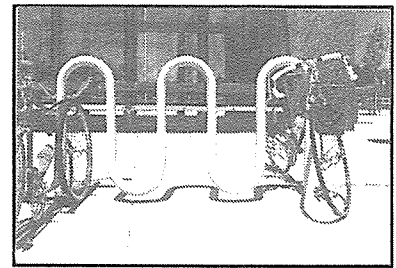
Possible locations for improved, or new, public open space:
(refer to illustration on page 57)

1. Dedham Avenue, next to the Unitarian Universalist Church
2. May Street at intersection with Chapel Street and Highland Avenue
3. Eaton Square next to the parking lot west of the railroad tracks

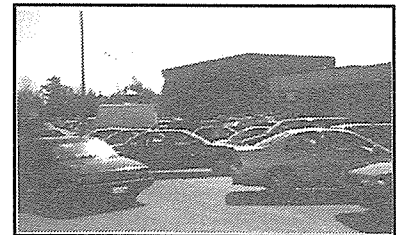
TOWN-OWNED PARKING AREAS

(i) Improve landscaping:

- Provide fencing, "garden walls" and landscaping at the perimeter of lots to screen them from surrounding uses.
- Use internal landscape divisions in larger parking lots to break down the overwhelming scale of the larger lots into "parking courts".
- Take snow plowing requirements into consideration when planning landscaping in parking areas.



Well designed bicycle posts can add to the streetscape environment.



Parking lots should be considered as important "gateway" areas to commercial streets. They should present more than a sea of cars or asphalt.

(ii) Add more attractive lighting:

- In parking lots, provide pedestrian-scale light fixtures, designed to shine entirely on the lot and avoid glare in surrounding properties.
- Provide lighting that specifically illuminates pedestrian walkways.

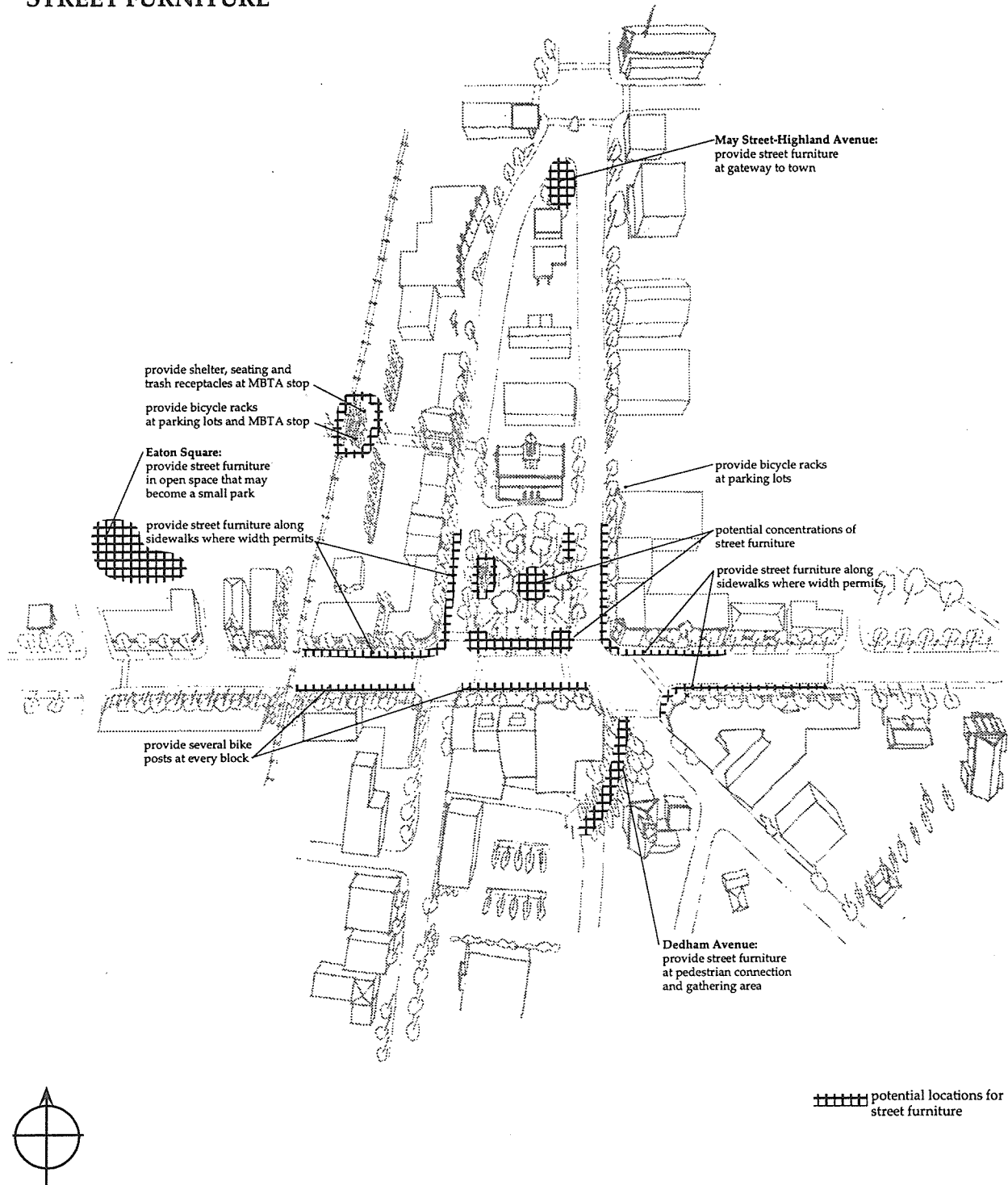
(iii) Provide sidewalks:

- Wherever possible, provide sidewalks at the backs of buildings, where they face onto parking lots and are accessible to the public.
- Provide sidewalks in larger parking lots.

(iv) Add trash receptacles:

- Consider trash receptacles as part of the overall design scheme of the parking lot.
- Take into consideration snow plowing requirements when locating receptacles.

**Needham Center
PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES:
STREET FURNITURE**



TOWN COMMON

The Town Common holds a special place in Needham. It is both the physical and civic center of the Town. While it serves these functions well there are ways that it can be improved to be a more integral part of the life and activity in the Center while still providing quiet places to sit or play.

*In recognition of the importance of the Town Common, the **Town Beautification Committee** was formed. The Committee is developing a Masterplan and Implementation Strategy for improvements to the Common.*

Implementation of the Master plan represents an important next step in an overall improvement plan for the Center.

Key elements of this plan include:

- the creation of a central seating area and focus for the Common
- the addition of several new benches (which will match those selected for the streetscape improvements)
- the addition of new trees, shrubs and other planting
- the provision of new pedestrian-scale lighting at existing locations and along the perimeter of the Common

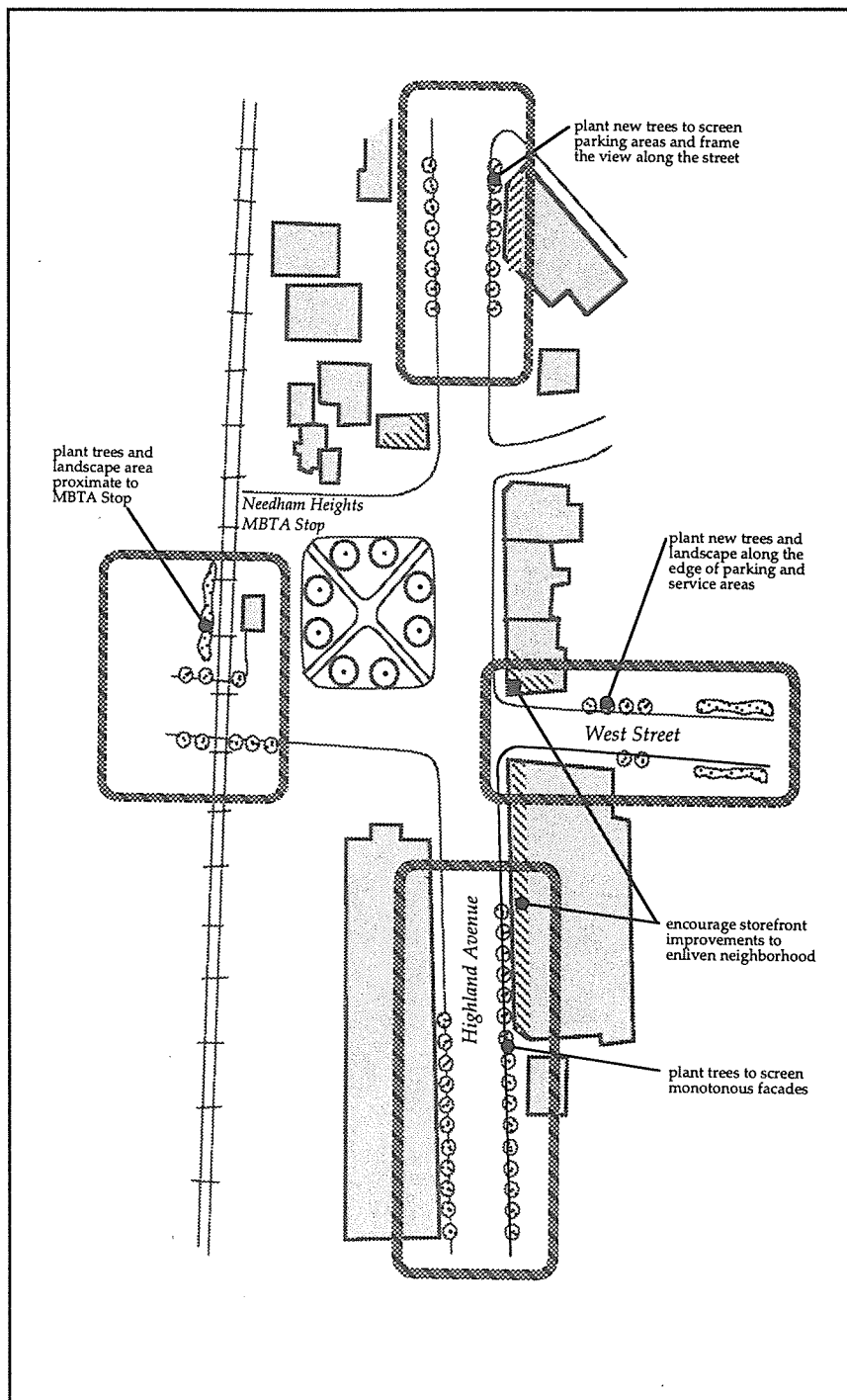
Additional desirable improvements which should also be considered include:

- improvements to the bus stop and shelter, incorporating a design more in keeping with the historic character of the Town Hall and Common
- improved physical and visual connections between the Common and the surrounding streets
- elimination or reduction of the paved parking area at the front of the Town Hall strengthening the link between the Town Hall and Common.

2. AVERY SQUARE BUSINESS DISTRICT

It is recommended that public improvements to Avery Square in Needham Heights focus on the "gateways" to the neighborhood. Highland Avenue, for example, is a major route into Needham and it is critical that the district provide a positive and welcoming image to people upon their approach both to Avery Square and towards Needham Center. The Avery Square Common is fairly strong as it stands, and over time the perimeter improvements should be complemented by additional improvements to the Common itself. Areas currently in need of improvement include: Highland Avenue north and south, the MBTA Needham Heights stop and parts of West Street.

Avery Square: Opportunities for Public Improvements



(i) Landscaping

1. Plant trees along Highland Avenue between Morton Street and Hunnewell Street.
2. Plant trees and other screening at West Street along the perimeter of the parking lot opposite the MBTA lot.
3. Plant trees along the north and south edges of West Street, between Hunnewell Street and Highland Avenue.

Recommendation: Use landscaping to screen parking and service areas that front on the main thoroughfares. Planting can also help to mitigate the effects of extensive blank facades.

(ii) Lighting

1. Locate pedestrian-scale light fixtures along Highland Avenue on both sides of the street.
2. Upgrade the pedestrian-scale fixtures at the Common.
3. Ensure that there is adequate lighting at the MBTA stop.

Recommendation: Use pedestrian-scale light fixtures to help identify the neighborhood center and encourage cars to slow down.

3. OTHER SMALLER NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICTS:

Bird's Hill, Charles River Village, Hillside Avenue, Hemlock Gorge, Memorial Park Area and Corporate Center Area.

(i) Landscaping:

1. Provide additional street trees.
2. Provide landscaping that can delineate public and private property or mark the entry to a specific neighborhood.
3. Add perimeter fencing to help screen parking and service areas.

Recommendation: Improve landscaping at the edge of the street, wherever possible.

(ii) Lighting:

1. Pedestrian-scale light fixtures should be used within parking lots and should be designed to shine entirely on the lot.
2. Consider the use of pedestrian-scale fixtures along all pedestrian connections.
3. Provide shielding to prevent off-site glare.

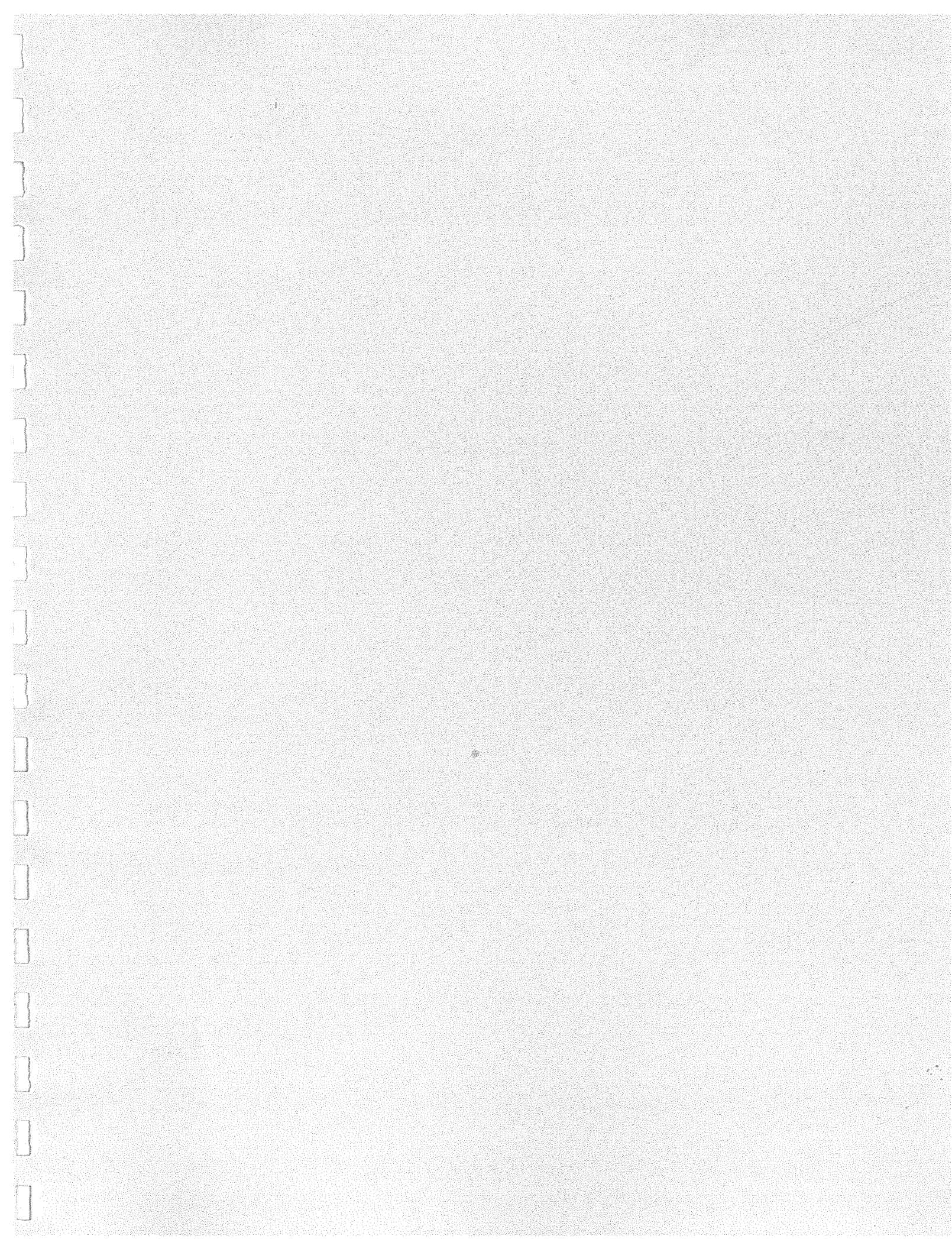
Recommendation: Use the above Guidelines to improve street and parking lot lighting.

(iii) Curb Cuts:

1. Provide a continuous sidewalk even where a curb cut allows entry to a parking lot or a gas station.

Recommendation: Work with businesses to reduce or eliminate curb cuts where possible.





APPENDIX

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Alleys: predominantly pedestrian connections between main streets and parking areas behind buildings.

Bay: the divisions of the facade established by the frame.

Cornice: a horizontal, molded or built-up projection that crowns or completes a building.

Display Area: the glazed section of the building facade devoted to display, including all associated fenestration and window framing.

Facade: Literally, the "face" or front (or rear) wall of a building.

Fenestration: the design and placement of windows in a building.

Frame: a system of often repetitive vertical piers and associated horizontal members which are visible on the building facade and which often serve as elements of the building's structural system.

Infill: material which is not part of the structural frame of the building but which "fills in" between structural members and is designed to express visibly its non-structural function. This can be achieved through a variety of methods including the use of an infill material different from the material of structural elements, or through use of the same material which is distinguished from structural elements through surface alignment or surface treatment. "Infill" also refers to a building project which may occur in a vacant building lot situated between two built up lots.

Pedestrian-scale fixtures/lighting: light fixtures along routes traveled by pedestrians, having posts which measure between 10 and 15 feet in height.

Signage: all signs used on the building including wall signs, projecting signs, window signs and freestanding signs.

- *Freestanding Sign:* a sign which is not attached to the building, either directly or hung, and is typically supported by or hung from a supporting post usually located within a front lot area.
- *Projecting Sign:* a sign attached to the facade of the building by a bracket, which is hung or projects from the building facade, often over the sidewalk.
- *Wall Sign:* a sign attached directly to the facade of the building either in the form of a board or the application of individual letters or other elements directly to the wall of the structure.
- *Window Sign:* a sign, either temporary or permanent, located within the glazed area of the facade, either on or behind the glass.

Sign Band: a visually defined band on the facade of the building (with one or more storefronts) signalled by a change of facade materials, colors or alignment of materials. The sign band architecturally defines an appropriate area of the facade within which individual store signs are to be located.

Storefront: the first floor facade of a building in commercial use which directly abuts the public sidewalk.

Zone for Signs: area where signs should be located on the building facade irrespective of the presence of a sign band.

FILING AN APPLICATION FOR A PROJECT PERMIT: the Review Process

The diagrams on the following pages illustrate various review processes that are formally described in the *General By-Laws of the Town of Needham* (Article 6 of which is the *Sign By-Laws*) and the *Zoning By-Law of the Town of Needham*. Copies of these documents are available at the Town Clerk's office in Town Hall.

These diagrams are for convenience only; if they appear to be inconsistent with the *By-Laws* mentioned above, assume that the *By-Laws* are correct.

In the interest of clarity, the diagrams illustrate normal procedures with successful outcomes and no complication; see the *By-Laws* for details of problems resolution.

Consult with your Planning Director and Building Inspector early.

The Town wants your review to be trouble-free; the earlier these people know what you want to do, the more they can help you avoid problems.

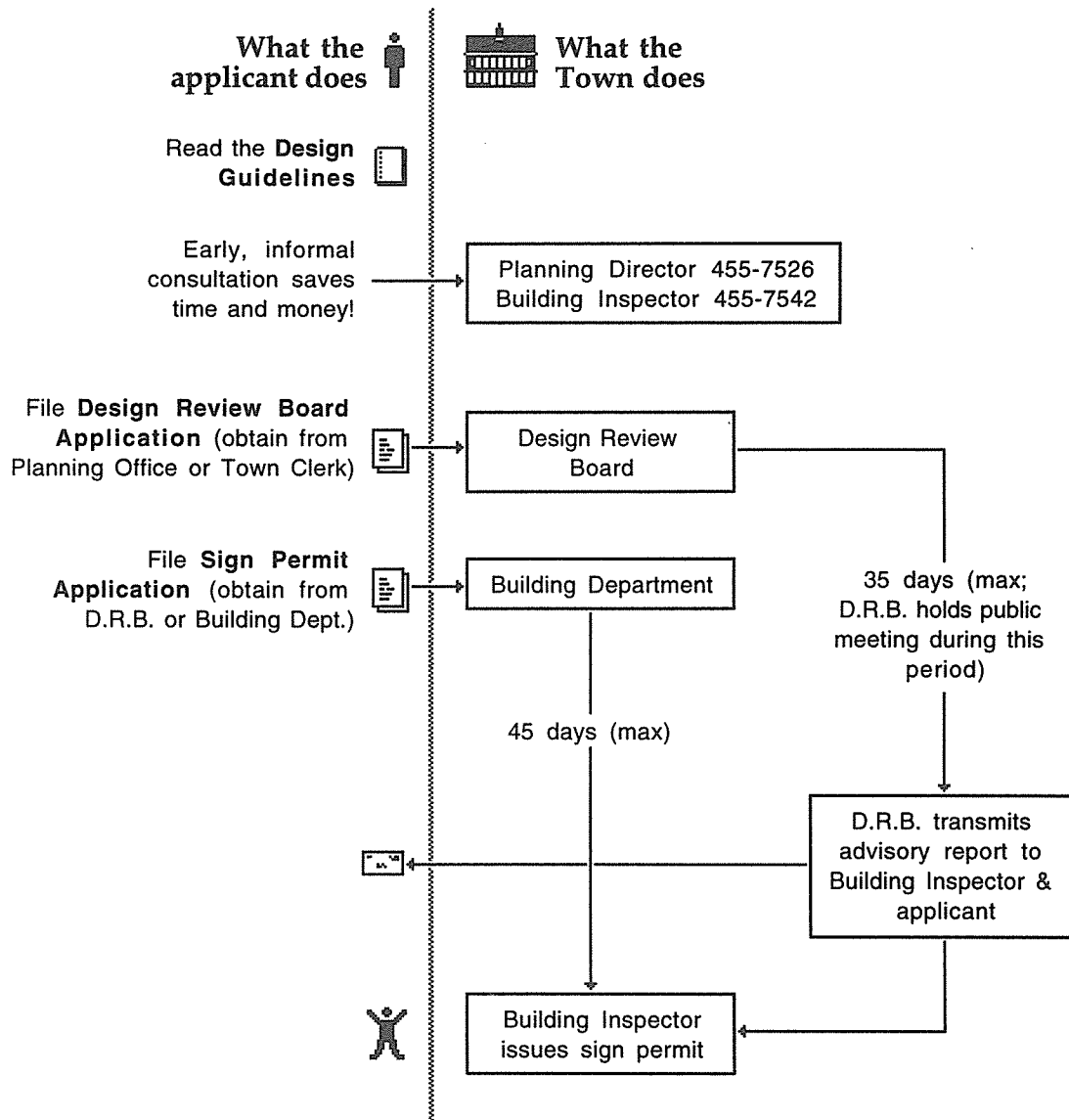
Office	Phone	Location
Town of Needham	455-7500	Town Hall
Planning Department	455-7526	Town Hall, 2nd floor
Building Department	455-7542	470 Dedham Avenue
Town Clerk	455-7510	Town Hall
Design Review Board	455-7526	Town Hall, 2nd floor
Zoning Board of Appeals	455-7510	Town Hall
Police Department	455-7570	99 School Street
Fire Department	455-7580	88 Chestnut Street
Board of Health	455-7523	Town Hall, 2nd floor
Board of Selectmen	455-7512	Town Hall
Public Works Department	455-7534	470 Dedham Avenue
Norfolk County Registry of Deeds		Dedham Center

All Needham town offices are open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The Design Review Board typically meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of every month, at 7:30 p.m. in the Planning Board office of Town Hall, 2nd floor. The agenda is usually first-come, first-served.

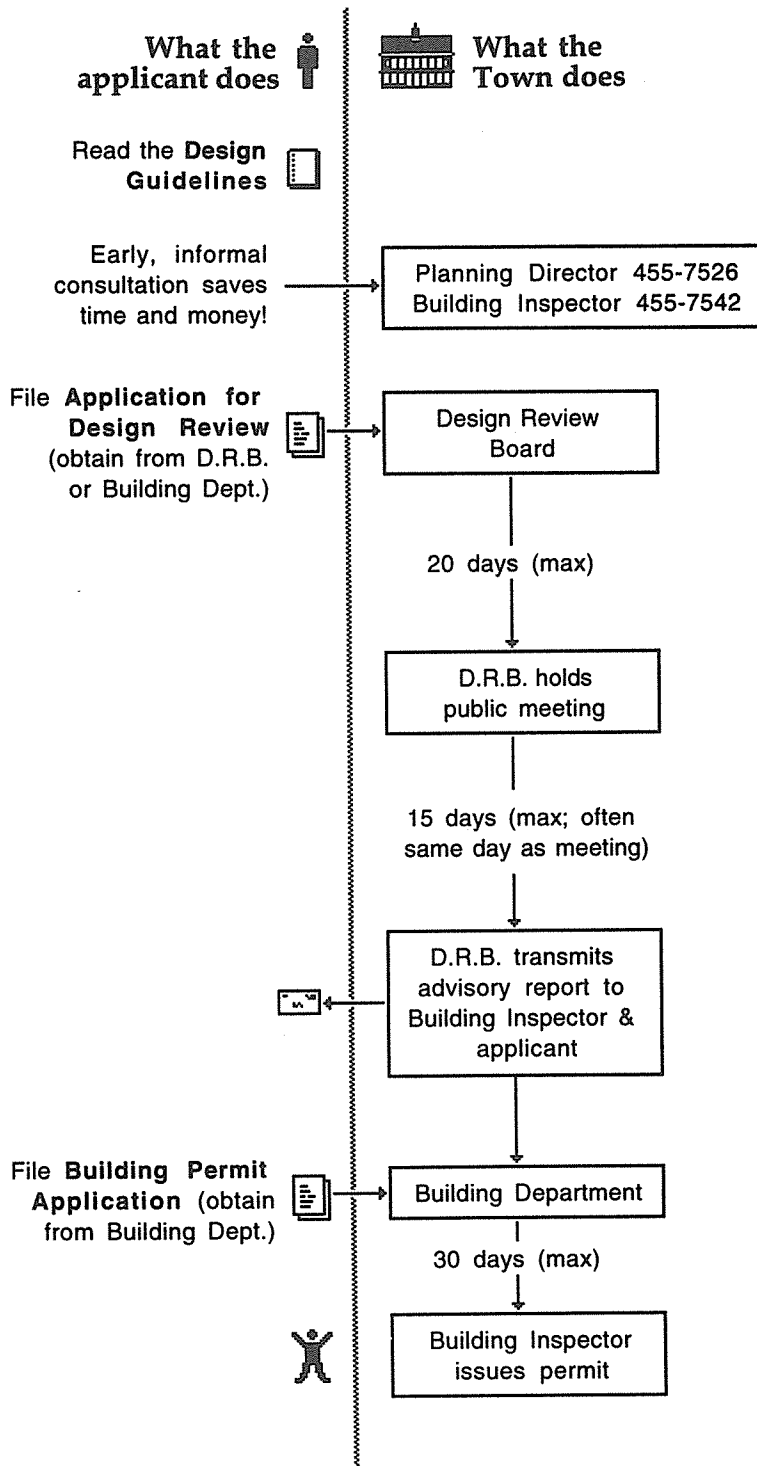
Design Review for Signs

— for more details, see General By-Laws (Article 6: Sign By-Law) —



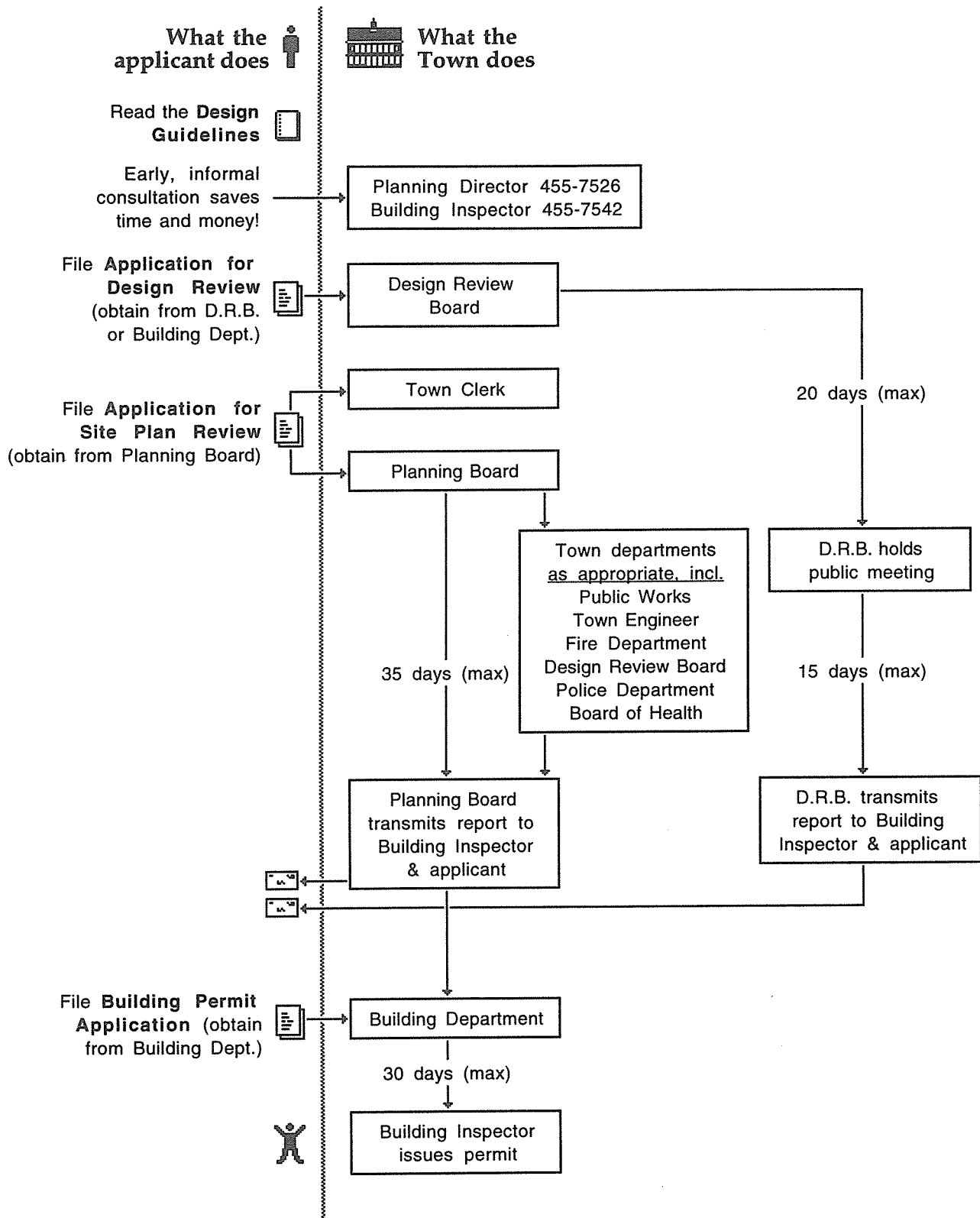
Design Review for Exterior Alterations not requiring a Special Permit

— assumes no complications; for more details, see Zoning By-Law §7.4 —



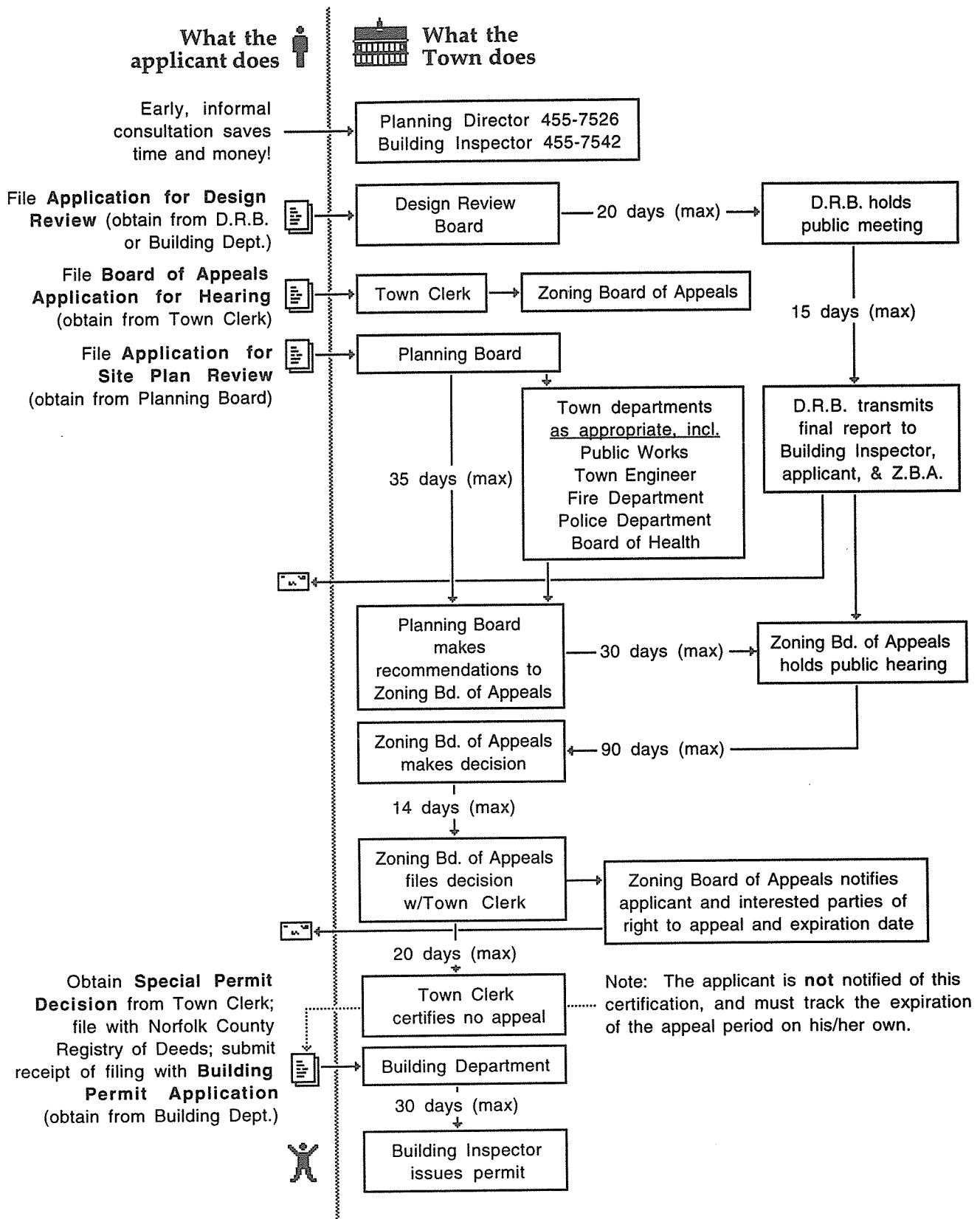
Site Plan Review for a Minor Project not requiring a Special Permit

— assumes no complications; for more details, see Zoning By-Law §7.4 —



Site Plan Review for a Minor Project requiring a Special Permit

— assumes no complications; for more details, see Zoning By-Law §7.4 —



Site Plan Review for a Major Project (always requires a Special Permit)

— assumes no complications; for more details, see Zoning By-Law §7.4 —

