

Town of Milford Downtown Area Design Guidelines

Worcester County
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
01757

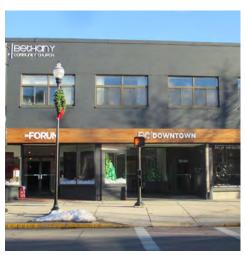








Table of Contents

1.0	Introd	luction	3	
2.0	Acknowledgements			
3.0	Purpose			
4.0	Terminology 6			
5.0	Milford Downtown Area Map			
6.0	Speci	fic Design Guidelines	8	
	6.1	Signs and Awnings	9	
	6.2	Exterior Lighting	17	
	6.3	Storefront Façade	18	
	6.4	Designing at Human Scale	19	
	6.5	External Materials and Appearance	20	
	6.6	Doors and Windows	21	
	6.7	Universal Access	22	
	6.8	Parking	23	
	6.9	Landscaping	24	
	6.10	Miscellaneous Amenities	25	

1.0 Introduction

The Town of Milford, Massachusetts is a mediumsized New England suburb in Worcester County, initially settled in 1662 as a part of Mendon and later incorporated as a town in 1780.

Milford, named for the Mill River, and several fords, has a long history as a bustling industrial town and an important center for commerce. Beginning in 1870 and through the mid 1900s, Milford was most known for it's mining industry and pink Milford granite, which was used in the construction of buildings throughout the region and beyond.

The construction of Interstate 495 in 1969 with two exits in Milford greatly increased the growth rate of the town and the appeal to many retail establishments. Additional major state vehicular routes 85, 109, 140, and 16 cross the town.

With a small-town feel, but close proximity to major cities (Worcester, Boston and Providence), large retail and commercial resources, and a major regional hospital, Milford boasts a great place to live and work.

Despite supporting larger retail chains throughout Town, the Milford Downtown Area remains a hub for small businesses and local entrepreneurs. Through community support and the efforts of the Downtown Revitalization Committee, Milford is committed to its business owners, maintaining the character and continuing the growth of the downtown as a prosperous, active, and welcoming New England town.







2.0 Acknowledgements

The Design Guidelines herewithin were prepared for the Town of Milford by Beals and Thomas, Inc. with the support and participation of the following:

MILFORD DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE

MILFORD DOWNTOWN MERCHANTS, PROPERTY OWNERS AND OTHER RESIDENTS

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MILFORD FINANCE COMMITTEE

TOWN PLANNER - Larry L. Dunkin, AICP

MARCH 2018



3.0 Purpose

The purpose of these Design Guidelines is to assist property owners, existing and potential business owners, project proponents, developers, architects, landscape architects, and civil engineers in project design, planning, and review by the Town of Milford. It also serves as an educational tool to outline the Town's design objectives and expectations for the Downtown Area.

Additionally, these Design Guidelines are intended to help strengthen the character of the built environment, enhance property values by improving the quality of development, and help to make the Downtown Area a more desirable place to live, work, and play.

The underlying objectives of these Design Guidelines are as follows:

- Achieve a positive and cohesive look to the Downtown Area which will, in turn, generate a sense of community among tenants and residents;
- Promote pride of place in the Downtown Area for tenants and residents:
- Design a pedestrian friendly downtown that encourages and welcomes small business commerce; and
- Assure that all future construction, alterations, expansions, and revitalization efforts respect the character and integrity of the Downtown Area.

The following Design Guidelines are a supplement to the Town of Milford Zoning Bylaws (Zoning Bylaws) and are not intended to replace any existing regulations. They are to be used to assist in the design of all new commercial and business projects and renovations located in the Downtown Area (see Section 5.0 for a map of the Milford Downtown Area).







4.0 Terminology

Belt Signs - A long rectangular-linear sign that spans the length of the store front facade.

Cantilevers - A projecting beam or member supported at only one end.

Fascia - A horizontal flat piece of material (mostly wood) that covers the joints between the top of a wall and the projecting eaves.

Fanlights - A small semicircular or rectangular window over a door or another window.

First Floor Area - The total enclosed floor area of the first floor of a building.

Glazing - The act of installing windows or fitting glass into frames of windows or doors.

Insignias - An object or mark (logos, etc.) that distinguishes itself from other objects or marks.

Pilasters - A Rectangular column, especially one projecting from a wall.

Rhythm - Rhythm in architecture refers to the repetition of patterns and spacing of design elements to establish building continuity, balance, direction, and consideration for scale. Rhythm is accomplished by establishing equal setback distances, even spacing between windows along a façade, congruent materials, the pairing of columns, and similarly-pitched rooflines.

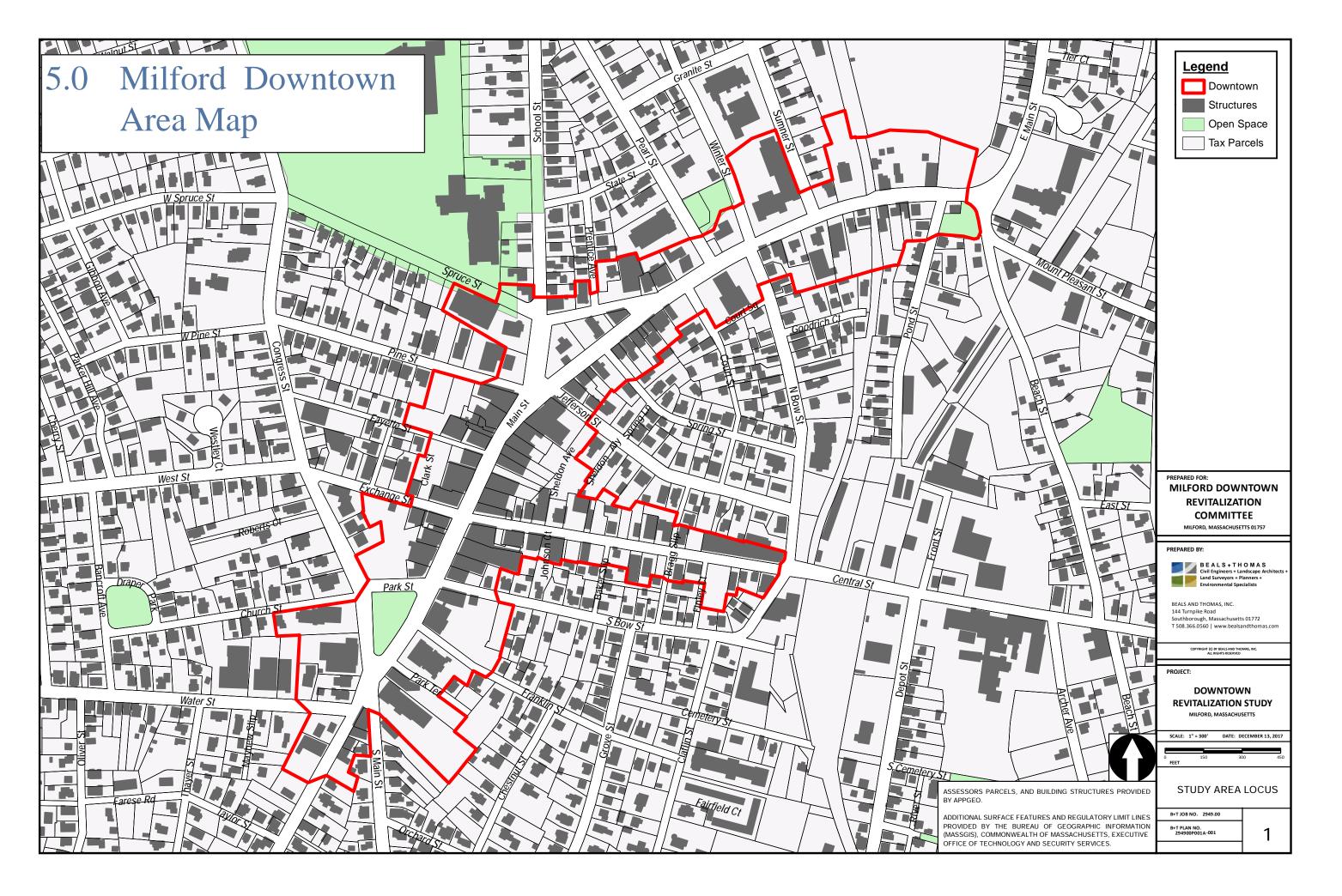
Sidelights - A narrow window or pane of glass set alongside a door or larger window.

Signage Zone - The storefront area above doorways and windows, designated for signage for the business or commercial establishment within.

Streetscape - A term that refers to the complete package of a street or portion of, sidewalks, streetlights, buildings, furnishings, landscaping and other visual elements that when combined, form the overall visual character of the area.

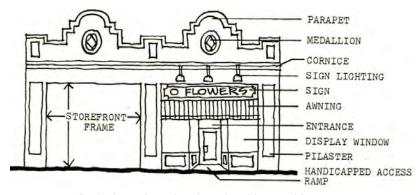
Structural Bay - The space between architectural elements, or a recess or compartment. An opening or hole.

Transoms - A transverse horizontal structural beam, bar or crosspiece that usually separates a door from a window above it.



6.0 Specific Design Guidelines

6.1	Signs and Awnings	9-16
6.2	Exterior Lighting	17
6.3	Storefront Façade	18
6.4	Designing at Human Scale	19
6.5	External Materials and Appearance	20
6.6	Doors and Windows	21
6.7	Universal Access	22
6.8	Parking	23
6.9	Landscaping	24
6.10	Miscellaneous Amenities	25



Typical storefront sketch and architectural features.

6.1 Signs and Awnings

The following signage guidelines are intended to provide adequate opportunities for property owners in the Downtown Area to meet their advertising and promotional needs while encouraging signs which:

- Strictly adhere to the signage regulations presented in Article III of the Zoning Bylaws;
- Reduce visual clutter with inappropriate colors, patterns, textures, and materials inconsistent with the surrounding buildings and natural environment;
- Accentuate and enhance building façades while complementing adjoining structures to create continuity in appearance;
- Protect public investment in streetscapes by promoting an inviting, pedestrian-friendly atmosphere;
- Enhance the safety, convenience, and welfare of the general public; and
- Respect the character and historical charm of existing buildings.

It is the responsibility of the business and/or property owner to review these guidelines and zoning bylaws prior to the creation and installation of any sign and review to ensure complete compliance with the regulations set forth necessary permitting before installation.

Signs and awnings are the most prominent visual elements of a streetscape. Well designed signs provide a clear and direct communication and enhance the architectural quality of the building façade. Awnings offer a shelter to window displays and to pedestrians. They also soften the hard building façades and bring flair and feeling of festivity to the commercial neighborhood.

Signs and awnings together can provide a visually unifying theme for the streetscape, add to the character of the downtown and substantially reinforce the "sense of place".



Utilize architectural features that portray historical charm



Successful multi-signage and awning use



Simple and tasteful signage & hardware



Clear and creative sign with charming "downtown" feel

LOCATION

- 1. Each sign, with the exception of off-premise signs erected in conformance with state and local regulations, must be located on the same site as the subject of the sign.
- 2. A sign may be erected on private property only with the written permission of the property owner.
- 3. No sign, other than signs placed by agencies of government with appropriate jurisdiction, or a sign whose placement is authorized by such agencies, may be erected or placed on public property.
- 4. No sign may be installed in a way that obstructs free and clear vision, or free use, of any public right-of-way, intersection, ingress or egress point, parking space, drive aisle, driveway, building entrance, fire escape, standpipe, or accessibility ramp.
- 5. No sign may be placed so as to obstruct any window or door, with the exception of window signs.
- Signs must not be located so that they cover architectural features of the building, including, but not limited to, transoms, insignias, or any other significant architectural feature.



Creative placement of signage is encouraged, so that it is unobstrusive yet highly visible



Signage above entrance



Signage above entrance

GENERAL SIGN GUIDELINES

Signage Location:

Signage should all be located in the same horizontal plane typically between the first and second floors on one façade. In general, signs located on upper floors is discouraged and no sign should extend above the roof of the building.

Signs for Pedestrian and Vehicular Speed:

Signs should work for both pedestrian and vehicular speeds. Smaller, imaginative, and attractive signs are generally more effective in communicating a message than large, oversized signs with too many words.

Logos and Symbols:

Logos and symbols are effective ways of direct, non-verbal communication. Most successful are the symbols directly and visually related to the merchandise: flower for florist, fish for fish market, etc.

Clear Message:

The graphic message should be simple, direct, and clear. A minimal amount of wording will increase the readability.

Stationary Signs:

All signs must be stationary. Moving, blinking or flashing signs are not acceptable. Hanging signs may be considered appropriate presuming they are securely fixed so as not to freely swing in an unsafe manner.

Stripes and Solid Colors:

Stripes may be combined with solid colors to accentuate the awning shape and to provide diversity. Two (2) and four (4) inch wide stripes are preferable and create a pleasant effect. Stripes wider than six (6) inches may be too bold and overpowering.

Obsolete Signs:

Defaced and outdated signs should be removed, including all obsolete sign supports, anchors, and brackets.



Signage visible to vehicular and pedestrian traffic



Clear and legible sign with logo and simple colors



Striped awning and individual letters as signage



Harmonious signage and matching awning

SIGNAGE TYPES

Flat Belt Sign:

Belt Signs should run the full length of the storefront frame and should be 24" to 36" high. The sign should be fastened tight against the building façade, with concealed, non-corrosive fasteners.

Projecting Sign:

Projecting signs are very effective and vital for commercial streets as they can be seen from a distance and read by pedestrians on the sidewalk. In general, a projecting sign should be placed a minimum of 10' above the sidewalk, have a decorative metal bracket firmly fastened to the building façade and should not exceed 36" in length and 36" in height. Total sign area should not exceed nine (9) square feet. The sign projection should not exceed 48" above the sidewalk and should be kept a minimum of 36" from the edge of the sidewalk curb. When designing the shape and location of projecting signs, strict conformance with the Zoning Bylaws should be maintained. Projections into the street rightof-way or abutting properties shall not be allowed without appropriate permits and approvals.

Metal Signs:

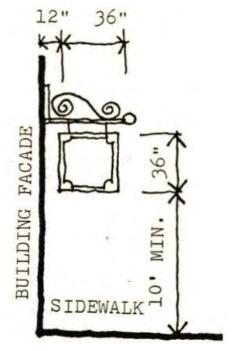
Metal is usually used as a sign background material with a durable baked-on enamel finish or as a material for individual letters directly fastened to the building façade. An aluminum belt sign with painted letters is one of the least expensive signs. It can be enhanced with wood trim, perimeter decorative molding and three-dimensional raised letters.

Plastic Signs:

Plastic became the most common material for signs, due to its low cost and translucent quality. Internally illuminated plastic signs are more suitable for large shopping malls and high speed traffic; they are too bright and overpowering for the Downtown Area. A significant disadvantage of a plastic sign is that it is brittle and can be damaged more easily than a wood or metal sign.



Flat Belt Sign



Projecting sign



Metal sign

Signs on Glass:

Lettering directly on glass is very effective, especially where the store interior is darker and the lettering creates a contrast. This type of signage is usually located at eye-level where it attracts the attention of pedestrians. Lettering coverage should not exceed 25% of the storefront window area.

Stationary Awnings:

Stationary rigid frame awnings offer greater design freedom as they allow a variety of shapes.

Individual Letters:

Individual letters can create very elegant and distinctive signage. The letters can be either individually illuminated or backlit.

Neon Signs:

Neon signs are decorative and allow greater design freedom, as the glass tubes can be formed into various shapes and colors. Neon signs should be placed within the signage zone of the building or behind the store window.

Internally Illuminated Plastic Signs:

Internally illuminated signs are generally not appropriate and should be discouraged, as the intensity of light is too overpowering for the building façade and the Downtown Area.



Individual letters



Simple and clear lettering on window glass



Window lettering



Striped and solid colored awnings

SIGNS AND AWNINGS COMBINED

On buildings with limited space to install both a sign and an awning, these two components may be combined, with the lettering and logo applied directly to the awning fabric. This solution may also used to reduce cost.

Lettering is usually applied to the fascia, with decorative logos on both sides of the awning. The size of lettering should not exceed six (6) to eight (8) inches high.

ADDRESS SIGNS

A sign, individual numerals or letters, or a nonelectrical nameplate identifying the property address, is required for all real property as follows:

- Each first floor non-residential use must identify the street address either on the principal entrance door or above or beside the principal entrance of the use.
- All residential building types must identify the street address either on the principal entrance door, above or beside the principal entrance, or on a mailbox.

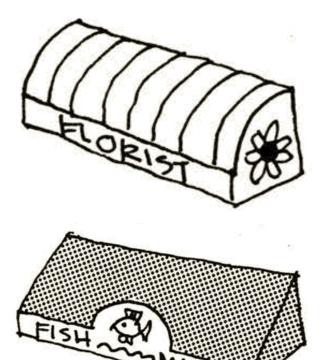
Address signs must be made easily visible through the use of colors or materials that contrast with the background material to which they are attached and must be conspicuously located to provide visibility from the thoroughfare that the building faces.



Address signage and successful signage on glass



Both sign and awning



Signage and awnings combined, with symbols relating directly to merchandise or services



Signage and awnings combined

The following are additional allowed signs to which the Design Guidelines may not apply:

- A public notice or informational sign required by federal, state, or local law, regulation, or ordinance and any special event, directional, or other sign erected by a government agency or public utility in the performance of public duty;
- Names of buildings, dates of erection, commemorative tablets, and the like, when carved into stone, made of cast metal, or other permanent type of material;
- Credit card, trading stamp, or trade association signs not exceeding one-half (0.5) square feet each and not exceeding ten per establishment;
- A clock, thermometer, barbershop pole, or similar device not part of a permanent sign;
- Historic building identification;
- Holiday signs and/or decorations, yard sale & garage sale signs; and
- · Elections signs.

TEMPORARY SIGNS

Unless otherwise specified, temporary signs should be allowed for a maximum of 30 total days and do not require a permit, but are subject to the following standards:

Banner:

A temporary sign that is printed or displayed upon flexible material, with or without frames, that identifies a new business or advertises a special sale, event, or activity. Banners must be secured to a building façade along all four sides at all times.

Construction Sign:

A temporary sign intended to provide information about current construction on a site and the parties involved in the project.

Real Estate Sign:

A temporary sign advertising the sale or lease of real property. The sign may contain the identification and contact information of the person and/or company conducting the sale, lease, or rent.



Carved in stone



Freestanding signage



Temporary / Construction signage



Holiday decorations

SIGN ILLUMINATION

Conforming signs may be illuminated according to the following:

- Internally illuminated signs are discouraged with the exception of exposed neon, which is only allowed for wall signs or windows signs. External light sources must be shielded so that they illuminate only the face of the sign and do not shine directly onto a public right-of-way or abutting properties.
- Light fixtures that project from the façade of a building for externally illuminated signs are exempt from setback requirements, but should be simple and unobtrusive in design and should not obscure the sign content.
- Illuminated signs indicating if a business is open must be turned off outside the hours of operation.

Continuous Fluorescent Lighting:

Provides even illumination along the entire sign and awning. The lighting fixtures should be painted to blend with the color of the building façade.

Spotlights:

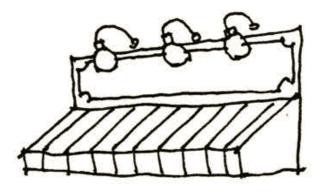
Spotlights are generally used to illuminate projecting signs. They are mounted on both sides of the sign, either directly to the building, or integrated with the decorative sign bracket.

Backlit Translucent Awning:

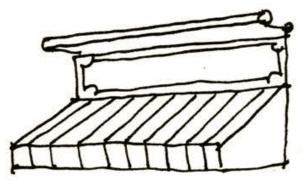
To create a "glowing effect," the translucent awnings are illuminated internally by continuous fluorescent lighting. The lighting fixtures should be carefully coordinated with the awning's tubular framing.



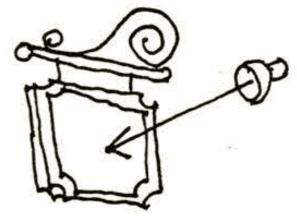
Sign illumination



Lighting to illuminate signage



Continuous Fluorescent Lighting



Spotlighting.



Backlit Translucent Awning

6.2 Exterior Lighting

Exterior lighting fixtures, using LEDs for higher efficiency rates, durability, and long life span, should complement building elements and materials, render façade colors correctly, be appropriately scaled, and placed accordingly to provide maximum illumination for safe vehicular and pedestrian circulation and easy entrance identification.

Smaller lighting fixtures, such as pedestrian-scaled fixtures, should be affixed to the building's front façade, storefront, canopy, awnings, or door surrounds consistently. Mounted pedestrian-scaled fixtures should be positioned as to directly illuminate pathways and building entrances. See previous section on Signs and Awnings (Section 6.1) for specifics related to lighted signage.

Taller light posts, no higher than 20 feet above grade, should be incorporated only in parking areas and transitional pathways and should not conflict with lighting in the public right-of-way.

Successful exterior lighting is cost-efficient, energy-conserving, reduces unnecessary glare and light trespass onto abutting properties, directs lights downwards, and preserves the integrity of the night sky.







6.3 Storefront Façade Design

Building façades and storefronts are very important, as they create the first impression of the Downtown Area and each individual business. Well-designed, well-preserved, attractive storefronts are inviting. The storefront image and quality of window display are a shopper's introduction to the available merchandise or services.

All new façade improvements should incorporate appropriate materials, complementary colors, intricate designs, variations in heights and proportions, articulated rooflines, and necessary accessories such as pedestrian-scaled lighting, visible signage, trash/recycling receptacles, and landscaped buffers.

Main entrances should be distinct and centralized on the façade, handicap accessible, unhindered by light posts, signage, or landscaping, visible to motorists, and oriented facing the street. Additional side or rear entrances and exits are encouraged for easier employee access, more direct access to parking areas, and further evacuation options in case of an emergency. Additionally, these entrances should be ADA accessible (Section 6.7).











6.4 Designing at Human Scale

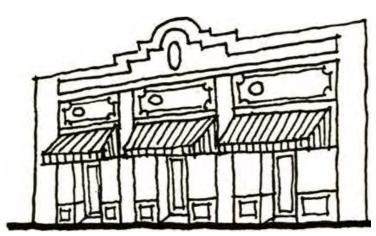
Human-scaled and pedestrian-oriented design emphasizes pedestrian access to the site and focuses on user sensitivity, needs, and overall experience.

The perceived scale of any building design is a direct function of the following:

- The overall size of the proposed building relative to neighboring buildings; and
- The visual relationship of prominent architectural façade elements relative to those on neighboring façades.

The scale, appearance, and maintenance of a storefront façade greatly influence a casual observer's perception and first impressions of a building and its services. Properly scaled, designed, and maintained façades represent the character of the business, enhance the connection to the streetscape, and help attract potential customers.

To reduce scale, large expanses of monochromatic walls should be broken up by incorporating pilasters, structural bays, intrusions/extrusions, and varied rooflines into the building design. Vertical massing along front façades shall integrate various materials and define a distinct base, middle, and top.



Even spacing between windows and doors along a façade





Properly scaled, designed, and maintained façades that represent the character of the business

6.5 Exterior Materials and Appearance

Dominant wall materials should be durable, weatherresistant, and have the appearance of finished wood, brick, or stone that, if painted, should be painted or coated in a non-metallic finish.

Cladding materials should be consistent on all building façades, especially clapboard made from red cedar or pine. The lower section of the walls, at least two (2) feet above the foundation, should be free of cladding material to avoid excessive dampness caused by lack of air circulation. Unwanted moisture may subsequently rot the material resulting in structural deficiencies and/or failure.

Storefronts should make generous use of non-reflective, non-opaque glazing which should not extend to the foundation. Interior goods on display should be visible from approaching walkways and unobstructed by landscaping elements, signage, or other architectural elements. All reflective materials such as porcelain enamel, sheet metal, or mirrored glazing are strictly discouraged.









6.6 Doors and Windows

Doorways should be centralized and prominent on the front façade. Colonial door surrounds, pent roofs, roof cantilevers, hooded door fronts, and covered porches extending greater than six (6) feet in both width and height are encouraged for added depth, integrity, definition of building threshold, and connection with other architectural elements.

Doors should not extend beyond the exterior façade into pedestrian walkways as to impede circulation or cause injury. Entry doors, measuring at least three (3) feet wide by seven (7) feet tall, shall always open towards the street or parking lot for safe and orderly exiting of the building in case of an emergency.

Windows should be oriented vertically, well-proportioned, consistently-spaced, and adequate in quantity to provide maximum sunlight entry and focused views. Fanlights and sidelights are encouraged.

Storefront windows and doors are encouraged to utilize modern framing devices for emphasizing entrances, insuring safety and stability, and creating a proper threshold between the sidewalk and building.







6.7 Universal Access

To provide universal access, all new projects and renovations shall strictly comply with the regulations set forth under the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the standards established by the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) (521 CMR), whichever is more stringent.

Refer to the ADA and MAAB regulations for all building and site access compliance including but not limited to, accessible parking spaces, ramp dimensions and slopes, handrails, guardrails, sidewalks, architectural dimensions, etc.

If a storefront entrance is not flush with the adjoining sidewalk, then a ramp shall be provided to resolve elevation change conflicts and accommodate all disabled and handicap persons. Ramps shall provide level platforms at all turns to allow for efficient and most importantly, safe maneuvering.



A flush entrance is most desirable, for physically challenged patrons, or those with small children or strollers



Provide a ramp where necessary to access front door



A ramp can be designed to complement a main entry



Provide prominent universal accessibility, even if a side entrance



Both stairs and ramp can be a successful design solution

6.8 Parking

Parking areas (not including public parking regulated and maintained by the Town of Milford) should be designed with respect to topography, integrated with adjacent streets and pedestrian walkways, numerous access points to places of interest, cohesive and well-organized interior circulation, adequate width of roadways and parking spaces, and clear separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic as to reduce hazards.

Parking areas should accomplish the following objectives:

- Eliminate the surplus of unessential parking spaces and impervious surfaces by efficient site planning,
- Mitigate traffic congestion while promoting safe travel;
- Protect adjoining lots and the general public from hazards such as excessive noise, glare from headlights, pollution from operation of motor vehicles, the urban heat island effect, and lack of visual relief; and
- Demarcate parking, pedestrian, and vehicular zones through highly visible pavement marking, changes in pavement patterns/materials/colors, physical barriers, signage, or any combination of the aforementioned methods.

Shielded lights on poles no higher than 20 feet should be used to provide consistent lighting on impervious surfaces to safely guide pedestrians and motorists, prevent unnecessary glare, and reduce light trespass onto abutting properties, roadways, or sidewalks.

Parking lots containing 10 or more spaces should include tree plantings designed to result in 50 percent shading of the total parking lot surface within 15 years.



Clear pavement parkings and planters used as physical barriers create a successful parking lot



Wheel stops form a safer pedestrian walkway



Clearly marked spaces eliminates confusing parking

6.9 Landscaping

Proper landscaping enhances the aesthetics of building façades, accentuates entrances, pedestrian walkways, and site access locations, helps fragment large expanses of impervious surfaces including parking lots, plazas, and courtyards, defines natural spaces, significantly increases property value, and provides a more pleasant experience for site visitors.

Examples of encouraged landscaping elements are as follows:

- Noninvasive,
- Drought-resistant native plantings, such as
 - Deciduous and evergreen trees,
 - Annuals and perennials,
 - Shrubs, and
 - Ornamental grasses.

New plantings shall be compatible with existing onsite plant material and shall incorporate a variety of:

- Species,
- Colors,
- Heights,
- · Widths, and
- Textures.

Existing and major specimen trees should be preserved and maintained to the greatest extent practicable, especially during building construction or site revitalization efforts.

In the Downtown Area where landscape opportunities are limited, mature and seasonal landscaping is encouraged. Such landscaping may include planters (fixed or moveable), window boxes, or seasonal decorations such as wreaths or garland. These items shall not encroach on public ways without prior approval.



Planters can double as a physical barrier and landscape opportunity



Planters with seasonal installations frame an entry way and provide a welcoming sense



Planters and seasonal decorations provide variability and interest along a streetscape



Landscaping softens a streetscape and building facade

6.10 Miscellaneous Amenities

Additional streetscape amenities are encouraged to promote the use of the Downtown Area, project a welcoming atmosphere, and enhance the user's experience.

Amenities may include such items as:

- Outdoor Seating (cafe/lounge furniture);
- Benches;
- Flags/banners;
- Seasonal decorations/planters; and
- Trash receptacles.

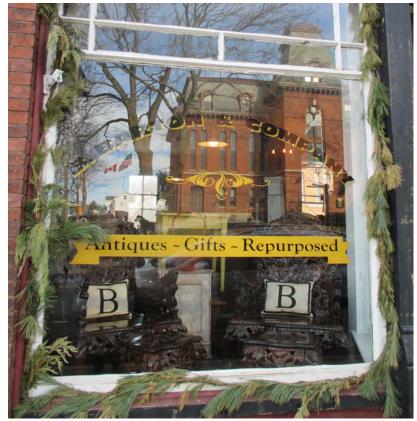
All amenities shall not encroach on public ways without prior approval and shall be the sole responsibility of the business owner to maintain.



An outdoor garden for people and pets brings a sense of community to a downtown area



Cafe seating enlivens the streetscape



Holiday/ Seasonal garland brings a personal touch to individual businesses



Outdoor seating promotes a lively and social streetscape



A welcoming OPEN flag will encourage patrons to enter