

DEDHAM SQUARE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Dedham, MA



Dedham Square 11/2017



architecture
urban design

GAMBLE
ASSOCIATES

September 28, 2018



Prepared for

Town of Dedham

26 Bryant Street
Dedham, MA 02026

In consultation with the Dedham Square Steering Committee, created by the Planning Board. Members are listed on page 107.

Prepared by

Gamble Associates
David Gamble, Brian Gregory, Philipp Maué
678 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 502
Cambridge MA 02139
617-292-9912

Comments / Questions

These Design Guidelines are intended to be a living document that will evolve over time with the changing needs of the Town. In that spirit, the document invites comments and perspectives that will inform the Town of Dedham as it updates and amends this work.

Comments on this document may be made to:

John Sisson, Economic Development Director
Town of Dedham
phone (781) 751-9175
email: jsisson@dedham-ma.gov

The Town's By-Laws regulate height and density for private development. However, there are few controls regarding the massing of buildings, the relationship of the buildings to the street or the aesthetics. This is where Design Guidelines can help. **Please note, these Guidelines do not always reflect the current Zoning Bylaws. Please refer to the existing Zoning Ordinance which will be updated in the future to better address the community aspirations for the Square.**



PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

These Guidelines address the design of new buildings located in and around Dedham Square and are intended to enhance character and design quality of both buildings and spaces.

The Design Guidelines provide guidance to property owners and potential developers about what is expected in terms of building quality, massing, height and character, as well as the interface with the public realm. However, they do not replace zoning or affect current property uses. The Guidelines enhance the economic vitality of Dedham Square by defining expectations for new development while still allowing for flexibility that foster high-quality design.

The goal of these Design Guidelines is to ensure that future development in Dedham Square happens in a manner that enhances the overall character of this historic town center. The Guidelines provide clarity about what is envisioned in the future. They pertain to new development on properties that are vacant, or sites that are likely to be redeveloped in the future. While Design Guidelines help shape the basic framework of future development, they do not define potential uses, per se. Therefore, current property owners and the uses of their buildings are not restricted by the Design Guidelines.

These Design Guidelines were developed in 2018 as a response to community concerns surrounding recent new development in the historic downtown core. Questions about the appropriate scale, massing and design character of infill buildings arose. These Guidelines seek to capture the vision of what Dedham Square could look like in the future.

ODD FELLOWS
— HALL —
F O L T

BOSTON
GENERAL
STORE
PURVEYORS
ESTD
2013



AND MORE
DIN & DRINK
EL. S. KALIS
BARRY V. GRUNIN
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
632

Kings of SW

Signage along High Street

INTRODUCTION

New development, if not done well, has the potential to undermine the very quality of place that makes Dedham Square attractive. Design Guidelines can address this. At the same time, if design guidelines are too restrictive, they have the potential to thwart redevelopment efforts by lengthening the review process, frustrating constituents and scaring away potential developers. **Finding the right balance of insights and ideas without being too prescriptive lies at the essence of what constitutes a well-crafted set of design guidelines.**

Dedham Square has many assets with a remarkable history. The downtown has a healthy mix of uses that include over 18 restaurants or places to eat in close proximity to one another. The well-maintained, historic buildings in the center of town represent a diverse collection of past eras and expressions. Recent streetscape improvements in the form of new sidewalks, street lights and tree planting highlight this enviable architectural backdrop.

Such favorable attributes naturally create development pressures. Over the last few years, recent construction is filling in the gaps between historic buildings and raising the level of discourse about what the future of Dedham Square should look like. Crafting Design Guidelines for new development ensures that future buildings will add value to the existing fabric and is in keeping with the character of an historic village.

Downtown Dedham is a beautiful example of a small New England downtown and County Seat. It has evolved over the centuries, with each new building adding to the downtown in a way that expressed the particular values of its time. Downtowns are always changing, and over time there have been



monumental changes to the urban design of the Square with respect to circulation patterns. Nevertheless, people are aware that new development needs be respectful of the historic resources of the landscape. There is an increased desire to reduce the presence of the car and enhance pedestrian activity.

The long-term economic sustainability of downtown Dedham will depend on the collective impact of both public and private enhancements. Continued economic investment will only occur when there is confidence that investments in individual buildings will be increased in value, over time, by similar investments in adjacent properties.

It is normal for communities to see a number of (seemingly) small-scale erosions in the circulation system. These incremental changes can result in challenges that, in aggregate, become more significant. **Communities that develop a well-thought out approach to their street and circulation systems are better off because they balance the demands of vehicles and pedestrians.** Dedham Square needs to address parking demands, but they should not come at the expense of a genuine pedestrian-oriented environment. It is increasingly important for the town to overcome the spatial separation caused by the Boston-Providence Highway and what role increased pedestrian connections can play to make for a safer public realm.

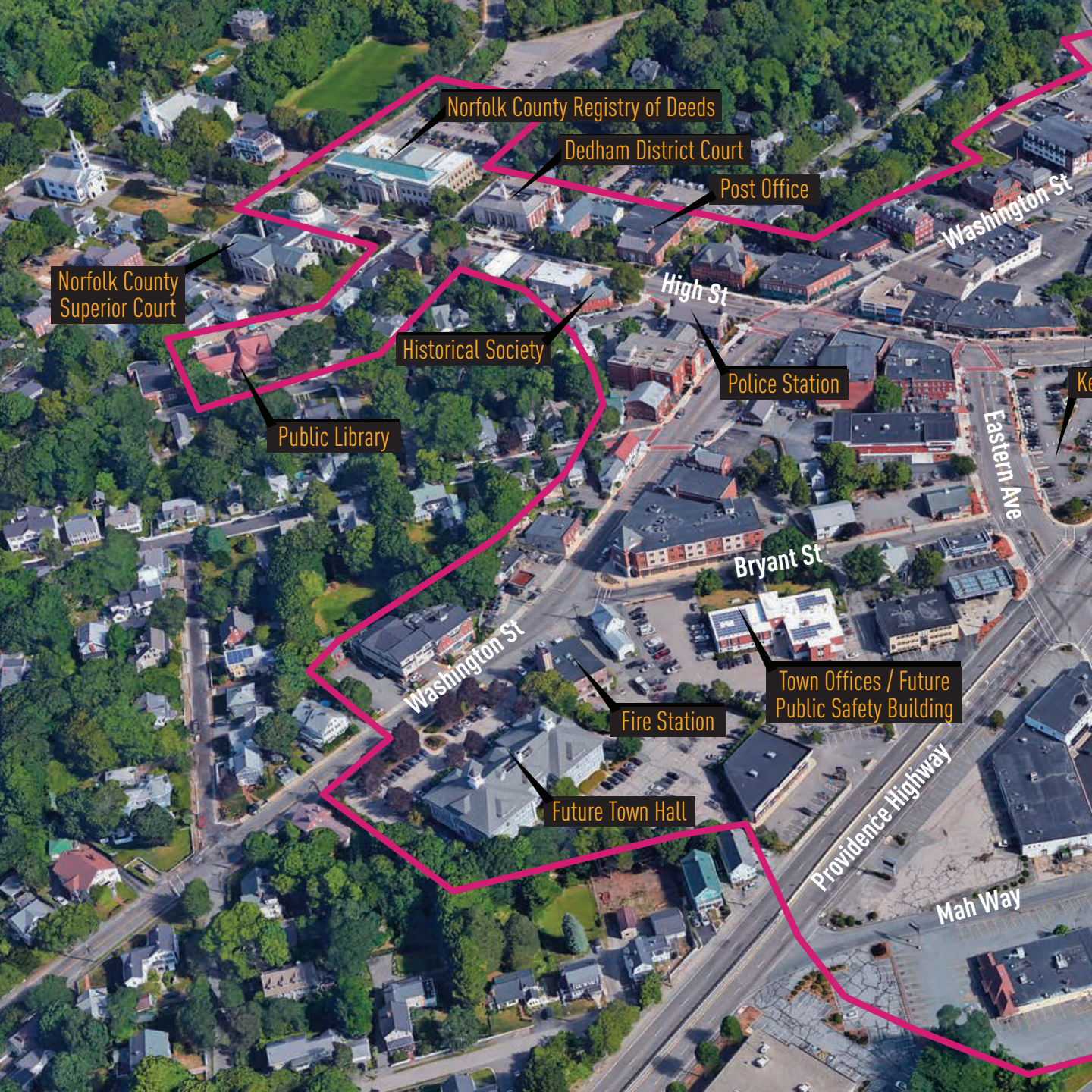
Dedham Square is a relatively small geography and there is a perception that the Town is built out. However, there is room to grow. Certain parcels close to Boston-Providence Highway are underutilized and would benefit from greater density and a more robust mix of uses. Paradoxically, potential areas for new growth are also close to the historic building fabric. There are a number of blocks that are nestled between the historic buildings and the highway which are best positioned for redevelopment. This is the area where Design Guidelines can have the biggest impact. **It is important to build in the right locations and at the right density.**

EST. 1636



HISTORIC
DEDHAM SQUARE





Norfolk County Registry of Deeds

Dedham District Court

Post Office

Norfolk County Superior Court

Historical Society

High St

Police Station

Public Library

Eastern Ave

Bryant St

Washington St

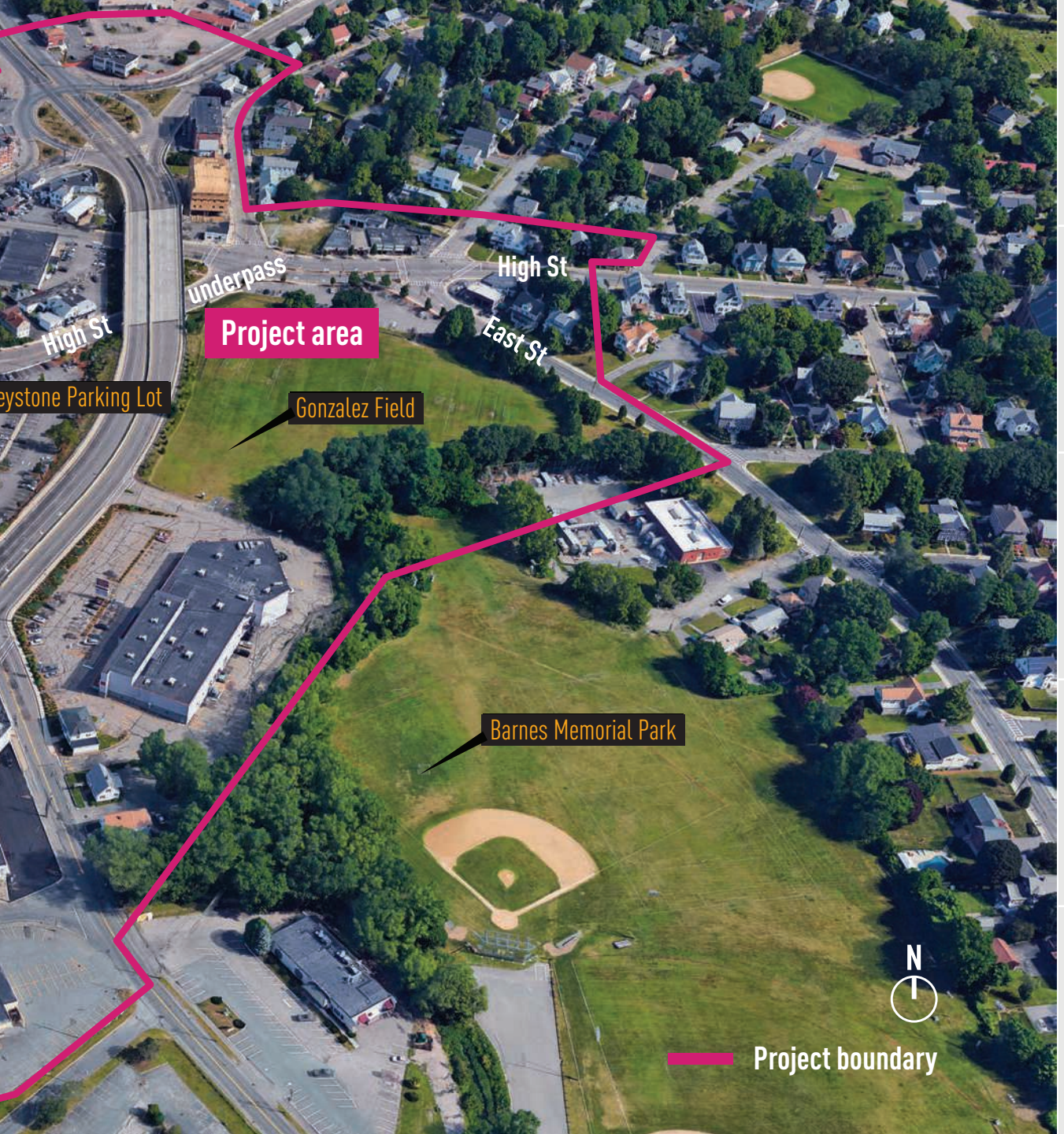
Fire Station

Town Offices / Future Public Safety Building

Future Town Hall

Providence Highway

Mah Way



underpass

Project area

High St

East St

Keystone Parking Lot

Gonzalez Field

Barnes Memorial Park



 **Project boundary**





© Courtesy of the Dedham Historical Society & Museum



© Courtesy of the Dedham Historical Society & Museum



DEDHAM'S HISTORY

Dedham Square has always been the center of public life for the Town. This is where people came to shop, eat, and socialize. A remarkable train station, built in 1835 and located on today's Keystone parking lot, added even higher importance to the downtown. The station was unfortunately demolished in 1951 after being vacant for almost twenty years. With respect to the natural environment, on hot summer days, locals populated the banks of the Charles River just north of downtown. This large recreational area was a huge asset for the town and a welcoming getaway.

In the beginning of the 20th century, the proliferation of automobiles transformed Dedham Square (and every other community across the country). The construction of the Boston Providence Highway and its bridge over High Street literally cut Dedham in half. The closing of the train station ended an important transportation option for the Boston region and contributed to the decline of Dedham Square. The site has been used for surface parking ever since.

Despite these changes, Dedham Square has never lost its unique charm and sense of identity. There is still a sufficient amount of historic fabric left. **The challenge in the future will be to integrate new development into the existing context and preserve the character of Dedham Square that has lasted for generations.**



DESIGN GUIDELINES FRAMEWORK

These Design Guidelines have not developed in a vacuum. A good deal of planning has already taken place.* Based on previous work and community conversations, the public has a good understanding of what Dedham Square's future should look like. The community envisions a shift from the car to the pedestrian, an enhanced streetscape with improved lighting, a higher architectural quality of new development, more open space, and a greater diversity of uses downtown. **Overall, there is a strong desire for a bolder vision for the future of the town.**

The Design Guidelines acknowledge these aspirations and are structured according to scale rather than location. They put the pedestrian in the center and place greater attention to details at street level. The most successful public spaces have a well designed public realm from street edge to the building. The Design Guidelines encourage active ground floor uses, outdoor seating, performative landscape elements and mature street trees. If these elements are implemented successfully, the stage is set for attractive new development.

New buildings should not be evaluated simply on a parcel-to-parcel basis, but in combination with their surrounding neighbors. Blocks with a harmonious design language will allow for pedestrian alleyways to meander in between, add a critical mass to the Square and provide attractive residential units on the upper floors for people who wish to live in a walkable district. Greater definition of blocks are part of the vision of the Square.

* Prior planning work includes:

2009 Dedham Master Plan Report - Community Opportunities Group, Inc.

2012 Design Bulletin - Brown & Keener

2012 Design Manual for Building Improvements - Brown & Keener

2013 Demographic Trends and Housing in the Town of Dedham - Northeastern University

2013 East Dedham Village Charrette - Metropolitan Area Planning Council

2014 Enhancing Creative East Dedham - Northeastern University

2015 Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Study - Metropolitan Area Planning Council

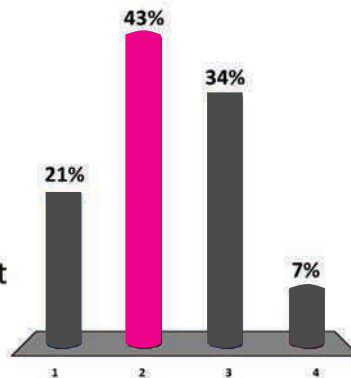
2016 Dedham Heritage Rail Trail Feasibility Study - Weston & Sampson

2016 Dedham Technical Assistance Panel - Urban Land Institute

2017 East Dedham Design Guidelines

The biggest challenge Dedham Square faces is:

1. Accommodating parking
2. Fostering greater pedestrian movement
3. Attracting higher quality development
4. Retail competition



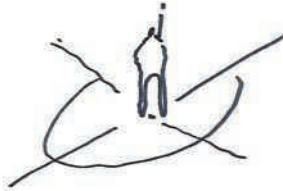
The development of the Design Guidelines utilized a range of techniques to elicit public feedback. This graph was created through Automated Response Technology at the Public Meeting on January 30, 2018.



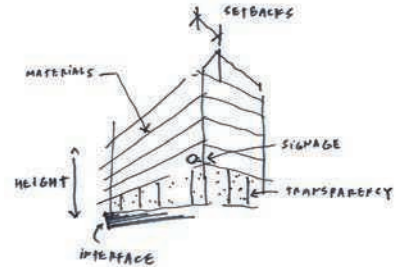
DESIGN GUIDELINES STRUCTURE

This document is organized according to five categories, starting at the scale of a pedestrian and extending to the large-scale corridor. The categories are color-coded for ease of navigation, and consist of several subcategories.

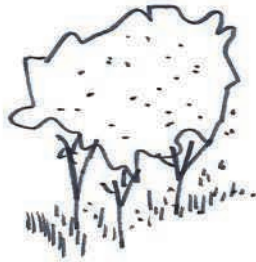
Person



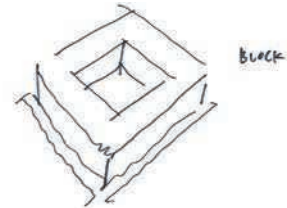
Building



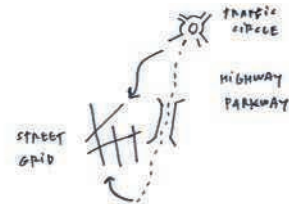
Landscape

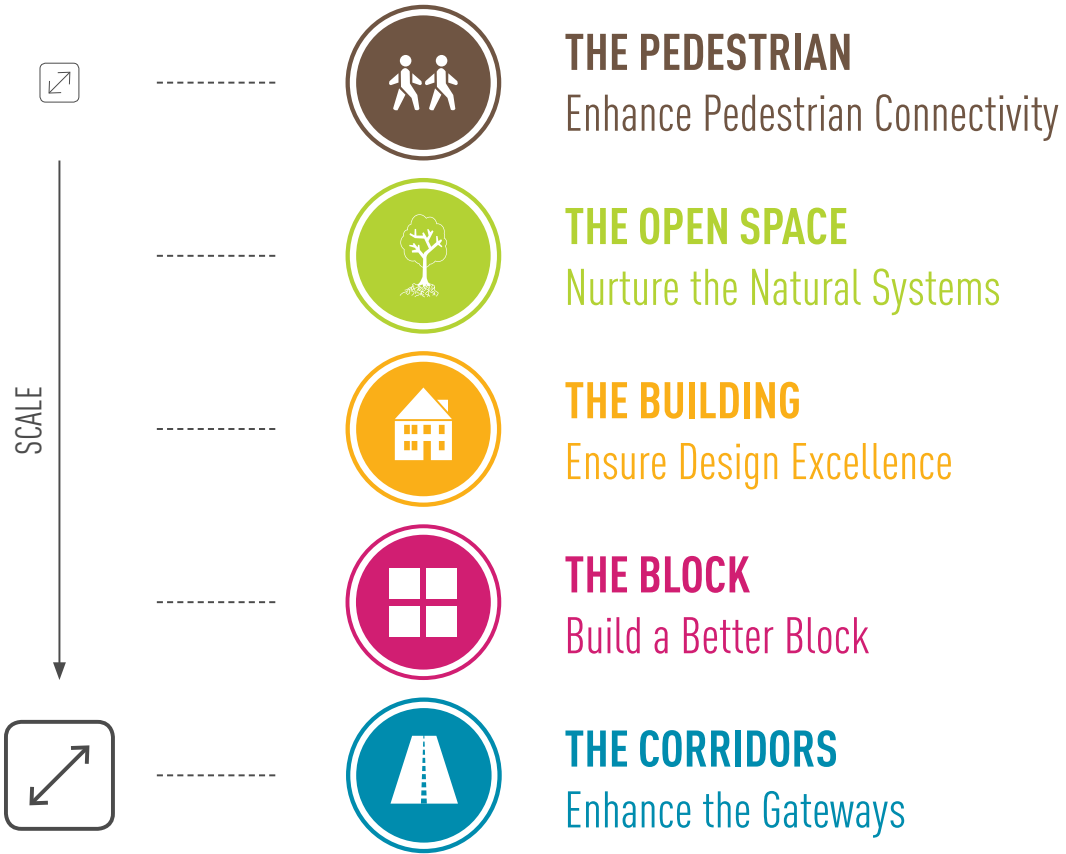


Block



Corridors





Downtowns are genuine gathering places and sources of community pride. After a century of suburban preferences, people of all ages are returning to downtowns because of their walkability, proximity to community assets and historic resources. Improvements to the public realm and amenities scaled for the pedestrian (and not in service of the car) result in a more vibrant and mixed use setting as a backdrop for civic life.



THE PEDESTRIAN

Enhance Pedestrian Connectivity



THE PEDESTRIAN

Enhance Pedestrian Connectivity



GOAL

Ensure continued maintenance and improvement of Dedham's pedestrian infrastructure.

(2009 Master Plan)

Boston Providence Highway | Dedham, MA



Ellicott Street | Buffalo, NY



4 Signage

3 Materials



2 Transparency

1 Public Realm Interface

1 PUBLIC REALM INTERFACE

While aligning a building's elevation to the property line is most often the appropriate response for building in a downtown setting, there are instances where some spatial relief is needed and a building setback could be included as part of a property's redevelopment. Occasionally, pocket parks with outdoor seating can be incorporated into new development. Modestly-scaled open spaces add vitality to the public realm.

Planters, green buffers, and performative landscape elements provide shade in the summer and create a sustainable, green environment. Appropriate lighting keeps historic features visible at night and increases security around the Square. A reasonable effort should be made to remove unsightly utility poles and install underground wires instead. A superlative public realm means that equal care is given to the ground plane in front of a building as the vertical surfaces of the building itself. Where space allows, the public realm offers a great opportunity for public art that further adds to the identity of Dedham Square.

- » **Encourage ground floor uses and outdoor seating**
- » **Incorporate planters and performative landscapes**
- » **Install appropriate lighting**



1 PUBLIC REALM INTERFACE

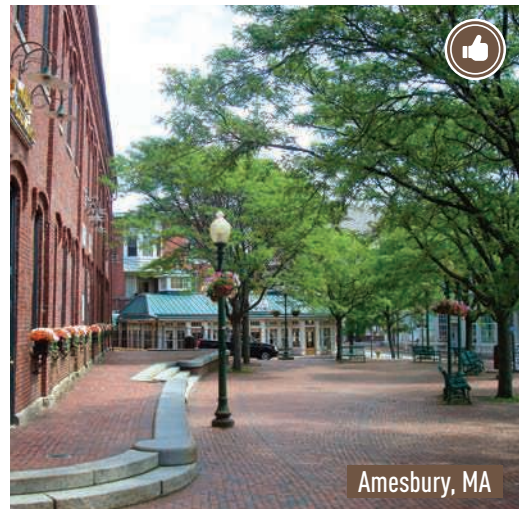
Encourage

- Pedestrian interest
- Appropriately scaled sidewalks
- Greater connectivity
- Bike paths
- Large caliper trees
- Publicly-accessible outdoor spaces
- Public art opportunities



Discourage

- Residual, privately-owned “public spaces”
- Building setbacks along commercial uses
- Preferring automobiles
- Multiple curb cuts





Outdoor seating

Street trees

Planters

Bench

Bike racks



2 TRANSPARENCY

The relationship of a building to a street and sidewalk plays an essential role in the ability of a development to enhance or detract from the public's experience. Commercial and mixed-use developments are most successful when the street edge is defined by active ground floor uses with a high degree of transparency. A vibrant public realm - achieved by a successful interface of the building with the ground plane - is essential for a downtown.

Large expanses of glazing, storefront windows and retractable facades contribute to a vibrant pedestrian experience. The main doorways of a building should face the public realm and be oriented to the primary street. The design of the building should provide visual clues that make entrances easily identifiable. Where a street terminates on the building façade or for buildings sited on corners, additional emphasis should be placed on the entry. Important interior spaces, such as lobbies or retail spaces, should be directly connected to the outdoor environment and be visible from the street so they are welcoming and provide synergy with the urban experience.

- » **Increase transparency at the ground floor**
- » **Multiple entrances along a façade are recommended**



Dedham, MA



Dedham, MA



2 TRANSPARENCY

Encourage

- Large windows on the ground floor
- Multiple entrances
- Well-lit window displays
- Doors with large glass panels
- Lobbies for larger developments



Discourage

- Large blank walls
- Large windows signs that obstruct views
- Frosted glass



Multiple entrances

Transparent ground floor



3 MATERIALS

The ability of a building to become a cherished part of Dedham Square has to do in part with changing societal tastes and aesthetic preferences. It also has to do with the economic climate in which the building was constructed and how resilient the structure is against deterioration. In this respect, the choice of materials for the building's exterior play a critical role.

Great care should be taken to specify durable, natural materials that work harmoniously with one another and project value. Façade materials should be chosen that are resilient, easily repaired, resist aging and are natural. Examples include brick, stone and metal panels. Cheap, non-durable cladding and finishes age poorly, require frequent maintenance and diminish the overall quality of the building. Not every elevation needs to be treated equally, and the greatest amount of detail needs to be reserved for the ground floor. This is the area that garners the most attention and view from pedestrians.

When a new building is built adjacent to an old one, it invariably draws a comparison. What does it mean to construct a new building in an area surrounded by old ones? Does a new building built in an historic area really need to look old? Variation and diversity of architecture is a good thing, and the choice of materials impact the quality of the development a great deal. What matters most is quality. Style is subjective, and trends change but striving to emulate a 19th century building in the 21st century is not really an appropriate contextual response.

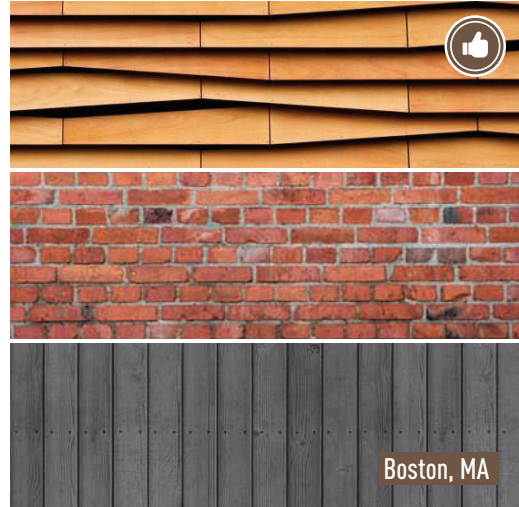
- » **Use durable, natural materials**
- » **Ensure that materials complement surrounding facades**



3 MATERIALS

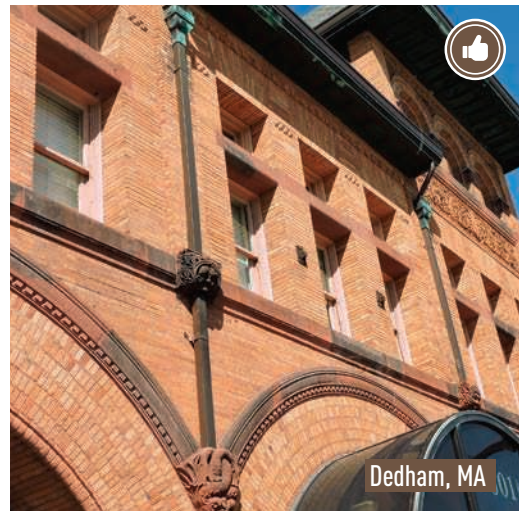
Encourage

- High-quality, locally sourced materials
- Recyclable, low embodied energy materials
- Historically appropriate materials
- Texture, variation, and tactility



Discourage

- Flat, Repetitive Facades
- Vinyl Siding
- Large Panels
- Inexpensive Materials
- Historical Facsimiles



Durable, natural materials



4 SIGNAGE

What is appropriate for a suburban mall, where cars drive by quickly and pedestrians are few, is inappropriate for an historic downtown with many pedestrians and slower moving traffic. Dedham Square will benefit from an easily recognizable, unique and memorable signage and wayfinding program. However, tying together the various information needs – identity, regulatory, orientation and conservation/interpretation – into a consistent graphic format can be challenging.

Signage needs to be integrated into a building's design, not installed as an afterthought. Discordant, randomly-placed, and poorly designed signage should be avoided. Effective signage is appropriately scaled to the viewer. For example, building directories - read by stationary pedestrians at close proximity – need to be much smaller in font size than those directing vehicles, which need to be seen from farther away while in motion. Internally lit signs project light beyond the property and are frequently composed of inexpensive, non-durable materials. Mass-produced neon and fluorescent signage, such as the ubiquitous “open” sign, and similar styles are inappropriate for Dedham Square.

- » **Respect Dedham Square's cultural and historical resources**
- » **Reduce visual clutter**
- » **Contribute to a vibrant pedestrian realm**



Dedham, MA



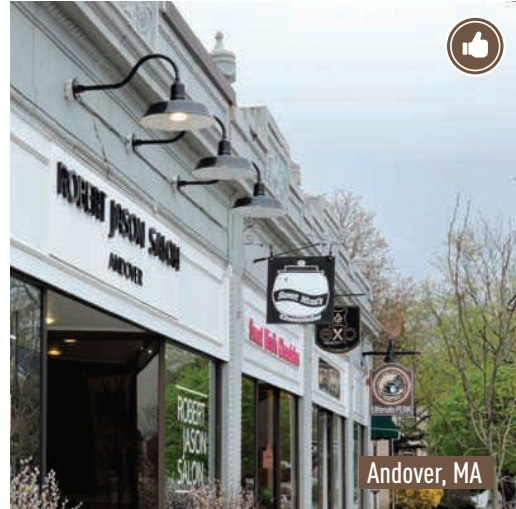
Dedham, MA



4 SIGNAGE

Encourage

- Attractive, proportionally appropriate signs
- Traditional sign materials
- Pedestrian-oriented projecting signs
- Decorative signs that aren't overwhelming
- Signs located above storefronts
- Materials + colors that complement the building



Discourage

- Visual clutter / Inconsistency amongst signs
- Unintegrated, stand-alone signs
- Internally lit plastic molded signs
- Neon and fluorescent or beacon signs
- Rooftop billboards





Blade signs

Awning signs

Applied signs

Windows signs





THE OPEN SPACE
Nurture the Natural Systems



THE OPEN SPACE

Nurture the Natural Systems



GOAL

Continue detailed and systematic planning for Dedham's short- and long-term open space and recreation needs.

(2009 Master Plan)

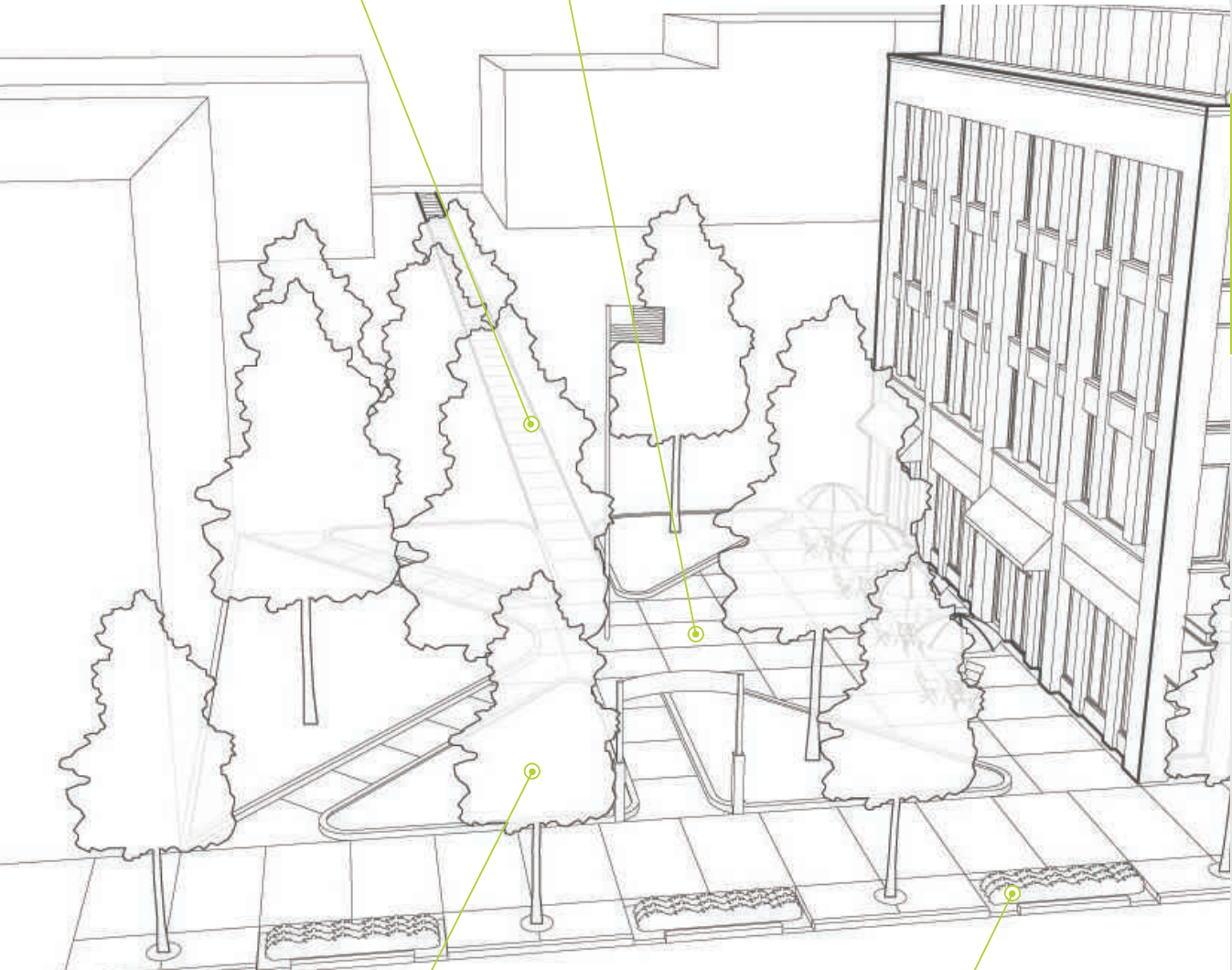
Open space below Boston Providence Highway | Dedham, MA



Downtown Streetscape | Oklahoma City, OK

7 Open Space Connections

5 Pocket Parks



8 Street trees

6 Sustainability



5 POCKET PARKS

The most evident feature of active, economically-healthy downtowns - be they large or small - is people outdoors; on the sidewalks, sitting in restaurants or cafes, or simply people-watching. The most dramatic way for this to occur is to encourage or incentivize ground floor activity (especially food and retail establishments) to have an outdoor as well as an indoor presence. Modestly-scaled open spaces in the form of plazas, courtyards or gardens can create opportunities for ground floor uses to spill out onto the public realm. There is a lack of these types of intimately-scaled spaces in Dedham Square.

The majority of downtown should have buildings that form a continuous street wall to form blocks. However, efforts should be made (at strategic locations) in Dedham Square to allow for smaller open spaces that augment or enable activities at the sidewalk. A key element of successful downtown revitalization efforts is a concerted and well managed program of downtown events, festivals and regularly scheduled activities that can happen in these spaces and are designed to bring people downtown or keep those already there longer.

- » **Incorporate modestly-scaled open spaces**
- » **Provide green space for a wide variety of users**



Dedham, MA



Dedham, MA



5 POCKET PARKS

Encourage

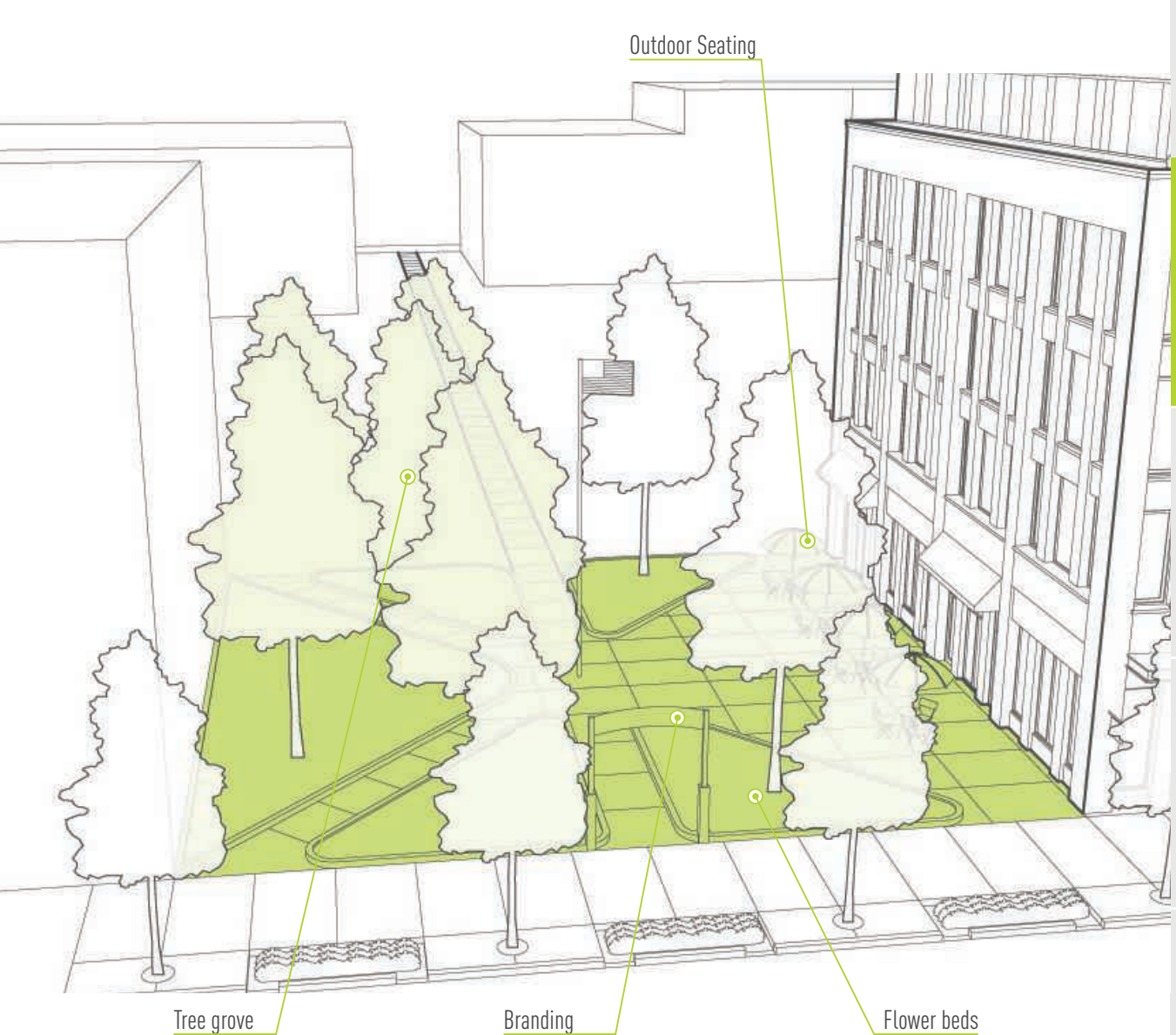
- Small gathering places
- Programming for different users
- Mature trees
- Native grasses
- Seating areas
- Installation of signs telling Dedham's history



Discourage

- Predominant use of impermeable surfaces
- Non-native plants and trees
- Residual, privately-owned "public spaces"





Outdoor Seating

Tree grove

Branding

Flower beds



6 SUSTAINABILITY

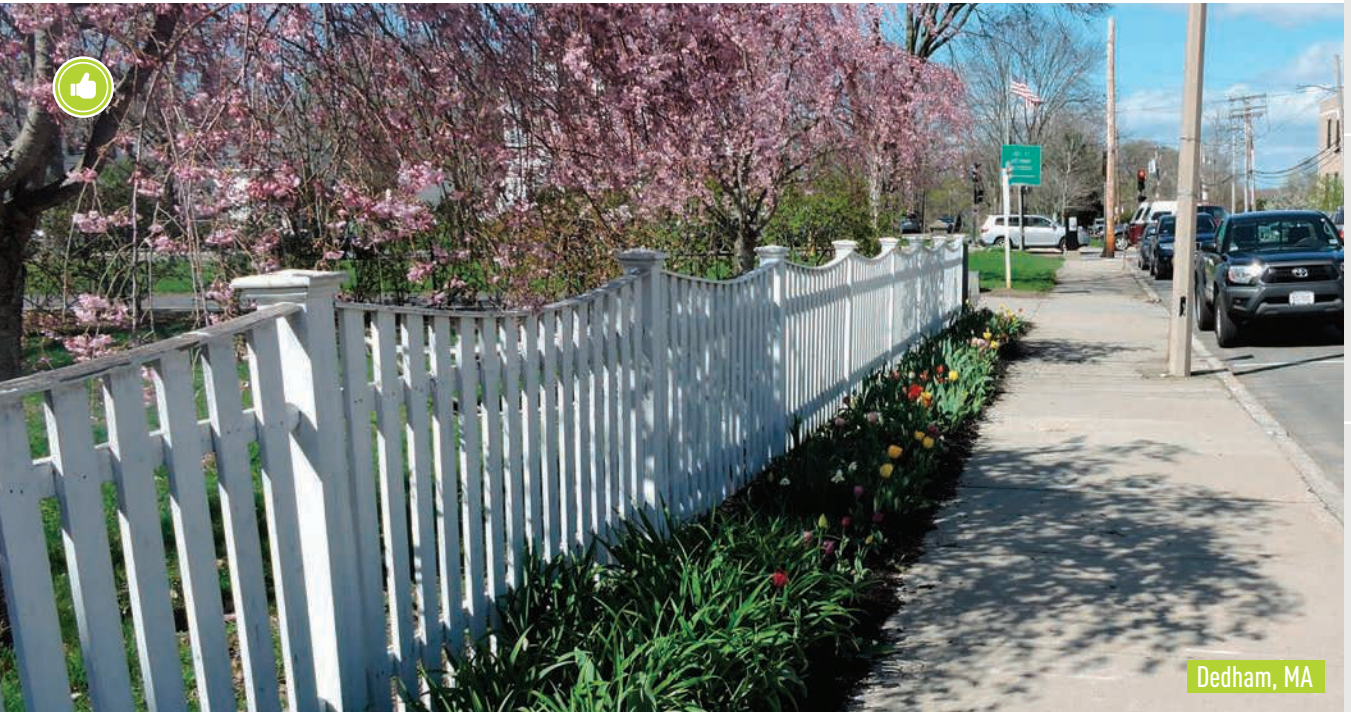
Sustainable is one of the most widely used - but also ambiguous and misunderstood - terms in vocabulary today. The word is used here to describe projects that are closely connected with the environments in which they reside. A development that is sustainable addresses, in one way or another, each of the scales articulated in this document: the pedestrian, the façade, the building, block and corridor. A greener and more sustainable Dedham Square will contribute to the health and wellness of the community and cultivate a pedestrian environment around which new development emerges.

Sustainable buildings utilize renewable energy resources and incorporate green technologies like permeable pavement, green roofs and rainwater harvesting. Minimizing storm-water runoff reduces the amount of impervious area, helps to eliminate sources of contaminants and pollutants and reduces heat island effect. Capturing and treating runoff allows water to filter into the soil and surrounding vegetation. These techniques can and should be deployed on individual sites as well as in the public realm.

- » **Utilize renewable energy resources and green technologies**
- » **Minimize storm-water runoff**



Dedham, MA



Dedham, MA



6 SUSTAINABILITY

Encourage

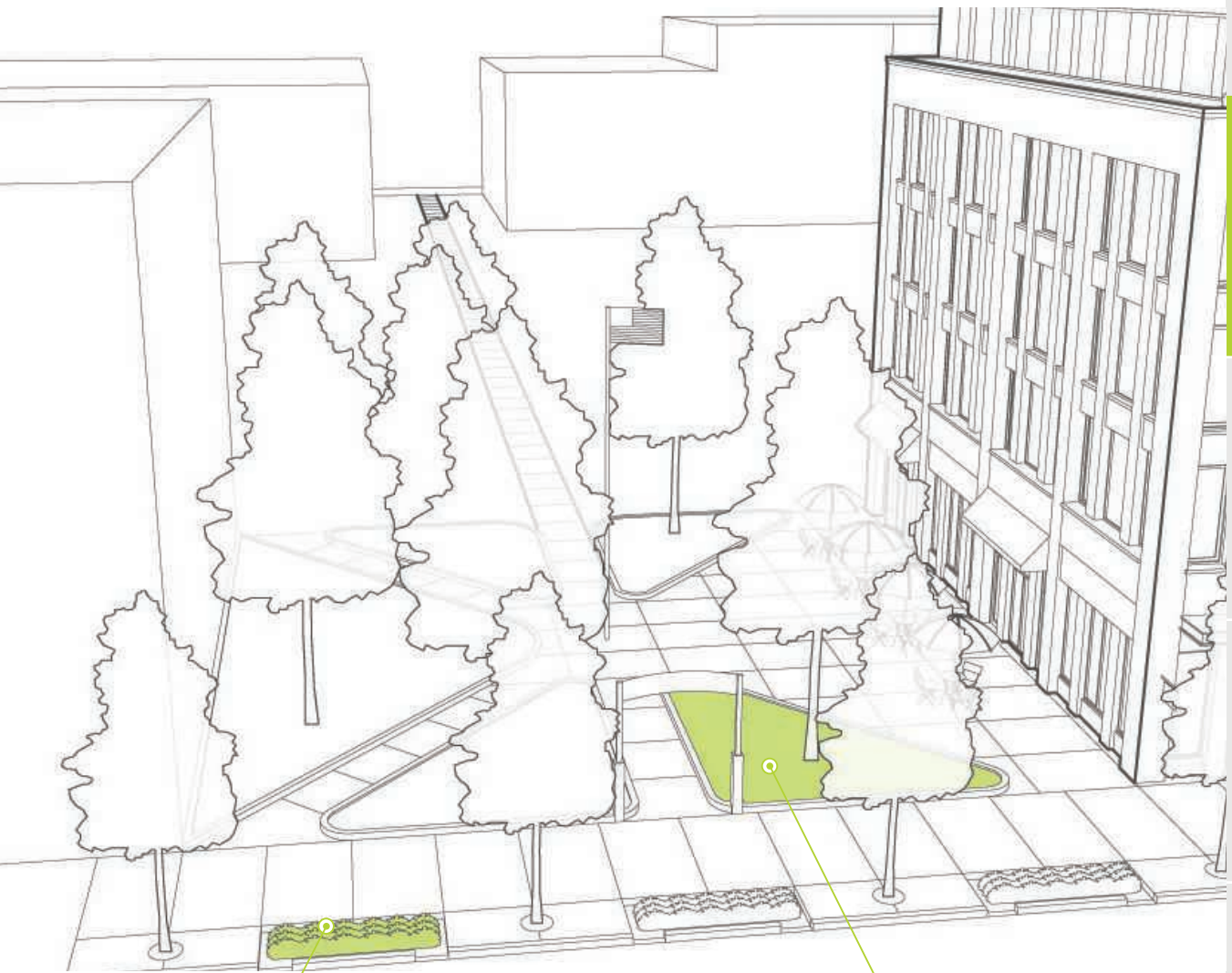
- Locally sourced materials
- High-performance building skin
- Renewable Energy Sources
- Green roofs
- Permeable paving
- Rain gardens / bioswales
- Energy Efficiency and Green Infrastructure



Discourage

- Single-use, car-focused buildings
- Large surface parking areas
- Extensively modifying existing topography
- Predominant use of impermeable surfaces





Bioswales

Storm water runoff



7 OPEN SPACE CONNECTIONS

Towns grow incrementally. Through the cumulative efforts of many actors and agendas, they mature slowly over time in fits and starts. The organic way in which places develop belies the fact that the cumulative effects of those changes, over time, can render places almost unrecognizable from one generation to the next. Investments in open space transcend relatively short-term decisions on individual properties to form a long-term framework of connectivity which unites disparate sites.

It is natural to only address individual properties when planning for parking, lot coverage, density or open space. However, greater connectivity in Dedham Square is needed and one should look towards linkages between sites. A network of attractive open spaces that are designed to be programmed and active during all seasons and times of the day will enhance the existing buildings and overcome the many layers of car-dominated infrastructure.

- » **Foster collaborative efforts to increase porosity**
- » **Establish a network of attractive open spaces**



Dedham, MA



Dedham, MA



7 OPEN SPACE CONNECTIONS

Encourage

- Mid-block connections
- Bike trails
- Wide sidewalks
- ADA accessibility / ramps
- Plantings and trees lining the connections
- Benches / seating areas along the way
- Attractive lighting
- Snow removal
- Pedestrian and cyclist amenities

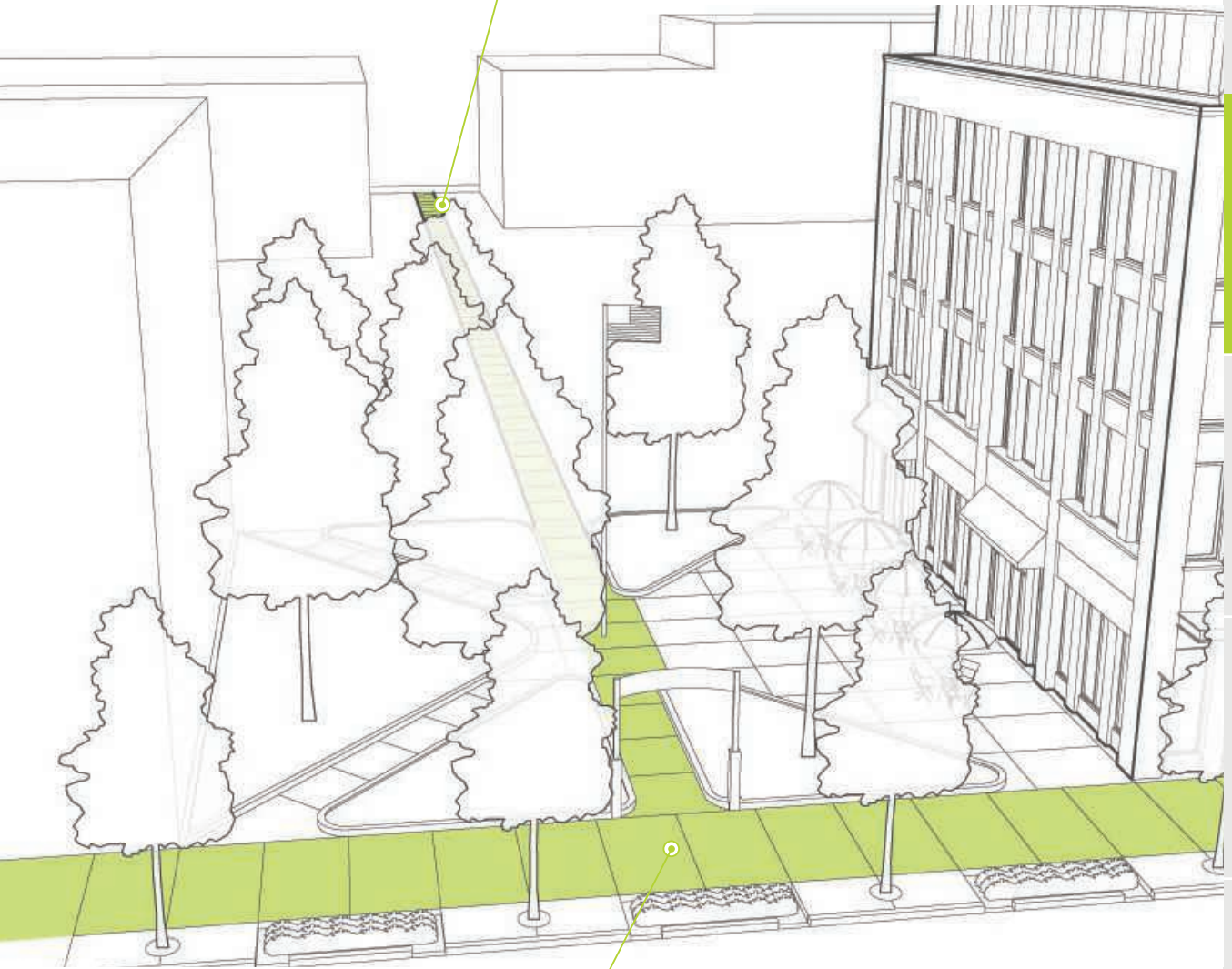


Discourage

- Narrow sidewalks
- Poorly-lit paths



Mid-block connections to adjacent blocks and neighborhoods



Wide sidewalks on primary streets



8 STREET TREES

Dedham is surrounded by a pervasive tree canopy and an inspiring natural landscape: parkways, wetlands and the Charles River. However, the majority of Dedham Square consists of impervious pavement; there is little green space. Upgrades to street infrastructure downtown will create a more hospitable environment for new construction. Streets are an extension of the public space, providing opportunities for outdoor events and activities.

Investment in the landscape in the form of bioswales, raingardens and trees create shade, reduce heat island effect and increase biodiversity, habitat support, seasonal color and visual interest. By insisting in an expansion of a more mature street tree canopy within or adjacent to the public-right-of-way a more connected downtown is made possible. Shaded streets facilitate a safe pedestrian environment that encourages walking and biking.

- » **Plant mature street trees and raingardens**
- » **Choose the right tree types that can cope with the New England climate**



Dedham, MA



Dedham, MA



8 STREET TREES

Encourage

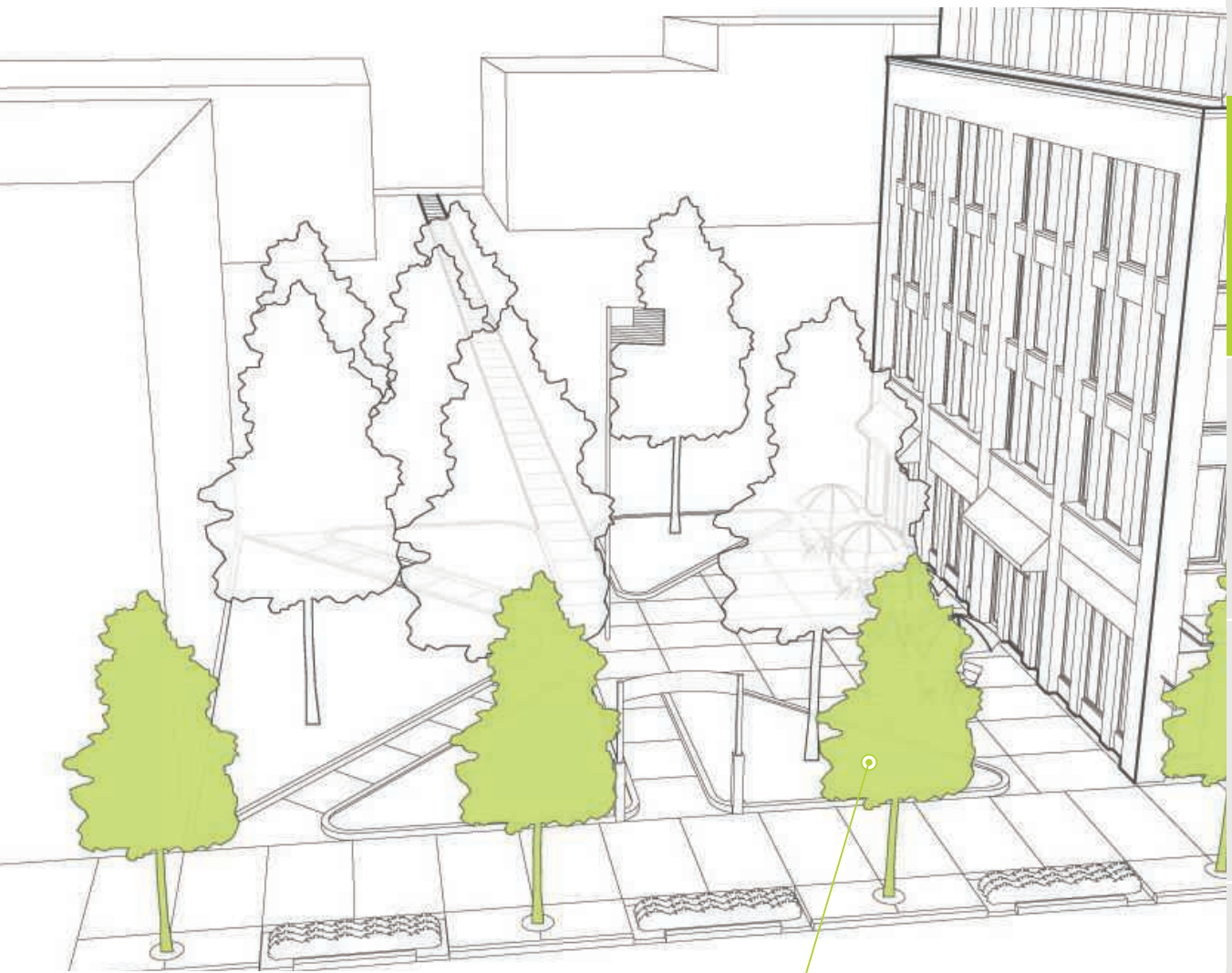
- Mature trees
- Native species
- Flower beds surrounding trees
- Trees that thrive in the New England climate



Discourage

- Non-native species
- Small tree beds
- Immature trees
- Interference with buildings





Mature street trees provide shade in the summer

There is mounting public appreciation for the historic and cultural value of older buildings. Increased recognition of the benefits of preserving and rehabilitating existing buildings often guides investment decisions and helps to shore up many downtowns. Nevertheless, interventions in historic downtown settings raise important questions about the appropriate scale, massing and character of new development. Dedham Square developed over hundreds of years. Each new building should be designed with this long-term perspective in mind.



THE BUILDING

Ensure Design Excellence



THE BUILDING

Ensure Design Excellence



GOAL

Provide for a diversity of housing opportunities. Encourage and facilitate quality design and maintenance of residential properties.

(2009 Master Plan)

321 Washington Street | Dedham, MA



The Lyric Courtyard | Seattle, WA

11 Setbacks + Stepbacks

9 Building Height



10 Massing



9 BUILDING HEIGHT

Height constitutes just one aspect of a building's massing, but it is one of the most conspicuous. Historical building heights in Dedham Square vary. The vast majority of buildings, however, are just one or two stories along the primary commercial corridors. Heights are impacted by a variety of factors, including floor to floor dimensions, the construction type, the site's topography and the scale of surrounding buildings. The height of a building is also impacted by the width of the street in which it fronts. Larger commercial corridors and primary streets that are wider warrant greater building heights than residential streets. Concerns about a "canyon effect" are warranted when the amount of new development along a primary street are taller (vertical dimension) than the street right-of-way (horizontal dimension).

Greater height in certain locations can be beneficial and increasing heights in some areas will offset the need for density in other areas. The impact of height can be diminished by the inclusion of open space or a building setback. For example, a taller building will appear less tall when setback from the street. However, in an effort to define Dedham Square's blocks, building setbacks are not preferred. When concerns about density arise as a result of a building's height, the relationship of the building façade to the public right-of-way can have a greater impact than any other dimension. At the same time, what is deemed an appropriate height for a building is relative to its surroundings.

- » **Establish appropriate building heights in relationship to adjacent historic fabric**
- » **Allow for greater building height where it is beneficial to the surroundings**



9 BUILDING HEIGHT

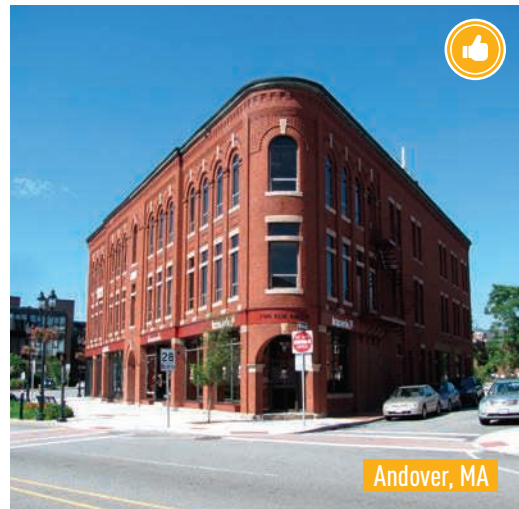
Encourage

- 3-5 Stories maximum at the gateways
- 3-4 Stories maximum at the Square
- Upper story stepbacks
- References to context
- A range of building heights
- Transitions zones
- Modest height allowances where appropriate



Discourage

- Large-scale discrepancies
- The “Canyon Effect”
- Shadow impacts



Vary building heights within development



3-4 stories maximum



10 MASSING

Building massing has to do with the overall proportion of a structure, including the dimensions of the building footprint and the relationship to the context where it resides. As Dedham's density increases and previously vacant or underutilized sites fill in with new buildings, figuring out how to manage massing becomes increasingly important.

Larger building masses are appropriate for the center of downtown and the Gateways into downtown. As new development gets closer to existing residential areas, a building's mass should taper to relate more closely with the scale of existing neighborhoods. Buildings in prominent locations should have distinct profiles to serve as landmarks which give areas their identities and are important for orientation. Prominent locations include building facades that terminate view corridors, corners of buildings, especially at gateway locations, and buildings surrounding open spaces/parks.

- » **Allow for greater building massing where it is beneficial to the surroundings**
- » **Taper building massing in proximity to small-scaled residential neighborhoods**



Dedham, MA



Dedham, MA



10 MASSING

Encourage

- Breaking building's mass into smaller forms
- Variation in building volumes
- Pass-throughs which diminish larger blocks
- Emphasizing corners
- Public open spaces scaled to a project's size
- Lower massing abutting residential areas
- Balconies that provide variation in massing



Discourage

- Monotonous building elevations
- Building clusters with the same look and design
- Large buildings along narrow right-of-ways
- Inwardly focused enclaves with few connections



Modulate larger building masses

Balconies provide views



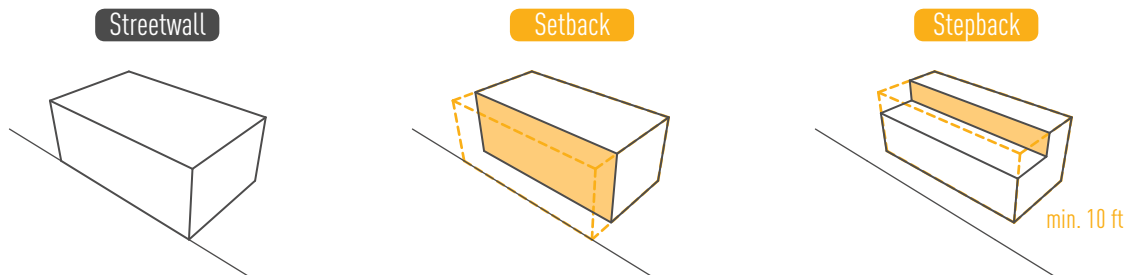
Variation in building volumes



11 SETBACK + STEPBCKS

The dimension measured from a building to the street edge has everything to do with how a space feels. In urban areas with a lot of commercial activity, it is important to maintain a continuous street wall with modest or few building setbacks. Setbacks that do occur should be used for pocket-parks, plazas, seating areas or landscape zones that are open to the public. What constitutes an appropriate setback is impacted by the character and scale of the street it fronts, the type of ground floor uses and the concentration of pedestrian activity on adjoining sites. In general, setbacks function best when they are consistently deployed. Larger landscape setbacks are appropriate for residential areas and large buildings, whereas mixed-use buildings in urban areas should define the streetwall. A step-back is different than a setback. A step-back minimizes the visual and shadow impacts of higher floors, allowing for greater height while maintaining a consistent scale with adjacent buildings. Step-backs occur at the upper level of buildings where the upper plane of the building is recessed from the lower stories. A minimum step-back of 10 feet is encouraged above the third or fourth floor. This allows for the first stepped-back level to be largely hidden from the street.

- » **Use setbacks to break up larger building massing**
- » **Include upper story step-backs to diminish the effect of building height**





Dedham, MA



Dedham, MA

11 SETBACK + STEPBACKS

Encourage

- Stepbacks on upper floors
- Green roofs / rooftops
- Spill-out space for ground floor uses
- Appropriate landscaping within the setbacks



Discourage

- The "Canyon Effect"
- Buildings close to sidewalks in residential areas
- Surface parking in setback zones
- Oversized Setbacks



Upper story step-backs diminish the perception of building height



Diminish long elevations by providing visual relief



Historic downtowns in America were developed prior to the automobile. Each new building built played an important role in the physical fabric of the town, and most buildings that were not civic in use were built directly adjacent to the next. The impact of the development pattern therefore formed continuous street walls that defined blocks. The buildings defined the streets and the streets created blocks. Pedestrian-scaled blocks are essential for the health and vitality of a town.



THE BLOCK

Build a Better Block



THE BLOCK

Build a Better Block



GOAL

Evaluate ways to encourage 'village' design in Dedham's neighborhood commercial centers.

(2009 Master Plan)

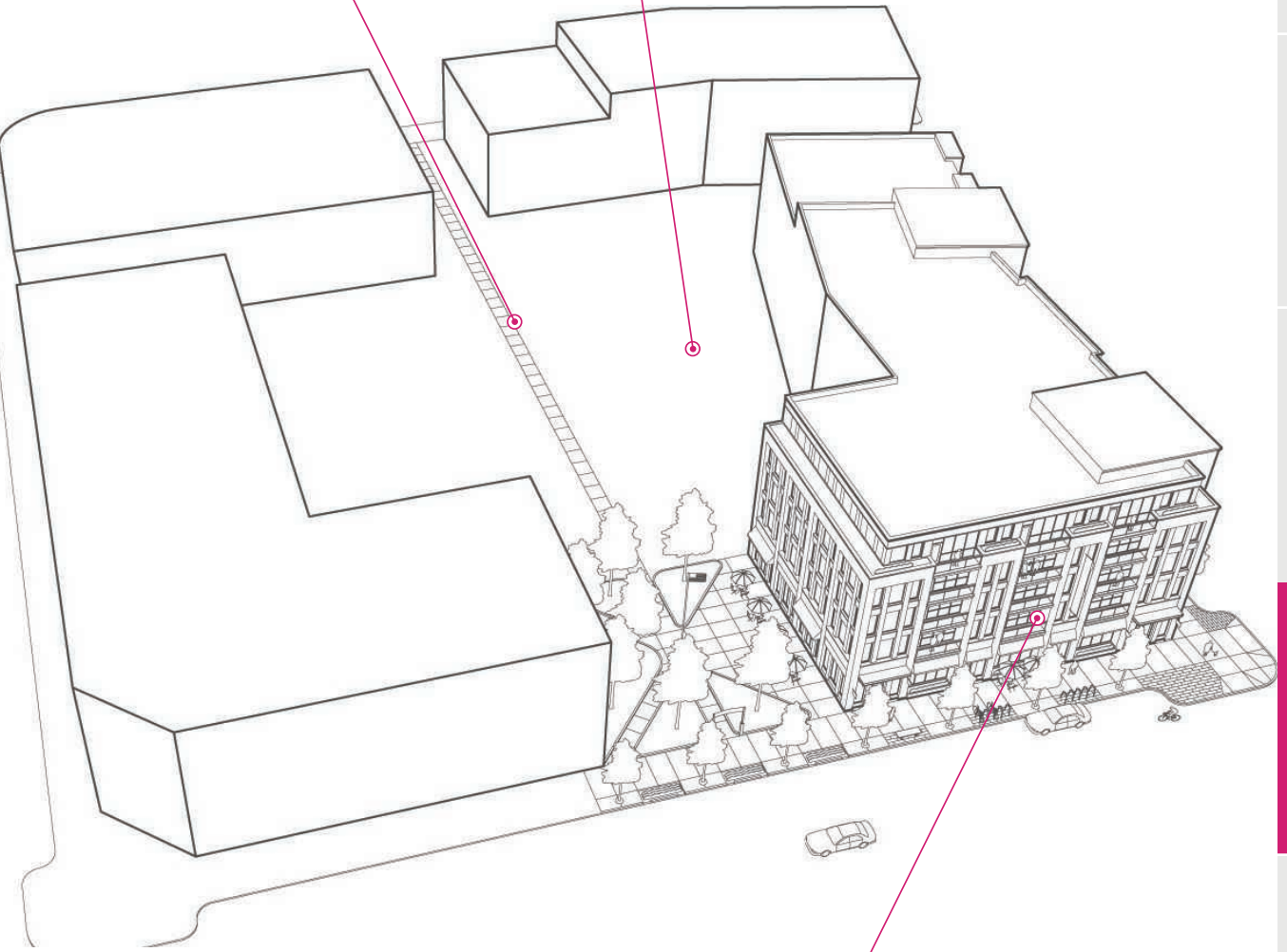
19 Eastern Avenue | Dedham, MA



Assembly Row | Somerville, MA

13 Porosity and linkages

14 Interior block parking



12 Streetwall definition



12 STREETWALL DEFINITION

Streets were once a community's most treasured public space, and in downtown settings, streets and public spaces should be defined by a consistent street wall in order to form an "outdoor room" with three dimensional qualities. Build-to lines indicate the placement of the building in relation to the street and, together with adjacent buildings, establish this edge between the public and private realms. In most instances, building façades in Dedham Square should be located on the build-to line. There are instances, however, when modest setbacks may provide relief.

Articulation in a building's façade can break down the scale of a building into smaller elements and introduce texture. Small setbacks and projections add dimension and shadow to a building's elevation.

- » **Create a consistent street wall that forms an outdoor room with three dimensional qualities**
- » **Allow for setbacks that break up larger facades**



Dedham, MA



Dedham, MA



12 STREETWALL DEFINITION

Encourage

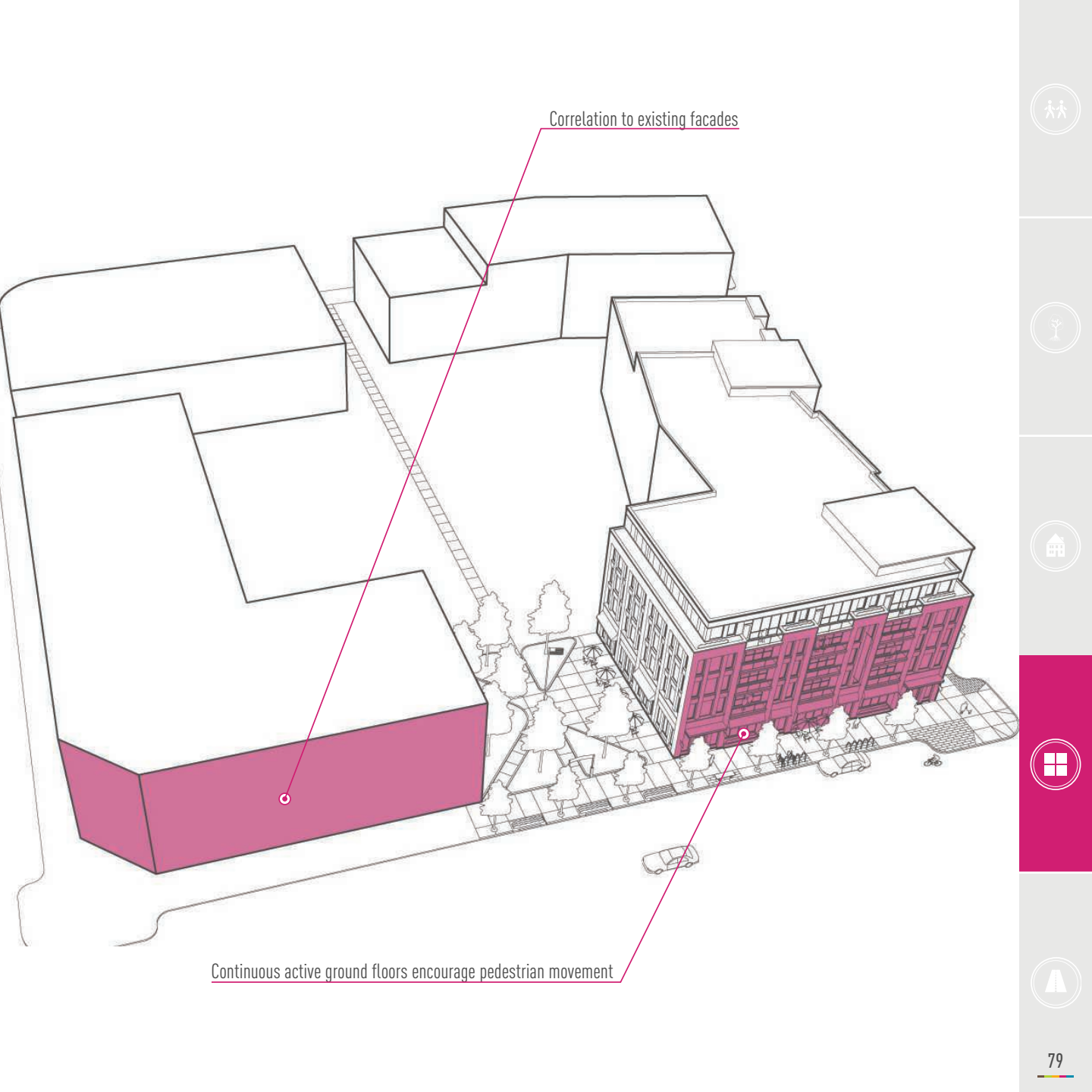
- Continuous building frontage in the Square
- Appropriate response to adjacent buildings
- Active ground-floor uses
- Modest setbacks where appropriate



Discourage

- Buildings set back too far from the street
- Low density
- Single use





Correlation to existing facades

Continuous active ground floors encourage pedestrian movement



13 POROSITY AND LINKAGES

The structure of these Design Guidelines reinforces the assertion that Dedham's downtown is largely defined by blocks, and that individual developments should be seen in aggregate as helping to define a street wall. However, not all blocks are the same size or geometry. Providing breaks in a building's elevation facilitates connectivity and linkages to adjoining sites, the interior of a large block, or adjacent areas.

Building pass-thrus in the form of walks or alleys connect sites together and provide a venue for outdoor programming and placemaking. These spaces break down the scale of a block.

- » **Provide breaks in buildings' elevation**
- » **Build alleys that link adjoining sites and create attractive outdoor spaces**



Dedham, MA



Dedham, MA



13 POROSITY AND LINKAGES

Encourage

- Well-lit mid-block connections
- Pedestrian short-cuts
- Transformation of existing alleys
- Linkages to courtyard gathering spaces
- Public art on long blank facades

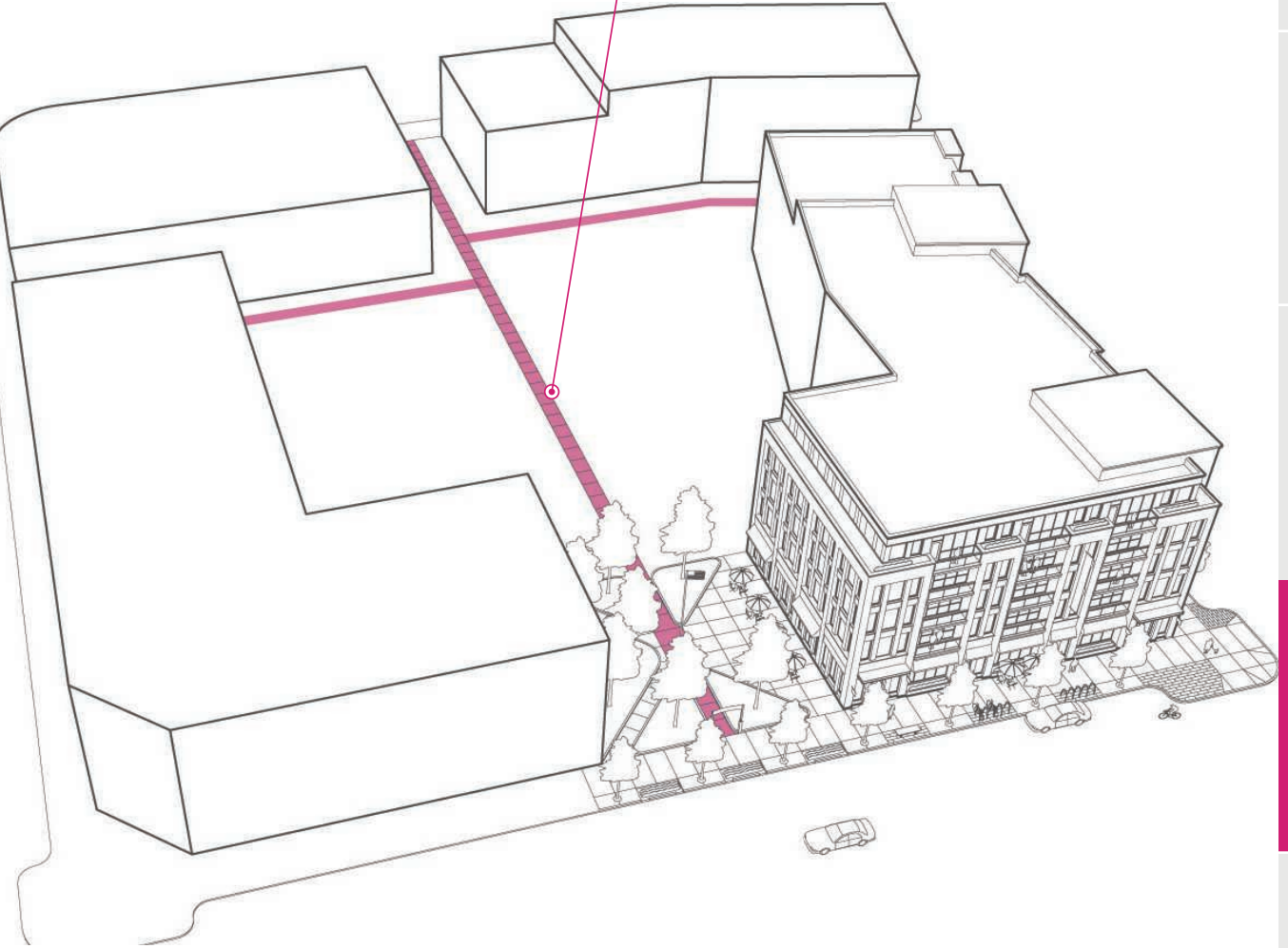


Discourage

- Poorly-lit alleys
- Conflicts with private spaces within courtyard
- Streetwalls that are broken up too frequently



Mid-block connections to adjacent neighborhoods



14 PARKING

In attractive and walkable downtown settings, parking is provided but seldom in the most convenient location possible. Opportunities for enhanced density can enable below-grade costs to be absorbed into the development plan when site conditions allow and the project is of a sufficient scale. Adequate vehicular parking and good pedestrian access need not be mutually exclusive ambitions. A wise and efficient plan for parking facilitates movement for cars and people alike.

American attitudes towards our car-dominated culture are slowly shifting. While market-based realities require on-site parking, simply providing the maximum amount of it on a parcel by parcel basis undermines the ambition to foster a walkable environment. Change is already happening. In the not-so-distant future, car and ride sharing, driverless cars, alternate modes of transport and more frequent public transit will radically alter the amount of space that is needed for parking.

- » **Promote the primacy of the pedestrian and bicyclist experience**
- » **Increase structured and shared parking solutions**
- » **Surface parking should be minimized and, where it exists, be located behind buildings or have decorative fencing, street trees and landscape buffers**



Dedham, MA



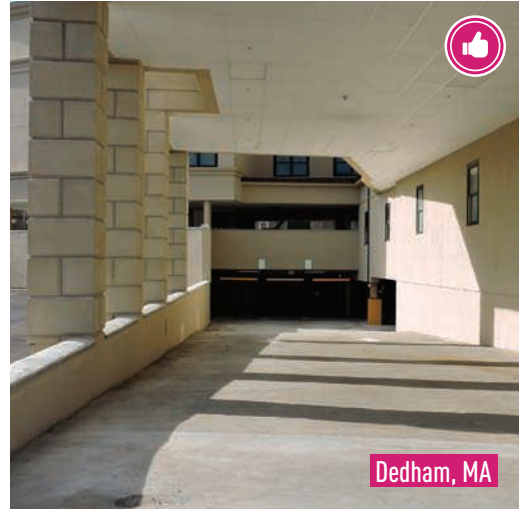
Dedham, MA



14 PARKING

Encourage

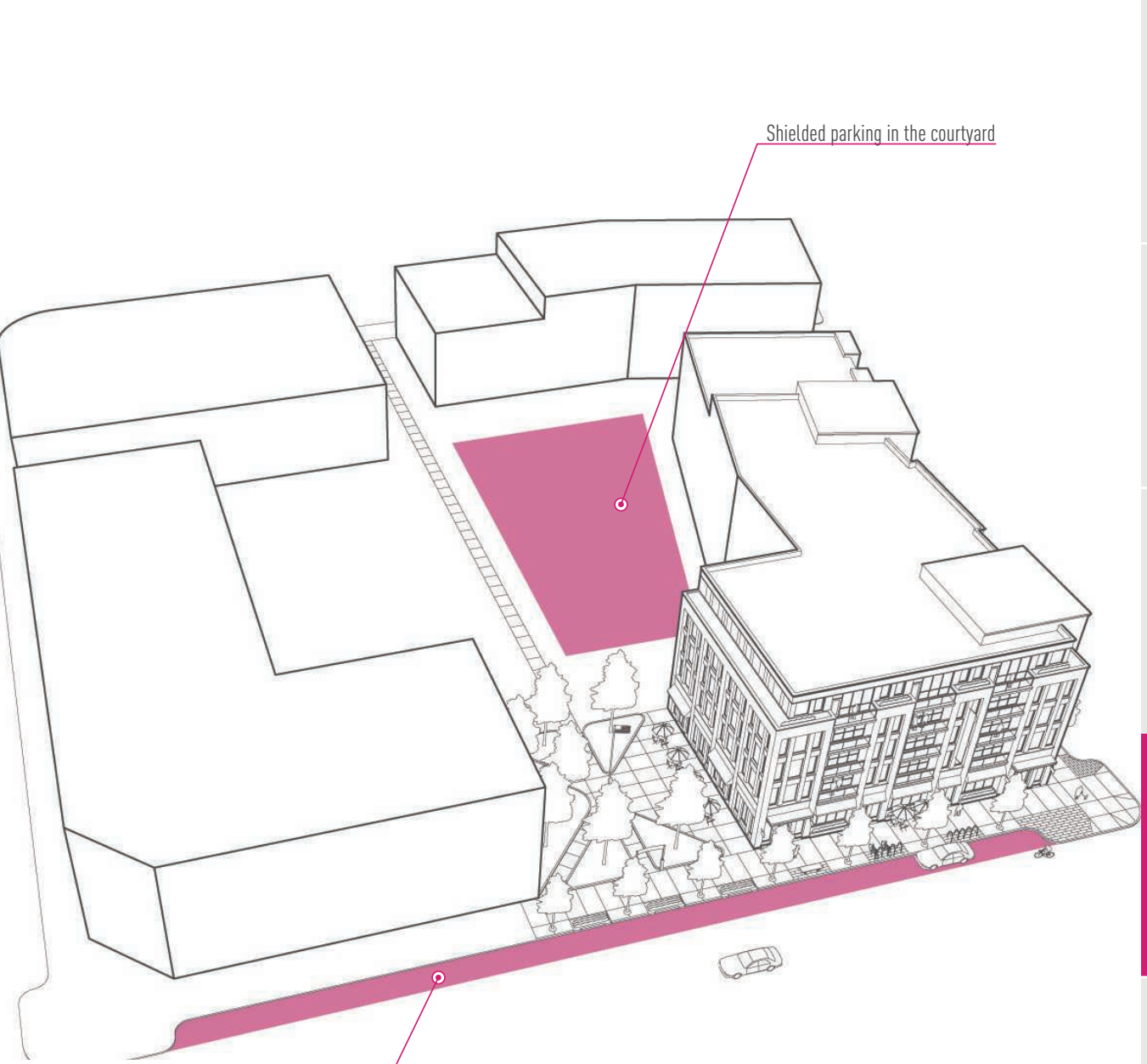
- Reduced parking requirements
- Underground / under building parking
- Well-landscaped surface lots
- Rear or mid-block surface parking
- Car sharing, charging stations and transit shuttles
- Bicycle, pedestrian and public transit access
- Street parking in front of businesses
- Drop-off zones for ridesharing services



Discourage

- Surface parking in front of buildings
- Preferring cars over pedestrians and bicyclists
- Parking garages with large blank walls
- Multiple curb cuts accessing parking lots





Shielded parking in the courtyard

Street parking for commercial uses



The largest scale in the structure of these Design Guidelines is that of the corridor. For the vast majority of people entering Dedham, Boston-Providence Highway is the primary route into the downtown. Infrastructure improvements to this major arterial can slowly begin to transition the character of the strip from a car-dominated, suburban raceway into a more graceful downtown setting. These improvements are both timely and essential for the future of Dedham Square.



THE CORRIDORS
Enhance the Gateways



THE CORRIDORS

Enhance the Gateways



GOAL

Identify, document and protect
Dedham's scenic roads.

(2009 Master Plan)

Existing: Intersection Washington Street / Boston Providence Highway



Opportunity: Washington Square Circle | Worcester, MA

15 Gateways

16 From Highway to Parkway



17 Crossings



15 GATEWAYS

How one enters Dedham Square matters. There are two primary gateways into the historic downtown, and they are very close to one another. Not surprisingly, the highway is located along the former railroad alignment. Unfortunately, the size and configuration of these gateways are a product of mid-20th century transportation planning that placed greater emphasis on leaving town as opposed to entering it. The intersections of Eastern Avenue and Washington Street with the Boston-Providence Highway leave a lot to be desired in terms of a cherished public realm.

Nevertheless, placemaking and transportation networks can co-exist. There are ways to address these sites in a manner that allow for the movement of cars and people. A more rationalized circulation pattern that clarifies vehicular movement is needed at the gateways into downtown. The confluence of multiple intersecting streets, excessive pavement and topographic changes create poor sight lines and unsafe conditions for pedestrians.

- » **Build gateways that provide identity and strong entry points into the downtown**
- » **Facilitate vehicular movement and pedestrian circulation**



Dedham, MA



Dedham, MA



15 GATEWAYS

Encourage

- New development celebrating the gateways
- Rationalized circulation pattern
- Spatial definition of corner parcels
- Pedestrian-centered solutions



Discourage

- Gas stations in prominent locations
- Vast surface parking lots in front of businesses
- Car-centered infrastructure
- Low-density, large-scale development





Enhanced infrastructure

New development defines gateway



16 FROM HIGHWAY TO PARKWAY

The greater Boston region is blessed with a legacy of interconnected parkways and open spaces. Despite the fact that portions of the Emerald Necklace are incomplete, the system is viewed with envy from other regions around the country that long for a network of lush, linked open spaces. The character of how one arrives to Dedham is as important as what it looks like when one gets there.

There is a vast difference in the character of the street sections leading into Dedham Square. The Veterans of Foreign Wars Parkway transitions abruptly to the Boston-Providence Highway and the difference between the two could not be more pronounced. While the right-of-way for the road does not change, the number and scale of curb cuts, light standards, planting and barriers along the highway undermine the aesthetic quality of the Town and reinforce a bland character commensurate with ubiquitous suburban strip development. Dedham deserves more.

- » **Line the highway with mature trees that form a boulevard**
- » **Install appropriate lighting and planters**
- » **Reduce the number of curb cuts**



Dedham, MA



Boston, MA



16 FROM HIGHWAY TO PARKWAY

Encourage

- Mature trees aligning the road
- New development framing the streetscape
- Bike-paths and bus lanes
- At-grade intersections
- Safe pedestrian crossings
- Travel speed reduction

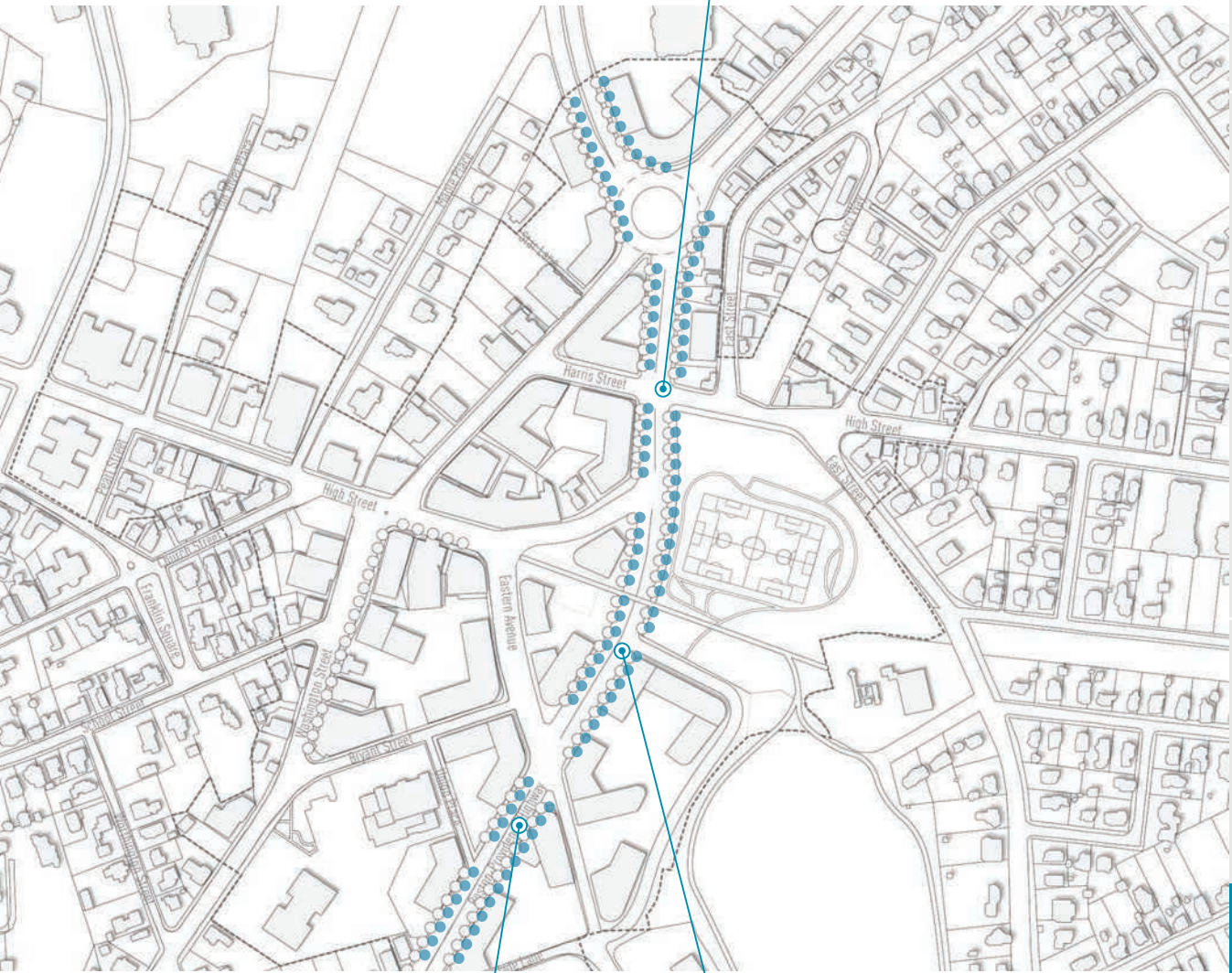


Discourage

- Overly-wide travel lanes
- High speed limits
- Car-centered businesses
- Overscaled traffic infrastructure



Intersections reduce travel speed



Multi-modal street section

Trees frame attractive boulevard



17 CROSSINGS

The project area is relatively small (see page 9). Pedestrians can walk from one end to other in less than 10 minutes. Unfortunately, the insufficient public infrastructure discourages people from walking to the Square. Missing sidewalks, crumbling concrete, long waiting periods at street lights, and the lack of attractive street walls offer little reason to stroll through downtown. Additionally, crossing the Boston-Providence Highway appears to be the biggest obstacle. The two main intersections at Washington Street and Eastern Avenue are almost impassable for a pedestrian. The most direct connection to East Dedham along High Street leads through a poorly lit underpass.

The Town has already invested a great deal of money into the streetscape in and around the Square. Now, investments to the crossing of the Boston-Providence Highway need to be made. New crosswalks at the two Gateways in combination with reduced street widths will encourage pedestrian movement. The installation of attractive lighting, public art, or recreational opportunities can transform people's perception of the High Street underpass. A more direct connection from Gonzales Field and Barnes Memorial Park to the Keystone Lot is desirable. Potential development on the Keystone Lot could even incorporate a pedestrian bridge over the highway.

- » **Improve crosswalks and waiting phases at traffic lights**
- » **Install better lighting and public art at the High Street underpass**
- » **Evaluate additional crossing options**



Dedham, MA



Bellvue, CO



17 CROSSINGS



Encourage

- Improved existing crossings
- Well-lit underpass
- New crosswalks, lights, and traffic islands
- Extended green lights for pedestrians
- Connection of trail networks
- Potential pedestrian bridge



Discourage

- Dark, unsafe underpasses
- Dangerous at-grade crossings



Improve existing crossings



Foster greater pedestrian connectivity



DESIGN GUIDELINES CHEAT SHEET



THE PEDESTRIAN

Enhance Pedestrian Connectivity

1 PUBLIC REALM INTERFACE

- » Encourage ground floor uses and outdoor seating
- » Incorporate planters and performative landscapes
- » Install appropriate lighting



THE OPEN SPACE

Nurture the Natural Systems

5 POCKET PARKS

- » Incorporate modestly-scaled open spaces
- » Provide green space for a wide variety of users



THE BUILDING

Ensure Design Excellence

9 BUILDING HEIGHT

- » Establish appropriate building heights in relationship to adjacent historic fabric
- » Allow for greater building height where it is beneficial to the surroundings



THE BLOCK

Build a Better Block

12 STREETWALL DEFINITION

- » Create a consistent street wall that forms an outdoor room with three dimensional qualities
- » Allow for setbacks that break up larger facades



THE CORRIDORS

Enhance the Gateways

15 GATEWAYS

- » Build gateways that provide identity and strong entry points into the downtown
- » Facilitate vehicular movement and pedestrian circulation

2 TRANSPARENCY

- » Increase transparency at the ground floor
- » Multiple entrances along a façade are recommended

3 MATERIALS

- » Use durable, natural materials
- » Ensure that materials complement surrounding façades

4 SIGNAGE

- » Respect Dedham Square's cultural and historical resources
- » Reduce visual clutter
- » Contribute to a vibrant pedestrian realm

6 SUSTAINABILITY

- » Utilize renewable energy resources and green technologies
- » Minimize storm-water runoff

7 OPEN SPACE CONNECTIONS

- » Foster collaborative efforts to increase porosity
- » Establish a network of attractive open spaces

8 STREET TREES

- » Plant mature street trees and raingardens
- » Choose the right tree types that can cope with the New England climate

10 MASSING

- » Allow for greater building massing where it is beneficial to the surroundings
- » Taper building massing in proximity to small-scaled residential neighborhoods

11 SETBACK + STEPBACK

- » Use setbacks to break up larger building massing
- » Include upper story setbacks to diminish the effect of building height

13 POROSITY AND LINKAGES

- » Provide breaks in buildings' elevation
- » Build alleys that link adjoining sites and create attractive outdoor spaces

14 PARKING

- » Promote the primacy of the pedestrian and bicyclist experience
- » Increase structured and shared parking solutions
- » Surface parking should be minimized and be located behind buildings

16 FROM HIGHWAY TO PARKWAY

- » Line the highway with mature trees that form a boulevard
- » Install appropriate lighting and planters
- » Reduce the number of curb cuts

17 CROSSINGS

- » Improve crosswalks and waiting phases at traffic lights
- » Install better lighting and public art at the High Street underpass
- » Evaluate additional crossing options



CONCLUSION + NEXT STEPS

Dedham Square's Design Guidelines were crafted to enhance the economic vitality of the downtown through attractive design. By following these guidelines, each project can complement another, resulting in more cohesive urban design. The guidelines provide a direction for the design of new infill development while acknowledging that existing buildings that have retained cultural or architectural significance can also form the basis for growth. The guidelines define expectations for quality while allowing for flexibility. An overarching goal is to recognize the potential for architectural diversity while at the same time adhering to fundamental urban design principles.

Design Guidelines cannot depict every possible building configuration. Rather, prototypical building forms are shown. The massing and scale is general enough to allow for a range of uses, but specific enough to highlight critical areas of concern. Architectural style is subjective and advancing a singular design aesthetic is neither viable nor desirable.

Recommended next steps:

1. Conduct "Strategic Planning Study" for the project area
2. Give the Design Review Advisory Board more advocacy
3. Translate Design Guidelines into Standards that are integrated into Dedham's By-Laws.
4. Apply for TIGER or similar funds to further improve the project area's infrastructure
5. Hold a public charrette on the future of the Police Station to understand the public's vision for the site
6. Draft RFI/RFP for Reuse of Police Station



Dedham Square Steering Committee members

1. Planning Board – **Michael Podolski** (*chair*)
 2. At-Large Member – **Peter Smith** (*vice chair*)
 3. Board of Selectmen – **Michael Butler**;
 4. Master Plan Implementation Committee – **Michelle Persson Reilly**;
 5. Zoning Board of Appeals – **Jessica Porter**;
 6. Dedham Square business owner – **George Panagopoulos**;
 7. Dedham Square property owner – **Mark Gottesman**;
 8. Dedham Square property developer – **Giorgio Petruzzello**;
 9. Dedham Square Circle board member – **Ryan McDermott**;
- Ex Officio members: **John Sisson** and **Jarret Katz**, Town staff; **Amy Haelsen**, Dedham Square Circle





architecture
urban design

GAMBLE
ASSOCIATES

Gamble Associates
678 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 502
Cambridge MA 02139
617-292-9912