

Design Guidance for **Vinnin Square** **Swampscott**

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Photo: swampscottphotos.com



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Section 1 - Introduction

In May of 2023, Swampscott Town Meeting approved zoning changes that regulate a portion of Vinnin Square located between Essex Street and Paradise Road. These zoning changes are intended to encourage future mixed-use redevelopment and investments that would strengthen the Town's commercial tax base. The adoption of "Design Guidelines" was a required component of the new zoning. The *Design Guidance for Vinnin Square* is intended to apply to the properties between Paradise Road and Essex Street with boundaries highlighted in yellow as shown in the diagrammatic illustration below. The area of applicability is noted as "Vinnin Square Study Area."

Study Area

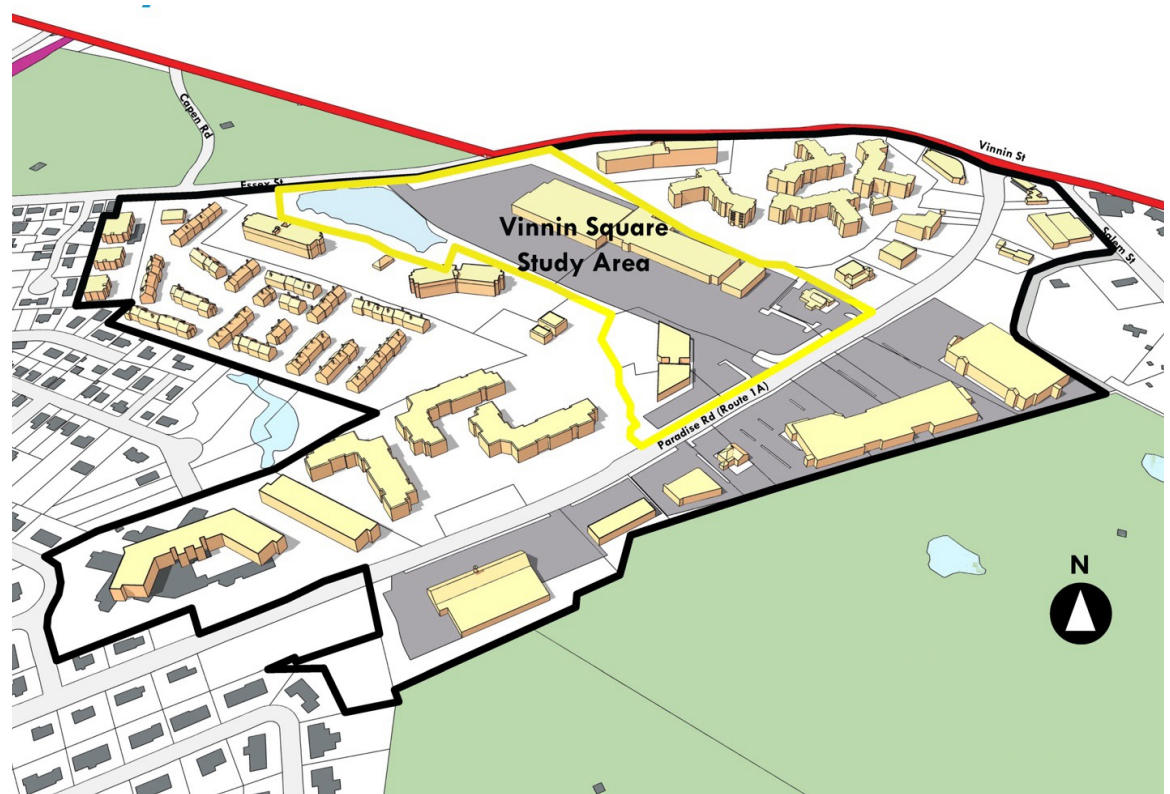


Illustration 1: Study Area

Purpose

The purpose of Design Guidance is to provide direction and assistance to regulate the architectural, landscape, and design aspects of any future redevelopment project. The Town of Swampscott, with the Planning Board as the lead, will administer the development review process for any development proposed within the Vinnin Square Study Area and will use the following Design Guidelines as a part of that review process. Any development proposal within the Vinnin Square Study Area is expected to comply with the Design Guidelines.

Review Process

The Planning Board encourages a pre-application review meeting to discuss a potential project application. In the pre-application review the applicant should be prepared to discuss compliance with the Design Guidelines for Vinnin Square.

Section 2 - Vision Statement

Vinnin Square will be a re-imagined, revitalized, and walkable center of community activity that fits with the seaside community and responds to the Town's nautical heritage and coastal architecture while improving multi-modal transportation access and appropriately scaled mixed use retail, residential and office space that attracts much needed business, jobs, commercial tax base, and increased consumer spending to Town.

- Adapted from the Town-wide *Swampscott Master Plan* (2016)

Community members were asked whether they agree with this vision for Vinnin Square. **52% of participants strongly agreed with the vision and 32% agreed with the vision for a total of 84% of support.** 8% of the participants were neutral about the statement, 4% disagree with the vision, and 4% strongly disagree with the vision.

Community members were asked, how close is Vinnin Square to your ideal vision for it today? 41% of the participants responded not close and 23% responded really not close for a total of 64% looking for something more from Vinnin Square. 28% responded that it is okay, 5% that it is close, and 3% that it is very close.

Priorities and Focus

The content outlined for the Vinnin Square design guidance has been defined based on input from the Swampscott community gathered at an August 29th, 2023, Community Meeting and a follow-up Community Survey. Over 200 community members provided feedback on how best to focus the content of the design guidance. The areas of design guidance prioritized include:

- Circulation (32%)
- Landscape (21%)
- Building (14%)
- Other (sustainability, affordability) (14%)
- Site (13%)

In addition to what is included in the design guidance and how the guidance is prioritized, the community feedback has also guided what is not included in the outline for design guidance. The following areas of design guidance are not included due to lack of community support:

- Parking (3%)
- Frontage (3%)
- Signage (0%)

Additional Community Feedback

Community members were asked, do you have a general preference for design guidelines (advisory) or design standards (mandatory)? The most frequent response preferred standards with some guidelines (46%). 33% preferred an even balance of standards and guidelines, 12% preferred standards (mandatory) only, and 9% preferred guidelines with some standards.

Community members were asked what do you think is most important for repositioning Vinnin Square? The most frequent responses included: increased mix of uses (32%), enhanced sense of place (25%), and reconfigured buildings that define outdoor space (22%).



Community Meeting discussing Vinnin Square design guidance

Photo: itemlive.com (Emma Fringuelli)

Section 3 – Vinnin Square Design Guidelines

Site

1 Site Design Guidelines

A. Feature outdoor open spaces and community amenities – strengthen the connection between buildings, landscape, and the surrounding sidewalks and open spaces to define multi-purpose outdoor areas that support a variety of activities and build a sense of place and community.

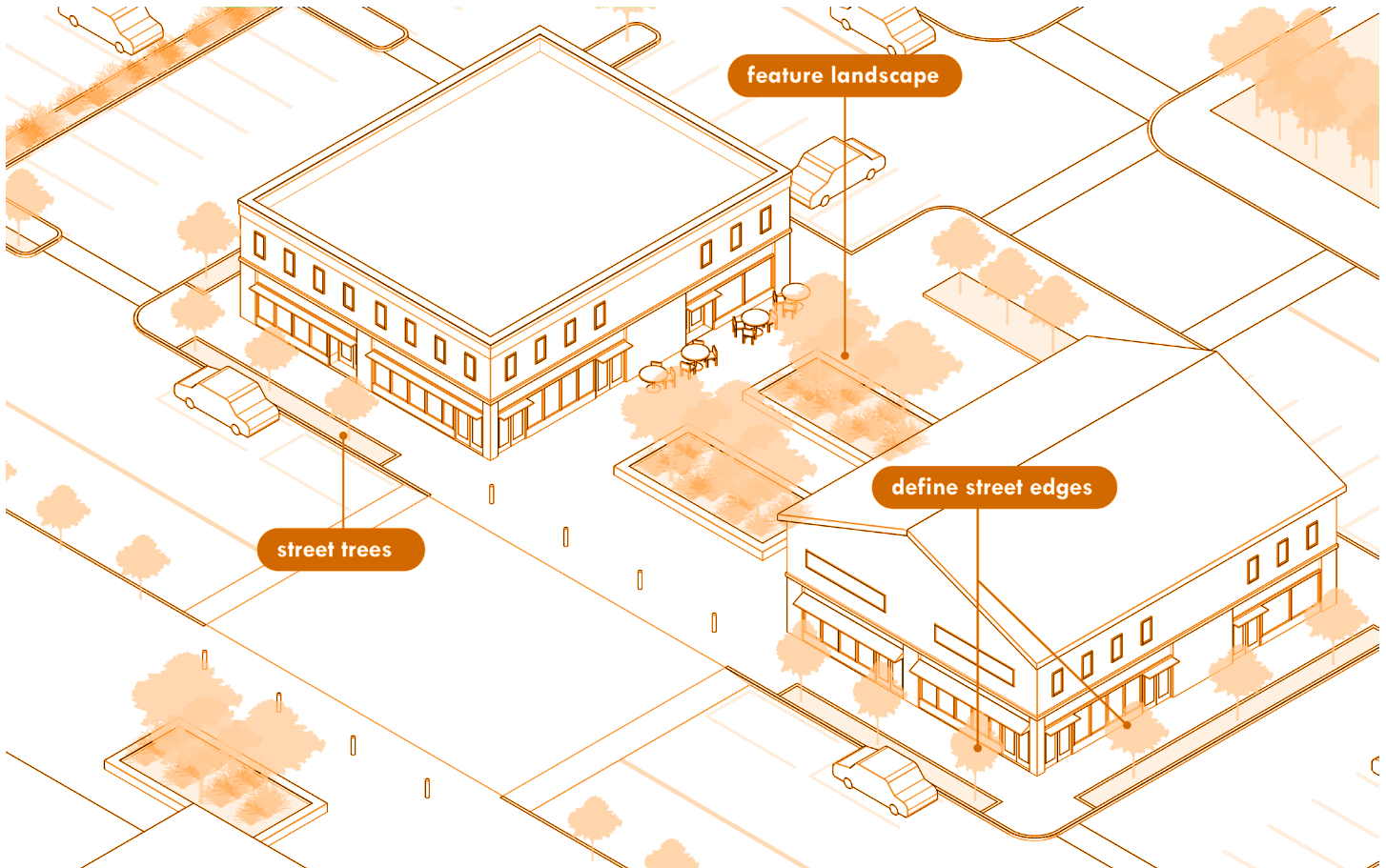


Illustration 2: Feature outdoor open spaces

a. Redefine existing buildings – adapt and redevelop existing buildings to create the opportunity for additional outdoor open spaces, community amenities, and enhanced landscape areas. A reconfiguration of the existing square feet should be considered to reduce the building footprints in the current configuration and to allow the same amount (or greater) square footage of building area to be redeployed to greater effect to define internal circulation and streets and outdoor open spaces.

b. Strategic additions of new buildings – add new buildings to define outdoor open spaces. The location of new buildings should be strategic to shape outdoor open spaces that support a variety of activities. The scale of the buildings and open spaces should be calibrated so that the outdoor open space(s) has a sense of enclosure and is human scaled.

c. Elevated outdoor open spaces – the outdoor open spaces should be designed as the central features of any development with amenities such as outdoor seating, lighting, paving treatments, landscape, public art or other elements that facilitate the public use of outdoor spaces. Public art should be used to define and punctuate outdoor open spaces while maintaining the ability to support a variety of activities. Landscape in outdoor open spaces should be selected to differentiate this area, for example installing more mature trees or unique ornamental trees that are differentiated from other street or parking area trees.

B. Connect the network of outdoor open spaces and amenities – create more than one outdoor open space that is connected as a network of new and existing outdoor spaces. Outdoor open spaces should be designed to complement pathways to building entries. Existing open spaces should be enhanced to fit with the character and amenities of new outdoor open spaces.

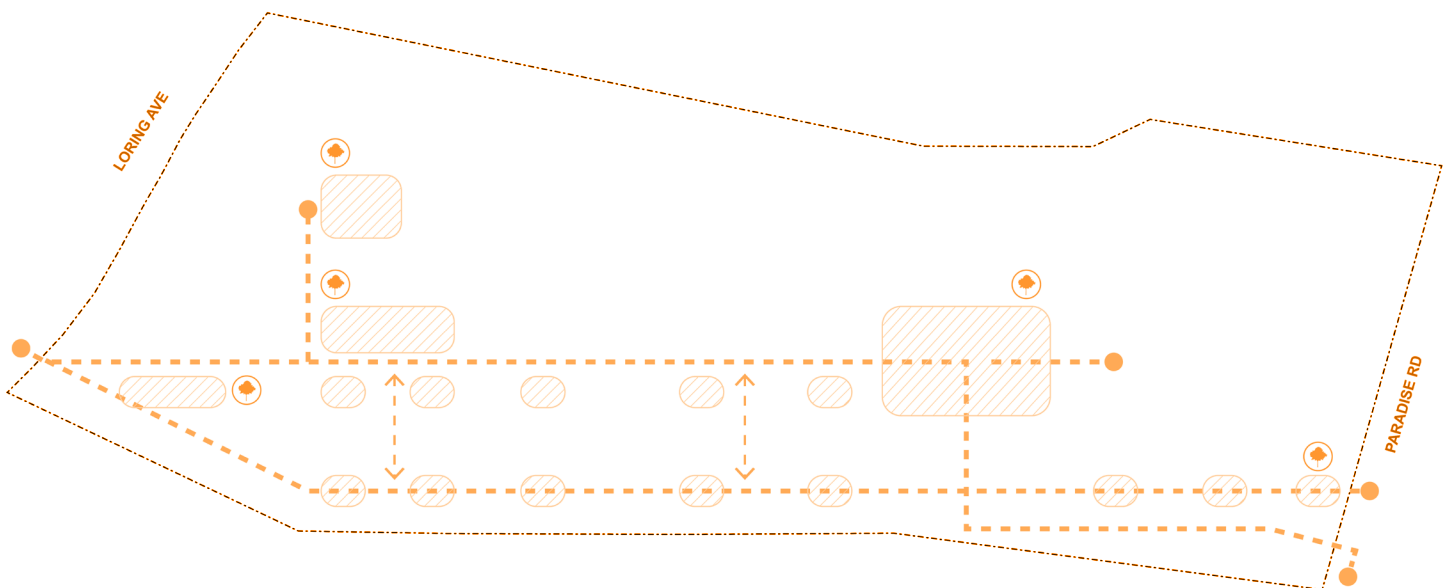


Illustration 3: Network of outdoor open spaces

a. Define a hierarchy and pattern – the scale and location of outdoor open spaces should be used to define a hierarchy of outdoor spaces that include a central feature, secondary spaces, and tertiary spaces. The central feature would include the full range of amenities such as special seating, lighting, paving treatments, landscape, public art, or other elements. These patterns should be repeated in part for secondary and tertiary outdoor open spaces in response to the hierarchy that is established. This repetition of elements should create a cohesive theme across the network of outdoor open spaces.

b. Maximize the use of all spaces – no outdoor open space is too small to feature an amenity. Small open spaces, leftover, or awkward in-between spots should be used as an opportunity to provide amenities for outdoor open spaces.

c. Relate to surrounding open spaces – the connected network of outdoor open spaces and amenities should also connect to adjacent properties where an adjacent open space is available for connection. This network should be designed in a manner that can accommodate connections to potential expanded networks of open spaces beyond the property to benefit the broader district, where other property owners can continue such connections and the network of outdoor open spaces.

d. Outdoor seating and dining – expanded sidewalk areas, outdoor plazas, or other outdoor open spaces should be used to provide areas for outdoor seating. Seating areas should be provided for use by patrons of businesses and the general community, provided that the foregoing should require any licensing or leasing of such areas to businesses.

C. Strategically integrate new building placement – place new buildings to define outdoor open spaces, define internal street or circulation frontage, conceal parking and reduce the scale of large parking areas.

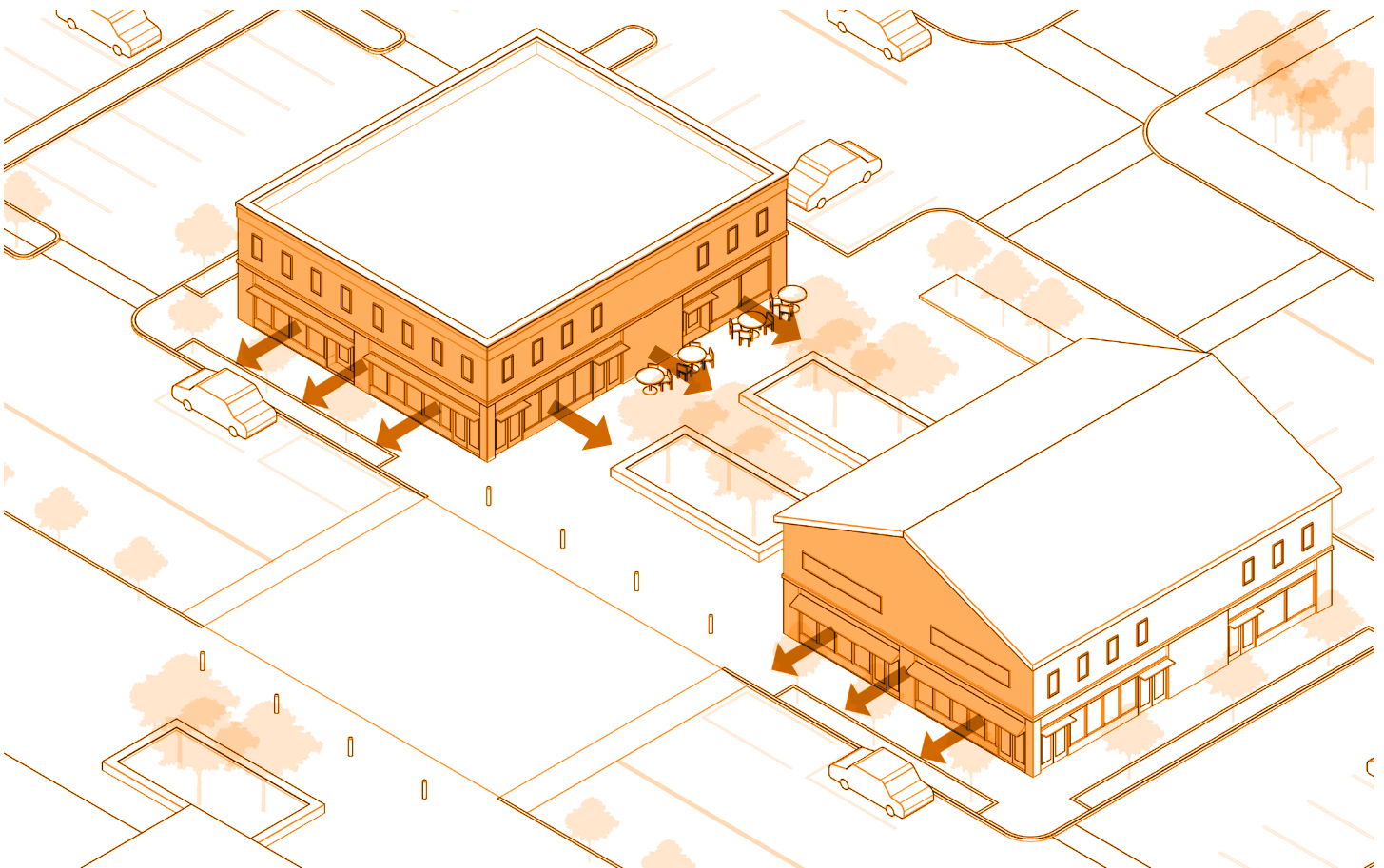


Illustration 4: Strategic building placement

a. Define open spaces and streets – new buildings should be placed on the site to define the edges of outdoor open spaces and to define double-loaded internal streets and circulation therein. The streets may be for internal circulation for the site only but should be designed and treated as a street with buildings oriented to the street frontage, sidewalks, and pedestrian amenities. A building's principal facade(s) should be oriented to the outdoor open space or street, minimally setback (except to the extent required to accommodate open spaces) and occupying a majority of the frontage.

b. Conceal and Define Parking – new buildings should be placed to conceal parking or reduce the scale of large expanses of parking by breaking large parking areas into smaller defined and separated parking bays. Separated parking bays should be further defined by pedestrian circulation and landscaping at the perimeter.



Illustration 5: Reduce large expanses of parking

D. Align the orientation and setback of new buildings – create new buildings that define the adjacent open spaces with primary and secondary facades. Special care should be given to new buildings that are centrally located where a rear service area is not practical. In these cases, integrate screening and buffers into the design to conceal these areas and to direct focus to the primary facades.

a. Consistency and continuity – building setbacks should be consistent with the surrounding context to strengthen continuity of the street form.

b. Expanded space and amenity – variation in setbacks may occur where additional space is being provided for an outdoor open space.

E. Integrate and minimize the presence of parking – the visual impact of parking should be reduced as much as possible, by using landscape, pedestrian circulation, buildings, or other features to reduce the visual prominence and perceived scale of large parking lots. New parking should be designed to be placed out of prominent view from public ways. Certain edges of parking lots may be more visible than others and would require treatment of the edge of the parking lot as described to reduce the visibility of such parking areas from public ways.

a. Define smaller distinct parking bays – existing parking to the front of buildings should be reduced into smaller parking bays or relocated to the side or rear of buildings, when possible. Parking lots should be designed to recede in the visual environment via separations between parking areas and the edges of streets and sidewalks, buffering parking areas with landscaping, and screening parking areas behind buildings or other site components (fences, gates, walls or hedges); provided that in all circumstances, parking should be designed to support public safety and encourage pedestrian connections to buildings and open spaces.

b. Reduce overall parking through shared reductions – share parking between uses or tenants where the peak demand for parking occurs on different days or different times of the day.

c. Extend complete pedestrian connections – in all circumstances, parking areas should be interconnected in a manner that allows the unobstructed flow of pedestrians between uses and parking areas. Paving treatments or other features should be used to indicate safe travel paths for pedestrians.

d. Location of garage entries – garage entries should be located behind buildings or separated from primary internal circulation routes where possible. Garage entries in public view should be integrated with the building facade and designed to be compatible with a pedestrian scale and surrounding aesthetic.

e. Treatment of structured parking, or parking within the footprint of a building – structured parking, where provided, should be configured on the site to allow lining with active building uses along primary internal streets and public spaces. Placement of the structured parking should be surrounded on visible edges by active retail or residential uses, or continuation of the building facade. In cases where structured parking is in a prominent location, but it is not practicable for first floor commercial space, facade treatments, public art or landscape techniques should be used to integrate the parking into the building form and buffer the ground-level environment from the garage.

2 Circulation Design Guidelines

A. Feature continuous sidewalks and crosswalks – to ensure connectivity for all modes of travel, all primary internal streets or circulation routes should have a sidewalk or walking path on at least one side, connected by crosswalks. To create a safe, walkable environment, buildings should be connected to each other with sidewalks, walking paths, and/or crosswalks. All buildings should have pedestrian connections from at least two directions. The pedestrian network on a property should connect to bus stops adjacent to the property. Consider enhancements to the existing bus stops adjacent to the property which may include adding covered shelters.

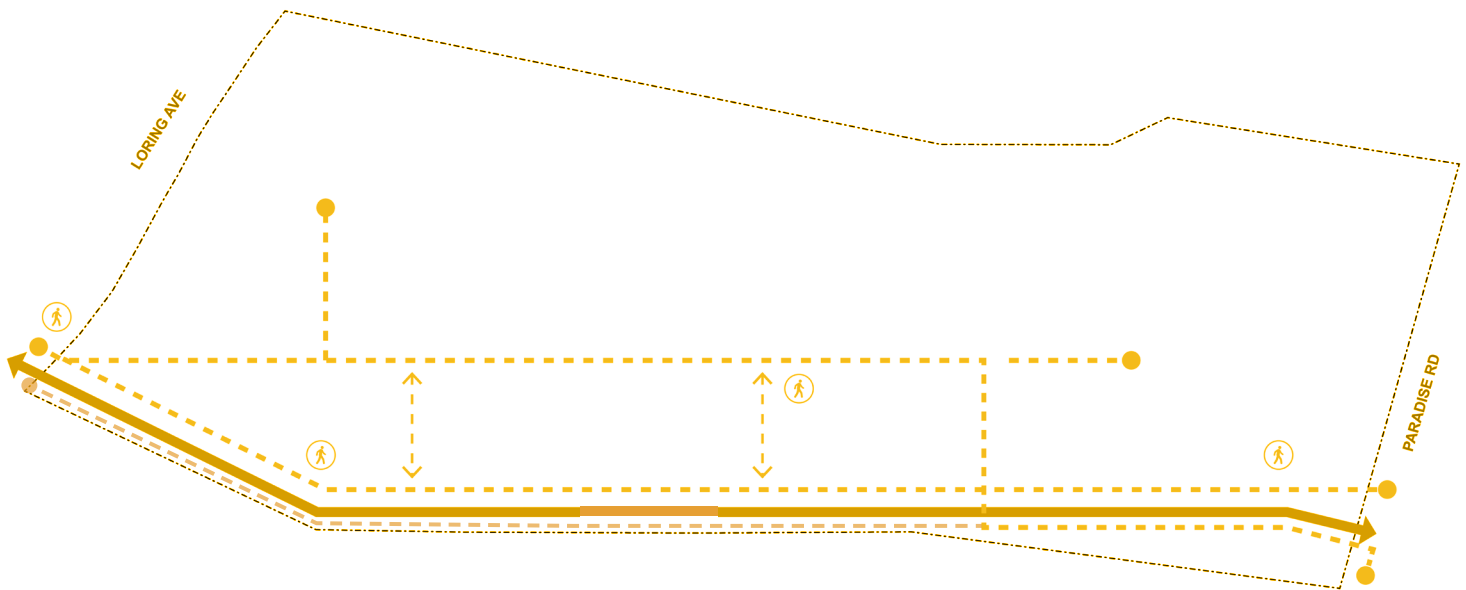


Illustration 6: Network of continuous pedestrian connections

a. Sidewalk configuration – sidewalks should have a minimum clear width of 5'. Sidewalks should be widened to accommodate street trees, landscaping, and outdoor furnishing and amenities as practicable. Sidewalks should be continuous and uninterrupted at driveways and curb cuts to reinforce priority for pedestrians.

b. Multi-functional sidewalks – internal sidewalks should be safe, comfortable, and supportive of pedestrian circulation and outdoor activity. Where internal sidewalks are greater than 5', they should also be multi-functional. Designs should include the following three sidewalk zones: (i) travel paths with a minimum clear width of 5', (ii) adequate space for streetscape and amenities, and (iii) adequate space for activity in front of buildings. These three distinct zones should be accounted for in the overall width of the sidewalk.

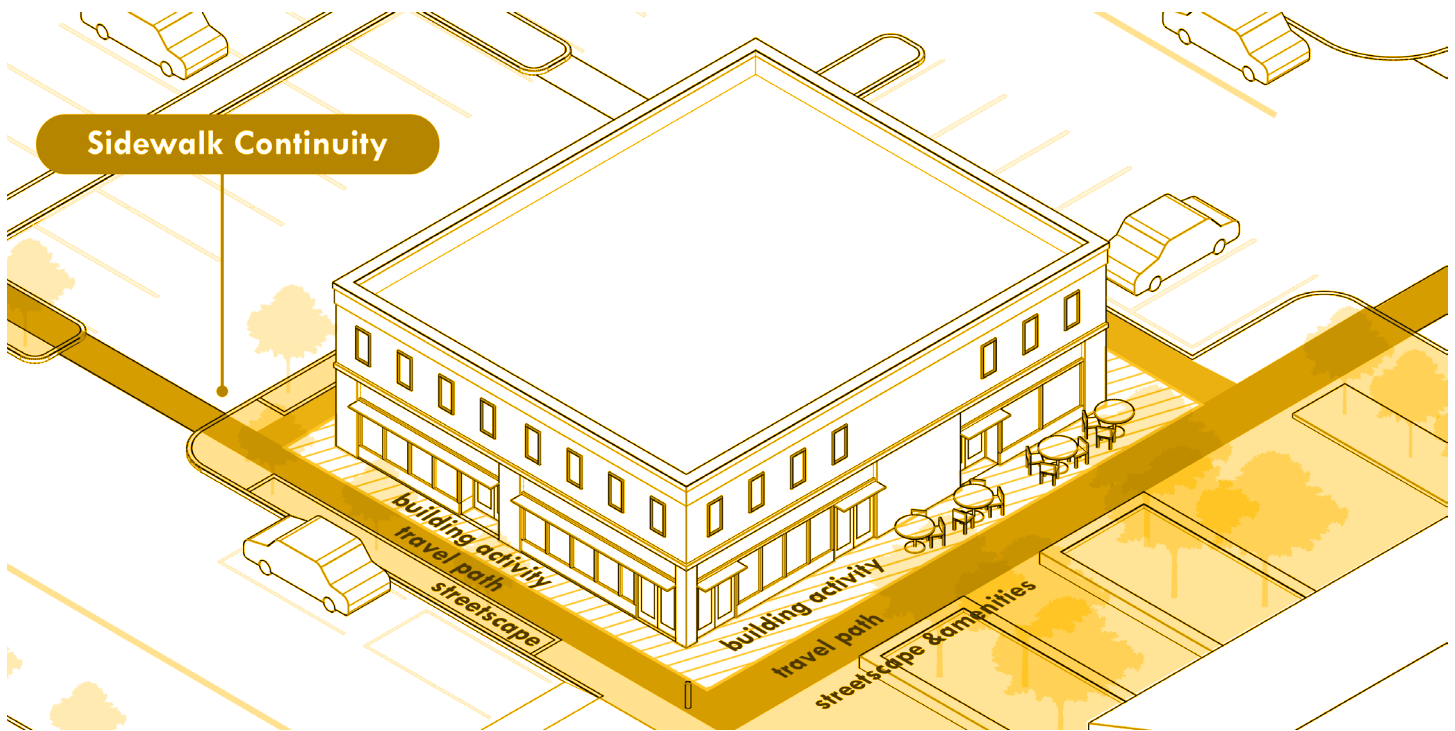


Illustration 7: Multi-functional and continuous sidewalks and crossings

c. Durable sidewalk materials – internal sidewalks should be constructed of high quality, durable materials, such as concrete and stone pavers. Internal sidewalks should be maintained for smooth and accessible surfaces. Because it can pose difficulty to certain pedestrians, brick is not permitted as a primary sidewalk material. Ornamental brick banding is permitted.

d. Visible and well-marked crosswalks – the pedestrian safety of the district should be enhanced with visible and well-marked street crossings and driveway crossings. Crosswalks should be in the continental or ladder style. Unless approved by the Town, crosswalks should be striped in white.

e. Temporary closure of street/circulation – segments of the internal street and circulation network should be designed so that they can be closed to vehicular travel for temporary events. The temporary events would expand the pedestrian realm into the closed street segment and utilize the additional space for the event.

B. Integrate traffic calming and emphasize safety – vehicle speed is directly related to pedestrian safety. Traffic calming features should be integrated into the design of the internal circulation system. Traffic calming includes reducing curb cuts, reducing corner radii, integrating speed tables, curbless street designs, street trees, and on-street parking, and narrowing travel lanes.

a. Reduce curb cuts – multiple curb cuts should be consolidated where it can be safely and effectively accomplished. Every curb cut should provide a continuous and uninterrupted pedestrian walkway. All curb cuts should be designed so that driveways slope up from the street to the level of the sidewalk, except where a curbless street design occurs.

b. Reduce corner radii – corner radii, which directly impact vehicular turning speeds and pedestrian crossing safety should be small enough to ensure turning vehicles adequately reduce their speed. Corner radii should be a maximum of 15'. Primary truck/delivery access point(s) are exempt from this requirement.

c. Integrate speed tables – at a high-volume traffic crossing with potential for pedestrian vehicle conflict, the crosswalk should be elevated to be level with the curb to slow traffic at the crossing. At segments of the internal street or circulation network adjacent to an outdoor open space, the entire segment should be elevated as a speed table to prioritize pedestrian circulation over vehicular circulation.

d. Integrate street trees and landscape – street trees should be integrated at every internal street or circulation route with tree species selected for the constraints of the location.

e. Integrate on-street parking – where new parking may be added, integrating parking into the internal street and circulation network as parallel, angled, or perpendicular spaces should be used to slow vehicular travel and increase pedestrian safety.

f. Narrow travel lanes – travel lanes should be narrowed to slow vehicular travel. Travel lanes should be no more than 11 feet with a preference for 10 feet travel lane widths, exclusive of bicycle lanes and on street parking.

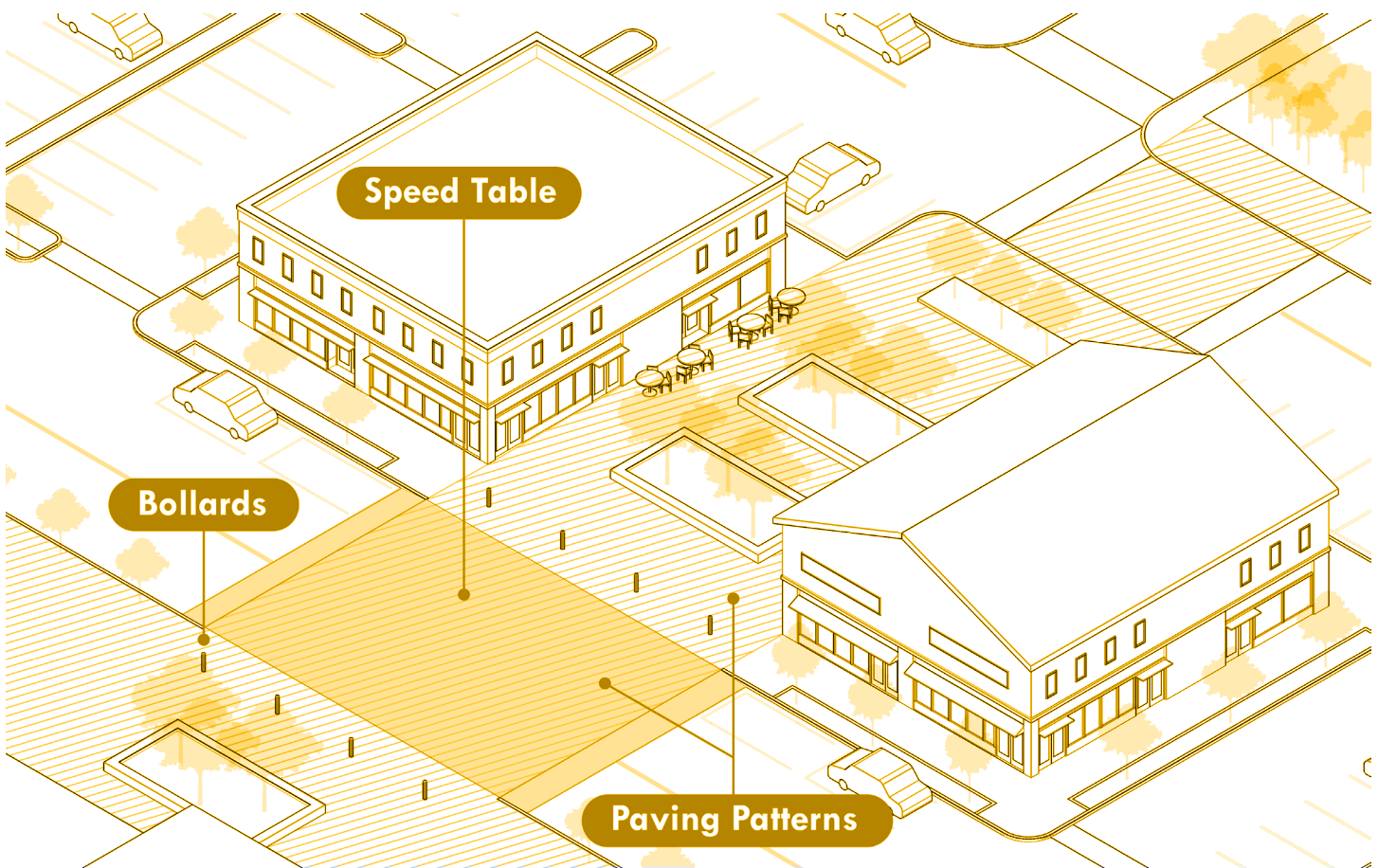


Illustration 8: Traffic calming and walkable environment

g. Integrate a curbless street design – where a speed table is extended for a full segment of an internal street or circulation network a curbless design should employ signage, paving patterns, and bollards to indicate safe movement for vehicles and pedestrians.

C. Conceal unappealing functions and service areas – consolidate service and loading areas where they will have the least visual presence and least impact on internal and external pedestrian and vehicular circulation.

a. Strategic locations and screening – site and building layout should be designed to minimize impact and public view of service areas, loading docks, dumpsters, utilities, and other utilitarian functions of the property. The site layout should place these components on the side of the building with the fewest number of expected pedestrians to the degree practicable.

b. Reduce visual impact – In areas where service functions are likely to be seen by pedestrians, these functions should be buffered with site landscaping, architectural screening, and fencing. The building and site design should be deployed to conceal or camouflage the loading and service functions so that they are not immediately obvious.

c. Clearly plan, define and regulate service routes – design the internal site circulation to consolidate and minimize service and delivery routes to and from buildings. Integrate the necessary maneuvering areas into the site plan and circulation design. Expand pedestrian safety features on these routes and regulate the consistent use of these routes during operation with signage or driver instructions.

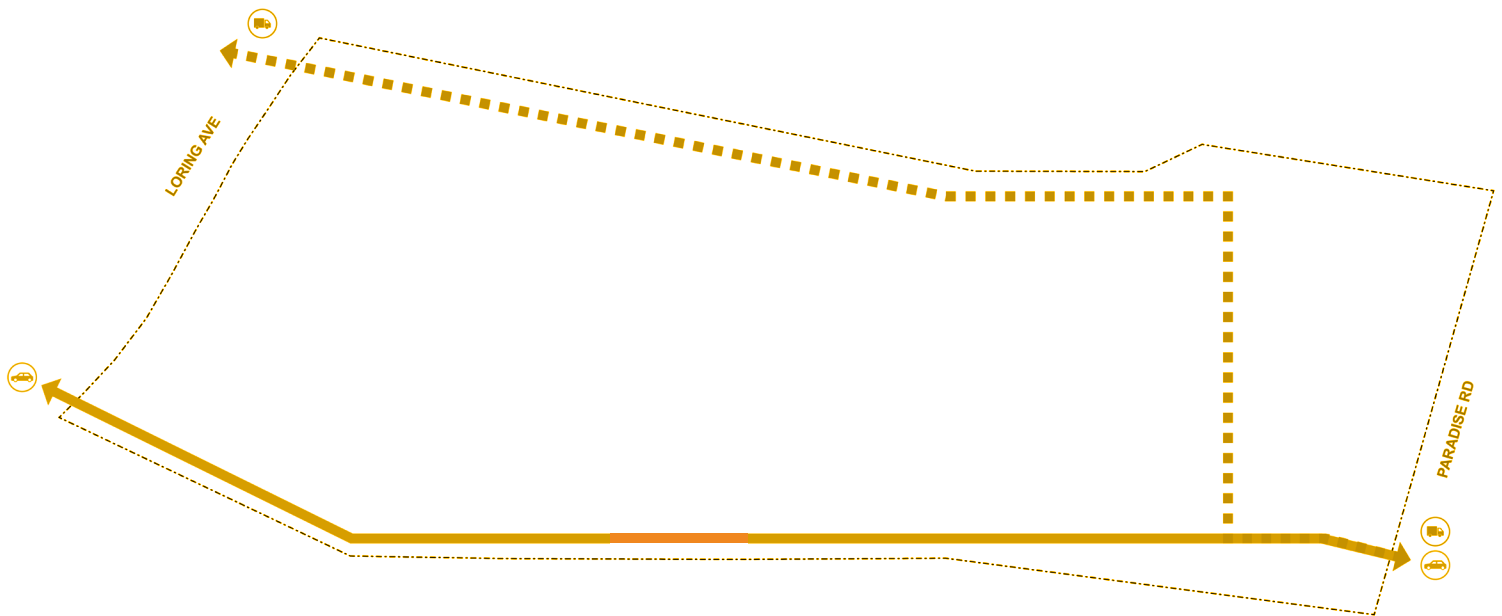


Illustration 9: Defined service and delivery route

D. Integrate bike lanes, storage, and amenities – provide a safe and comfortable environment for cyclists. Bicycle facilities, such as on-road bicycle lanes, multi-use paths, or allocated sidewalk space (i.e., cycle tracks), are required on primary circulation routes throughout the district.

a. Integrate bicycle lanes – where bicycle lanes are not included, internal streets should incorporate signage, shared lane markings, and/or traffic calming measures to improve the safety of cyclists. Bicycle lanes should be a minimum of 5' wide.

b. Integrate bicycle storage – create strategic locations near building entries and outdoor open spaces for bicycle parking with bike racks to secure bicycles. An indoor or sheltered bicycle storage area should be provided, particularly where new residential uses are located.

Landscape

3 Landscape Design Guidelines

A. Define outdoor open spaces with feature landscape – highlight the centrality and hierarchy of the network of outdoor open spaces through the placement and use of landscape features, shade trees, shrubs, ground cover. Enhance existing parking with new shade trees. Define the internal street and circulation network with landscape.

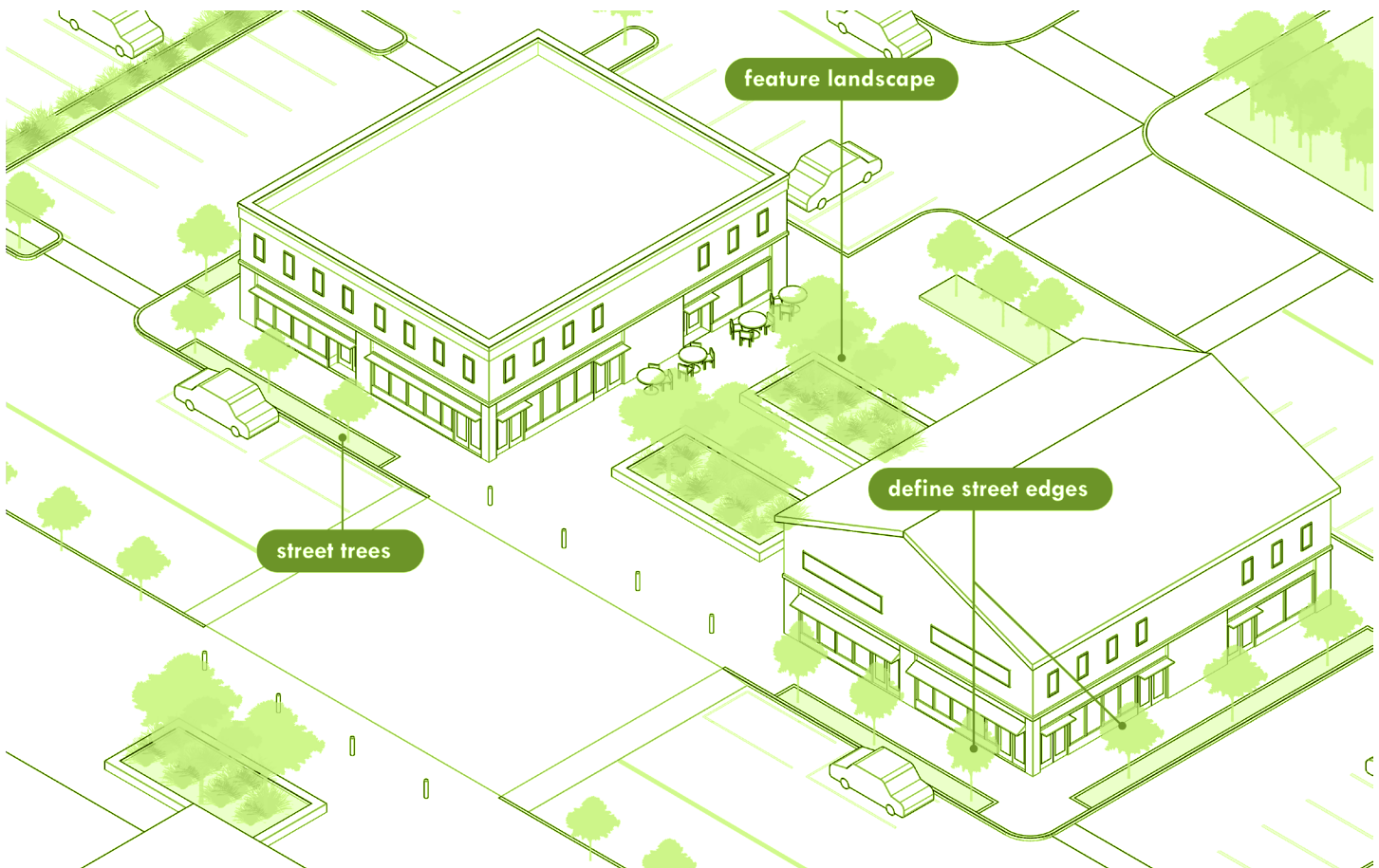


Illustration 10: Feature landscape defining outdoor open spaces

a. Landscape use and orientation – site, block, and building orientation and configuration should use landscape features to shield negative views, define edges, and frame internal streets and outdoor open spaces. Tree species should be selected to maintain relatively clear views of the ground floor and adequate height clearances for sidewalk circulation. Landscaping should be used to reinforce pedestrian scale elements of the building and site.

b. Accent/feature landscape in outdoor open spaces – unique tree, shrub, and ground cover species should be deployed for featured outdoor open spaces. The landscape selections should help to differentiate these spaces as unique and should include the selection of more mature trees and plants to give these spaces a defined presence from the start. Feature trees should be over 4” caliper measured 1 foot from the soil line and #1 grade.

c. Themes of Swampscott – narratives of Swampscott’s history, the history of the property, or other local themes should be integrated with the design of the environment including the landscape design, interpretive signs or displays, features on the ground plane or paver design, or other elements to connect the property to local and authentic placemaking.

d. Street/circulation landscape – rows of street trees should be provided on both sides of all primary internal streets at intervals no greater than 40’. To allow healthy tree growth, structural soil should be used under adjacent sidewalks or paving when street trees are planted in tree wells or planting strips narrower than 10’. Street trees or other shrubs at sidewalks and parking should be used to define the street and site edges.

e. Trees and plantings – trees, shrubs, and groundcover should be appropriate to the conditions of a particular location and the climate of Swampscott. All plantings should be Native Species. Invasive plant species are prohibited. Plants located near streets, driveways, or parking lots should be salt-tolerant.

B. Screen less attractive areas with landscape – conceal service areas with landscape and reduce the scale and visual impact of parking with landscape.

a. Parking landscape – landscape areas should be designed to ensure plant health, including adequate area for snow removal, and should create planting strips of not less than 8 feet wide for trees. Landscape areas should be placed at all exterior edges of the parking area that abut adjacent properties, external streets or circulation networks. Parking bays greater than 15 consecutive spaces should be broken up by at least one planting bed per bay. This requirement may be waived if arrangements with existing tenants prohibits modifications to existing parking areas.

b. Buffers and screens – landscape buffers should be used to screen parking, loading, and service areas that may be visible from external streets or open spaces. All views that could be associated with a negative impact should be screened with strategically selected and located landscape features. Screening may also include architectural walls, fences, or other visual barriers.

C. Preserve existing trees – preserve, protect, and maintain existing mature trees as part of the future site plan. If a mature tree of 6 inches or more diameter at breast height (DBH), 4.5 feet above the ground, should be removed, a suitable contribution to the Swampscott Tree Gift Fund will be required.

D. DarkSky compliant lighting – exterior lighting should minimize glare, reduce light trespass, and avoid light pollution in the night sky.

a. Sensitive site lighting – site lighting should use shielded and full cut-off fixtures that avoid spilling light onto external streets, properties, structures, and into the night sky. Site lighting should use low height fixtures, between 14 and 17', which should reinforce the pedestrian scale, measuring the height of a light fixture from the ground to the light emitting flat glass of the luminaire; pole height may be higher than the light-emitting height. Portions of parking areas or truck/delivery routes may require taller fixtures.

b. Sensitive building lighting – building lighting should use shielded fixtures that avoid spilling light onto external streets, properties, structures, and into the night sky. Building lighting should focus on illuminating building entries, display windows, and building signs. Coordinate architectural lighting of facades, building accents, Awnings or other features to create a cohesive and complementary lighting effect.

E. Integrating street furniture – permanent street furniture, including light fixtures, benches, bike racks, and trash and recycling receptacles, should be consistent with Town standards and coordinated with Swampscott. All street furniture should be integrated with street and sidewalk circulation to ensure adequate clearances, access, and convenience of the location for these amenities. Street furniture should be clustered at convenient locations that are plainly visible and accessible, such as near building entrances.

a. Seating – permanent seating should be provided throughout the property and be a prominent feature of the outdoor open spaces, movable furniture is strongly encouraged. A variety of seating types should be used. Permanent seating should also be designed for multifunctional uses, such as integrating seating with a planting bed, using fixed seating as a barrier for vehicles to enter a pedestrian area, or other functions.

b. Trash receptacles – a consistent and coordinated system of trash receptacles should be placed throughout the property with a concentration at the outdoor open spaces. The selection of trash receptacles should coordinate with the Town of Swampscott and other accessories on the property.

c. Other objects – other street furniture and objects should be coordinated with the type, color, design, and material of other street furniture objects. Clusters of street furniture should be designed to enhance convenience for pedestrians and to minimize disruption to circulation networks.

F. Integrate site lighting with landscape – integrate pedestrian scaled lighting into the pedestrian circulation system and outdoor open spaces. Enhance dark sky compliance through fixture selection, avoid light spillover, and encourage efficient and sustainable LED lighting.

a. Pedestrian-oriented lighting placement – placement of lighting fixtures should be designed to provide adequate ambient light levels for safety and usefulness, and should be configured to highlight pedestrian paths, building entrances, and outdoor open spaces. Integrate feature lighting with the outdoor open spaces to define these as a central feature in the evening and nighttime operational hours.

b. Feature/accent lighting – at featured outdoor open spaces, overhead string lights or other overhead fixtures or installations should be used to elevate the character of the space and to help define it as a featured highlight of the site plan.

c. Signage lighting – building signage may be lit by a fixture(s) or internally lit and should light the sign and shield other views from glare. Light fixtures should be consistent with the character of the building or should be hidden from view.

d. Reduce uplighting – uplighting is permitted when used as follows: 1) To light a primary entrance when the lighting fixture is wall-mounted under an architectural element (e.g., roofs over walkways/entries or overhanging, non-translucent eaves) so this uplight is captured; 2) To light local, state, or national flags, when no more than two light fixtures per flagpole are used with an equivalent total lumen maximum of a 150 watt bulb (incandescent). The fixtures should be shielded such that the lamp is not visible beyond a fifteen-foot radius.

Building

4 Building Design Guidelines

A. Scale and shape of buildings – Create continuity in height and scale, reduce the perceived height and bulk of larger buildings by extruding the building massing into a series of interconnected masses that could be perceived as separate structures, stepback building massing at upper floors to reduce height and bulk, and increase the perceived height and bulk of single-story retail structures to better define a presence and sense of enclosure at outdoor open spaces.

a. Building form – the shape and massing of the building should define the edges of internal streets and open spaces. The building form and building massing should use the techniques described herein to reduce the impact of large uninterrupted building masses and facades and to create smaller building forms that are relate to a human-scale.

b. Building scale – large scale buildings (three or more stories) should be reduced in overall impact by providing variation in building massing. The configuration of architectural components should be composed to reduce the overall scale of buildings to relate to a human-scale. Select (4) of the following

techniques to design building massing proportionally to the size of the human body: (i) include articulated building bases through a change in material or color; (ii) placement of windows in a regular pattern; (iii) use of materials that are made of smaller human-scaled modules; (iv) articulation of building entries with canopies, porches or awnings; (v) facade, and roof projections (such as cornices, defined bays); (vi) the tallest portions of multi-story building height should be placed away from prominent views from public ways.

c. Modulation of building mass, scale, and bulk – buildings greater than 100' in length should be divided with smaller multiple bays through pronounced variation in the primary wall plane at a minimum of every 60'. This may be accomplished through the division of the building facade into smaller parts, variation in the cornice or roofline, projections or recessions in the building facade, or variation in the design and composition of the facade. Where windows are not possible or appropriate to the intended use, vertical articulation in the form of raised or recessed surfaces, piers, columns, pilasters, etc. should be used to break up Blank Walls. Building design elements, details and building massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept.

d. Facade design – Blank Wall surfaces greater than 20' in length are prohibited if visible from internal streets, circulation, or other outdoor open spaces. Any side of the building that has frontage on a sidewalk or street should include windows, doors, murals or other architectural articulations.

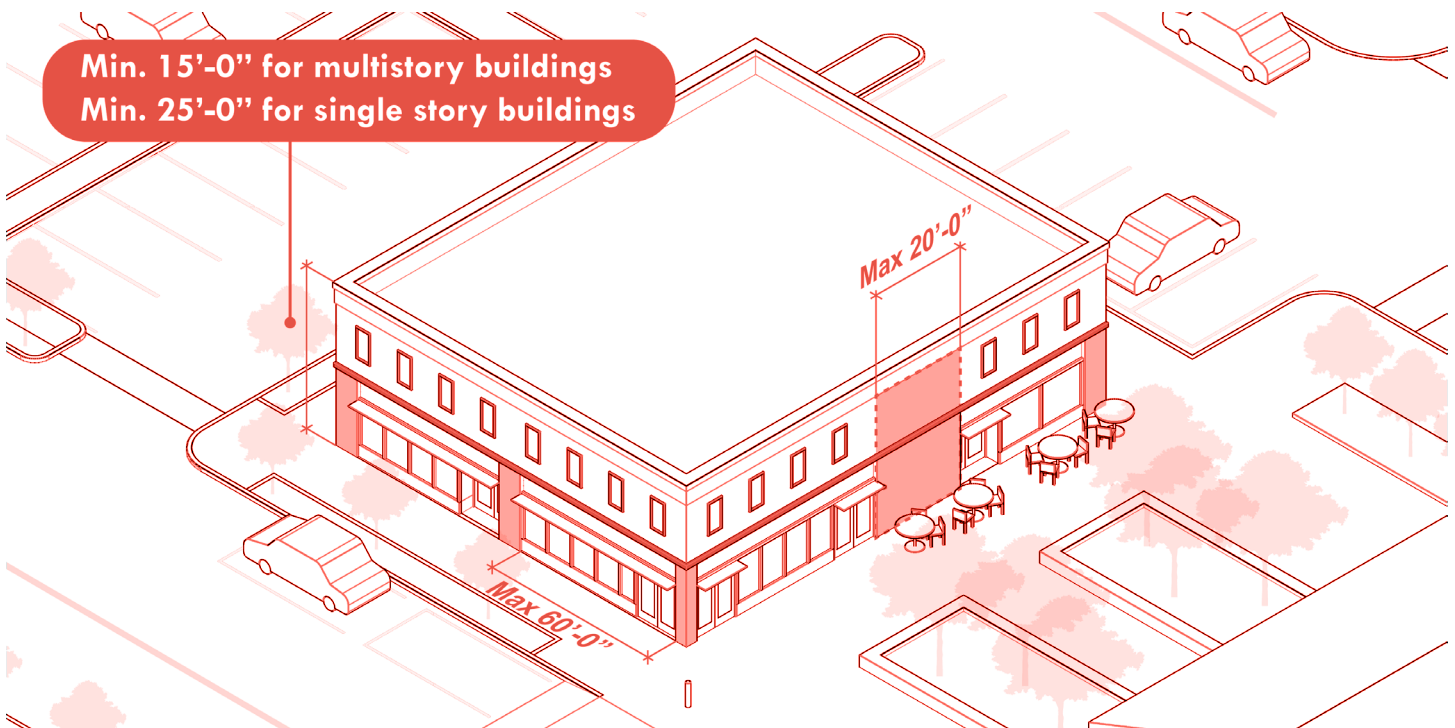


Illustration 11: Building and facade design to define pedestrian environment

B. Character and height of ground floor – provide a generous ground floor in new structures to enhance the connection between interior and exterior spaces and strengthen the sense of place and community.

a. Visual interest and pedestrian comfort – if a building's primary facade orientation is not facing the primary street, then the treatment of the facade along the primary internal street should be designed to be comfortable to pedestrians, including windows and other treatments, such as canopies, green screens, art, landscaping or other interactive designs meant to engage pedestrians.

b. Feature interior activities – storefronts are most vibrant when offering views of active interior uses. This should include shops, restaurants, and cafes, but may also include residential lobbies, community rooms, exercise rooms, and art galleries. Multi-story, multi-use buildings should be arranged with the most active portions of the program on the ground floor. The least active uses should be oriented to the side or rear of the building.

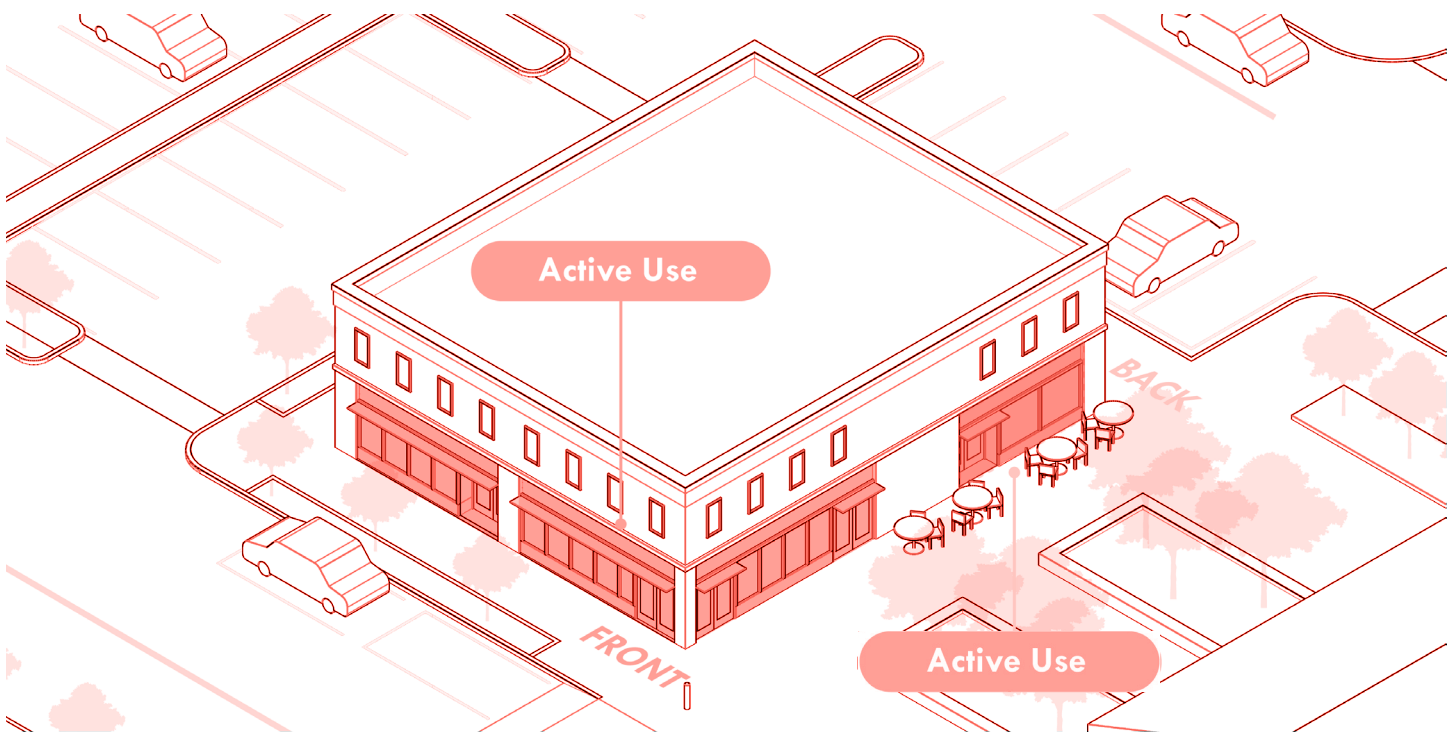


Illustration 12: Orienting active uses to outdoor open spaces and streets

c. Prominent ground floor – for multi-story buildings, the ground floor height for commercial uses should be greater than upper stories and be a minimum of 15'. Single-story buildings should be a minimum of 20' tall; parapets or other similar architectural elements may be included in the calculation of a single-story building height.

d. Ground level articulation – the building facade should clearly define commercial ground floor space and differentiate the articulation of the ground floor from the residential or mixed-use space on the building stories above. Ground level facades in non-commercial buildings should be articulated in such a way that they are visually compatible with nearby commercial storefronts and maintain an active and inviting street level. Articulation of the ground level of a building should be used to visually anchor the base of the building on the site and to define a human-scaled base at the primary street frontage.

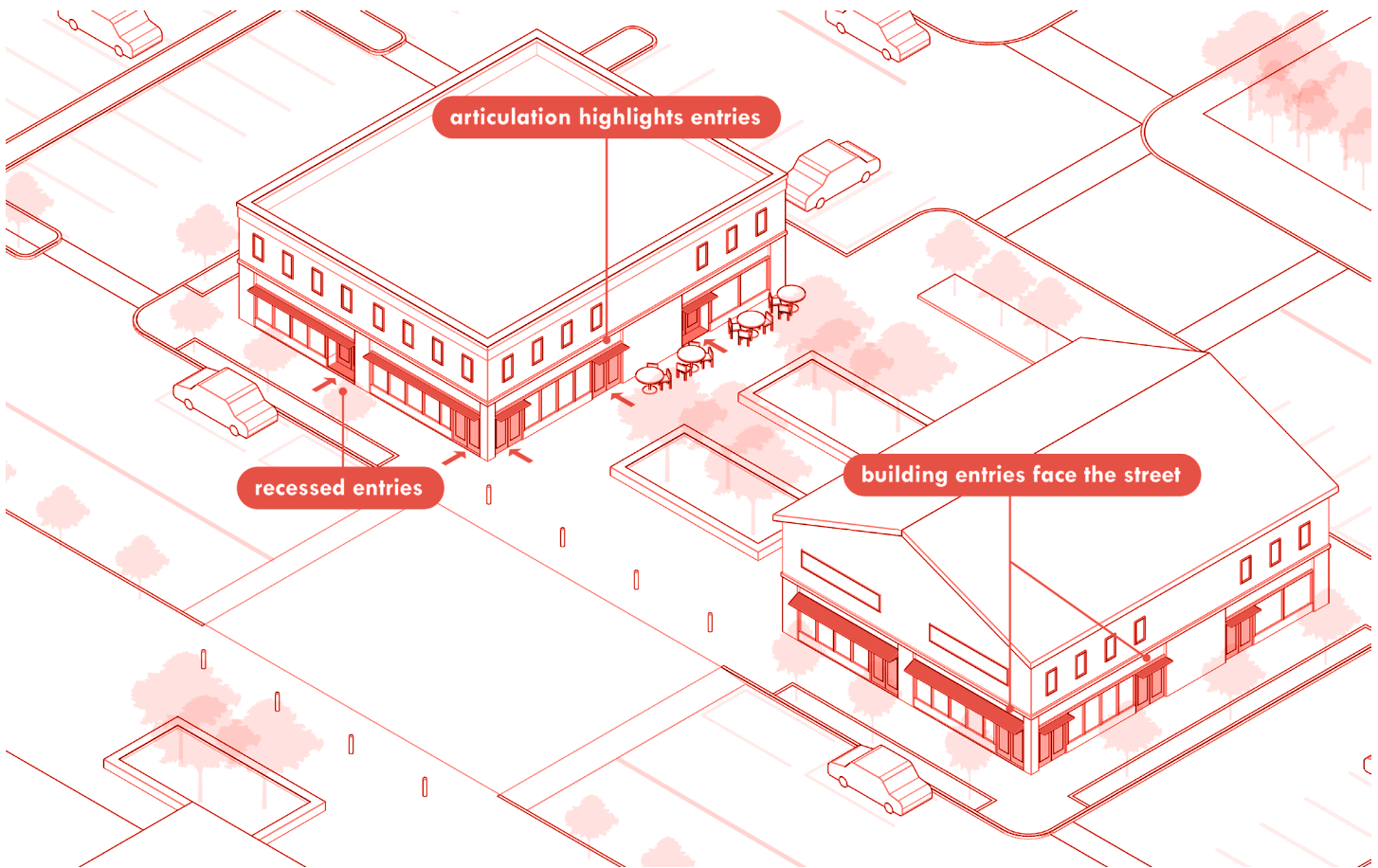


Illustration 13: Activating outdoor open space and streets with building entries

e. Ground floor windows – primary building facades facing an internal street or circulation route should have at least 25% of the overall facade in transparent windows. For purposes of this requirement only, ground floor facade should be defined as the area that is 12 feet above the finish floor elevation of the building. Ground floor storefront windows should be typically more frequent and taller than upper stories. Glass in the storefront should be clear, as opposed to reflective, tinted, or mirrored.

f. Multi-tenant signage – signs for buildings with multiple tenants should be coordinated across a building facade to offer clear, orderly, and legible information about the building and tenants through consistent location of signs, such as a consistent sign band on the building facade. Signage should not be placed on the upper facade above the second story of multi-story buildings.

C. General character and architectural style – the building designs should create a sense place and community through shared design features and a common theme connecting the ground floor of each structure. Variation on the theme should be integrated across multiple structures, including variation on upper floors of multi-story buildings. The common theme should connect to the history of the property, historical narratives of Swampscott, or the traditional architectural heritage of the Town while interpreting the themes in a manner authentic to a contemporary mixed-use redevelopment that reinforces a human-scaled environment.

a. Architectural treatments – architectural details, variations in materials, and elevated quality and design should be featured on the ground floor of buildings, and particularly around or near building entries on the primary facade. Such details may include, but are not limited to, trim around entrances, corners, eaves, doors, and windows; distinctions in exterior cladding materials; changes in roof form or type; changes in parapet height; integrating a canopy; or integrating public art, murals, or other visually engaging signs, exhibits, or installations. These components should be coordinated to reinforce the human-scaled aspects of the building design.

b. Building materials – building materials should be strategically deployed to increase the visual interest of the structure, particularly for buildings with long facades, by incorporating a variety of textures and colors. Building facade materials may include, but are not limited to, brick, concrete masonry, wood, fiber cement panel, cast stone, glass, terracotta wall panel, metal panel, cellular PVC trim, tile, and other sustainable materials. If used, cementitious stucco should be incorporated with additional materials listed above. Poured-in-place concrete and pre-cast concrete are appropriate with special consideration to formwork, pigments, and aggregates that create rich surfaces. In general, more resilient, and finer detailed materials should be placed on the ground floor, particularly in locations where they would reinforce the human-scale and be resilient to the impacts of high-volume use.

c. Awnings – awnings may be used to provide a human-scaled element to the ground floor of building facades and protect building entries. Awnings should not be placed on a building such that they obscure important architectural details by crossing over columns, pilasters, or covering windows. Multiple awnings on a single building with a single tenant should be consistent in size, profile, location, material, color, and design. On multi-tenant buildings, awnings should be allowed to vary in color and details but should be located consistently and at the same height on the building facade.

d. Roof form – roof forms should be authentic to the scale and size of the structure. Smaller structures should contribute to variety of roof forms with the opportunity to authentically integrate pitched roofs and connect to the traditional architectural heritage of the Town while interpreting the themes in a manner authentic to a contemporary mixed-use redevelopment that reinforces a human-scaled environment.

D. Character of upper floors – provide variations on the themes of the ground floor features, while translating into differences that may be present including punched-opening windows, less height between floors, and less need for the most resilient materials.

a. Visual distinction – the building design for multi-story buildings should create or maintain a visual distinction between upper and lower floors. Upper stories should have the effect of “receding” from the ground floor. For residential uses, the intended effect can be achieved through several means, including a 1’ step-back, architectural banding above the first story of approximately 1’ in depth, a canopy, or other visual break that creates a similar effect.

b. Placement of building windows – define a pattern of upper-story windows that relates to the ground floor and creates a visually balanced pattern.

c. Upper-level amenities – integrate upper-level amenities such as roof decks, courtyards, or balconies into the form and design of the building.

E. Placement of building entries – strengthen building orientation to activate outdoor open spaces, internal circulation and streets with building entries that are a primary feature of the building facade and strategically located to activate the adjacent exterior space.

a. Entries oriented to the street – the primary building facade should be oriented to the internal street or circulation route and/or outdoor open spaces adjacent to it, the primary building entrances should be easily identified and oriented to these exterior spaces and features and clearly discernible upon approach to the building.

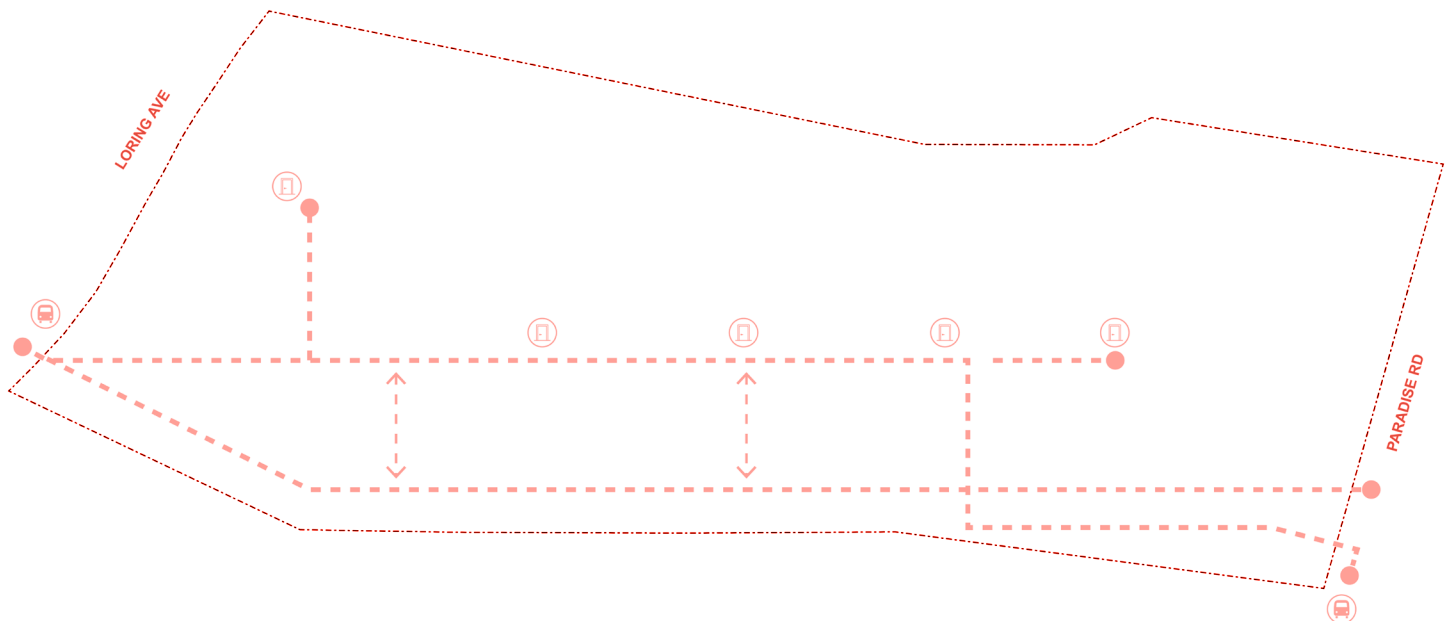


Illustration 14: A connected pedestrian network of building entries and destinations

b. Placement and treatment of entries – building entrances should be part of an active and welcoming facade composition that is integrated into the overall building massing and configuration of the building form. The building facade should integrate separate entrances for multiple tenants and uses. Building entries should be used to introduce human-scaled components to the building facade, such as storefronts, canopies, and provide a high level of visibility and transparency into ground floor uses to activate and add interest to the adjacent outdoor space.

c. Recessed entries – where a building entry may cause congestion on a sidewalk area or outdoor open space, recessing the building massing, or recessing the entry area is preferred. Particularly, where adjacent sidewalks are five feet or less in width, building entrances should be recessed to a minimum depth equal to the width of the door to prevent doors from swinging into the sidewalk and obstructing pedestrian circulation.

Sustainability

5 Sustainability Design Guidelines

A. Site sustainability – integrating sustainable design features into the site design should be used to reduce the environmental impact of the development and decrease dependence on fossil fuels.

a. Connect to multi-modal transit networks – complete pedestrian and bicycle connections to multi-modal networks adjacent to the property to increase multi-modal site access. Connect the sidewalk network to abutting transit stops. Connect the bicycle network to abutting bicycle lanes and shared paths. If no bicycle lane currently exists on abutting roadways, create bicycle lanes in anticipation of such lanes in the future.

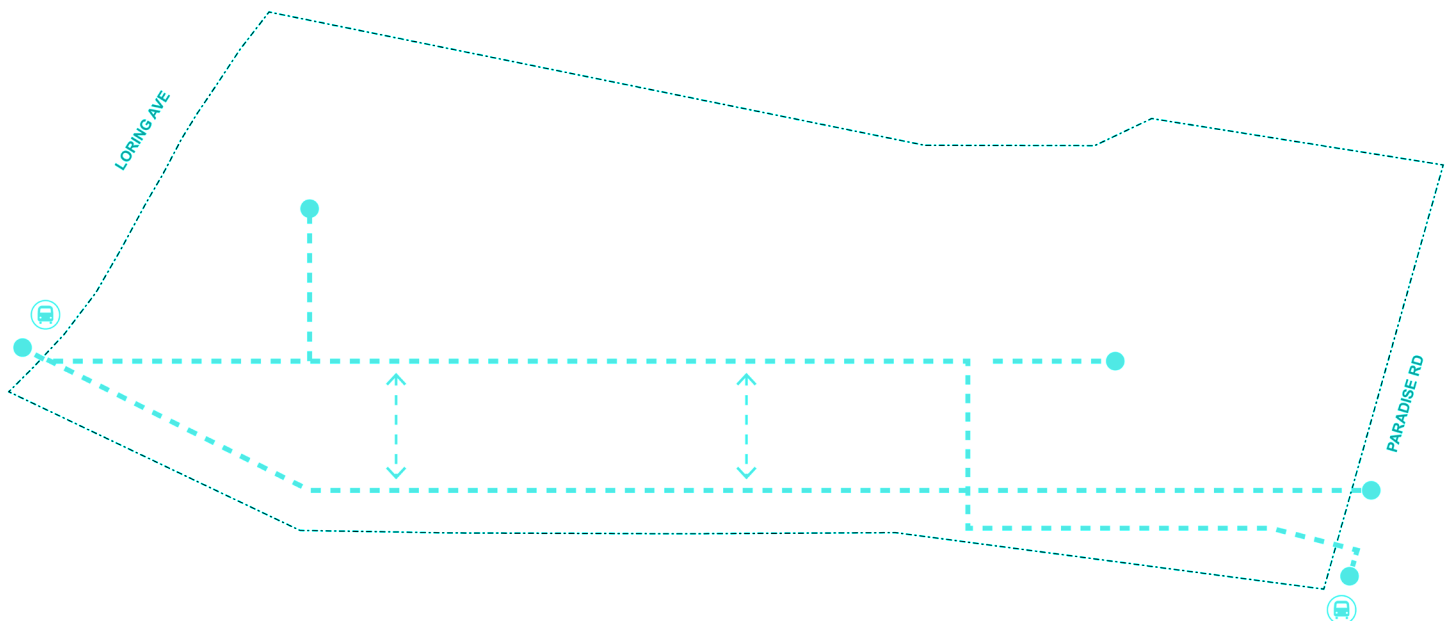


Illustration 15: Safe pedestrian connections to adjacent transit options

b. Design functional stormwater features as landscape amenities –

bioretention areas should be designed as a part of the landscape features to filter and infiltrate stormwater to reduce runoff from impervious surfaces. These areas should be used to reduce impervious surfaces and provide additional opportunities for landscape.

c. Select and maintain native plant species – Swampscott is in USDA Hardiness Zone 7a. Plant species selected for the property should use plants appropriate for the climatic conditions and that are native to the region. Invasive plant species should be managed and removed as part of the property landscape maintenance.

d. Use vegetation to minimize energy use – the location of street trees, shade trees, and other landscape features should be strategically placed to reduce the need for building cooling and to provide insulation against heat loss in the winter.

B. Building sustainability – sustainable design features should be integrated into the building design to reduce the environmental impact of the development, support high performing and healthy buildings, and decrease dependence on fossil fuels.

a. Comply with Specialized Energy Code and achieve LEED Gold certification

– buildings should be designed to comply with the Municipal Opt-in Specialized Energy Code and to be LEED Gold certifiable or equivalent. LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. It is a voluntary rating system administered by the U.S. Green Building Council to certify the sustainability of buildings and their surroundings.

C. Site sustainability – integrating sustainable design features into the site design should be used to reduce the environmental impact of the development and decrease dependence on fossil fuels.

a. Renewable energy features – where commercially feasible generate alternative sources of energy on site through the installation of solar panels on buildings, solar panel canopies over parking lots, mini wind-turbines, or other technologies to reduce the property's energy dependence on the power grid and fossil fuels.

b. Reduce water use for irrigation – manage and collect precipitation on the site in the form of rain gardens, cisterns, or rain barrels to aid in the irrigation of landscape. Select tree and plant species that are climate appropriate, native species that are drought tolerant.

c. Reduce urban heat island effect – heat islands experience higher temperatures than outlying areas due to structures such as buildings, roads, and parking that absorb and re-emit the sun's heat. The installation of green roofs, cool (light colored), or reflective roofs, and the increase in the amount of green space, and shade trees should be used to reduce the heat island effect.

d. Integrate electric vehicle charging stations – integrate publicly accessible electric vehicle (EV) charging station infrastructure into the site design and parking layout.

e. Use regional materials – the use of local and regional materials can reduce the environmental impacts from transportation and can help connect the place to local narratives.

f. Support social cohesion – social cohesion exists where people feel part of a community. The community-oriented aspects of the outdoor open spaces and areas of social gathering and activity help to build this aspect of sustainability and inclusion in the development. Messaging and programming within these spaces should be designed to make all feel welcome.

D. Building sustainability – integrating sustainable design features into the building design should be used to reduce the environmental impact of the development, support high performing and healthy buildings, and decrease dependence on fossil fuels.

a. Integrate renewable energy sources – where renewable energy sources are deployed, they should be cohesively integrated with the design of the building. For example, a solar array on a roof of upper-story facade should not appear to be tacked on at the end of the design, but should be thoughtfully integrated with the building massing, form, and surrounding material selections.

b. Reach for additional sustainability goals – the ambitious pursuit of net zero or net positive energy, carbon, and/or waste at the property would be welcomed. A net zero carbon building is a highly efficient building that achieves a zero balance of carbon emissions emitted during operations. This achievement would be beyond the achievement of LEED Gold certification and could be tracked through LEED Zero, Passive House Certification, or Net Zero Energy Certification administered by the International Living Future Institute (ILFI).

Affordability

Refer to Section 4.8.0.0 of the Swampscott Zoning Bylaw for the full requirements of the Inclusionary Housing Regulations.

6 Affordability Design Guidelines

A. Inclusionary Housing Regulations – Section 4.8.0.0 of the Swampscott Zoning Bylaw includes the Inclusionary Housing Regulations. The regulations apply to any project that results in a net increase of ten (10) or more dwelling units. The applicant should contribute to the local stock of affordable units by constructing at least ten (10) percent of the units as affordable housing units on the subject property, or different property, an equivalent fees-in-lieu of payment, donation of land, or any combination of the requirements if it complies with the equivalent number of required affordable units.

B. Housing affordability – all affordable units should be subject to an affordable housing restriction and a regulatory agreement in a form acceptable to the Planning Board and count toward Swampscott’s Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI).

C. Design of Affordable Units – affordable housing units should be situated within the development so as not to be in less desirable locations than market-rate units in the development and should, on average, be no less accessible to public amenities, such as open space, as the market-rate units. Affordable housing units should be integrated with the rest of the development and should be compatible in design, appearance, construction, and quality of materials with other units. Interior features and mechanical systems of affordable units should conform to the same specifications as apply to market-rate units.

D. Commercial affordability and local small business support – to the extent feasible support local small businesses.

Section 4 – Definitions

Technical terms that may require further explanation are defined in this section.

Awning – an awning or canopy is any device, fixed or retractable, made of canvas or duck cloth, which extends over or otherwise covers a sidewalk, courtyard, walkway, eating area, driveway, or other area or space, whether that area or space is intended for pedestrians, vehicles, or other purposes.

Blank Wall – a portion of the exterior of a building that does not include doors, windows, or other defining features.

Block – an area bounded by public or private streets or by a combination of streets and public land, railroad rights-of-way, waterways, or any other barrier to the continuity of development.

Buffer – areas of land maintained in a landscaped fashion or in a natural state that are open, unpaved, and not used for buildings, parking areas, or storage of any kind with the intention of providing space and reducing visual impact for abutting uses or properties.

Building – an independent structure resting on its foundations and designed for the shelter or housing of persons, commerce, or property of any kind. The word “building” should be construed, where the context requires, as though followed by the words “or part or parts thereof.”

Building Massing – the overall size, shape, and form of a building, including the geometry of the floor plan, height of the building, and form of the roof.

Building Sign – any wall sign, projecting sign, suspended sign, or any sign attached to any exterior part of a building.

Circulation, external – streets, sidewalks, bike lanes, or other infrastructure to support travel by any mode that are located outside the parcel boundaries of private property and that provide circulation adjacent to the property and public access to it.

Circulation, internal – streets, sidewalks, bike lanes, or other infrastructure to support travel by any mode that are located inside the parcel boundaries of private property and that provide circulation within the property.

Fence – an enclosure or barrier, such as wooden posts, wire, iron, etc. used as a boundary, means of protection, privacy screening or confinement, but not including hedges, shrubs, trees or other natural growth.

Front Facade – the side of a building that faces a street; corner buildings have two front facades.

Frontage – the length of continuous linear feet of a lot which runs along a street.

Ground Floor – the first floor of a building that is level with or elevated above the sidewalk, excluding basements.

Human Scale – relating the proportions of a structure’s mass and bulk, street fixtures, signs, or other architectural or site elements to the proportions of the human body.

Lot – a single area of land in one ownership with definite boundaries, ascertainable by deed or recorded plan.

Native Species – the Massachusetts Urban & Community Forestry Program provides suggestions for species for Massachusetts for streetscape trees, large trees, medium trees, and small trees. This resource is available at: <https://masstreewardens.org/wp-content/uploads/Tree-Selection-1.pdf> The Swampscott Tree Committee can also provide assistance.

Outdoor Open Space – a publicly accessible private space between buildings, streets or circulation routes that contributes to the sense of place and community and that can accommodate a variety of uses.

Parking Lot – an area dedicated and exclusively used, in whole or in part, for parking of motor vehicles on a lot, in a garage, or on a parking deck, including aisles, accessory structures, and landscaping, provided that the horizontal area on the lot available for parking, whether paved or not, and the parking layout meet the provisions of the Zoning Bylaw applicable at the time of approval, and further provided that any increase in the required parking due to a change in use or to an increase in building floor area or outdoor area served by such parking should require approval or a revised parking or site plan.

Planting Strip – the area between the curb and the sidewalk, intended to provide a buffer between pedestrians and vehicles, where grass and street trees are often located.

Principal Facade – any facade that constitutes the primary visual and functional orientation of the building or tenant space, characterized by a combination of such features as principal entry, storefront, and visibility from streets or parking areas.

Property – see definition for Lot.

Roof – the structure covering the upper portion of a building.

Scale – the proportion of a structure's mass and bulk in relationship to other structures in that neighborhood; or the relative size of a building, street fixture, sign, or other architectural or site element. See related definition for Human Scale.

Setback (front) – the minimum horizontal distance between the front lot line and the building nearest the front lot line measured at a right angle to the front lot line.

Sign – any permanent or temporary device, letter, word, billboard, placard, painting, drawing, poster, banner, pennant, insignia, trade flag, streamer, display, emblem, or representation used as or which is an advertisement, announcement, or direction, or is designed to attract the eye.

Site – see definition for Lot.

Stepback – a required change in the vertical plane of the building facade at a specified height where the portion of the building above that height is recessed from the principal vertical plane typically employed to reduce the impact of taller buildings. For example, a 5-story building may require a stepback at the top of the 4th story to push the face of the 5th story back 10' from the vertical plane of the building below.

Storefront – the display and entry areas of a ground floor or street level space that attracts visual attention to retail, business, or restaurant activity.

Street – a public way, or a way shown on a plan approved by the Planning Board under the subdivision control law, or a private way in existence when the subdivision law became effective in the Town which, in the opinion of the Planning Board has sufficient width, suitable grades and adequate construction to provide for the needs of a vehicular traffic.

Street Frontage – the portion of a property or building which is aligned with a street it abuts.

Streetscape – the components and character of the street that may include the sidewalk, street trees, streetlights, curbs, benches, planters, tree grates, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, transit shelters, or bollards.

Transparent – the use of clear glass in a facade to strengthen the visual connection to retail, restaurant, commercial, or other activity inside of a building.

Wall Area – the area of a wall within a single plane.

**Design Guidance for
Vinnin Square
Swampscott**

Final Document
January 19, 2024